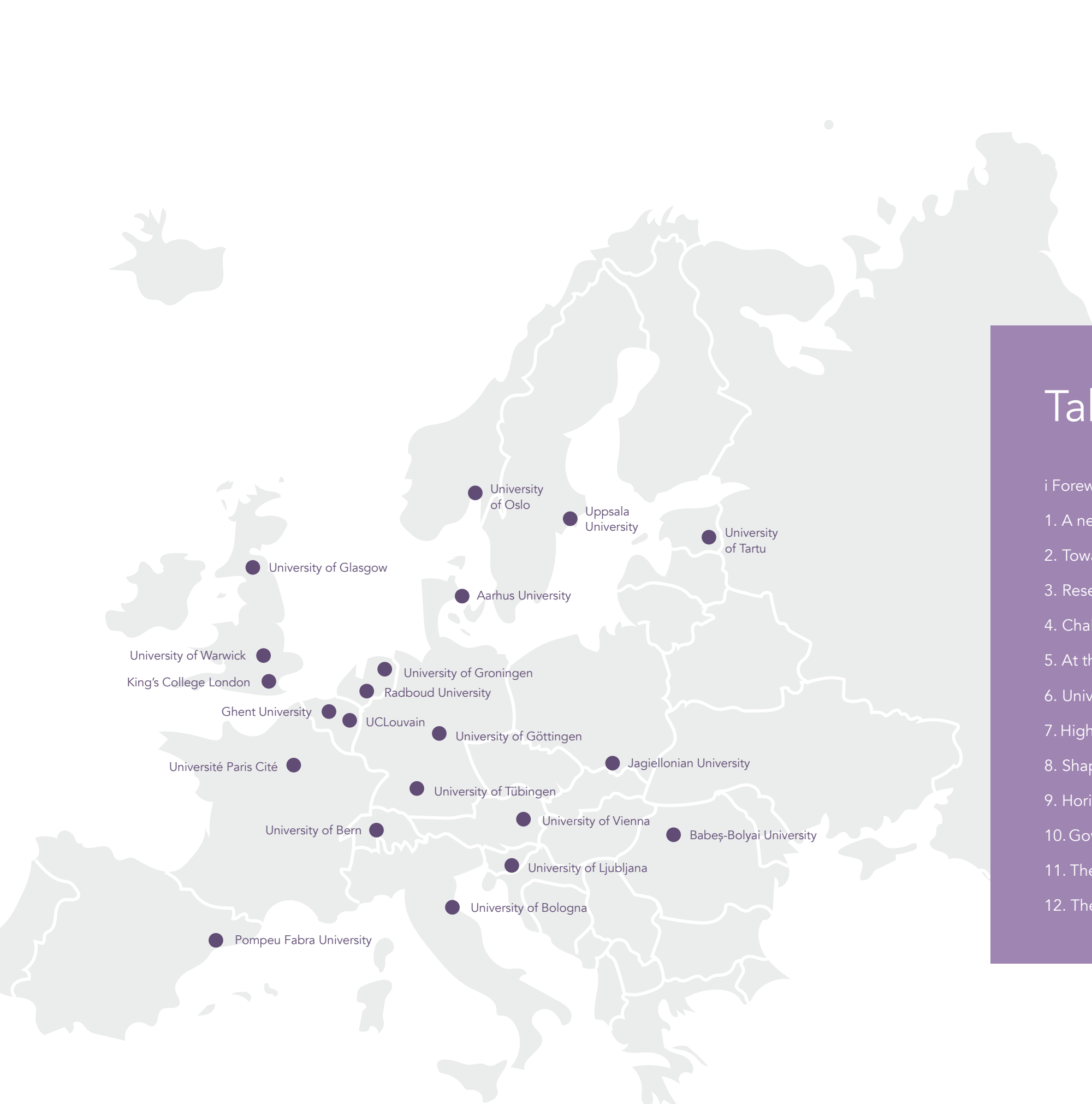


# REIMAGINING UNIVERSITIES IN EUROPE AND BEYOND

Annual Report | 2021–2022





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# Foreword

## Vincent Blondel

Chair of The Guild  
Rector of UCLouvain



Following the covid crisis, we will remember this past academic year through another crisis whose full implications we cannot yet fully comprehend: the Russian attack on Ukraine. This war has imperilled our sister institutions in Ukraine. It has challenged us to provide support wherever we can to staff and students affected by the war. And it has raised fundamental questions about the need for academic solidarity, providing refuge and dialogue in Europe and far beyond.

After five years, I am stepping down as Chair of The Guild. In this time, we have grown to twenty-one members. We have become much more conscious of the commonality of our challenges, including climate change, digital transformation, societal inequalities and a global health crisis. And we have become conscious of our strength in responding to these challenges together.

Five years ago, our main focus was on Horizon Europe and Erasmus+. Now we more fully recognize also the need for universities to impact on wider European political priorities. And we fully appreciate the need to further bring together the European Research Area and the European Education Area, including through European university alliances.

It has been a pleasure to lead The Guild at a time of tremendous political and societal transformation – and to help ensure, with my fellow presidents and rectors, and with all our staff committed through The Guild, that universities are heard, recognized and supported in their capacity to lead in moments of uncertainty and challenge.

Thank you so much for all your support during these years, and long live The Guild!

*Vincent Blondel*

## Jan Palmowski

Secretary-General of The Guild



In the past year there has been a remarkable growth of research, innovation and education in EU policy – and a correspondingly bigger impact of the EU on universities. Key legislative initiatives around flagship policies, on Europe's digital transformation and the European Health Data Space, had major implications for research and higher education. The same was true for the Green Deal, whose importance intensified after the energy crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine. Indeed, the war in Ukraine increased the role of universities at a time of acute societal need, while posing more starkly challenges around academic freedom and rules around international academic collaboration. Through the huge commitment of our members and the energy of our staff, The Guild was most prominent in articulating the concerns of research universities in all these areas.

Perhaps in no other area was The Guild as impactful as through its trusted collaboration with the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA). Together we created new opportunities for dialogue, including through a bi-continental conference bringing together university presidents, research leaders and leading policymakers from the African Union and the European Union. We were delighted when the EU-AU Innovation Agenda took up our key positions, including a need for long-term investment in the research capacities of African universities, especially through investment in infrastructure and clusters of excellence.

Through the Global Approach to Research and Innovation (R&I), the EU formulated a new strategy that included a commitment to scientific freedom and an acknowledgement of the importance of R&I in EU international relations. The growing importance of universities was also expressed in the European Strategy for Higher Education Institutions. Here we particularly welcomed the acknowledgement of our institutions as key to effecting the human rights values that also define the EU, and as places of fundamental impact through our teaching and research. Having articulated our own 2030 vision for Europe's universities, we were pleased that both documents reflected core Guild concerns. At the same time, we continued to emphasize the need for a more meaningful articulation of how the excellence of the EU's universities could be strengthened to ensure their continued global competitiveness. Amid these wider policy discussions, The Guild never wavered in its focus on core R&I concerns. We were the first network to gather feedback on the practical operation of Horizon Europe in late 2021. We were outspoken in our push for the speedy association of the UK and Switzerland – though eighteen months into the operation of Horizon Europe, this was still not realized.

With the growing importance of universities across so many key policy domains, The Guild's mission of enhancing the voice of universities in Brussels and beyond has never been more important. At a time of tremendous challenges and transformations for universities, our members' sustained input and commitment has enabled us to ensure their experience and ideas are understood in Brussels. We continue to be grateful for our members' contributions, and the collaborations with councillors, Members of the European Parliament and Commission colleagues marked by trust and respect.

*Jan Palmowski*



# A new global approach

The war in Ukraine has changed geopolitics profoundly, forcing universities also to position themselves and their approaches to international relations. Universities across Europe set up crisis teams, providing concrete support to staff and students from Ukraine. However, as by the end of April 2022, the number of people who had been forced to flee Ukraine had risen to over 5 million, additional resources from the EU and member states were pressingly needed for universities to be able to provide help to the best of their abilities.

The war also emphasized the urgency of ensuring that Europe is a safe haven for the freedom of scientific research and democratic values, where universities are at any time able to welcome students, researchers and academics whose freedom is under threat.

Against this background, The Guild, jointly with the German U15 and Udice, put forward principles for international cooperation in research, reiterating their commitment to strengthening it. Together, we highlighted the significance of research universities in spearheading global collaboration to address our global challenges. We also reiterated the importance of openness in science as core to excellence. At the same time, we also called for a more profound debate about how the war in Ukraine forces us to consider the limits and opportunities of international collaboration.

▲  
Aula am Wilhelmsplatz, the University of  
Göttingen (March 2022)

## Supporting people affected by the war in Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 forced students, academics and employees of Ukrainian universities to flee the country. Others remained, heavily impacted in their capacity to conduct research and studies. Our universities reacted promptly in solidarity with their Ukrainian counterparts, highlighting the need to support Ukrainian students and researchers in our communities, while preparing to welcome displaced students and academics on our campuses. At the same time, we called for the protection of academics and students from Russia under threat for speaking out against the war. Along with other stakeholders, we supported the idea of developing an ambitious EU fellowship scheme to protect researchers at risk.

On our campuses, concrete support was quickly organized, such as psychological and financial support, and flexibility in enrolment conditions for students previously based at Ukrainian universities. In addition, our universities closer to the front line went even further, proactively taking part in humanitarian assistance for Ukrainian refugees through providing transport from the border, and shelter and food on their premises. The Guild supported these efforts by bringing together these many activities on one website where the range of support at all our university campuses became apparent, and which could inspire other universities in the support measures they created.

In Brussels, we engaged with policymakers to highlight areas where support would be needed. We called for the Erasmus+ rules to be eased to enable our universities to mobilize unused funds in support of students from Ukraine, and to allow more flexibility in EU funding programmes to respond to the current crisis. When EU member states expressed their willingness to make Europe a safe haven for scholars and students, we strongly backed this call, reiterating the need to secure new EU funding for a Europe-wide scholarship scheme for researchers at risk in their home countries. In April, the European Commission unveiled a number of exceptional measures to support university staff and students from Ukraine. Nonetheless, we contended that these measures were not enough, emphasizing the need for creativity and scale in the way funds could be used to support staff and students from Ukraine.

With the war not over, we argued for a deeper assessment of its impacts upon our principles of collaboration and partnership. We also strongly supported moves by the European Council and the European Parliament to establish funding for Europe to become a safe haven for researchers in need. With the multiplication of armed conflicts at the borders of the EU in recent years (including Syria, Afghanistan, Libya, and Ukraine), Europe and its universities must now think of sustainable ways to support displaced students and researchers, and reflect on what universities can do to sustain peace.



Maria Cristina Russo



Interesting statement issued today by the [The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities](#), [German U15](#) and [Udice - French Research Universities](#) supporting rules-based multilateralism as outlined in the [#EUGlobalApproach](#) to R&I. The EU strongly supports values-based international cooperation for Research & Innovation

27 April 2022



Hugues Abriel, Vice-Rector at the University of Bern, Monique Scheer, Vice-Rector at the University of Tübingen, Laura Royer, Policy Officer, and Jan Palmowski, Secretary-General, at the Udice conference in Marseilles (March 2022)



## Setting principles for international cooperation in research

The French Presidency of the Council of the EU also was the occasion to take forward discussions on the international dimension of research cooperation. Announced as part of the EU's new international strategy for research and innovation (the Global Approach), the French government invited EU member states to agree on principles for international cooperation in research and innovation during a ministerial conference in Marseille on 8 March 2022.

With a view to informing the ministerial conference, the Udice network of French research universities organized a conference in Marseille on the previous day, 7 March, aimed at reflecting and shedding light on the role of research-intensive universities in leading Europe's research cooperation with the rest of world. We were invited, along with colleagues from German U15, the Canadian U15, the League of European Research Universities (LERU) and swissuniversities, to exchange on how universities can maximize scientific cross-border collaboration in an unstable geopolitical environment. This discussion was particularly important in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine that had happened two weeks

earlier, which raised acutely the issue of what the limits of scientific collaboration might be, and whether (or not) Europe was experiencing a watershed in its commitment to openness in scientific cooperation.

Following this important exchange, we published a joint statement with Udice and German U15 to sum up our positions and inform future debates in the context of the European Research Area (ERA) Forum's Standing Subgroup on the Global Approach. We highlighted the need to intensify international cooperation in research if Europe wishes to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, promote understanding between people and states, and enhance Europe's attractiveness and sovereignty. At the same time, and particularly at this moment of war in Europe, we recognized the challenges of cooperating with research-performing organizations operating in authoritarian settings, especially if they actively supported the war in Ukraine. In light of this, we called for the opening of a Europe-wide debate on the stakes and forms of international cooperation in this new geopolitical context.

## Academic freedom

Building on our core mission to defend academic freedom, we discussed our concerns about current attacks on academic freedom in all parts of Europe over the first half of 2021. These discussions led to a comprehensive statement on academic freedom, which we published in June 2021 after it was approved (and refined) by our General Assembly. In the statement, we expressed our strong support for academic freedom on the basis of the Magna Charta Universitatum, and the Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research. In the statement, The Guild insisted on the responsibility of universities (not governments) to secure free debates on their campus, as spaces where conflicting scholarly views can be contested. We underlined the importance of academic freedom as a fundamental value of the EU. And we called for the EU to be proactive in the defence of academic freedom, including through the creation of a European ombudsperson for the defence and support of academic freedom.

The statement was one of the most detailed articulations of the need to defend academic freedom by any university network in the sector. In particular, our call for an ombudsperson was amplified in a subsequent report of the Strategic Forum for International Scientific and Technological Cooperation (SFIC) of the European Research and Innovation Committee (ERAC) of EU member states.

Deans of Social Sciences and Humanities meeting at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow (April 2022)



## Deans of Social Sciences and Humanities meet in Krakow

Meeting at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, the Deans of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) focused on the issue of academic freedom. This topic was especially pertinent in light of the Russian attack on Ukraine. Professor Liviu Matei, former Provost of Central European University and Head of the School of Education at King's College London, led the discussion. Matei noted that classic definitions of academic freedom needed to be revised in light of the complexity of the ways in which academic freedom was endangered in Europe. He urged universities to take ownership of the discussions and definitions of the concept, so that we could arrive at a common understanding of how academic freedom should be defined, and how it would need to be defended. This was further contextualized by a presentation by Prof. Beata Kowalska, academic freedom ombudsman for the Jagiellonian University, who discussed how matters of academic freedom play out in practice in the context of the Jagiellonian University.

Academic freedom was thrown into stark relief by the war in Ukraine. A presentation by Professor Valentyna Ushchyna, Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European University, Lutsk, described both the personal toll of the war and its impact on education, and universities specifically, in Ukraine. The warm welcome that Ukrainian arrivals have received in Krakow and at the Jagiellonian was discussed, followed by calls for us to facilitate Ukraine's admission into European structures of cooperation.



# Towards a sustainable EU-AU partnership

In partnership with the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA), in 2021–2022 we continued advocating for strengthening the African knowledge society, and witnessed a major success in our advocacy work: the

acknowledgement by EU and AU leaders of the centrality of universities in the Europe-Africa partnership during the 2022 EU-AU summit.



*In November 2021, The Guild and the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) brought together university leaders, policymakers and researchers across Africa and Europe to discuss the AU-EU partnership and the role of universities in tackling the unions' common challenges (November 2021)*

## Supporting a renewed Africa-EU partnership

After the publication of our joint proposals for African universities in 2020, we worked together with ARUA to promote our positions towards policymakers and research communities ahead of the European Union-African Union (EU-AU) leaders' summit in early 2022. We first organised a virtual conference in November, bringing together twenty-three university leaders, researchers, and policymakers from Europe and Africa to discuss the role of research and universities in a renewed partnership between the two continents. The conference was a success, as it attracted two hundred and fifty international participants and featured a diversity of voices from across Europe and Africa. They all articulated the need for sustained investment in African research as a way to support the development of an African knowledge society, and to meet Africa's economic, societal and demographic challenges.

The conference led to the rearticulation of joint recommendations for the EU-AU summit, including investments in clusters of excellence, the development of a pan-African research funding scheme and of world-class research infrastructures, and the implementation of a 'matching fund' approach to funding programmes. We also launched a video communications campaign

to support the dissemination of these proposals in early 2022, that performed well on social media (1,387 views in a month). At the same time, ARUA universities called on African governments and the AU to support the development of a stronger research ecosystem in Africa through the identification and development of clusters of excellence. This initiative by our partners was critical in reinforcing the urgency of our joint concerns a few weeks before the summit.

Finally, in conjunction with the EU-AU summit, our two networks were invited to convene an online panel discussion by the Africa-Europe Science Collaboration and Innovation Platform (AERAP), a network of stakeholders engaged in shaping priorities for science and innovation cooperation between Africa and Europe. This additional event was an excellent opportunity to reaffirm our positions, and to emphasize the importance of science collaboration as core to an EU-AU strategic relationship. In the week when EU and AU leaders met, it underlined the position of ARUA and The Guild as key stakeholders in the wider policy discussions.

**We need to move away from relying on short-term, project-based funding and instead, move towards and enhance the African universities' institutional capacities for excellent research and innovation through long-term collaboration.**

Svein Stølen, Rector of the University of Oslo



## Recognition of universities as key actors in the EU-AU relations

Our sustained work paid off at the EU-AU summit in Brussels on 17–18 February. EU and AU leaders formally recognized the need to put research and innovation at the heart of the renewed EU-AU partnership, and agreed to work towards the development of a joint Innovation Agenda. A first version of this Agenda was submitted for consultation with stakeholders, which we welcomed as an excellent development towards the recognition of universities as key actors in tackling European-African joint challenges, and as enablers of positive change between and on both continents.

This political recognition of universities could not have taken place without the support of an increasing part of the research sector in Europe and Africa. In June, representing over 1,100 universities in Europe, twenty National Rectors' Conferences and the European University Association urged the EU and member states to prioritize investments in a number of areas previously identified by The Guild and ARUA, such as doctoral

schools, post-doctoral fellowships and clusters of excellence. A few months later, over 200 scientists from around the world voiced their support for The Guild and ARUA's initiative, and in particular the four priority areas we identified for research collaborations (public health, digitalization, climate change, good governance). The signatories also engaged with our work and suggested that the list be expanded to include a fifth topic: biodiversity.

Subsequently, the Innovation Agenda formally articulated the need for all the key demands which ARUA and The Guild had articulated since 2020. This included the need for long-term investment in the capacities of African universities, and improved access by African researchers to world-class infrastructures. The Innovation Agenda also underlined the importance of collaborative Masters' degrees and doctoral schools, and the creation or strengthening of centres of excellence.



▲ The Guild staff met South African colleagues from Stellenbosch University to discuss how partnerships between European and African Universities can be developed (March 2022)



▲ Souad Aden-Osman, Executive Director of Coalition for Dialogue on Africa, Maria Cristina Russo, Director at DG RTD, Ernest Aryeetey, Secretary-General of ARUA, Mahama Ouedraogo, Acting Director at the AU Commission, Sarah Anyang Agbor, the then Commissioner at the AU Commission, and Carla Montesi, Director at DG INTPA, at the ARUA-The Guild conference (November 2021)



▲ Jan Palmowski participated in a Science Business event together with Maria Cristina Russo, Director Global Approach & International Cooperation in R&I at DG RTD, and Ernest Aryeetey, Secretary-General of ARUA, to discuss how to strengthen Africa's research system (March 2022)

I see significant expansion and some new initiatives from the EU side in supporting public universities in Africa. The challenge remains how to give the African side a greater voice in the new efforts at co-creation of programmes, as they work with European universities.

Ernest Aryeetey, Secretary-General of ARUA,  
in *University World News*, November 2021

## Strengthening collaborations between European and African universities

Last but not least, in 2021–2022 we started facilitating the dissemination of opportunities for African researchers, and of funding opportunities for research and academic collaborations between Europe and Africa. With the launch of an African Research Initiative for Scientific Excellence (ARISE) pilot programme's first call, we hosted Obed Ogega, Senior Programme Manager at the African Academy of Sciences, for a virtual info session and Q&A on the new programme in July. This brought together one hundred and fifty early-career researchers principally from ARUA universities. It demonstrated our commitment

to the success of ARISE, and strengthened our ties with the African Academy of Sciences.

In the same vein, we organised another info session with European Commission speakers in October, to present EU funding available for joint doctoral training between Europe and Africa (Erasmus+ and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions). These two webinars were excellent opportunities for us to see how we can explore and support collaborations between The Guild and ARUA universities, while we expect these efforts to bear fruits for our universities in the coming years.

# Research-led education in a digital era

In the disruptive environment of the 21st century, it is impossible to educate students for the future on the basis of past experience. Universities need to train for a mindset-creativity-problem-solving attitude rather than either predicting a future that will constantly change or narrowly focusing on skills for jobs.

Jo Angouri, Academic Director for Education and Internationalisation,  
University of Warwick

Calls for a new higher education model have been prominent in the policy debates on the European Education Area (EEA) and the Digital Education Action Plan. But the discourse of change has swept the sector even more during the Covid-19 pandemic. University experience has demonstrated the importance of physical learning spaces and both the potential and limitations

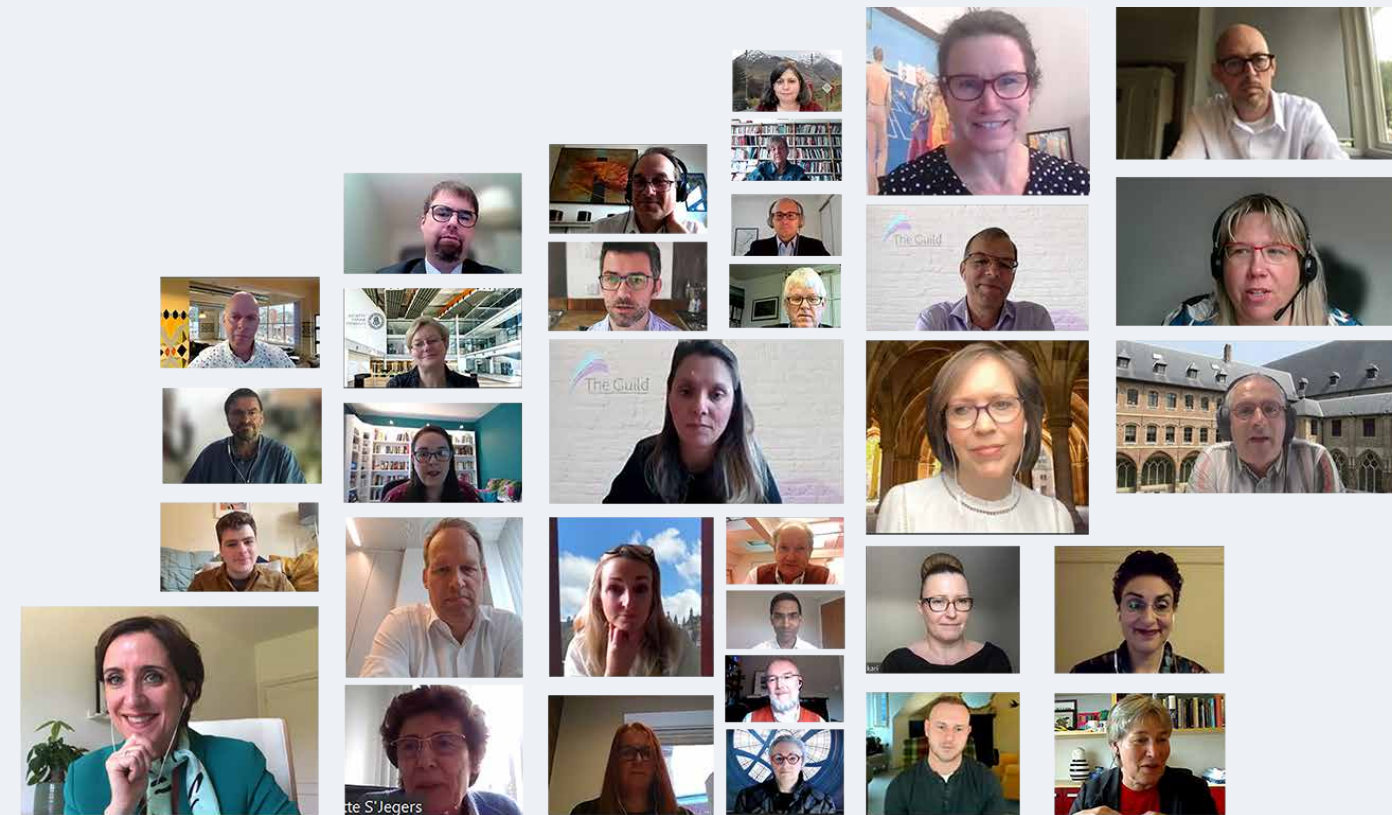
## Reimagining higher education

In June 2021 we published The Guild's third Insight Paper, authored by Jo Angouri from the University of Warwick and with support of a small writing team of vice-presidents Karin Amos (University of Tübingen), Berit Eika (Aarhus University) and Aune Valk (University of Tartu).

The paper aimed at engaging the sector with key issues that are being discussed at campuses across Europe. During the launch event panellists and the audience

of online learning and student support. In dealing with the future challenges of higher education, our members agreed that The Guild had an important role in standing up for effective, cutting-edge pedagogy while critically challenging concepts that were often assumed to be best practice, but currently lacked scientific evidence.

explored how to ensure that higher education responds to the needs of graduates in the 21st century, while operating at the interface of various tensions: balancing disciplinary knowledge with interdisciplinarity, individual learning with a growing number of students, and national accreditation systems with international mobility. The rich discussion encouraged a wider reflection on how the EU could support universities to address their key challenges, as part of a European strategy for universities.



*In 2021-2022, The Guild co-hosted, with five of its member universities, five workshops to discuss different aspects of educational transformation, bringing together almost 600 participants across Europe*

## Expanding the debate to campuses across Europe

The Insight Paper aimed to spark a continuing dialogue within and beyond the higher education community. The authors wished to initiate broader discussions about what needs to change and what needs to be preserved from the current system. Following the launch of the Paper, we started a series of virtual seminars hosted by members from Warwick, Aarhus, Tartu, Glasgow and Tübingen.

In the first seminar we explored the potential of lifelong learning models, as representatives from European University alliances, the European Commission and EdTech providers debated the benefits and challenges of micro-credentials. Colleagues from Aarhus University led a discussion on new types of quality standards, and the move beyond binaries of home/abroad and online/offline to a portfolio of experiences for the students. The

third edition of the seminar series focused on national strategies to integrate foreign graduates in the local labour market. It featured examples from Estonia, the Netherlands and Finland.

Earlier this year, we provided an in-depth discussion about how the transformation of teaching and learning can be realised in an institutional context. To this end, colleagues from Glasgow shared their experience in designing new learning spaces which transform teaching, learning and student experiences. The seminar series closed in early June with an engaging discussion on the broader ecosystem that characterizes research-intensive universities, especially the national embeddedness of teaching regardless of the Bologna process and further harmonization within the European Universities initiative.





# Challenges to world-class health research in Europe

The capacities of universities to carry out cutting-edge health research and deliver solutions to current and future health emergencies (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) requires that the right enabling conditions are in place.

Over the past year, the Health Deans have maintained

their strong commitment to engaging in EU health research policy to ensure that citizens have access to innovative disease treatments and diagnostic techniques in Europe.

## Addressing the obstacles medical research is facing

In June 2021, The Guild reiterated its strong concern that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the lack of harmonization of its implementation across countries have been posing serious limitations on the sharing and reuse of health data. Existing obstacles hinder collaborative health research projects and multinational clinical trials. This reduces our capacities to engage in large cross-institutional studies and to contribute to the development of new and more effective medicines and diagnostic techniques. Considering how crucial access to data is for health research and clinical studies, the Health Deans urge the European Commission to find solutions, via the envisaged European Health Data Space (EHDS), to facilitate the reuse of health data for research purposes.

In their recommendations published in June 2021, the Health Deans called for clarifying GDPR provisions and harmonizing their implementation. They underlined the need for revised rules on data protection and patients' consent to data processing and transfer, and advocated for support to the development of privacy-enhancing

technologies. Our Deans' proposals served as a basis for contributing to the Open Public Consultation on the EHDS and for a bilateral meeting with Director Andrzej Rys (Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) in October 2021.

This work informed The Guild's response to the Commission's proposal for an EHDS in May. We welcomed the commitment to overcome different national interpretations of GDPR and the facilitation of collaboration between national competent authorities through a new EHDS Board for better interoperability of health data sets. But we also urged the Commission to go further than the anonymization of health data. To maximize the effectiveness of health research, it was essential to give patients the option to volunteer their health data for secondary (research) use.

▲  
The Zebrafish unit at Uppsala University's SciLifeLab provides an infrastructure and personalised support for research projects utilising the zebrafish model system for vertebrate development and disease (September 2018)

Jan Palmowski, Secretary-General of The Guild, cautioned that data sharing underpins EU institutions' ability to remain internationally competitive on medical research. "It is critical that the European Commission develops a balanced approach that enables this sharing to proceed, for the benefit of European citizens," he said.

*Research Professional, June 2021*





Researchers at the University of Bern study how the level of magnesium in the blood affects the immune system and its ability to fight pathogens or cancer cells (January 2022)

### Call to enable multinational clinical trials

The Guild argues that the EHDS will be instrumental in facilitating multinational clinical trials too. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the fragmentation of clinical trials generated an insufficient number of studies with reliable data and conclusions and therefore hindered regulatory decision-making in the European Union. The Health Deans welcomed the recent EU initiatives which DG SANTE's Edit Szepessy presented to them in March 2022. The entry into force of the Clinical Trial Regulation, the launch of the Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS), and the Accelerating Clinical Trials in the EU (ACT EU)

initiative, all could contribute to solving this pressing and highly detrimental issue. However, a Guild statement published in March 2022 contends that these initiatives could be more ambitious by including medical devices in their scope. We also argue that they should be closely articulated with the future EHDS, as solutions for sharing health data will be crucial for the conduct of clinical trials in multiple countries.



Health Deans discussed the Cancer Mission of Horizon Europe with Jan-Willem Van De Loo, Scientific and Policy Officer - Cancer Theme at DG RTD (March 2022)

### Setting recommendations on the use of animals in research

A resolution of the European Parliament adopted in September 2021, which called for an action plan for an accelerated phase-out of the use of animals in research, prompted a reaction of the Health Deans. In a statement published in March 2021, The Guild highlights the full commitment of the research community to the so-called 3R principle intended for a better protection of the animals used in research (replacement, reduction, refinement). Indeed, technical progress has allowed for a significant reduction in the number of animals used for research purposes.

However, the Health Deans contend that alternative animal-free methods cannot entirely and systematically replace animals yet. These technological limitations are compounded by uncertainties about when a full replacement will be possible without altering the quality and reliability of health research. Consequently, a ban on

animal research (immediate or after a set timeline) would put health research under major threat and limit the capacities of universities to provide solutions to health challenges.

The Guild welcomed that in February 2022 the European Commission publicly rejected the European Parliament's idea of an action plan for an accelerated phase-out of the use of animals in research. We publicly supported its main argument that the current legal framework gives animals used in research sufficiently strong protection. We also support the Commission's aim to replace the use of animals in research as soon as scientifically possible. While warning against any hasty ban, The Guild also recommends further efforts to ensure fit-for-purpose rules on the use of animals in research as well as increased transparency.



# At the heart of the twin transitions

Over the past year, The Guild increased its influencing activities in relation to two key strategic aims of the van der Leyen Commission: the twin digital and green transitions. The Guild engaged with policymakers on

the importance of EU strategic goals for universities in research, innovation and teaching, focusing initially on its signature legislative initiatives: the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act and the Digital Services Act.

## Recommendations for regulating data technologies and flows

The Heads of AI/Digital Research group was formed just as the European Commission published several proposals for regulating digital technologies, services and markets. In reaction to these regulations, predominantly addressed to the industry and business sectors, The Guild made a strong push for better considering their (unintended) impacts on research and universities.

### Artificial Intelligence Act

The European Union is developing the first transnational regulatory framework for AI, with the ambition to thereby define a global standard. The AI Act aims to define harmonized rules to address the risks of specific uses of AI systems, banning, for instance, those that create a high risk to the fundamental rights of European citizens. In May 2021, The Guild's Heads of AI/Digital research working group discussed the European Commission's proposal with Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology's (DG CNECT) Kilian Gross.

Invited by the Commission to contribute our views further, our working group provided feedback to the European Commission's proposal in December 2021. It recommended prohibiting practices that posed a serious threat to fundamental rights and EU values, instead of regulating or banning the AI systems that may be used for these practices. Additionally, The Guild expressed concerns about the additional burdens that the Act may create on research activities on (or using) AI technologies.

Finally, we proposed rethinking the role of universities as regulatory sandboxes supporting the development of AI systems compliant with the future AI Act. Accordingly, academic experts could also advise on regular amendments to the definition of high-risk AI systems to ensure that it stays relevant, given the fast-paced technological progress in the field.

In April 2022, The Guild reiterated jointly with the AURORA network of universities our concerns that the European Commission may stifle innovation, by regulating technologies instead of banning high-risk practices (enabled or not by AI systems).

*The Guild's Senior Policy Officer Julien Chicot visited the European High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC) to discuss the future of supercomputing in Europe and its effects on universities (February 2022)*



We expressed our joint support to the amendment proposed by the European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy to introduce a new article reading that the AI Act shall not affect R&D activities regarding AI systems.

### Data Act

The Heads of AI/Digital Research also engaged in the policy discussions on the European Commission's proposal for a Data Act aimed at ensuring fair access to, and the reuse of, data held by for-profit private organizations. This Act aims at a fair data digital environment by facilitating the access to, and use of, data generated and owned by private entities. In December 2021, the Heads of AI/Digital Research discussed with DG CNECT's Christian D'Cunha the ambition of the European Commission.

In February 2022, Julien Chicot and Professor Morten Dæhlen (University of Oslo) had a follow-up meeting with DG CNECT's Yvo Volman in Luxembourg. Based on these bilateral discussions, The Guild published its views on the European Commission's proposal. We contend that the provisions on fair access to data held by private companies should apply to business-to-academia data sharing too. We also call for the recognition that research is instrumental in finding solutions to pressing challenges.

It is in the public interest to allow researchers to request direct access to data under fair conditions.

### Digital Services Act

Finally, in April 2022, The Guild joined a coalition of research organisations to voice deep concern about the Digital Services Act then being discussed by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council. The European Commission's proposal was devised for regulating commercial platforms and their content. Because of its focus on the for-profit sector, it overlooked the risk that the digital platforms and infrastructures used by universities may fall within the scope of the Act. If applied to the higher education and research sector, the Act may hinder the use of some crucial digital platforms and infrastructure for research and higher education and even threaten academic freedom by regulating their content.

The Guild and its partners jointly acknowledged the efforts of the European Parliament to propose procedures to exempt not-for-profit repositories from the obligations imposed on online platforms. However, they called instead for a derogation for not-for-profit educational and research digital infrastructures to avoid the administrative costs and potential legal uncertainties that derogation procedures would induce.



### Establishment of new working groups

During the General Assembly of June 2021, the Presidents of The Guild’s universities expressed willingness to establish a new working group to discuss the digitalization of universities. In complement to the Heads of AI/Digital Research whose focus is on digitalization as a research topic, the Strategic Leads of Digital Transformation working group aims to exchange experience and good practices on the obstacles to, and the challenges implied by, the uptake of digital tools in the different activities of universities (research, education, administration). Composed of colleagues with an overall strategic overview within their universities, the group will gather for the first time in June 2022 in Brussels to kick

off its activities.

The Guild engaged with the Green Deal and its impact on universities in working groups that discussed the creation of Horizon Europe, the European Research Area (ERA), and the European Education Area (EEA). As sustainability became an increasingly important topic across all aspects of university life among our members, the need to create a working group focusing specifically on the EU’s key strategic ambition and how universities respond to the challenge of climate change became apparent. To this end, a steering group was formed in Spring 2022, with a first meeting envisaged later in the year.

If the EU wants to lead a global transformation in AI, it must respect and support the needs of researchers.

Jan Palmowski, Secretary-General of The Guild,  
in *Research Professional*, December 2021

▲  
The UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, took place in November 2021 in Glasgow. Alongside the international summit, the University of Glasgow organised a large number of activities focusing on how to tackle the climate crisis (November 2021)

▼  
Solar panels at the Faculty of International and Political Studies, Jagiellonian University (August 2020)

▼  
The University of Göttingen supports students and academics in establishing sustainable start-ups. 3Dignity develops robotic orthoses for hand rehabilitation (February 2022)

### Addressing climate change

At a scientific and institutional level, our member universities increased further their support for greater environmental sustainability. Scientists like Caroline Adler (Bern), Mark Pelling (King’s College London) and Jean-François Toussaint (Paris Cité) contributed to the IPCC Sixth Climate Change report finalized in February 2022.

Individual initiatives by universities such as the Radboud Impact Day were complemented by the University of

Glasgow’s close involvement in the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow (November 2021) across almost its entire subject range, and through the UK’s COP26 Universities network. To support this activity, The Guild launched a series of articles bringing together some of the initiatives of our members, to highlight the diversity and complexity of the challenges we face.







# Universities as central innovation actors

Horizon Europe and the revamped ERA gave a new impetus to impact-oriented research. Over the past months, the European Commission and its executive agencies have also launched policy discussions on

new instruments to increase the impacts of EU-funded research projects. The Guild, via its innovation working group, engaged rigorously in these discussions.

## Enhancing universities' capacities to innovate

With the support of The Guild, the European Commission proposed the renewal of its Recommendation of 10 April 2008 on the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities. In a meeting with our innovation working group, Ioannis Sagias (Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) explained that the EU member states would lead the design of new Guiding Principles for Knowledge Valorization and that stakeholders would be engaged in the further elaboration of these principles in specific Codes of Practice.

The University of Ljubljana's Knowledge Transfer Office, which was Slovenia's representative in the ERA Forum group in charge of designing the Guiding Principles, initially led our work providing input on the initial drafts. The Guild called for specific support to universities' knowledge and technology transfer activities (including dedicated funding in addition to research funding) as well as for better recognition of research valorisation in

researchers' careers and universities' activities. It also highlighted the importance of further engaging research stakeholders in the design of the Guiding Principles and follow-up Codes of Practice.

In line with this last recommendation, The Guild participated in stakeholder consultations on the Guiding Principles organised by the European Commission in March 2022. It also appointed Professor Jonathan Cooper (University of Glasgow) as its representative in the Community of Practice in charge of designing the Code of Practice for Smart Use of Intellectual Property (IP).



*The University of Tartu collaborated with the Estonian autonomous vehicle manufacturer Auve Tech to develop the world's first autonomous hydrogen vehicle (June 2021)*

Horizon Europe can and must fund the research and innovation content of the missions based on the principle of excellence. And hence it is critical to have significant financial support from other programmes within the EU, lest we undermine the purpose of Horizon Europe, whose purpose is research and innovation.

Jan Palmowski, Secretary-General of The Guild,  
in *Science Business*, September 2021



## Joint workshop on impacts in Horizon Europe projects

In February 2022, the Research Support Office (RSO) and the Innovation working groups jointly organised a workshop to exchange good practices to increase the impacts of Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects. The ambition of this internal event was to break silos between the RSOs and the Knowledge Transfer Offices. The aim was also to foster collaboration all along the life cycle of research projects, i.e. from the preparation of the grant proposals to the commercialization of the research outcomes.

For this purpose, Ghent University and the University of Groningen presented their renewed strategies and internal re-organisation for better collaboration between the two departments. Similarly, Research Support Officers and Knowledge Transfer Officers from other

Guild universities shared their experience on how to best engage with industrial partners, foresee exploitation strategies early in the project design, and reconcile knowledge valorization with open science.

In addition to these internal exchanges of good practices, both groups discussed with DG RTD's Ann-Sofie Ronnlund the new approach to impact in Horizon Europe. They also had an intensive discussion with Elena Martines (European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA)) on how universities can best engage with, and benefit from, the European Innovation Council (EIC).

Cochin hospital (AP-HP), a university hospital of Université Paris Cité, hosts around 60 3D printers that originally manufactured protective visors and are now used for several other parts (July 2020)



University of Groningen's Professor Harro Meijer and Director Mervin Bakker presented the Centre for Isotope Research which houses the longest-running radiocarbon dating laboratory in the world. With the machinery, researchers were able to provide the first exact date when Vikings discovered America (March 2022)



Our working groups of Research Support Officers, and of Innovation, discussed how to deliver impactful Horizon Europe projects with Ann-Sofie Ronnlund, Head of Unit at DG RTD, at the joint workshop (February 2022)

## Exploiting inventions funded by the European Innovation Council

In a follow-up discussion with EISMEA, the innovation working group expressed concern about provisions in the EIC work programme and the Horizon Model Grant Agreement, which grant EIC-funded inventors indefinite access rights to their inventions on a royalty-free basis. The Guild questions the relevance of these provisions and of their underlying assumption that EIC inventors may be best placed to exploit the results of their research.

As we highlight in our input to the Guiding Principles for Knowledge Valorization, ensuring that research-performing organisations across Europe have well-functioning Knowledge Transfer Offices in place would be a more effective and efficient approach to maximizing exploitation of research results. The support that universities provide for knowledge and technology transfer is especially important when researchers do not

have the skills, capacities, incentives and/or the mindset required for the successful exploitation of their research results.

Finally, we submitted that these provisions may conflict with universities' institutional rules or national and regional regulations on handling intellectual properties or exploiting research results. Legal uncertainties may even be higher when inventions result from research projects funded through multiples sources that include the EIC, each of which has different exploitation requirements. In consequence, The Guild followed up with further discussions with EISMEA on how the EIC inventors' access right rules should be interpreted and implemented in universities to limit these detrimental effects.



# Higher education

The past year gave further momentum to the EU's role in higher education, which far exceeds Erasmus+. As the EU articulated a strategy for Europe's higher education institutions, and thus gave further impetus to the EEA,

we focused on identifying and highlighting the added value of the EU for our universities, and how this could be strengthened without duplicating what already works well at a national and regional level.

## The European strategy for universities

After a year of consultations, in early 2022 the European Commission published the European strategy for universities as a way to articulate a transformative vision for the higher education sector. The Guild welcomed the strategy as a framework which recognizes the rich potential and contribution of universities to our society through research, education and innovation.

Discussions about The Guild's vision for how universities can thrive by 2030 started in early 2020, and we were among the first networks to map out key opportunities and challenges for the sector in October 2020. We also actively contributed to the stakeholder-driven vision for the future of universities in research and innovation, which was published shortly after by the Commission.

The Guild welcomed the visibility of universities in the EU political agenda. Indeed, the vision recognized universities as foundational to the European idea, as bedrocks of universal and European values, and as a key to the EU's strategic development.

At the same time, we raised questions about important points of detail. We encouraged member states to commit to prioritising universities in their funding decisions. We also noted that the choice of initiatives in the Commission's

proposal, which was restricted to those that can be completed by mid-2024, did not match the wider ambitions of the strategy. Finally, we urged the Commission to articulate more clearly how Europe's universities can be strengthened in their excellence, to ensure we remain competitive globally.

Crucially, the strategy expressed the significance of universities for the EU as lighthouses for 'the' European way of life. We challenged this notion, arguing for a more complex understanding of the diversity of how lives are lived across Europe, and to develop a critical insight into how often Europeans had tried to impose 'their' (perceived) way of life on each other, and on others outside Europe.

*The Guild Board member Toomas Asser (University of Tartu) addressed a joint meeting of Directors of Higher Education Ministries and of the European Research and Innovation Committee of Member States in Ljubljana, Slovenia (September 2021)*



## Synergies between research and education

In the autumn of 2021, The Guild was invited to speak at the two joint meetings of the Directors of Higher Education and the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC). These meetings, convened by the Slovenian presidency, had a particular significance, as there had only been one meeting before that brought the heads of the research and education ministries of the member states together.

Invited to help member states and the Commission consider areas of synergies between the ERA and the EEA, in September Toomas Asser (University of Tartu) pointed to a number of areas in which the EU could concentrate its efforts to support universities in their teaching and research missions. This included the critical area of academic freedom, as freedom of scientific research and freedom of teaching were connected in critical ways. He also pointed to the Green Deal and the digital transformation as two strategic areas that

required the interdisciplinary expertise and bottom-up creativity of universities in research as well as teaching. Finally, he proposed that providing new resource for lifelong learning could support universities in new areas of societal need in developing their provisions not just in teaching, but also in research.

We built on these comments in the second meeting, when we challenged member states to build up the international competitiveness of Europe's universities, for instance in their capacities to address strategic concerns like the Green Deal and the Digital Transition. We also highlighted the importance of the social sciences and humanities, for instance for their capacity to critically engage with European values and political practices – thus challenging the idea of 'the' European way of life that is articulated in the European higher education strategy.

## Concerns about the start of the new Erasmus+ programme

Last year marked the beginning of the new Erasmus+ programme (2021–2027) which promised to be more inclusive and accessible, with an increased mobility budget. Unfortunately, for many universities the actual level of funding was lower than in previous years, leading to struggles to meet the expectations of students eager to spend time abroad after two years of travel restrictions. At the same time, new opportunities such as grants for environmentally friendly ways of travelling or short-term mobility needed to be well planned and funded.

Our members acknowledged that each transition year brings certain difficulties but urged that more effective information channels be developed between the European Commission, National Agencies and universities, in order for guidelines to be received in time. Our Erasmus working group raised

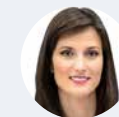
concerns about the transition to Erasmus Without Papers and called on the Commission to consult universities in all discussions around timelines, and to provide support and training. We were pleased to see the Commission engage with the sector to ensure a smoother implementation in 2022.

We were pleased to be joined by colleagues from the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) in a webinar dedicated to digitalization, to exchange experience on signing Inter-Institutional Agreements and Learning Agreements digitally.



Our Erasmus working group met with representatives from the UK Mission to the EU and Universities UK International to discuss mobilities with the UK and Turing scheme (February 2022)

Jan Palmowski took part in a Circle U. seminar to mark the enlargement of the network, moderating a panel discussion on the ways forward for the European Universities initiative (March 2022)



Mariya Gabriel  
@GabrielMariya



Thank you @vincentblondel @janpalmowski for inviting me to @guildeu General Assembly! #ERA Forum, strengthening of #research careers, reforming of #research assessment & EU Strategy for Universities are key components of #ERA. Together w/ universities we will make #ERA thrive!

8 June 2021

## European Universities beyond the pilot phase

Throughout the year our members reflected on the future vision for the European Universities initiative, which now includes all Guild universities eligible to participate. Our European Universities working group, composed of CIVIS, Una Europa, Eutopia, NeurotechEU, Circle U. and ENLIGHT representatives, is an important forum for discussion between like-minded alliances, sharing the same perspective of research-intensive universities. It is also a space to share about the activities of the different alliances in more detail.

In 2021–2022 we continued to engage with policymakers through our annual workshop dedicated to alliances, where we discussed the benefits and risks of reinforced cooperation between universities. Together with the Strategic Leads on Education working group, alliances will continue to inform The Guild's policy recommendations on the future of alliances' funding, joint European degrees and a possible legal entity.



# Shaping the new European Research Area

Since our creation we have supported the closer integration of Europe's research systems through the European Research Area (ERA). Our involvement in the rearticulation of ERA dates back to 2019, when we participated in a series of strategic meetings of the

ERAC, whose report fed into the Commission's proposals for a new ERA in September 2020. Over the past year a significant part of our work focused on how the ERA could become operationalized.

## Towards a strong European Research Area

Council Conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area (ERA) provided the basis for how ERA would be governed, plus the first proposed ERA actions. These twenty actions covered a broad variety of aspects for the alignment of Europe's research systems, including research career assessment reform, the green and digital transition, and the empowerment of universities.

The Council Conclusions specified that in ERA governance, stakeholders would be involved in a new way. The Guild had advocated for the strongest possible representation of university representatives in the ERA Forum. This forum was established to bring together representatives of member states, associated countries and stakeholders. The Forum further develops ERA actions and will oversee their implementation. Seven stakeholder groups, corresponding to the principal R&I sectors in Europe, are represented in the Forum. Each sector sends their representative to the Forum meetings to observe and contribute to the proceedings.

The Guild has been active both within the university stakeholder group and via our own advocacy channels. We are active contributors to the stakeholder group, representing the views of our members through input into verbal and written Forum meetings. We have also been invited to contribute to numerous workshops and sub-group meetings, organised by the European Commission on the various ERA actions. In this way, we have had a rich dialogue with the Commission and some member states about the ERA, with demonstrable successes in influencing the development of ERA actions.

*The Guild's Head of Policy, Sarika Wilson, participated in the European R&I Days to discuss the governance of the new ERA together with Commissioner Mariya Gabriel; Minister Simona Kustec; MEP Maria da Graça Carvalho; Jean-Eric Paquet, Director-General of DG RTD; and Karin Roelofs, Vice-President of the Association of ERC Grantees (June 2021)*



Ministrstvo za izobraževanje, znanost in šport  
@MIZS\_RS riya



Minister @SimonaKustec at @guildeu General Assembly: Minister @SimonaKustec: "New European Research Area needs to be co-created with the stakeholders. The goal of @EU2021SI is to capitalise on the diversity and experiences of the university sector and of other sectors. #ERA

22 October 2021

## Values and principles

In July 2021, the Pact for Research and Innovation was published. This proposed the values and principles guiding the development of the new ERA, the priority areas that would be covered by the ERA, how member states and the EU should prioritise their investments in national and European research systems, and how R&I policy should be coordinated between member states and the EU.

Ahead of its initial publication and after it, we advocated

successfully for the inclusion of fundamental research as key to the success of the ERA. We were also pleased that fundamental research was included in thematic ERA actions, notably on the Green Deal – a key demand of ours throughout 2021. We were very grateful for the close dialogue with the European Commission throughout this process, and with the Presidency Trio (Germany, Portugal, Slovenia) that led on the rearticulation of the ERA on behalf of the Council.



## Reforming research assessment

In May 2021, the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions to improve researchers' working conditions and make their careers more attractive and sustainable. While the European Commission's communication envisages the reform of research assessment mainly as a means to accelerate cultural changes in the research community for a faster uptake of open science practices, the Council Conclusions encourage a structural reform for 'more talent-based and diversity-sensitive quality measurement' and an approach to measure excellence beyond the sole use of bibliometric indicators (where this exists).

Throughout the last year, The Guild has actively engaged in this reform, through regular meetings of our vice-presidents and our Research Careers & Assessment working group. We contributed to the European Commission's scoping report published in November 2021, which became the basis of a sector-wide discussion about how research reform could be implemented. In both bi- and multilateral consultations, The Guild and several of its members had insisted that the reformed research assessment should first and foremost allow for a more accurate assessment of research quality, whose

*The Guild Presidents discussed ERA with the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU, Minister for Education, Science and Sport, Simona Kustec, at the general assembly (October, 2021)*

definition in the report was directly inspired from our inputs.

In January 2022, the European Commission invited The Guild to join the Core Group to support the translation of the scoping report into a coalition agreement. In this way we continued our advocacy for a research assessment based on qualitative peer-review supported by a responsible use of quantitative indicators. Additionally, The Guild has repeatedly warned against a one-size-fits-all process for implementing the reforms. We also raised concerns about commitments and a governance model whose benefits may not outweigh their negative consequences on universities and their research communities.

The same views served as basis for The Guild's comments to the draft Council Conclusions on research assessment and implementation of open science policies. These were prepared by the French presidency for their adoption in June 2022. Through timely intervention we were able to alert the Council to the continued need to focus on assessing quality, and strengthening (and rewarding) researchers' capacities to address key challenges across borders.

## Excellence and inclusiveness

The Guild has continuously advocated that the ERA must develop a clear strategy to boost the excellence of European research and innovation globally. At the same time, this commitment to excellence in research and innovation must be inclusive. The new ERA is uniquely placed to enable and encourage researchers from universities in less performing countries to succeed. Therefore, we called for the ERA Forum to articulate a long-term vision to strengthen and deepen excellence in Widening countries.

As the first ERA Policy Agenda was taking shape, we invited policymakers to include meaningful initiatives aimed at improving access to excellence, alongside strengthening the excellence of European science overall. These initiatives should focus on how fundamental research can be better supported by European and national actors, and how different instruments align – from supporting research excellence to boosting the regional innovation ecosystem in Widening countries.

In a statement published at the end of last year, we warned against unintended consequences for less performing R&I countries stemming from the broader ERA policy priorities (e.g. Open Science, intersectoral mobility) and reiterated inconsistencies between Horizon Europe and Cohesion policy.

Our members suggested concrete ERA actions in support of Widening countries. Concerning governance structure, they called for a dedicated sub-group under the ERA Forum to design and monitor the fit-for-purpose of Widening measures in ERA and Horizon Europe. At the implementation level, we asked for guidelines for enhanced synergies between EU's funding programmes and national and regional funding schemes, and for dedicated support to young researchers to develop outstanding research proposals and encourage more coordinator roles.

As the ERA evolved, we continued to focus on a much stronger articulation on both Europe's global excellence, and how all European R&I systems could fully contribute to, and benefit from, the full potential of Europe's researchers.

## Articulating gender, diversity and inclusiveness

In 2021–2022, The Guild's Gender and Diversity working group has deepened collaboration to learn from, and encourage, each other as they support their universities on their journey towards more gender equality, inclusiveness and diversity. Besides organizing regular meetings on thematic areas (racial discrimination, gender-based violence, research careers, etc.), we worked on recommending definitions of the key concepts we need to achieve progress at universities, such as equity, intersectionality and gender mainstreaming, with a view to achieving a common, Europe-wide understanding of these.

Published on International Women's Day (8 March), our set of definitions provides a conceptual basis for European universities to strengthen conversations on issues, challenges and solutions for championing diversity and inclusivity. International Women's Day was also the occasion to launch a video campaign to support the dissemination of our definitions, featuring members of the working group. We are now looking forward to keeping the discussion going within and between our universities, to provide mutual support, exchange best practice and develop further ideas to progress gender diversity and equality in higher education, starting in our own universities.



*Université Paris Cité was awarded the excellence initiative IdEx label indefinitely in 2022. The university and its President Christine Clerici celebrated the recognition in March (March 2022)*





# Horizon Europe: taking stock

The past year marks the first full year when the programme has been in operation. With each passing month, the lack of association of key partners, notably the UK and Switzerland, became more alarming. The Guild focused

## Horizon Europe in practice

Horizon Europe officially launched in February 2021 and the new programme introduced several changes and novelties to the application progress. By the autumn of that year a significant number of the first calls had closed. This offered the perfect opportunity to provide immediate feedback on member experiences of the first Horizon Europe calls.

Led by the R&I Policy Working Group, over 100 researchers and research support staff across our member universities participated in a survey, sharing experiences of applying to the Horizon Europe programme. Overall, respondents were

on feeding back to the Commission the experiences of our members with the new programme, and on amplifying our concerns about the lack of association, addressed to policymakers in the EU, UK and Switzerland.

broadly positive about the application process; however, feedback revealed that seemingly minor issues to do with application form design can affect applicants' ability to fully express the quality, relevance and novelty of their proposed research. The published survey results made several recommendations to reduce redundancy, improve clarity and prioritise space for researchers to fully express the excellence and impact of their proposed research. To wide resonance in the sector, our submission demonstrated the importance of optimizing the application process to ensure the excellence of Horizon Europe.

European science can be strong only in a complete European academic area. However, in order to be complete, the European academic area must include Swiss and the UK universities. So let's be wise and strong together.

Daniel David, Rector of Babeş-Bolyai University

## Calling for Swiss and UK association

The year 2021–2022 was critical for the association of the UK and Switzerland to Horizon Europe and demonstrated the unity of the research community behind the two countries' participation in the Framework Programme.

In May 2021, Switzerland halted the negotiations over the EU-Swiss Institutional Framework Agreement, leading the EU to stop the country's association process to Horizon Europe. As for the UK, association was still not finalized by April 2022, even though it was foreseen in the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

In the face of these obstacles, we led a campaign in November 2021, bringing together Europe's research community to emphasize the need to overcome political disagreements, and noting the long and mutually beneficial history of cooperation in R&I between them. Our public letter, addressed to Commission President von der Leyen, was supported by organisations representing 1,100 higher education institutions, 10,000 ERC grantees and over 50 academies in Europe. We

were united in demanding the immediate association of the UK, and the development of a new vision for the accession of Switzerland. In February 2022, we became active supporters of the Europe-wide Stick to Science campaign, endorsed personally and prominently by our university presidents. This campaign attracted the active support not just of institutions but also of senior scientists (including Nobel Prize Winners) and companies.

In Spring 2022 there appeared to be movement in the wider discussions between Switzerland and the EU, though discussions between the UK and EU were still deadlocked as a result of wider political disagreements. While the campaigns have not yet achieved their immediate objectives, they have demonstrated a continued joint concern for collaboration across Europe's communities of scientists.

## Accounting for Horizon Europe

A large-scale expansion of lump sum funding is planned to take place throughout the Horizon Europe programme. Lump sum pays grant recipients upon the completion of work packages, rather than upon the declaration of real costs. In October 2021, the European Commission published their analysis of the first two years of a pilot of lump sum funding. While this covered applicant experience of lump sum calls, it did not cover the reporting or beneficiary experience of implementing lump sum projects. It also did not gather information from the institutional perspective, but instead only surveyed academics and research staff.

The Guild published a statement urging the Commission to wait until the pilot has been completed, so as to be able to gather the full effect of implementation and reporting, before continuing with the large-scale roll out. We also urged the Commission to include the institutional perspective in their analysis by gathering experiences from research support and finance staff, in order to provide a full picture of the impact of lump sum funding on universities.

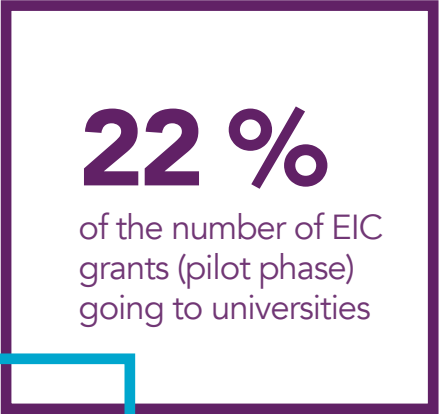
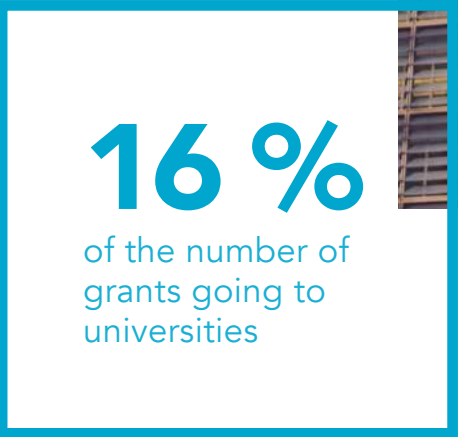
## Workshop on democracy topics in the Horizon Europe

We launched a practical engagement with the new Horizon Programme in June 2021, when we offered the opportunity for the Deans of Social Sciences and Humanities to consider and discuss the first democracy topics in the Horizon Europe programme. Attendees were asked to evaluate first calls in terms of their policy relevance, their relation to state-of-the-art research questions in the discipline, and what topics should be covered in the future. They then discussed in smaller groups areas of common interest to aid consortium-building.

Finally, attendees were afforded the opportunity to discuss these points with the relevant programme staff from the European Commission, facilitating feedback to the European Commission on published calls directly from their target group. This exchange also informed members about assumptions in the Commission that informed the formulation of the calls.

*Secretary-General Jan Palmowski visited Pompeu Fabra University in November 2021 and met with colleagues from the university staff, including Rector Oriol Amat (November 2021)*

# The Guild's member universities in Horizon 2020





# Governance

## A thank you to our outgoing Chair

The year 2022 marks the end of Vincent Blondel's term as Chair of The Guild. Vincent was our second Chair, originally elected in 2017 when The Guild had just been created, with nineteen member universities having come together in the preceding twelve months.

After an initial year in which The Guild had established a number of foundational policy positions on research and education, Vincent oversaw an expansion of our policy reach as we developed expertise on more specific topics in research, education and innovation. During his period of office, we began to engage not only with the Directorates-General in Research and Innovation, and in Education. We further developed fruitful dialogues with DG SANTE (Health), DG CNCT (Digital), DG EMPL (Employment), and DG INTPA (International Partnerships). And we intensified our work with the European Parliament and the European Council.

The General Assemblies held since 2017 very much bear Vincent's imprint, as he sought to balance policy discussions with trusted exchanges on common challenges among university presidents. This focus did not waver during the pandemic, as Vincent was keen to develop formats that sustained the quality of exchange among presidents in a virtual world.

Vincent's attention to the interpersonal side of the General Assembly was also reflected in his concern that trust among presidents should overcome potential rivalry in the creation of different European University networks within The Guild. The congeniality and trust among presidents has increased noticeably over the five years of his term of office; a process also supported by Vincent's legendary quiz games testing presidents' knowledge of each others' institutions!



Under Vincent's leadership, the informal side of The Guild was strengthened as much as its formal side. We developed robust processes to maximize the transparency of how common positions were formed, and how decisions were arrived at. Moreover, The Guild benefited appreciably from the support of UCLouvain in checking our financial accounts, and in the revision of our statutes.

Last but by no means least, Vincent was a great supporter of the office and its staff, taking a personal interest in the development of each staff member, and being a rock of support for the Secretary-General. We have appreciated his trust as much as the wisdom of his advice.

Vincent was a perfect Chair for The Guild in its formative period, setting standards for how we work, leading through his particular capacity for seeking – and building on – consensus. We are hugely grateful for his commitment and support.



▲  
The Guild's Board of Directors: Toomas Asser (University of Tartu), Vincent Blondel (UCLouvain), Rachel Sandison (University of Glasgow), and Svein Stølen (University of Oslo)

## The Guild's Board of Directors

Once again we are very grateful to the personal leadership of our presidents and rectors. This has been in evidence not just by their regular participation in our General Assemblies. They have also led by example, for instance in their immediate and visible support to the Stick to Science campaign advocating Swiss and UK association to Horizon Europe. They have also led through their support of our strategic initiatives, not least our collaboration with ARUA, and realizing the potential of the EU-AU Innovation Agenda.

The Board has met seven times over the past year, and approved our policy positions and provided direction in accordance with the wishes of the General Assembly. We continue to be grateful to the institutions of Board members for generous additional assistance. For instance, the University of Glasgow accords visiting status

to our office staff, while the University of Oslo continues to host our website. The Board makes decisions on behalf of the General Assembly, in accordance with the priorities it set out.

Finally, vice-presidents have continued to meet three times per year, complementing this commitment through special strategic task forces. Over the past year, they have also met monthly to develop actively our positions on the evolving research assessment reform process. This collaboration with our Careers Group (which has also met monthly) ensured that our positions always reflected the positions of our university communities, including our universities' senior leadership teams.

# The Guild's working groups



Deans of Social Sciences and Humanities meeting at Jagiellonian University (April 2022)

The Guild staff met with University of Bologna representatives (October 2021)

In the past year The Guild office welcomed two new colleagues: Rachel Barrett and Janne Rooms. Covering for Sarika Wilson's maternity leave, Rachel worked on key R&I policy developments, including the new ERA, its governance and policy actions (December 2021)

# The Guild at a glance



21

members



35K

academic staff



630K

students



70

internal meetings



169

meetings with policy-makers and key influencers



9

events



233

media features



≈ 122K

website views



≈ 1500

new social media followers



≈ 2,180K

views on social media

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Univerza v Ljubljani

