

EXCELLENCE THROUGH COLLABORATION

Annual Report | 2022–2023



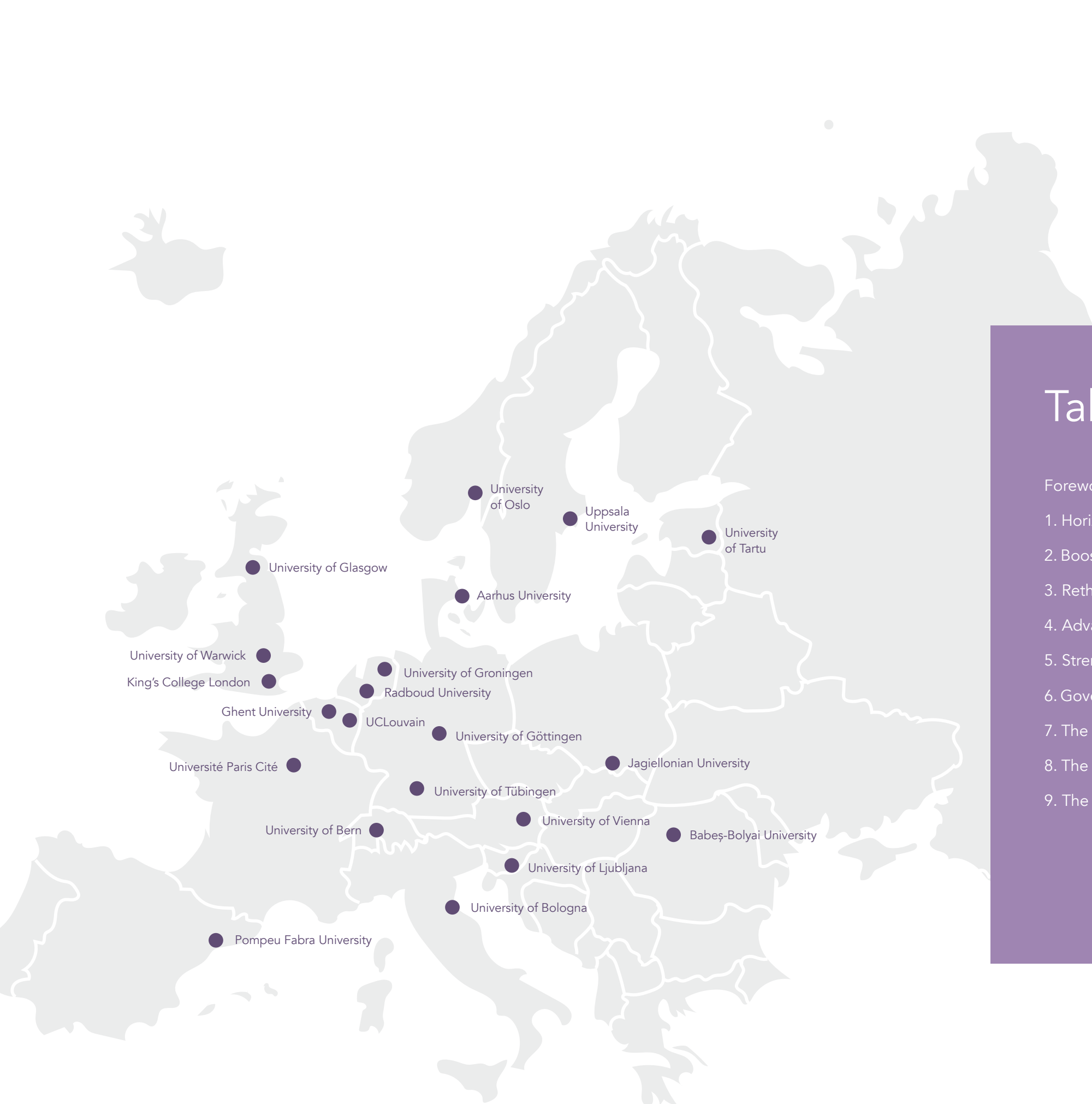


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Foreword

Svein Stølen

Chair of The Guild
Rector of the University of Oslo



Universities have a critical role in fostering research collaboration, educational collaboration, and exchange, and linking different actors in society through their third mission. This is what makes universities succeed. And this is what helps the societies we serve flourish. Over the past year we emphasised, across all our missions, the critical need to find every new way to enhance collaboration, and to ensure that our collaborations in research, education, and innovation are the most impactful they can be, inspired by the excellence of our communities.

The bedrock of our commitment to collaboration starts at home, within Europe. Over the past year, we have continued to advocate tirelessly for the association of Switzerland and the United Kingdom to Horizon Europe. We simply cannot afford to ignore the excellence that universities in these countries bring to our work. It is by facilitating collaboration seamlessly across the EU's borders that Horizon Europe can achieve its biggest potential in helping scientists to address our key societal challenges.

Over the past year, we have worked hard to translate our close policy collaboration with the African Research Universities Alliance, ARUA, into research practice. To that end, we have begun to work closely, across our networks and universities, to create Clusters of Excellence on the basis of equity. We are identifying together key societal challenges which we will address through a critical mass of excellent researchers, from our own networks and from many other networks besides. And throughout this process we have engaged closely with the European Commission, in the firm belief that we must bring about a culture change in global north-south research collaboration, and this requires a close partnership between policymakers and the entire research ecosystem.

In March, I was pleased to represent The Guild in the European Innovation Days in Silicon Valley. This was an excellent opportunity to make the case for the importance of research for innovation, and the non-linearity of how research and teaching inform innovation. Finally, I look forward to representing The Guild at an international event organised by Udice, the French network of research-intensive universities, with whom we have already had the pleasure of publishing a joint position paper (along with the German U-15 network) on international collaboration and the EU's global approach to research and innovation, in the wake of Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine.

These activities build on the strong foundations we have laid in engaging with European research and innovation. I am delighted we are recognised as a network that has a global position through our close and effective engagement in research and innovation in Brussels. And just as our policy engagement is always influenced by the practice of our researchers and educators, so it has been wonderful to witness, in turn, how our own practices are affected by our collective work in The Guild.

Svein Stølen

Jan Palmowski

Secretary-General of The Guild



The European framework programme in research and innovation, as well as Erasmus+, are so important because they are unique in bringing our communities together, igniting ideas, and inspiring solutions. That is why, for the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe, we presented one of the richest submissions of any network or stakeholder to the Commission. Our input ranged from important practical details of implementation to careful evaluations of the instruments in all the pillars. We also provided rich scholarly input from our academic communities about the future societal challenges that research must address, to help ensure that these priorities are addressed in the next strategic plan of Horizon Europe.

A particular concern of The Guild was to provide feedback on new instruments such as the Missions. Particularly in collaboration with the European Innovation Council (EIC) we led a sustained dialogue with the Commission. We also co-led a joint position with a range of other key stakeholders and were pleased with the supportive response from the EIC Board (even if discussions are still ongoing). Universities make a central contribution to Europe's innovation ecosystem. It is critical that universities are better able to engage with the EIC, including its rules around the exploitation of intellectual property.

Preparing for the interim evaluation of Erasmus+, we fostered rich discussions throughout the year on the mobility programme, and on European Universities. We also considered how these European instruments have given space for a European movement towards new modes of flexible internationalisation. These modes, we underline, are important in thinking not just about the future of Erasmus+, but they should inform our innovative approach to pedagogy.

For the new European Research Area, we actively contributed to the overall contributions of the university stakeholder group and focused on a number of actions of particular importance, including the Global Approach to Research and Innovation, and Empowering Higher Education Institutions.

But alongside this intensive engagement with a rich – and growing – policy arena in European research, innovation, and higher education, we also took a major step towards becoming a network that is distinguished by equitable global partnerships – not just in policy advocacy, but also in practice. In this endeavour with our African partners, led by the African Research Universities Alliance, we are supported by the resounding enthusiasm of our researchers. It is a commitment on their part that we do not take for granted, and a trust we must keep earning as we embrace the challenge of turning a vision of equitable research partnerships into reality.

Jan Palmowski



Horizon Europe: strategic priorities

After we had been one of the first networks to provide initial feedback on how our researchers and research offices engaged in Horizon Europe in early 2021, in the past year we launched a deeper reflection on how the new programme has been received by our research community. This entailed mobilising six of our working groups to influence the mid-term review of the programme. These included our working groups on R&I Policy, Innovation, Widening Participation that address the structural aspects of the programme, as well as our academic groups (Health Deans, Heads of Digital/AI research, and Deans of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities) that shared their insights into the scientific priorities that the challenge-driven pillar of Horizon Europe should focus on in the last years of its running.

Universities, which as beneficiaries win roughly a third of the programme's budget, had key messages to send to the Commission on the need for a better balance between research and innovation funding in Horizon Europe. The Guild articulated a range of concrete measures on how to strengthen the opportunities for research projects in Horizon Europe's Global Challenges Pillar, as well as the new R&I Missions that are designed to contribute to concrete time-bound goals through dedicated projects. Our network succeeded in mobilising wide support from the Council to address the imbalance towards innovation projects in this pillar, so that funding calls in the last years of Horizon could include more support for research projects. Our work towards improving research opportunities in the challenge-driven pillar was coupled with scientific insights from our academic groups, which remain unique in the advocacy landscape in Brussels.

In the past year, The Guild has also been proactive on several issues regarding innovation policy, which remains an area where the views of universities are often underrepresented. The Guild urged the European Commission to ensure that the instruments under Pillar 3, mainly the European Innovation Council and the European Institute of Innovation & Technology, offer clearer and more relevant support to the innovation activities of universities and therefore engage further with them.

Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities research

The Deans of Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities (SSAH) have emphasised the importance of SSAH research in addressing Europe's challenges and have called for a stronger role for SSAH research in Horizon Europe. The Deans have stressed the importance of including the entire range of the SSAH disciplines in the research priorities articulated by Horizon Europe.

Under Horizon Europe's Cluster 2, the SSAH Deans have reflected on the need for a profound understanding of human conflict and the relationship between tradition, innovation, and transformation in Europe. They have also urged a better understanding from an SSAH perspective of how markets work and how they can become more resilient under the pressure of global threats. The Deans have demanded a genuine integration of SSAH across the entire Horizon Europe funding programme, promoting stronger interdisciplinary collaboration to align technological developments with human values and culture.

Finally, the Deans have renewed calls for the establishment of an independent expert group responsible for evaluating SSAH-flagged calls under the excellence criterion. This would help to foster successful SSAH integration and ensure that SSAH is evaluated on an equal footing with other research areas.



Deans of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities meeting at Uppsala University, January 2023

Digital and AI research

The Heads of Digital/AI Research have noted that the relevance of digital/AI research has not decreased since the launch of Horizon Europe. Challenges are instead mounting. This requires increased investment in research to accelerate the digital transformation of Europe's society, economy, and public services, and thereby increase the global competitiveness of European industry. As the green and digital transitions become increasingly entwined, this will also require the greening of digital technologies as well as the development of digital solutions that will improve energy efficiency and prevent and curb biodiversity loss.

Fundamental research is also increasingly crucial for enabling Europe to maintain and even strengthen its capacities to develop digital technologies and shape the ongoing fast-paced digital transformation. Digital/AI research must not only make Europe fit for the digital age. It is also crucial that it contributes to making this digital age human-centred and compliant with Europe's core values.

Health research

The Health Deans have reasserted the crucial importance of investing in health research to address the demographic changes in Europe (such as an ageing population and brain drain), improve pandemic preparedness, and ensure access to innovative and high-quality healthcare throughout Europe. We have highlighted research areas that deserve further attention in the second half of Horizon Europe, such as mental health, interactions between communicable and non-communicable diseases, and preventive and non-pharmacological interventions.

Advancements in these and other health research domains will require improved access to and reuse of data in compliance with the existing EU rules for health research purposes. It is therefore key that Horizon Europe does not neglect these enabling factors. Finally, our Health Deans have raised the concern that the implementation of the EU Mission on Cancer undermines the need for investment in fundamental research.

Association of UK and Switzerland with Horizon Europe

Throughout 2022–2023, The Guild has maintained its efforts to ensure a swift association of the UK and Switzerland to Horizon Europe. Meeting in September with Martina Hirayama, Switzerland's State Secretary for Education, Research and Innovation, our Vice-Presidents voiced their concerns over the negative consequences of the EU–Swiss political disagreement for the excellence and competitiveness of the European research system as a whole.

The Guild has maintained a constructive dialogue with EU, UK, and Swiss policymakers to encourage progress in the negotiations, and we have regularly raised media attention on the issue. In February and March, we were delighted to see a new impetus for the relations between the EU and its neighbours. This was manifested by the EU–UK agreement on the Windsor framework – which we welcomed with other key research organisations – and the visit of Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič to Switzerland.

The EU, the UK, and Switzerland are now in position to make good use of this positive political momentum and finalise association with Horizon Europe for the benefit of Europe's societies and economies.

Widening Participation

The Guild has welcomed the budget boost for the Widening Participation pillar in Horizon Europe but warned about the need for more data about the effectiveness of Widening instruments to evaluate their contribution to reducing the disparities in R&I performance. We have reiterated the need for a clearer articulation of how different Widening instruments relate to each other, and what the ultimate objective was.

Based on the experience of the first Horizon Europe calls, we have shared recommendations on how to improve actions such as Teaming, Twinning and ERA Chairs. We have also welcomed ERA Fellowships and emphasised that the new ERA Talents scheme can complement it – if the interdisciplinary and the international potential of the scheme were better highlighted alongside intersectoral mobility.

Concerning Excellence Hubs, The Guild has suggested including cooperation with well-established R&I ecosystems outside the Widening countries in future calls since links with top-level partners could have a greater impact and help in transferring best practices to Widening countries.

"The European Court of Auditors' report and the Commission's own analyses show: we still need to discuss widening and inclusiveness in European research and innovation - but no longer in the same way as ten years ago: the parameters have shifted, thanks to some very effective measures taken!"

Jan Palmowski, Secretary-General of The Guild, September 2022

The Guild's member universities in Horizon Europe

Around
600 m
grant capture

20 %
of the number of
grants going to
universities

13 %
of the number of EIC
grants (pilot phase)
going to universities

Around
300 m
in ERC grants, accounting
for 13% of university share

18 %
of MSCA grants
going to universities



Boosting the European innovation ecosystem

The European Union will become an innovation powerhouse only by leveraging excellent research. But at a policy level, policymakers have increased the emphasis on innovative solutions based on known technological applications. Therefore, The Guild has needed to reassert, through the activities of its Innovation working group, how crucial it is that EU innovation policy, from its strategy to the implementation modalities of its instruments, fully engages universities and gives them the means to best nurture and support innovative activities and ecosystems.

The European Innovation Council

The Intellectual Property rules applicable to the European Innovation Council's Pathfinder and Transition projects have remained high on the policy agenda of The Guild and its Innovation working group. Following the publication of a statement in May 2022, we successfully urged MEP Christian Ehler to raise our concerns in the European Parliament's report on the implementation of the EIC, of which he was the rapporteur, and which was published in November 2022.

Despite our advocacy actions and this mounting political pressure, we felt that the amendments proposed by the European Commission to the EIC IP rules were insufficient to solve our concerns and to give universities all the means they need to deploy their knowledge valorisation strategies. For this reason, we joined forces with nine associations of research-performing organisations and knowledge transfer professionals and experts. In a joint statement published in December 2022, we called for IP rules that overcome (rather than create) legal uncertainties, and that are compatible with state aid rules and competition law. We urged IP rules that fostered the necessary collaboration between researchers and universities instead of pitting them against each other. Our Vice-Presidents reiterated these concerns to Marja Makarow, an EIC Board member, during their meeting in January 2023.

In the following weeks, The Guild and the other associations started a close dialogue with the EIC Board's IP working group chair to formulate rules that would boost the exploitation of EIC projects' outcomes without undermining the roles of research-performing organisations.



Svein Stølen, Chair of The Guild together with Commissioner Mariya Gabriel during the European Innovation Days at the Silicon Valley, March 2023

Svein Stølen's visit in Silicon Valley

In March 2023, The Guild's Chair Svein Stølen took part in a high-level delegation headed by Commissioner Mariya Gabriel, together with entrepreneurs, university rectors, investors, innovation actors and policymakers, to Silicon Valley. This visit aimed to attract talent and increase investments in Europe, share best practices and bridge gaps between the different research and innovation ecosystems.

Svein Stølen emphasised that buoyant innovation ecosystems like Silicon Valley rely on scientific excellence conducted at universities. Calling for nurturing and strengthening transatlantic cooperation, he stressed the need to better utilise existing instruments such as Erasmus+. He also proposed to build on the experience gained through the European University Initiative to increase EU-US student and academic staff mobility. Going forward, Stølen suggested building on our complementary research strengths, securing the process by which the ecosystems of research and innovation also tap into disruptive fundamental research, and working on improving frameworks for data sharing.

Calling for a comprehensive New European Innovation Agenda

The Guild has raised concerns that the New European Innovation Agenda published in July 2022 focuses on deep tech innovation and neglects the roles of universities in nurturing innovation. The meeting of our Innovation working group in August 2022 in Tartu, in parallel to the sTARTUp Day 2022, was an excellent opportunity to highlight the multifaceted nature of innovation, and the importance of universities in it. It showcased and discussed the University of Tartu's activities in fostering entrepreneurship, promoting collaboration with non-academic actors, and, in sum, orchestrating the local innovation ecosystem.

Throughout the autumn, we sustained our advocacy work towards a clear acknowledgement of universities in the innovation ecosystem, and the importance of fostering innovation more generally. This helped convince the Council to adopt conclusions in December that assert the crucial contributions of research – including fundamental research – to Europe's innovation strategy.



Rethinking global science relations

Since the launch of the EU's Global Approach in 2021, The Guild has been active in focusing on one of the EU's key priorities: developing a new approach to R&I collaboration with Africa. But the Global Approach was also challenged by the implications of Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine, which also challenged us to develop new approaches towards solidarity, and what limits to university cooperation were justified.

ARUA and The Guild university leaders met in Cape Town to reflect on how to develop new types of institutional partnerships that will build long-term research capacity in African universities, November 2022

ARUA and The Guild rectors meet in Cape Town

With the development of a joint AU-EU Innovation Agenda, The Guild and ARUA Presidents and Vice-Chancellors met at the University of Cape Town in South Africa in November to discuss the role of universities in the renewed Europe–Africa partnership. Agreeing on the need to strengthen in the long term the research capacities of African universities to boost the excellence and relevance of global science production, The Guild and ARUA rectors decided to work towards the development of joint Clusters of Excellence.

These new models of university partnerships will involve African and European universities around a joint research challenge in Public Health, Green Transition, Innovation and Technology, and Capacities for Science. Clusters of Excellence will pool resources of individual universities to produce ground-breaking knowledge for the benefit of Africa and Europe's sustainable growth and train the next generation of excellent scientists able to engage meaningfully with tomorrow's challenges.

Towards Clusters of Excellence

Building on three years of collaboration with ARUA, 2022–2023 saw our universities strengthen their relations at both the leadership and the academic levels. We organised another online information session on funding opportunities for our researchers, this time dedicated to the MSCA Doctoral Networks scheme, where we heard experiences of successful applicants in African–European consortia.

At the same time, The Guild and ARUA Vice-Presidents and Academics met regularly in winter and spring to discuss opportunities and address the obstacles to closer collaboration between our universities. This work has served the development of proposals for Clusters of Excellence.



Jan Palmowski, Secretary-General of The Guild and Ernest Aryeetey Secretary-General of the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) during the Cape Town meeting, November 2022

"These clusters would need to be grounded on the bottom-up collaboration between researchers. But they also require an institutional commitment by the university leadership to provide the necessary long-term institutional support to enable researchers to succeed in their long-term collaboration. [...] At the summit in Cape Town, South Africa, on 3-4 November, university leaders were clear that any future collaborative clusters could not be about business as usual. Clusters have to be grounded in the principle of equity, including the need to ensure African researchers are prominently integrated in knowledge production and dissemination."

Ernest Aryeetey Secretary-General of ARUA, and Jan Palmowski, Secretary General of The Guild, "Changing the future, inspiring the present", University World News, November 2022



The Guild and ARUA contributed to a transcontinental dialogue about the draft AU-EU Innovation Agenda in Nairobi, November 2022

Universities as gateways between Africa and Europe

To support the continued development of our collaboration with African universities, we have remained active at the policy level. We participated in a stakeholder consultation workshop organised by the European Commission and the African Union Commission in Nairobi in November, to present our Clusters of Excellence project and reflect with other research and innovation actors on the road ahead to implement the AU–EU Innovation Agenda.

As part of our ERA work, we also worked with the European Commission and EU member states to develop a coordinated approach to research and innovation cooperation with Africa ('Team Europe'). Last but not least, together with other key research stakeholders in Africa and Europe, we published recommendations for the place of research in the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package, ahead of the finalisation of the AU–EU Innovation Agenda in June.

Internationalisation and Ukraine

With the war in Ukraine and a changing geopolitical context, universities have a responsibility to promote dialogue and foster global science relations – as scientists need more than ever to work collectively to address global challenges – while at the same time protecting their researchers and students from undue political pressures, internal and external.

To this end, the challenges posed by the war in Ukraine were never far from the agendas of The Guild meetings. In this we were led by our Presidents, for whom the issue of how we could best support Ukrainian universities was a core part of the agenda of our General Assemblies. We strongly supported the EU's moves to support researchers and students from Ukraine (e.g. through MSCA Fellowships). And we also carefully considered the implications of the war on science policy within and beyond Europe.

The Guild set up a Taskforce on Responsible Internationalisation to identify the challenges faced by universities when developing and implementing their international strategies. The extent to which scientific collaboration requires external regulation or validation has been a growing concern at the national level. It became critical to develop a forum for the exchange of best practice, and to better enable us to communicate the activities of universities to EU policymakers. To that end, we need clearer approaches to crucial issues, including export control, sanction lists, pressures on students and academics, and financial dependences. In this context, our taskforce will engage with the ERA ongoing work on foreign interference and academic freedom.

The University of Groningen, illuminated in Ukrainian national colors, March 2022



Advancing the European Education Area

With ambitions to complete the European Education Area by 2025, this year marks a mid-term reflection process to take stock of progress and discuss the next steps. Several actions have been initiated: from promoting the European approach to micro-credentials, selecting 44 European Universities, piloting the European degree label to supporting digital education and training.

With the discourse of ‘need for change’, there are expectations from the sector to innovate its pedagogical offering, collaborate across disciplines, and educate students for continuous change. At the same time, it is important to reflect on the mission of universities and build on the strengths of universities while we navigate this exciting policy environment.

“Although European and global partnerships have been increasing in the sector over the years, the actual benefits of collaborative partnerships for education often remain implicit. We need to articulate the value of international collaboration to grow the benefits.”

Jo Angouri, University of Warwick,
Virtual Seminar “From Bologna to Bologna and beyond”, June 2022

The Guild’s contribution to education policy

In 2022–2023 our Strategic Leads on Education have focused on transnational collaboration, looking into different approaches taken by institutions and European University alliances – joint study programmes, micro-programmes, connected learning communities, semi-joint curricula etc. Based on policy analysis and multiple interviews within the network, the group has explored existing pedagogic/mobility designs and different approaches to transnational education collaboration.

Given the current policy push towards a potential European degree label, the group has engaged with policymakers in the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) to share their insights on the possible added value and the scope of such a label. Joint degrees are one way of collaborating across institutions and should not be seen as the only indicator of success. Building on The Guild’s previous Insight paper *Reimagining Research-led Education in a Digital Age*, the group has advanced recommendations on how to structurally connect educational provisions, exploring the complex relationship between mobility, flexibility, and individualised learning. First insights were presented at the “DAAD Moving Target Digitalisation” conference in December 2022, and then shared in The Guild’s virtual seminar with the broader community in 2023.

In addition, our Strategic Leads on Education shared good practices in digitally enhanced teaching. Colleagues from the University of Bern presented how they address evidence-based digitalised teaching and support lecturers through student eCoaches programme. The group agreed that digital skills training should not be separated from disciplinary training, but brought together, also as a way to sustain disciplinary breadth. Strategic Leads on Education also provided The Guild’s input to the current discussions on reward and recognition systems in academic careers.



Berit Eika, Aune Valk, Karin Amos and Jo Angouri representing The Guild at the conference “Moving Target Digitalisation 2022: Increasing the Impact of Internationalisation in Higher Education” organised by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), December 2022



Our Erasmus+ working group met in-person in Brussels to discuss about the programme and its interim evaluation. The group had the pleasure to welcome DG EAC Team Leader Vito Borelli for a timely discussion on the past, present and future of the programme, April 2023

Erasmus+: two years in

In the past year, our Erasmus working group has started to reflect on the implementation of the first two years of the Erasmus+ programme. They have discussed their experience with new actions such as the Blended Intensive Programmes, short-term mobility, and top-up grants for green travel. The group has also reiterated the call for a holistic approach to the digitalisation efforts of the programme, with universities in the driving seat. Given the complexity of switching from paper to digital mobility management, along with scarce IT resources at universities, our members have highlighted the importance of setting realistic milestones and investing in infrastructure and human resources. In 2022 The Guild joined the Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) University and Students Forum, the new governance body of the EWP consortium, to amplify the voice of the higher education community.

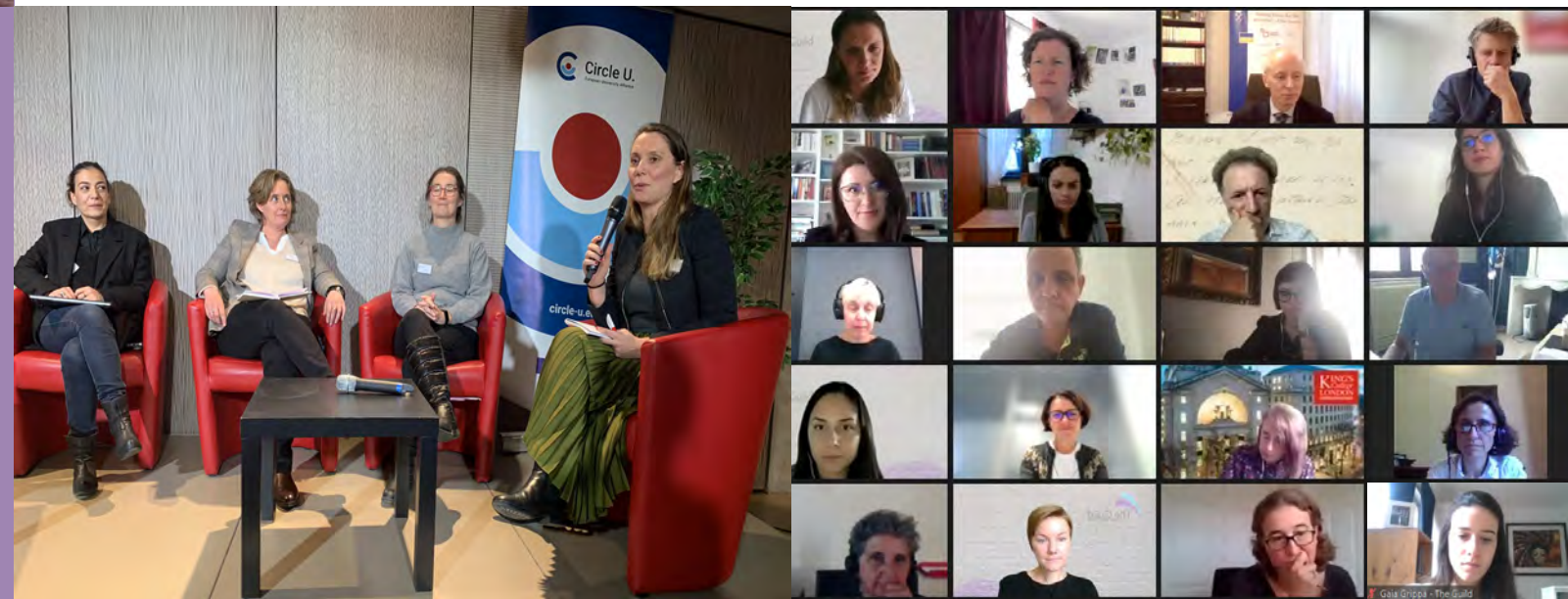
After a series of online meetings, the group met in Brussels to share their recommendations with colleagues from DG EAC at the European Commission. This feedback was timely as we approach the Erasmus+ mid-term review later this year. We hope that the experience of colleagues within The Guild network will contribute to a more impactful programme with smoother implementation in the future.

The European Universities initiative: doing things differently and better?

The most ambitious educational initiative in recent years has led to the selection of 44 European Universities. We are particularly pleased that the connections made within The Guild have helped our members to take part in the initiative. Through their activities in Circle U., CIVIS, EUTOPIA, ENLIGHT, NeurotechEU and Una Europa, universities are working together across education and research – by offering virtual exchanges, establishing joint study programmes, connecting research support offices, facilitating joint research visits and project proposals etc. Most importantly, alliances have created an atmosphere of collaboration.

With the end goal of providing quality education and research, our members have emphasised the importance of safeguarding the bottom-up nature of the initiative while ensuring a long-term funding perspective. In response to the growing importance of this issue among policymakers, in the past year the group has focused especially on the need for R&I funding for alliances. Although these began as educational collaborations, the initiative cannot be completely separated from research. This has given rise to important discussions about the nature of this relationship in an alliance of universities. And it has raised the question of how the research dimension of research-intensive universities has provided a specific context for pedagogical innovation.

The European Universities working group within The Guild provides a trusted space for debate around the challenges facing the alliances: for example, how to ensure the wider understanding of the alliance within the university or how to scale up successful activities.



Ivana Didak, Senior Policy Officer at The Guild, moderated a panel discussion on European alliances as testbeds for creating joint study programmes during the CircleU. National Conference in Paris, January 2023

The European Universities working group met online this year to discuss the the next phase of alliances and future funding opportunities, September 2022



Strengthening the European Research Area

This year has marked the first year of implementation of the renewed European Research Area. The Guild has participated in the coordinated university representation in the ERA Forum, where the Commission, member states and stakeholders (grouped in different categories) have discussed strategic issues related to ERA. But more importantly, The Guild was represented directly in several ERA Actions that focus on individual themes, ranging from Open Science to the empowerment of universities. The ERA Actions have opened new opportunities for us to speak directly to member state representatives in a coordinated way, to learn about their individual approaches, and to participate in co-creation efforts to formulate policies with them and the Commission.

“The renewed ERA has surprised us with the genuine co-creation opportunities to shape policies together with the EU Member States, the Commission and other stakeholders. The sub-groups act as an early preparatory body for new approaches that also reveal to us more about the values and objectives of the decision-makers.”

Sarika Wilson, Head of Policy at The Guild, May 2023

Research careers

The Guild was a member of the Core Group that advised on the Agreement on reforming research assessment and the set-up of the related CoARA coalition. Our active contribution was acknowledged by the European Commission and the leading drafting team. We ensured that the Agreement respects universities’ institutional autonomy, does not create unnecessary administrative procedures and remains focused on its aim of a more accurate measurement of research quality and impact. Reflecting the commitment of The Guild member universities to the fair assessment of research, The Guild signed the Agreement, but refrained from joining the CoARA coalition which we felt was not appropriate for us as a stakeholder organisation.

As part of our commitment to the ERA action on research careers, we provided input for the revision of the Charter & Code for Researchers. We welcome the addition of provisions on open science but called for clearer guidance for the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers. We also engaged in the discussion on better support for early-career researchers and highlighted that it requires increased and sustainable funding for research.

Knowledge and data flows

The Guild has pursued its commitment to facilitating knowledge and data flows. In April 2023, we expressed our strong support to the Swedish presidency of the Council of the EU and its leadership in negotiating ambitious conclusions on academic publishing. We welcome especially its clear statement that the rising publication costs became unsustainable for universities and worsened inequalities within and among them.

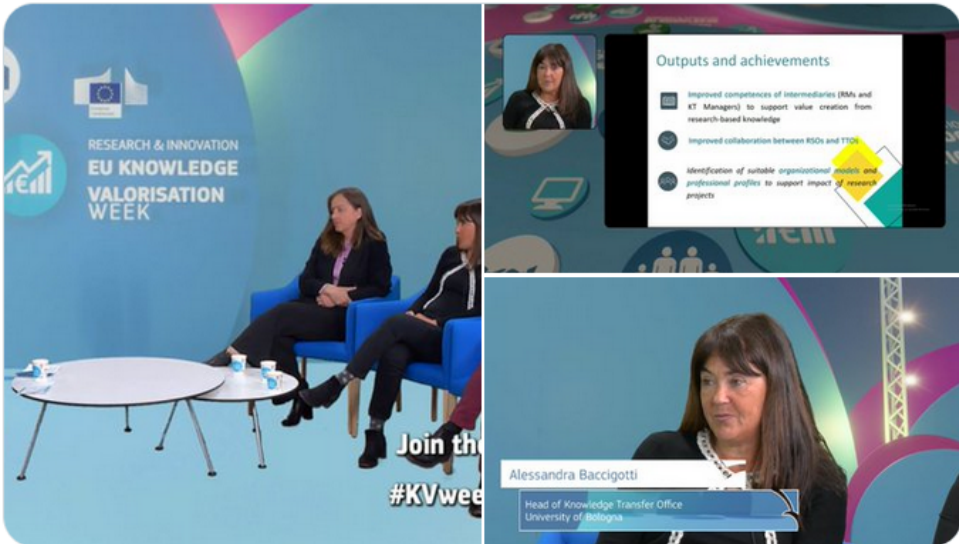
Our statement also called for a better recognition of the crucial roles of researchers in the academic publishing system and for support for the development of scholarly publication models which ensure quality and financial sustainability.

Likewise, The Guild has kept advocating for fair data access. We promoted our views to the members of the European Parliament in charge of negotiating the Data Act. In May 2023, together with CESAER and LIBER Europe, we urged the co-legislators to preserve in the final text the amendments facilitating data access and reuse for research purposes.



Julien Chicot @ChicotJulien · Apr 26

Day 2 of EU Knowledge #Valorisation week 2023: Alessandra Baccigotti @Unibo showcases a @codau_it initiative to break silos between research support and technology transfer offices in universities. Impact managers will fill this gap and improve knowledge valorisation capacities!





▲
Rona Jualla Van Oudenhoven, Chief Diversity Officer at Radboud University Nijmegen and Member of The Guild's Gender and Diversity working group, during a panel discussion on "Ending gender-based violence in academia" organised by the Czech Presidency in Prague, November 2022

Gender and Diversity

The Guild's Gender and Diversity working group has continued meeting regularly throughout 2022–23 to discuss issues including targeted fellowship programmes for women scholars, initiatives to inspire a more sustainable research culture, and tackling biases in academic recruitments.

Building on previous discussions on this issue, The Guild also participated in a conference organised by the Czech Republic in the framework of its Presidency of the Council of the EU in November, to discuss the actions EU umbrella organisations can take to challenge gender-based violence in academia. Finally, The Guild participated in the first meeting of a new ERA subgroup aiming to improve coordination of EU policies for gender equality and diversity in research.

R&I Values in the Global Approach

In the context of the ERA Subgroup on the Global Approach, the European Commission and member states have launched a series of workshops with international partners to discuss the values and principles underlying R&I international cooperation.

Building on the statement The Guild had published with Udice and U15 in Spring 2022 on key principles for international cooperation in research, we have engaged with these workshops throughout 2022–2023, along with representatives of countries all around the world.

▲
The Guild Vice-Presidents met in Bern to discuss the key policy issues for the upcoming year, including the importance of the European Research Area, September 2022

Empowering Universities

The Guild has been proactive in feeding into the development of a European Excellence Initiative since 2019, when it published its first position paper after early dialogue with the Commission. This year, the Commission has pursued the plan to contribute to an initiative that would boost the R&I excellence of universities, and thereby their global competitiveness.

The Guild fostered debates about the topic with several working groups as well as the Vice-Presidents and concluded that research excellence is best supported at the level of research teams. We also agreed that the Excellence Initiative could also foster capacity-building at the level of institutional cooperations, to respond to their strategic needs.

All in all, as part of this policy debate The Guild affirmed its position as a network dedicated to the protection of scientific quality as the most important aspect of EU funding.

“The EU is missing funding for long-term cooperation between research teams, according to the Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities [...] What is missing in the current R&I funding landscape of the EU is funding for fostering strategic cooperation among the best research teams in Europe that focus their work on longer-term research projects”.

Research Professional “Universities seek EU funding for long-term collaboration”
3 May 2023



Governance



The Guild's Board of Directors: Svein Stølen (University of Oslo), Toomas Asser (University of Tartu), Rachel Sandison (University of Glasgow), Anders Hagfeldt (Uppsala University), and Oriol Amat (Pompeu Fabra University)

The Guild's Board of Directors

We would like to express our gratitude once again to the leadership and support of our presidents and rectors. The election of Svein Stølen from the University of Oslo as Chair of The Guild has been a significant highlight of this year. In addition, we were delighted to welcome two new board members, Oriol Amat, Rector of Pompeu Fabra University, and Anders Hagfeldt, Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University, who have joined us with their unique perspectives and expertise.

Through our General Assemblies and Board meetings, The Guild's Presidents have offered crucial direction, and provided support to many of our activities, including our collaboration with ARUA as well as our work on Horizon Europe. We are deeply grateful to our members for their generous support and valuable input, which has contributed to enriching and expanding The Guild's policy initiatives.

Once more we underline our appreciation for the work done by our Vice-Presidents, and we would like to highlight their outstanding commitment throughout this year. In addition to our three annual meetings, our Vice-Presidents committed to support various activities within The Guild. This included regular special meetings to frame our collaboration through Clusters of Excellence with universities in the ARUA network, as well as regular joint meetings with the Deputy Vice-Chancellors of ARUA.

The Guild office

Gaia Grippa, The Guild office in Brussels, September 2022

Gaia's experience as Junior Policy Officer at The Guild

Since our creation in 2016, we have been grateful for the contribution of current and former students to The Guild office; without them, we could not have achieved what we have. This past year, we were privileged to host Gaia Grippa, who joined The Guild as a Junior Policy Officer in September 2022. She graduated with a master's degree in International and European Governance from Leiden University and holds a bachelor's degree from King's College London in History and International Relations.

What encouraged you to apply to the position of Junior Policy Officer at The Guild?

"After my master's degree I was interested in acquiring advocacy skills in an international environment. The European constituency of The Guild and the vast portfolio of their activities appeared to me as the perfect environment to develop them."

What was your knowledge of the research-intensive European sphere before joining The Guild? What surprised you the most in this new environment?

"During my studies I became familiar with different university systems, but I had a very limited knowledge of the sphere of research and innovation policies. When I started working at The Guild I was surprised to discover all the barriers researchers face in terms of access to data and international cooperations, especially within Europe."



What is the role of The Guild in overcoming these challenges?

"The working groups of The Guild provide a rich international perspective represented by the different national contexts and points of view of both academics and administrators. Through The Guild, universities are able to provide direct feedback and practical suggestions to improve EU policies on research and innovation."

Which file have you worked on the most? And how do you think this experience will influence your future professional career?

"As I joined The Guild, I started working on its collaboration with the network of ARUA universities to create Clusters of Excellence and was immediately fascinated by the innovative and inclusive approach of the project to develop long-term equitable research partnerships between Europe and Africa. As I progress in my career in the international field, I will incorporate this way of envisioning and developing international collaborations."

The Guild's working groups



The Guild at a glance



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