

Transform4Europe:

The European University for

Knowledge Entrepreneurs

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TRANSFORM4EUROPE: THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY FOR KNOWLEDGE ENTREPRENEURS

Work Package 2

Task 2.1.1.

Transform4Europe Partnership

Strategy Paper

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Partnership Strategy

1. Term of validity

The Partnership Strategy is the one of the main permanent documents on the basis of which the signatory organizations operate. It shall enter into force on the date of its adoption and it is a dynamic and adaptable document that should be able to respond to project development needs as we move forward on the process of establishing a sustainable and strategic Alliance. This is a document that shall be updated as we progress with the Alliance implementation.

2. Strategy development process and methods

This strategy is developed based on summary information on:

1. Preliminary experience, incl. good practices, for each of the Transform4Europe partners to create and maintain partnerships to achieve their institutional and project goals. An overview of the implemented partnerships up to the last 5 years before the start of the Transform4Europe project has been made.

2. The assessments and attitudes of the Transform4Europe partners about the partnership as an organizational principle and the possibilities in this way to optimize the process of achieving goals.

3. The experience of the partnership established for the purposes of the Transform4Europe project in the development stage and the first year of its implementation.

This information was collected through a questionnaire designed for each of the partners.

The summarized information from the surveys is presented in Appendix №1.

Based on this information, SWOT analysis was developed (Appendix №2), as well as stakeholder analysis (Appendix №3).

3. Purpose of the Strategy

The partnership strategy has a dual purpose:

1. On the one hand, the Strategy must support the effective achievement of the objectives of the Transform4Europe project;
2. On the other hand, the Strategy is part of the organizational outline of the European University and must support its effective functioning in an environment of unpredictability and rapid societal change.

4. Rationale

The EU, as well as the world today, are facing severe challenges that will determine the development and life of modern societies. Researchers and policymakers are increasingly focusing on environmental and climate issues, the need to modernize and digitalize the economy, and growing social pressures for various reasons. All these issues have precise regional dimensions, the complexity of which presupposes and requires the involvement and active participation of a wide range of stakeholders.

We, the Transform4Europe partners, share a clear vision that the future of higher education and academia in Europe lies in the ever more profound and more comprehensive integration of academic institutions with the regions and society, offering adequate education, research and innovation support for sustainable development, which helps to identify and solve the main societal problem of our time. In this regard, to become a significant and internationally visible academic consortium, we will make the necessary efforts to attract and integrate industry and enterprise, culture, society and politics into a common system of key stakeholders from the Transform4Europe regions.

We recognize and share a common understanding that we cannot achieve the goals of our project and alliance, without establishing active and broad partnership within the Transform4Europe regions as well as on European and global level. This fact is related to many reasons:

- the growing specialization, a consequence of the demand for efficiency, naturally increases the need to supplement and pool capacities;
- self-organization, a consequence of cultural change and human rights principles, increases the influence of certain social groups and makes them a necessary participant in the provision of public services;
- the complication of social problems, a consequence of the rapid technological change, requires their shared solution, as well as finding the intersection between different concepts of development;
- public governance, as a result of its adaptation to the changes listed above, explicitly stimulates the pooling of capacities of independent organizations in the direction of achieving common goals.

All these aspects make partnerships and partner behavioural models a prerequisite for the successful functioning of organizations, regardless of their field, goals or status.

EU integration and the gradual homogeneity of European society reinforced the need to pool resources, capacity and vision:

- the EU project is a partnership project at its core – it is a voluntary union to achieve common goals and mutually beneficial cooperation;

- the establishment of common EU practices and models implies joint agreement, which is not possible without considering the differences and the need of adoption;
- the dividing lines in the EU are diverse and cannot be reduced to differences between Member States. Many relatively distinct groups and communities in the Union, whose interests, values and visions need to be embedded in the common models.
- Partnership as a way to achieve goals is a horizontal principle of EU policies and a prerequisite for their effective implementation.

These are why the Universities – participants in the Transform4Europe project, accept the partnership as a fundamental organizational principle for achieving their institutional and project goals.

In this regard, the Transform4Europe alliance is developing a strategy in order to introduce a common understanding of:

- the purpose of partnerships;
- the values that partnership is built on;
- the principles on which partnership is built, maintained and developed;
- Rules of the partnership process.

The basic principles of the strategy are defined as follows:

1. This partnership will be implemented between different categories of stakeholders and the Transform4Europe Alliance, based on the perceived common interest in creating a shared innovative academic ecosystem that provides human capital and scientific knowledge to meet the needs of the regions.
2. Transform4Europe Partnerships are built upon a common vision, values, goals and the need to achieve measurable results related to the effective integration of the academic sector and the products it provides to overcome the challenges and solve the problems of the regions.
3. Strategic and operational principles are identified, flexible and adaptable to the changes in the EU and the regions where this partnership operates.
4. The relationship between partners is characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment.
5. The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets and works to address needs and increase the capacity of all partners.

6. Partners make clear and open communication an ongoing priority by striving to understand each other's needs and self-interests, and developing a common language.
7. Partners share the benefits of the partnership's accomplishments.
8. Partnerships can dissolve and need to plan a process for closure.

5. Mission, Vision and Objectives of Partnership

The Transform4Europe Partnership is envisaged as a sustainable union between independent organizations that set common goals and coordinate action to achieve them. Within the Partnership, the organizations retain their independence and the right to defend their interests, values and vision. At the same time, each of them agrees to participate in the process of mutual learning and knowledge enrichment from the equal exchange of evidence related to common goals.

The mission of the Transform4Europe Partnership is to increase the efficiency, practical applicability and quality of higher education in the regions of operation of the Transform4Europe project. Based on the synergy of the combined academic resources of the Transform4Europe alliance and the active participation of the key stakeholders involved, we aim to achieve **the transformation of this partnership into an innovative interregional knowledge and innovation ecosystem.**

Within this interregional knowledge and innovation hub, students, researchers and regional stakeholders will collaborate to generate new practice-oriented knowledge concerning digital transformation and smart regions, environmental transformation and sustainability, and societal transformation and inclusion, jointly driving the development of Europe and the European Education Area (EEA) through the regions.

The integrated innovative interregional ecosystem will create the necessary academic environment, which will help the Transform4Europe alliance to educate a new generation of highly motivated and highly skilled European knowledge-entrepreneurs: agents of change with the interdisciplinary, entrepreneurial, digital, multilingual and intercultural competencies needed to actively contribute to and shape upcoming challenge-related transformation processes in Europe.

Thus, a formulated Partnership mission is possible only if the implementation meets specific criteria that are in line with its vision:

- It is created on the foundation of common principles and goals;
- It is voluntary and mutually beneficial;
- Its participants are individuals and organizations that can contribute to the achievement of the goals;

- Partnership is based on the complementarity of capacity in a way that its own capacity exceeds the capacity of each participant, as well as the simple capacity sum between them;
- It exists by constantly exchanging information, discussing ideas and possible alternatives and rallying on common option for achieving the objectives for which it was created;
- It is maintained through mutual respect, trust, full access to information, openness and transparency within the framework of common actions and intentions;
- It develops by expanding through organizations that are necessary and can contribute to the effective achievement of the objectives for which the partnership was created;
- Organizations included in the partnership have an equal right to express and defend their vision, regardless of when they joined it.

To fulfil its mission, the Transform4Europe Partnership should set out the following common objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Bringing together the Transform4Europe Alliance, individuals and organizations that can effectively and strategically contribute towards the education of a future generation of European knowledge-entrepreneurs: agents of change.
- **Objective 2:** Establishment of an integrated network of partners working for the transformation of the network into an interregional space and ecosystem for exchanging information, ideas and knowledge: The partnership will be the foundation of a common collaboration platform where students, researchers and regional stakeholders will collaborate to generate new practice-oriented knowledge concerning digital transformation and smart regions, environmental transformation and sustainability, and societal transformation and inclusion, jointly driving the development of Europe and the EEA through the regions.
- **Objective 3:** Constantly increase the collaboration capacity of each individual and organization within the Transform4Europe Partnership.
- **Objective 4:** Effective positioning and recognition of the Transform4Europe alliance within the avant-garde of EU academic ecosystem.

Partnerships are built on accepting of the value of European unification and the idea that it underpins the prosperity and freedom of all European citizens. They are created to contribute to the idea that the University as a public institution has a leading role in the processes of adaptation and management to the regional, digital and social transformation of European society. They are oriented towards the creation of social entrepreneurs that can stimulate public change and make the digital, societal and environmental transition acceptable to all European citizens.

6. Participants in the Partnership

Each Partnership is built on a shared responsibility to achieve its objectives. It is based on the clear distinction between the function of the different participants. The distribution of the functions is based on previous experience and expertise.

Each partnership is a process of self-recognition of the participants – individuals and organizations that share common values and goals and together realize them. At the same time, each partnership has (an) initiator(s) who take(s) an active role in creating and developing the partnership.

The initiator identifies potential partners and undertakes activities to bring them together.

During identification, the initiator shall comply with the following criteria:

- the potential partner shares European values;
- the potential partner has influence among communities that are affected;
- there is specific expertise directly related to the objectives of the Partnership;
- the potential partner shares the partnership principles set out in this Strategy;
- the potential partner has the capacity to participate in the partnership and contribute to its objectives.

Participation in the Partnership is voluntary. It is maintained within the active presence of the specific participant in the partner activities and especially in the communication between the partners.

Partnerships act as support bodies where options for solutions are discussed and ideas, information, evidence are exchanged.

7. Strategy implementation plan

1. Plan for maintaining the partnership established for the purposes of the Transform4Europe project:

- Each of the partners adopts the Strategy and reviews its internal regulations for establishing compliance;

– The project implements the principles set out in the Strategy by creating channels and practices for open and equal debate and communication.

– In developing and establishing the organizational structure of the European University, all practices are assessed for compliance with the principles set out in the Strategy.

2. Plan for the development and expansion of the partnership.

1. Research period: stakeholder analysis in the fields of:

- a. Regional and environmental transformation;
- b. Digital transformation;
- c. Social transformation.

2. Stage of creation: an invitation to stakeholders to join partner networks for the establishment of a European University

- a. Cross-border network. This network involves organizations from different countries and expands the T4Europe partnership internationally.
- b. Regional network. This network includes organizations that represent the different groups in a region – domestic or international, and together can ensure its transformation into a rapidly developing economic and social space.
- c. Partnership network for digital transformation. This network includes organizations that can contribute and have an interest in digital transformation. It can have both international and regional scope.
- d. Partnership network for social transformation. This network includes organizations that can contribute and have an interest in social transformation. It can have both international and regional scope.

3. Maintenance stage: Establishment of communication channels for the exchange of information between participants in partner networks.

Annex 1. Summary of the study results on partnerships of participating universities

1. Scope of the Partnership

The indicator “scope of the partnership” reflects the main characteristics of partnerships carried out by the universities included in the project – the and type and number of the partnerships. Reporting on the activities for which partners are involved indicates areas where universities feel they need additional support. In addition, the activities developed in partnership help universities to develop the link between teaching and practice, by improving the quality of their programs and increasing the opportunities for successful realization of their students. Naturally, the research partnership is woven into the very essence of research work. This is evident from the specific results of the study on the practices of individual universities.

1.1. Whom do we partner with?

All universities participating in the project are developing various types of partnerships. All universities have a wide network of partnerships with other universities – at the national, regional, and international levels. The data are similar for partnerships with research centers and student organizations – all universities develop this type of high-intensity partnership.

The result of the analysis of the data on partnerships with schools is interesting. The research team had hypothesized that this type of partnership would be widespread. For 5 of the 7 partners involved in the project, the University of Silesia and the University of Saarland have stated that they do not develop this type of partnership.

The partnership with think tanks is not evenly distributed among the partners. For example, the University of Silesia, the Estonian Academy of Arts and the University of Saarland do not develop partnerships with such organizations. On the other hand, the other participants in the project declare that they have a significant number of partnerships with this type of organizations.

Partnerships with private companies, trade unions, employers' organizations, consulting firms, and public institutions are also being developed by almost all project partners. The practice of the University of Saarland is different. It is stated that the practice of partnerships with private companies is limited, and this type of partnership is applied only to a limited extent. Partnerships with trade unions, consulting companies, and public institutions are not being developed.

1.2. What are we partnering for?

All universities implement partnerships in order to develop the curriculum. In general, this type of partnership has the largest share of all partnerships of a given university. The data for partnerships with the aim of research activities are similar.

The practice of various partner organizations participating in Advisory bodies is also relatively common. In some cases, the partners also participate in the governing bodies of the universities – the University of Saarland, the University of Alicante, the Vytautas Magnus University.

All universities use existing partnerships to promote their activities. The career development of students is also supported through the implementation of partnerships in all universities. Some of them support the career development of teachers through this tool. Some universities (the University of Trieste and the University of Saarland) do not have partnerships for this purpose. On the other hand, the University of Alicante has a significant number of partnerships for this purpose.

The assessment of the importance of a specific type of partners for universities shows that in terms of students' career development, universities rely mainly on partnerships at the national level. Universities that develop partnerships for the career development of teachers consider international partnerships in this field to be more important. The analysis results for the partnerships concerning curriculum development are similar – the international partners are preferable.

In partnerships aiming at research activities, all types of partners are defined as significant – international, national, regional.

In conclusion, we can say that most universities have a wide range of partnerships – both with different types of partners and in different fields. There is a strong desire to develop activities such as research and career development of teachers with the widest possible range of partners at all possible levels – national, regional, and international, while the career development of students is supported mainly through partnerships at the national level.

2. Institutional organization of the Partnership

The specific institutional organization of the partnership process in each university is essential for the future joint work of the project partners. Early identification of significant differences would help to limit possible synchronization problems in advance.

2.1. Forms of Partnership

Most project participants develop all possible forms of partnership – permanent contracts and agreements, ad hoc partnership, research projects, mobility and exchange, internship. This is an expected result on the basis of the background of a wide range of goals and types of partners that apply.

2.2. Internal regulation and administrative capacity development

The practice of regulating partnerships is very diverse. However, all universities apply the Ethic Code, which naturally applies to partnerships, especially those aimed at developing research activities.

Some universities have specific requirements to regulate the scope and representation of the university in the partnership, while others do not. Similarly, some universities have developed specific criteria for selecting partners, others do not. Only the University of Alicante declares that a special strategy for the development of the partnership has been developed. Against this background, it is difficult to talk about common, even approximately comparable, models of internal regulation of the internal regulation process of partnerships.

All universities involved in the project have taken steps to provide administrative capacity to support the development of partnerships. Each of them has designated a specific administrative unit to support and coordinate the activities for the implementation of the partnerships.

2.3. National regulation

There is no specific national regulation that restricts and/or sets specific requirements for the partnerships in which universities can participate.

3. How do we realize partnerships?

Understanding the motives for participating in partnerships is at the heart of the opportunities for their expansion. Identifying the source of the initiative to build a concrete partnership is essential. It is appropriate for the "initiator" of the partnership to have institutional support in order to successfully develop such practices.

3.1. Where does the initiative come from?

All universities rely on the initiative of all possible participants – the University management, the management of individual departments, individual scientists and teachers, specially created university units, external organizations. However, some peculiarities can be deduced. Without exception, the initiative of the individual scientist is at the

heart of the partnerships for all participants. The involvement of the university management and the individual faculties and departments is also essential.

3.2. What are the motives for partnering with a university?

Participants recognize all tested motives for participating in a partnership with a university as valid. We can find certain predominance in motives such as improving the public reputation, improving the business development of the individual partner and the presence of informal relationships.

3.3. Degree of centralization and university partnership management systems

In general, partnerships and their management are highly decentralized across universities. This is particularly evident in the larger, teaching and various branches of science, partner universities such as the Sofia University, the University of Silesia, or the Saarland University. Partnership management is usually decentralized to individual departments and units. At the central level, departments for international cooperation are most often established (usually, they have priority functions in international university partnerships and exchange programs for students and teachers). Other units that have the functions of managing partnerships in individual universities are the project management departments (e.g. the University of Alicante and the University of Silesia) or the industrial cooperation services (the University of Silesia). The University of Trieste, for example, has set up Office Business Relations, Partnerships and Strategic projects.

Most participants reported difficulties in collecting data for completing the questionnaire due to the lack of a unified database. A good example in this regard is the Vytautas Magnus University, which in the spring of 2021 established a separate university center for the collection and processing of information related to strategic partnerships.

4. Institutional experience and good practices

All universities have lasting and diverse relationships with different types of external organizations. The most frequently identified practices, especially of international and regional cross-border cooperation, are with other universities and university networks for the purpose of training, exchange of professors, and specific research initiatives. At the national and local level, partnerships with business consortia, branch organizations, and specific companies and government agencies, related to joint educational programs, student internships and internships and specific practical projects, predominate.

4.1. Identified good practices at the national level

Partner universities have established the strongest links at the national level. Partnerships with other national universities predominate (e.g. the University of Alicante is an active member of SICUE, the Spanish system for the exchange of students between national universities) and various business and professional associations, chambers of commerce, and others. In recent years, a number of high-tech clusters have been created on specific projects.

For example, the Sofia High-Tech Cluster brings together the Sofia University and ten Bulgarian high-tech companies in order to set up an experimental laboratory, based on cutting-edge technologies and equipment for common cluster activities. The VMU Agricultural Academy and four business companies (UAB Biržų žemtiekimas, UAB Baltic Agro Machinery, UAB Dojus Agro, and AB Lytagra) are creating the first cluster of agricultural engineering research in Lithuania. The cluster is dedicated to the implementation of engineering curricula and the introduction of innovative and inclusive forms of education. A new modern bachelor's degree program in Intelligent Engineering is being created. The Saarland University is an active participant in the Quality Audit Network, which consists of the universities of Bamberg, Greifswald, Ilmenau, Kaiserslautern, Kassel, Cologne, Lüneburg, Osnabrück, Potsdam, Saarland and Siegen. The network aims to promote the development of quality in teaching and learning through collegial procedures and to turn its own goals and criteria into a benchmark.

4.2. Identified good practices in local regional partnerships

At the local and regional level, universities have fewer but more systematic and lasting partnerships. For example, the Estonian Academy of Arts considers its cooperation with local authorities in the city of Tallinn to be particularly important, and the Sofia University has signed a number of agreements with the Municipality of Sofia, e.g. under the initiative "Cities of the Future and their digital twins". The University of Silesia, on the other hand, has fruitful cooperation with the Regional Chamber of Commerce, including on specific projects. One of the interesting initiatives for regional cooperation is the Silesian University Network (SUN) – a network of nine public academic units in the Silesian region, established to promote higher education in Silesia, the rest of Poland, and internationally.

4.3. Identified good practices of cross-border regional partnerships

The partner universities have many cross-border regional partnerships. Some are somewhat sporadic and on specific initiatives (the Sofia University, the Estonian Academy of Arts), and others have strong traditions and a certain degree of institutionalization. The University of Alicante is a member of the Xarxa Vives (Network Vives), which

includes 22 universities in Spain, Andorra, Southern France, and the Italian island of Sardinia. The idea is to create a university space that allows for the coordination of teaching, research, and cultural activities, and the promotion of the use and standardization of the common Catalan language. The University of Trieste has intensive research links with public and private organizations in neighboring countries. It cooperates with partners mainly in Slovenia, Austria, and Croatia, using territorial cooperation programs such as INTERREG. The VMU actively cooperates with Baltic research centers and schools in neighboring countries (Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Latvia, etc.). Sofia University is a partner in several projects with universities in Greece and Romania. The University of Silesia is an active participant in the Progress 3 Consortium with 15 universities in the border regions of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. The primary mission is to make connections in terms of research and innovation. EKA has succeeded in the North Baltic Cooperation Networks, KUNO, NBAA and others.

4.4. Identified good practices of international partnerships

International university partnerships are mostly inter-university collaborations. The University of Trieste partners in at least 13 different international university networks. Due to its strategic geographical location, the University of Trieste is connected to the university networks in the Alpine region, the Adriatic region and the Danube region. Thirteen academic institutions from eleven countries, including Sofia University, are working to create a permanent European research infrastructure for religious research called RESILIENCE. The University of Silesia also has lasting collaborations outside Europe, such as the one with Northeastern University in China, which includes two dual degree programs.

Saarland University is the main player in the creation of the University of the Greater Region – UniGR. It is a lasting strategic partnership – a university union with joint governing bodies, a central office with co-financed staff, research, education, and innovation projects (<http://www.uni-gr.eu/en>).

5. Criteria for recruiting partners and managing partnerships

As part of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to formulate the most important criteria for the selection of partners in relation to the implementation of project activities, on the one hand and contributing to the development of thematic areas, on the other. In summary, the most important partnership indicators for universities are as follows:

5.1. Criteria for external organizations in connection with the implementation of project activities

- ***Development of common university programs***

Similarities in programs and curriculum; Experts in the field; Openness to partnerships; Quality management certificates; Practical experience

- ***Respect for democratic principles and rights***

Creating common structures; Quality reputation and trust; Similar values and shared goals; Clear rules and responsibilities; A certain degree of autonomy; Organizational flexibility

- ***University mobility***

Similarities in programs and curricula; Linguistic diversity; Previous experience

- ***Dissemination of project results***

Media popularity; International relations and partnerships; Coherence.

5.2. Criteria for external organizations in relation to their contribution to the development of the thematic area

- ***Digital transformation and intelligent regions***

Access to knowledge; High level of technological development and use of innovations; Extensive local and regional representation

- ***Transformation and sustainable environment***

Environmental protection certificates; Use of sustainable methods and practices; Introduced innovative environmental practices

- ***Public transformation, community building and inclusion***

Sustainable relations at community and local level; Implemented campaigns and initiatives; Representation of certain communities and social groups.

6. Summary

The study results of the study showed that the partner educational institutions have many and different types and purpose partnerships. It is difficult to determine the number of partners and categorize partnerships, as there is no data system in individual universities. This is a line on which progress is needed in connection with the implementation of the project. In this case, our partners from Vytautas Magnus University can share their experience as they set up a separate university center in 2021 to collect and process information related to strategic partnerships. Another identified shortcoming is related to the criteria (ethical, operational, functional) for the selection and evaluation of partnerships and their benefits. Universities are very different in institutional structure and traditions, and building common structures for the purposes of this project will be a challenge. In this context, the experience of Saarland University at the University of the Greater Region – UniGR with joint governing bodies, a central office with co-financed staff can be particularly useful.

In the end, project participants are adamant that the benefits of current and future partnerships are vital to both the learning process and research activities. The main identified benefits are in terms of competitiveness, innovation, and sustainable development.

Annex 2. SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Significant past experience of Transform4Europe partners in establishing and maintaining partnerships;
- Transform4Europe partners have embraced the idea of the need for partnerships;
- There is a high degree of coincidence in the purpose of the partnerships used;
- The inter-university partnership created for the implementation of the Transform4Europe project has a strong European dimension;
- European funding practices stimulate the building of partnerships.

WEAKNESSES

- Transform4Europe partners do not have a permanent system for recruiting and evaluating the undertaken partnerships;
- Most partnerships are temporary rather than permanent;
- There is relatively little experience of Transform4Europe partners for partnerships with business organizations;
- Transform4Europe partners have limited experience in international partnerships outside of student and teacher exchange programs;
- Existing partnerships are highly dependent on personal contacts and initiatives;
- There are significant differences in the size and scope of Transform4Europe partners, as well as in the ways of partnerships management.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Most Transform4Europe partners have good practices that can be shared and disseminated;
- Existing partnerships may be expanded and adequately regulated;
- The Transform4Europe partnership may be extended to neighboring countries that are not members of the EU;
- The demand for innovative and cross-border educational programs is constantly increasing;
- Cross-border cooperation, especially in the field of education, will continue to be funded on a project and grant basis in the long term due to its importance for European integration.

THREATS

- The partnership established for the purposes of the project to cease to exist after the completion of the project;
- The established partnership to maintain its current geographical dimension;
- The partnership to be formal and not to have an added value;
- Attempts to collect and manage information on partnerships may meet resistance from people or departments in Transform4Europe partners who are currently managing the partnership processes themselves;
- Some Transform4Europe partners may withdraw from the process for fear of formalization or centralization;
- The existence of national specificities and cultural differences may make it difficult to establish principles and criteria for expanding partnerships and ultimately hinder their implementation.

Annex 3. Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder analysis in the higher education

The purpose of this analysis is to identify key and non-key stakeholders who have influence and interests related to the process of creating higher education professionals.

The purpose of the analysis is to help build partnership networks in the implementation of the main objectives of the Universities for the provision of educational services in the field of higher education. The study is based on the following assumptions:

- Achieving the institutional goals of the Universities depends on a wide range of participants who, through their own behavior, influence their effectiveness. Universities are a mediator between young people (with their attitudes and expectations) and the labor market, which depends on a number of domestic and international factors;
- Due to the public importance of higher education, it is a highly regulated area in which many institutions and governmental and non-governmental organizations operate.

These are the reasons why Universities need to set up partnership networks. In this way, they can unite the efforts of stakeholders:

- To meet both the expectations of young people and the intentions of economic operators and trends in the labor market;
- To stimulate social change in the direction of successful social development.

This analysis is based on expert evaluation. It refers to university activity in general and does not consider either national specifics or the specific situations in which partner networks will be set up. In this sense, the current analysis should be used only as a starting point for the specific identification of stakeholders associated with a specific targeting process.

Stakeholders table

Stakeholders	Having interest in the process of higher education (scale from 1 to 5: insignificant – significant)	Influence on the process of higher education (scale from 1 to 5: insignificant – significant)	Proposals
Institutions	Institutions generally have no interests. They defend and realize the formulated and legitimized public interest.	The institutions have a great deal of influence, by virtue of their formal powers. In addition, they could have a huge impact on the decision-making process, so they need to be convinced by arguments and evidence that certain steps need to be taken.	
1. Ministry of Education (or relevant state agency – main entity in the field of higher education)	1	5 (this assessment cannot be absolute because it depends on the behaviour (attitudes and activity) of the representatives of the organisations concerned)	
2. National Accreditation Agency (if any)	2 (in this type of institutions the interests of the universities themselves are represented, but they are balanced through the system of criteria and accreditation procedures)	3 (the impact is limited up to the accreditation system and potential participation in the development of the system of criteria; very rarely representatives of such government agencies are active in the public)	The assessments given may vary depending on the state specificities in the structure and functions of the regulatory agency)
3. Employment Agency (or relevant government agency)	1	3	In the vast majority of cases, these institutions are oriented towards the low-skilled. At the same time, they have the potential to contribute to the university achievements.

4. National Inspectorate of Education (relevant state agency)	1	2 (these organizations are very often isolated from the higher education process. At the same time, their institutional goals are related to it.	Representatives of these organizations should be actively attracted to the partner networks.
Civil organizations			
5. Student organizations	5	3 (this assessment is extremely uncertain because the influence of such organizations depends on a number of factors. In order to assess the impact, it must be considered: the activity of the organizations, as well as the degree to which students recognize it as their representative. Potentially, such organizations could have a much greater impact.	It is highly likely that the presence of many student organizations could be competitive. Where student organizations are united, their influence grows
6. Youth NGOs	3	3 (applies the same as for student organizations)	These organizations can contribute a lot to university activities by increasing the interest in higher education and the degree of attractiveness of universities. Their influence is different from that of student organizations and should therefore be included in partner networks.
7. Youth political organizations	2	2	It is possible that in a particular situation, such an organization with a much higher level of interest may appear. However, its inclusion in a partner network would hardly contribute to the effective achievement of university objectives.
8. Employers' associations	5 (this assessment is correct only in	5 (this assessment shouldn't be accepted	It is necessary to evaluate the employers' organizations

	cases where the employer organisation is linked to the areas and sectors for which universities prepare professionals.	unreservedly. It depends on the activity of the organization concerned and the behavior of its representatives)	necessary to achieve the objectives for which the partnership is set up.
9. Local and regional associations	3 (this interest may not be realized)	4 (this is an assessment of the potential rather than the real influence)	These organizations must necessarily be attracted to the partner networks, even if they are not active in the field of higher education.
10. Hat hunting organizations	4	4	
International organizations			
11. European Commission	1	4	In the absence of general competence in the field of education, this organisation is now regarded as an international organisation. Its presence in partner networks is essential because of the European coordination process and possible funding.
12. European Education and Culture Executive Agency	1	4	Main source of funding in the field of education

Stakeholder quadrant

