INGENIUM
European University

Deliverable 10.1

INGENIUM Long-term Strategy

Work package 10 – Impact and dissemination

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The INGENIUM European University Alliance represents an ambitious collaboration among 10 universities across 10 EU Member States, supported by regional governments, industry, and civil society. After nearly three years of operation, INGENIUM has undertaken a critical self-assessment to define a clear pathway toward becoming a fully integrated European university. This executive summary outlines the strategic priorities, implementation commitments, and long-term vision presented in the Alliance's Long-term Sustainability Strategy.

INGENIUM's Added Value in the European Universities Landscape: Addressing Skills and Labour Gaps at European Scale

INGENIUM's distinctive contribution to the European Universities Initiative lies in its commitment to tackling two of Europe's most pressing challenges: skills and labour gaps. While some European universities focus on achieving world-class research status, INGENIUM positions itself as a skills-focused, regionally-rooted alliance uniquely equipped to deliver high-quality education and training that responds to labour market needs.

The Alliance brings together ten mid-size, regionally-based institutions—the majority not appearing in major global rankings—whose collective strength lies in their ability to equip students with knowledge and practical skills demanded by employers. This mission directly supports the European Commission's Union of Skills agenda, addressing critical shortages in science and engineering, information and communications technology, and health sectors.

Leveraging Institutional Diversity

INGENIUM's added value stems from the complementary diversity of its member profiles. The Alliance includes comprehensive universities (UNIOVI, UoC, Ud'A, URN), technical universities (TUIASI), universities of applied sciences or similar (HKA, XAMK, HS, MTU), and a specialized medical university (MUS). This diversity enables the Alliance to:

- Cover a broad spectrum of academic disciplines from STEM to social sciences and humanities
- Maintain particular strengths in engineering and health sciences
- Foster interdisciplinary approaches that prepare learners not only for the labour market but also to address societal challenges
- Offer complementary educational programmes without internal competition among members

Building a New Institutional Model

INGENIUM recognizes that Europe lacks a common institutional model for establishing genuine European universities beyond project-based collaborations. To address this gap, the Alliance is pioneering a coherent institutional model at European scale, characterized by:

- Flexible learning pathways allowing students and lifelong learners to acquire key skills through international mobility

- Co-creation processes with industry, public sector, NGOs, and civil society to build educational offerings responsive to societal needs
- Regional ecosystem facilitation connecting the innovation and economic development ecosystems across all partner regions
- Educational innovation through conceptualizing, testing, and upscaling innovative educational components

By prioritizing high-quality education and training—particularly at undergraduate and master's levels—on an inter-university campus where mobility is fully integrated, INGENIUM contributes to realizing the "fifth freedom" for education, research, and innovation.

Key Implementation Commitments

To transform from a project-based initiative into a sustainable, integrated European university, INGENIUM undertakes the following strategic commitments across four critical challenge areas:

1. Building an Integrated Institution with Multi-Speed Integration

Commitment: Establish a flexible framework allowing for diverse levels of institutional integration while maintaining Alliance coherence.

Key Actions:

- Implement a multi-speed integration model where volunteer members can advance faster toward deeper integration without being constrained by consensus-based lowest common denominators
- Enable members with varying strategic priorities to determine their appropriate level of involvement while keeping pathways open for others to join at later stages
- Explore creative solutions including potential partial mergers between certain members and creation of joint services and structures
- Ensure transparent mutual learning and clarity regarding each member's readiness and capacity to dedicate internal resources to INGENIUM
- Allocate future responsibilities based on different contributions, recognizing diverse institutional capacities

2. Establishing the INGENIUM European Campus

Commitment: Accelerate implementation of a comprehensive joint academic offer that provides seamless student mobility and integrated educational experiences.

Key Actions:

- Launch flagship programmes, with at least 2 being operational by the end of the funding period
- Implement the INGENIUM Pathway Programme Framework allowing students to add study fields and international mobility components to their regular programmes, with over 10 Pathway Programmes being launched in 2026-2027
- Develop and deliver additional micro-credentials responsive to working life needs, building on the comprehensive framework already established

- Establish at least four Joint Doctorate Programmes and facilitate co-supervision of at least 10 PhD theses across partner universities
- Prepare to award joint European degrees by piloting the European degree label from 2026 and positioning for full joint European degree status from 2029

3. Shifting from Project-Based to Sustainable Organization

Commitment: Transform INGENIUM's governance and legal structure to enable genuine strategic steering and long-term institutional sustainability.

Key Actions:

- Establish the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) as INGENIUM's legal entity, becoming the first European University Alliance to adopt this form:
- Leverage EGTC benefits including:
  - Capacity to hire joint staff employed directly by the Alliance
  - Enhanced credibility with European, national, and regional stakeholders
  - Improved access to public funding as a single beneficiary
  - Ability to receive revenue from private actors through fee-based services
  - Authority to invest in and manage shared properties and resources
- Pool resources within the EGTC framework, including digital platforms, research infrastructure, services, and potentially staff.
- Define core activities sustainable even in funding interruption scenarios, supported by institutional pledges and operational structures (by IAC January 2026)
- Implement institutional transformation plans across all 10 partner universities
- Strengthen governance through high-level political and strategic involvement, enhanced student representation, and improved external stakeholder engagement

4. Developing a Sustainable Implementation and Funding Model

Commitment: Establish a diversified, resilient funding strategy that ensures INGENIUM's continuity beyond current project-based support.

Key Actions:

- Define and secure institutional commitments including:
  - EGTC membership fees differentiated based on member profiles and capacities
  - Allocation of staff beyond project-funded positions to support core activities
  - Embedding INGENIUM in institutional planning and leadership structures
  - Firm commitments ensuring new academic offerings incorporate an INGENIUM dimension
- Prepare transparent agreements on minimum partner contributions (financial, human resources, leadership involvement) to enable effective division of responsibilities
- Pursue European funding through coordinated applications to Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, and other EU programmes, with an action plan for identifying relevant calls
- Secure national and regional funding by exploring opportunities beyond EUI-specific support

- Generate revenue from educational programmes, particularly fee-based micro-credentials and executive education for businesses, leveraging member institutions' industry connections
- Conduct advocacy at European and national levels for sustainable funding pathways for European Universities post-2027
- Plan for multiple funding scenarios ranging from continued substantial support to complete funding interruption, with operational structures defined for each scenario

5. Timeline: 2025-2035 Roadmap

Immediate Priorities (2025-2026):

- Finalize EGTC legal structure and obtain regulatory approvals
- Define core activities and institutional pledges for minimum viable operations
- Launch joint education call and embed European Degree Label criteria
- Approve institutional transformation plans across partner universities
- Define sustainable funding action plan

Medium-term Goals (2027-2028):

- Achieve full EGTC operational status with hired joint staff
- Implement flagship joint programmes with enrolled students
- Launch additional flexible learning pathway opportunities, including Pathway Programmes and micro-credentials
- Pilot operational structures for core activities
- Apply for long-term Erasmus+ funding (2028-2034)

Long-term Vision (2029-2035):

- Award joint European degrees
- Establish joint centres offering services for all partners
- Explore voluntary mergers among interested members
- Achieve full financial sustainability through diversified funding
- Serve as a recognized role model for European higher education cooperation

Exploitation Strategy

The INGENIUM Long-term Strategy includes an annexed Exploitation Strategy that positions the Alliance as a role model for the European higher education sector. This strategy recognizes that INGENIUM's innovations hold transformative potential far beyond its member institutions.

DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

The content of this long-term strategy has been produced based on the DoA description included in D10.1 and the intertwined Task 10.1.

The long-term strategy also incorporates the exploitation elements described in D10.2. This change in approach was done following the request from EACEA to incorporate.

The strategy has been drafted using the following methodology:

1. Comprehensive analysis of the review report by EACEA and all the data gathered for the preparation of the mid-term review report
2. Review of the relevant policy context, including initiatives by other EUAs
3. Consultations through questionnaire, interviews and group discussions involving the INGENIUM community
4. Validation of draft results through structured dialogue with university leaders, including the INGENIUM Alliance Council.

Deliverable 10.1 Description

The Strategy will be produced at mid-term of the implementation of the work programme. The Strategy will monitor the project impact achieved in the first two years and plan to evaluate and re-calibrate the alternatives for long-term financial sustainability.

Task 10.1: INGENIUM Long-term Strategy

Long-term sustainability is the main challenge for the Alliance, not less than for the sustainability and funding of the newly developed joint activities our universities are committed to perform as a European University, whether education, research, entrepreneurial or societal engagement. Therefore, the partners will be considering the sustainability of the Alliance as part of their endeavour to improve their financial situation in the longer-term, as the successful implementation of the project will have a significant and permanent impact on some key areas of the partner Universities, and will contribute to improve their international position, and therefore their ability to access new funding sources: international students, industry-focused training courses, industry-sponsored learners and / or research, competitive funding. Moreover, as public Universities, their involvement in the Alliance will probably be taken into account in funding decisions, whether by national or regional authorities. Local, regional and in some cases national governments have been involved by partners in the development of the project and explicitly expressed their interest in supporting the Alliance as crucial for the development of the region's resilient community.

All these issues will be considered in the INGENIUM Long-term Strategy proposed in WP10, which will be produced at mid-term of the implementation of the work programme. The Strategy will monitor the project impact achieved in the first two years and plan to evaluate and re-calibrate the alternatives for long-term financial sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The INGENIUM European University is an ambitious Alliance that brings together 10 universities from 10 EU Member States, supported by a large group of associate organisations, ranging from regional and local governments to industry and civil society groups. It is born out of a shared ambition of enhancing the existing Inter-university cooperation between some of the partner universities, while adding new profiles that also share the same objectives. INGENIUM aims to move forward and become a completely integrated European University with campuses distributed throughout the Union.

This ambition remains at the heart of INGENIUM, and we are proud of the many successes that INGENIUM has already achieved. However, after almost three years of intense activity, we are also more conscious of the challenges that alliances such as INGENIUM face. We have a deeper understanding both of how our ambition can be translated into practice and of the difficulties of ensuring that actions have a systemic impact on our institutions. We have furthermore greatly benefited from exchanges of experience and knowledge with other EUIs as well as from the important criticisms underlined in the intermediary evaluation report of the European Commission.

In this context, **the members of INGENIUM decided to undertake an in-depth analysis of their current model of collaboration,** critically assessing our original proposal, openly discussing what was working and what was not, and identifying a set of key priorities that, we believe, will enable our long-term success. Beyond the question of financial sustainability alone, it thus aims to:

- analyse the long-term added value of the alliance,
- diagnose the main challenges to overcome to be sustainable, and
- define concrete measures to work toward sustainability in a ten-year roadmap.

The report itself forms the final deliverable of task 10.1 and has been produced by the Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iași, as part of the WP10 “Impact and Dissemination”. The document also includes a complementary exploitation strategy that explains how INGENIUM plans to contribute as a role model for the European Higher Education sector. It is based on a combination of documentary research (academic literature, grey literature, case studies), online surveys sent to INGENIUM stakeholders (coordinators, WP leaders, students), and more than 35 online interviews conducted with the latter stakeholders and rectors.

The report has been discussed at length by the bodies of INGENIUM and notably the IAC who endorsed the key elements of the strategy following a two day meeting on 8 and 9 October 2025. We are confident that our **long-term strategy** will help us successfully shift from INGENIUM as a project amongst others, to INGENIUM as a truly integrated alliance that shapes our individual institutions across all our missions.

The general context: EUIs in an uncertain world

European Universities Initiatives (EUIs) like INGENIUM have been receiving continuous support since their creation. Since President Macron's speech calling for the creation of EUIs in 2017, the European Commission has organized five calls for proposals, leading to the emergence of 65 alliances. As a winner of the third call, INGENIUM received €14.4 million for the period from 01/01/2023 to 31/12/2026. The majority of its members also benefited from national or regional financial support, sometimes very significant (cf. section II.2). This diversity of financial support has enabled the Alliance to make progress towards the establishment of a European campus, as described in the recent progress report of the Alliance[1].

However, the future of the EUIs is marked by great uncertainty. Europe and the world have seen major political shifts in the last few years. Numerous external factors, such as rising nationalisms, Russia's war against Ukraine, and the major shift in US policy currently underway, could push the EU and its Member States to readjust their strategic priorities. In the coming years, the substantial financial support that has been granted to EUIs is thus no longer guaranteed and could be reduced or reallocated to a few Alliances considered as priorities. As of January 2025, the information provided by the European Commission on the future funding framework is as follows[2]:

- For 2026-2027, "the European Commission expects to publish a call for European Universities under Erasmus+", whose "primary target will be already existing alliances involved in deep institutional transnational cooperation, ensuring sustainable 'bridge' funding into the next EU budgetary period starting in 2028".
- For 2028-2034, the European Commission and its partners are "working on an investment pathway" for EUIs, "to facilitate a comprehensive funding approach, complementing the core educational dimension with support across all alliances' missions (including research and innovation) for wider societal benefit. It also aims to seek synergies *with national and regional funding*".

Various scenarios have been explored by the European actors in higher education, research and innovation (HE&RI). In a recent study, the European University Association explores 4 possible futures of transnational cooperation for Europe's universities[3]. Its forecasts range from the most favourable scenario – the emergence of "*super European universities with campuses across the European Union*" – to the most catastrophic one – "*the collapse of international cooperation*" due to "*extreme nationalist policies*". Although no one can predict what will happen, these scenarios must be viewed as the context to help INGENIUM members shape the future of their Alliance.

[1] INGENIUM, *Deliverable 1.3: INGENIUM Alliance Progress Report 2,* January 2025 (link).
[2] European Commission's website, *Timeline and future developments,* consulted on 21 May 2025 (link).
[3] European University Association, *What if? Exploring possible futures of transnational cooperation for Europe's universities*, 2024 (link).

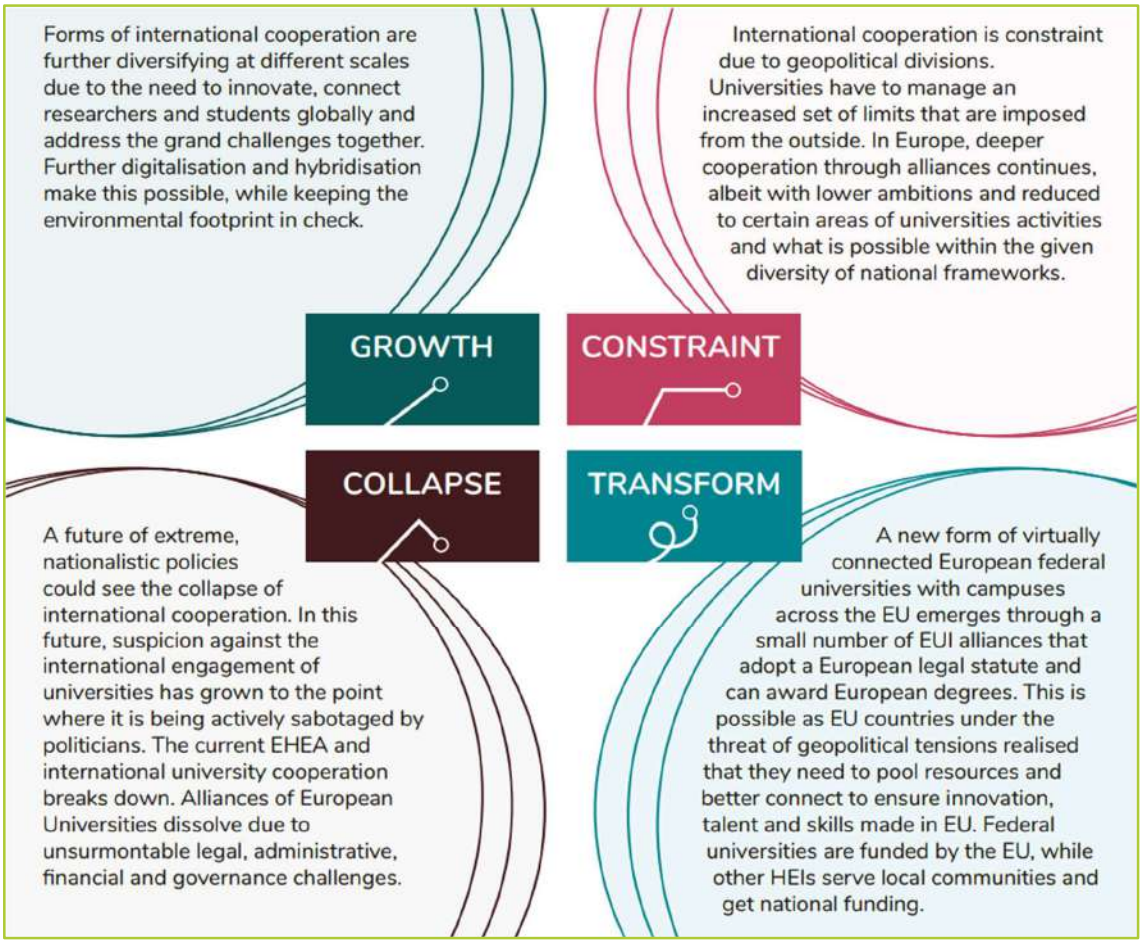

Fig. 1. *Extract from the report "What if? Exploring possible futures of transnational cooperation for Europe's universities", European University Association, 2024.*

Of course, a single European University, such as INGENIUM, has limited influence on future European and national policies. However, by defining an ambitious trajectory and by identifying and implementing specific actions, we can maximise our chances of success, and thus the likelihood that we will be one of the "small number of EUI alliances" that can aspire to be a "federal university" (in the Transform scenario) or potentially one of the few EUI alliances that do not "dissolve" (in the Collapse scenario).

A critical moment for INGENIUM

In its 2025 review report, the European Commission assessed that INGENIUM's progress was insufficient. The report underlines three major failures with a lack of progress on the (1) transformative elements (or in other words the core priorities), (2) specific objectives (or in other words the main actions), and (3) the impact on participating institutions. **This criticism can be summarised as an indication that INGENIUM remains, in practice, a project for the member institutions, rather than their main strategic priority.** Our aim in this document is to propose concrete steps that can be implemented rapidly to correct the situation and increase the resilience and long-term sustainability of INGENIUM.

The report also highlights the importance of an internal quality assurance system supported by data analytics. It further underlines the lack of an integrated approach that ensures that each individual deliverable and milestone is embedded in a comprehensive plan that is aligned with the overall strategy. This is once again a strong indictment of our current approach which lacks strategic focus.

Beyond the renewed emphasis on quality assurance and data analytics, an important point raised in the report is the fact that an EUI should be capable of adapting approaches depending on results with a view to achieving the overall ambition rather than a specific deliverable. This requires a strong governance framework to facilitate decision-making.

As we will outline in this document, the future INGENIUM legal entity (EGTC) is indeed at the heart of the long-term sustainability plan.

The previous paragraphs underline the difficulty of ensuring impact at an institutional level. They explain why, in this document, we focus on the importance of aligning individual institutional strategies with those of INGENIUM as a whole.

According to this interim report, INGENIUM is thus not only at risk of not achieving its objectives by the end of the granting period, but of diverging from the long-term ambition to create a truly integrated European University.

Although we feel that some of the comments are a little harsh, the 10 members of INGENIUM all agree that the main points made are valid and require a strong shift in terms of both strategy and commitment.

INGENIUM has the potential to build a new model for cooperation in higher education and research, but needs to go faster to have a chance to implement it. With little time left before the end of the funding period, we therefore acknowledge the recommendations of the European Commission and have used the opportunity of this deliverable to define strong, concrete actions, in particular to establish the INGENIUM European Campus which is the Alliance's primary objective.

1. INGENIUM'S LONG-TERM ADDED VALUE

1.1. Leveraging the diversity of member profiles

INGENIUM draws on the strengths of 10 members with diverse and complementary profiles. Although not all members have a history of deep transnational cooperation between themselves, they share a strong commitment to transform their institutions by placing internationalisation at the centre of their strategies.

As the analysis below shows, the specificities of each member lead them to benefit from the Alliance in various ways.

- University of Oviedo (UNIOVI): As an old and comprehensive university with 19,000 students, UNIOVI covers a wide range of academic disciplines, with particular strengths

in engineering – reflecting the industrial heritage of the Asturias Region – and health. It is a cornerstone of the Alliance, having established long-standing collaborations with nearly all its members. With INGENIUM, UNIOVI can better structure and consolidate its numerous international partnerships within a coherent and integrated framework. It can also draw on the expertise of specialised members (universities of applied sciences, medical universities) to develop targeted collaborations in engineering and health. Its participation in the INGENIUM European Campus notably involved the Joint Master Programme in Chemical and Biochemical Process Technologies, together with URN and TUIASI.

- Medical University Sofia (MUS): MUS brings a highly specialised profile to the Alliance, which naturally limits the scope of its collaboration to those institutions with aligned academic specialisation. It mainly partners with universities providing medical education, such as UNIOVI, UoC, Ud'A and URN, as well as those with strengths in public health and nursing, such as XAMK and HIS. In terms of joint educational offer, MUS has developed a Digital Health module in partnership with MTU, and is currently co-developing the Joint Master Programme "Advanced Practice Nursing in Acute Care" with XAMK. Looking ahead, it seeks to expand its collaborations into the fields of Biomedical Engineering and Artificial Intelligence with engineering-oriented members such as MTU, TUIASI, XAMK, HS and HKA.
- University of Crete (UoC): UoC is one of the top three universities in Greece and stands out for its academic excellence, particularly in computer science, ecology, and medicine, as recognised by Scimago rankings[4]. It is one of the most recent entrants into the INGENIUM Alliance, joining alongside XAMK during the third application round in 2022. Its relative isolation on the island of Crete made integration into a European alliance particularly necessary. INGENIUM enables it to strengthen its openness to Europe and to send or welcome students on international mobility programmes, particularly with UNIOVI, MUS, Ud'A and URN.
- Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences (HKA): As a university of applied sciences, HKA mostly focuses on conducting applied research and equipping students with practical skills aligned with the needs of the labour market. It maintains close ties with the vibrant industrial ecosystem of the Upper Rhine Region, particularly its many SMEs and key sectors such as automobile manufacturing, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and IT5. The university faces demographic challenges – due to declining student numbers in Baden-Württemberg6 – and competition from the highly attractive Karlsruhe Institute of Technology in its local area. In this context, HKA's participation in INGENIUM strengthens HKA's attractiveness at all levels and offers its students crucial international exposure, which is increasingly sought after by local industries that operate at the European scale.
- South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (XAMK): Created in 2017 from the merger of two institutions, XAMK has quickly risen to prominence as Finland's best university of applied sciences, according to the Finnish Ministry of Education7. The institution primarily focuses on providing local students with professional skills, and on

[4] https://www.scimagoir.com/rankings.php?country=GRC&sector=Higher%20educ.
[5] Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Tourismus, *Economic Facts and Figures Baden-Württemberg*, 2023 (link).
[6] The number of students in Baden-Württemberg is declining according to the latest figures of Destatis, the German official statistical office (link).
[7] INGENIUM's application form to the European Commission, p. 37: "According to the metrics of Ministry of Education in Finland, Xamk is by far the best university of applied sciences in Finland for three consecutive years."

training workers through a solid lifelong learning and skills oriented programme closely linked to local businesses. It does not award doctoral degrees. Its unique governance structure — as a privately operated institution majority owned by 4 cities8 and managed by a CEO — brings a culture of flexibility, innovation, and risk-taking in the Alliance. As one of the most recent INGENIUM members, its cooperation in education and research within the Alliance are promising, but remains to be developed. Its participation in the INGENIUM European campus will notably involve the co-development of the Joint Master Programme "Advanced Practice Nursing in Acute Care" with MUS, and of the first PhD programme in partnership with Ud'A and MTU.

- University Gabriele d'Annunzio Chieti-Pescara (Ud'A): As a large and comprehensive university, Ud'A offers a wide array of academic disciplines, ranging from STEM to SSH to medicine. It plays a vital role in the development and of Abruzzo, a region facing economic challenges such as low GDP growth and above-average unemployment9. Although it has long-standing collaborations with nearly all INGENIUM members, its level of internationalisation remains modest compared to other size-comparable Italian universities10. In this context, INGENIUM represents a strategic opportunity to boost Ud'A's internationalisation, broaden students' horizons, and enhance their employability in a region facing economic challenges through exposure to global networks. UD´A has been a leader in institutional transformation among the INGENIUM partners, creating the first institutional transformation plan in the form of an INGENIUM Regulation. It also led the creation of a joint PhD with MTU and XAMK.
- University of Skövde (HS): HS is a university situated in the rural region of West Sweden. It offers professionally oriented programmes aimed at equipping students with the skills required by the labour market, particularly at bachelor and master's levels. The university places a strong emphasis on applied research, much of which is externally funded—accounting for 55% of its research budget—and closely aligned with the needs of local industries. Through its participation in the INGENIUM Alliance, HS is able to broaden its students' perspectives and better prepare them for the demands of an increasingly international labour market, thereby enhancing their employability and competitiveness. The University has a tradition of working with micro-credentials and is a partner of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master programme in Mechatronics, together with two other INGENIUM partners. HS issues PhDs in the areas of Informatics and Health Science.
- Munster Technological University (MTU): Formed in 2021 from the merger of two institutes of technology, MTU is Ireland's second technological university. With multiple campuses, MTU continues to build a strong identity rooted in technological excellence and applied learning. Within the INGENIUM Alliance, it primarily collaborates with universities of applied sciences sharing a similar mission and educational ethos (HKA, XAMK, HS). A notable example is its recent joint research agreement with XAMK, underlining a commitment to international cooperation in applied research and innovation. It joined the Alliance to immerse its students in a multi-cultural environment, establish a framework for the development and implementation of Open Degrees, and add to its

[8] Mikkeli, Savonlinna, Kotka and Kouvola.
[9] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance 2024: Italy,* December 2024 (link).
[10] Censis, *La classifica Censis delle università italiane (edizione 2024-2025)*, July 2024 (link).

extensive portfolio of our Industry-focused credit bearing Special Purpose Awards[11], continuous professional development programmes and micro-credentials.

- University of Rouen Normandie (URN): As a large, comprehensive university with over 35,000 students, URN offers education in a broad spectrum of disciplines, including medicine. It entered the INGENIUM Alliance with a solid foundation of existing partnerships, particularly with MTU, XAMK, Oviedo, HKA, and Ud'A. INGENIUM plays a pivotal role in helping URN streamline its international strategy by concentrating efforts on a core group of trusted partners, replacing a previously fragmented network of over 230 institutional ties. The Alliance also significantly enhances student mobility at undergraduate, especially between URN's Institutes of Technology (IUTs) and INGENIUM's universities of applied sciences, which share many similarities. As one of the best-resourced members, having secured €1.4 million in funding from the French National Research Agency, URN has significant resources enabling it to fully commit to INGENIUM. Its participation in the INGENIUM European campus will notably involve the co-development of the Joint Master Programmes in -Joint master in Sustainable Management and Coastal Conservation: SMaCCs, and the Joint master Mathematical Modelling, Data Science and Machine Learning for Science and Technology (MDLST).
- Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iasi (TUIASI): TUIASI is a leading national institution in Romania, particularly recognised for its contributions to engineering and technological education. It operates in a competitive environment alongside the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, but maintains a clear identity focused on preparing students to meet the practical needs of the labour market. It aims at training "a highly-qualified and flexible workforce, thus forming the backbone of a regional resilient economy that deals with shocks well and plays a pro-active role in the European economy"[12]. Through its involvement in the Alliance, TUIASI enhances its ability to support regional development while contributing to broader European objectives of economic adaptability and workforce readiness. Its participation in the INGENIUM European campus will notably involve the co-development of three Joint Master Programmes: Artificial Intelligence; Chemical and Biochemical Process Technologies (in collaboration with URN and UNIOVI); Sustainable Development and Circular Economy (in collaboration with HS).

[11] A special purpose award relates to a very specific area of study which addresses a gap in someone's learning. It may equate to a number of modules which are grouped together for up-skilling or reskilling purposes (source: MTU website).
[12] INGENIUM's application to the European Commission, p. 44.

Table 1. *Foundation date, size and discipline coverage of INGENIUM members*

Member	Founding year	Number of students	Strategic focus on STEM	Strategic focus on (para)medical studies	Strategic focus on SSH[13]
UNIOVI	1608	19,000+	✓	✓	✓
MUS	1917	8,000+		✓	
UoC	1973	20,000+	✓	✓	✓
HKA	1878	7,000+	✓		
XAMK	2017	12,000+	✓		
Ud'A	1960	21,000+	✓	✓	✓
HS	1977	11,000+	✓	✓	
MTU	2021	18,000+	✓		
URN	1966	30,000+	✓	✓	✓
TUIASI	1813	14,000+	✓		

The diversity of profiles of our member institutions has two major consequences for INGENIUM as a whole. On the one hand, it enables us to define a very ambitious but concrete goal that leverages our respective strengths to address the crucial European challenge of skills and labour gaps that forms the heart of the European Commission's new initiative for a Union of Skills. On the other hand, it requires us to adopt a differentiated approach because the level of desirable institutional integration is logically not the same for a small university of applied sciences than for a large comprehensive university; it is not the same for a university that takes pride in research rankings than for one that focuses on local territorial impact; it is not the same for a university specialised in the Health sector than for one focused on Engineering.

1.2. Building a new model of university focused on tackling the skills and labour gaps at the European scale

INGENIUM aims to play a key role in addressing the major challenges facing Europe. Among the numerous challenges Europe is facing today, two seem particularly crucial. First, as highlighted by Mario Draghi's report "The future of European competitiveness" (2024), Europe needs to develop cutting-edge competitiveness to avoid falling behind the largest world economies, particularly the United States and China. On an academic level, the report's recommendation is "*to establish and consolidate European academic institutions at the*

[13] SSH: Social Sciences and Humanities.

forefront of global research" by concentrating resources on a few selected universities, for example with an "*ERC for institutions*". Second, as shown by the European Commission in its communication "The Union of skills" (2025), "*Europe does not produce enough skilled graduates from higher education and vocational education and training, nor does it enable enough people to upskill or reskill throughout their working lives*". This is particularly true for certain fields facing acute skills shortage, such as science and engineering, information and communications technology, and health[14]. This requires strengthening local universities that are firmly rooted in their communities and capable of training students in the skills demanded by the job market. Although these two challenges are brought together by the European Commission under the same priority for 2024-2029[15], the profile of INGENIUM members means that INGENIUM as an Alliance is clearly best positioned to address the second one.

The Alliance is uniquely positioned to build a European university focused on tackling the skills and labour gaps. As stated in our application to the European Commission, the INGENIUM members are "*ten mid-size regionally based higher education institutions*", the majority of which are not listed in the ARWU, THE or QS rankings[16]. Under these conditions, our long-term added value for Europe mostly lies in our ability to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed in the world of work. Together, we have all the necessary assets to fulfil this mission: our training offers cover a large spectrum of academic disciplines ranging from STEM to social sciences, with a particular focus on engineering – notably thanks to the universities of applied sciences – and health – notably thanks to the universities offering medical and paramedical studies. INGENIUM also believes in the strategic value of fostering interdisciplinarity between the different fields covered by our partners. We believe interdisciplinary approaches can play a crucial role in the creation of skills, knowledge and attitudes that ensure that learners are not only equipped to thrive in the labour market, but also to respond to societal challenges and become active citizens.

Consequently, rather than focusing on building a world-class research university, INGENIUM will prioritize delivering high-quality education and training – particularly at the undergraduate and master's levels – on an inter-university campus where mobility is fully integrated.

For INGENIUM partners, this will have the following implications:

- A central focus on the creation of flexible learning pathways that allow students and lifelong learners to obtain key skills that help them to thrive in the labour market
- Design co-creation processes with industry, the public sector, NGOs, and other societal actors to build an educational offer that responds to societal needs
- Serve as a facilitator between the regional ecosystems of all the INGENIUM partner institutions

[14] European centre for the development of vocational training (CEDEFOP), *CEDEFOP Labour and skills shortage index - Briefing notes*, January 2025 (link).
[15] The European Commission has defined 7 priorities for 2024-2029. The first one, entitled "A new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness", notably includes 2 objectives: "Putting research and innovation at the heart of our economy" and "Tackling the skills and labour gaps to improve people's careers and economic competitiveness".
[16] INGENIUM winning application, p. 37.

- Conceptualise, test and upscale innovative educational components that prioritise skills acquisition, including those coming from research-based education and challenge-based learning.

INGENIUM sees itself as a contributor to the realisation of the "fifth freedom" for education, research and innovation. Education is the foundation for impactful research and meaningful innovation. By removing barriers to learning and inventing new learning formats and concepts, we will also be building the foundations for a real union of knowledge.

Europe does not yet provide an institutional model for such an ambitious endeavour. Over the past 30 years, Europe has successfully built the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), mainly through the Bologna Process and the Erasmus+ programme, which contributed to more coherent and better funded national higher education systems. It also successfully built the European Research Area (ERA), mainly through the Framework programmes for research and technological development, which have given European research an unprecedented boost. However, despite the progress made possible by the EHEA and the ERA, national systems remain massively diverse in terms of institutional and academic organisation, and Europe does not yet offer a common institutional model for establishing real European universities beyond the existing project-based EUIs.

INGENIUM is convinced that without an institutional model, a long-term sustainability strategy makes little sense. This is why we have taken the decision to define a model that is suited to our specific European University Alliance. INGENIUM thus aims to be one of the pioneering EUIs developing a coherent institutional model at European scale, which will enable the implementation of one key outcome – answering the need for better skills at European scale – on one key level – professional skills. To ensure the sustainability of this model, the Alliance will need to meet 4 long-term challenges:

- Building an integrated institution welcoming diverse levels of involvement,
- Establishing the European campus,
- Shifting from a project-based to an institutional organisation, and
- Developing a sustainable implementation and funding model.

2. INGENIUM'S LONG-TERM CHALLENGES

2.1. Building an integrated institution welcoming diverse levels of integration

The members have an interest in a more or less advanced level of integration within the Alliance. Based on their strategic priorities and interests, members have varying visions of their level of integration in the long term. Some expressed their full commitment to a long-term transformation process whereby their university would become an INGENIUM campus, while others wish to retain a high degree of autonomy, at least at this stage. These strategic choices are a matter of institutional sovereignty and are equally legitimate. However, their misalignment could hinder INGENIUM's progress towards becoming a single European

university.

The current model, although well suited to a project-based approach, is insufficient to drive deep institutional transformation. At this stage, decisions within the Alliance remain largely made by consensus and thus often based on the lowest common denominator[17]. As in any EUI, the decision-making process requires trade-offs and compromises to satisfy all members. This process is effective to a certain extent and has enabled INGENIUM to make significant progress since its creation in 2023. If the Alliance continues along this path, progress is likely to be steady, but slow. Members might launch remarkable joint activities such as the 6 flagship programmes, but a deep, transformative institutional change seems unlikely to happen. To move up to the next level, the cooperation model needs to be revamped.

To succeed in creating a fully integrated European university, INGENIUM must offer a flexible framework allowing for multi-speed integration. In this new model, volunteer members will have the freedom to go further and faster towards integration, without being "slowed down" by others. The circle of universities deciding to go one step further will neither be exclusive nor definitive: other members will always have the opportunity to join them and move to the next level in terms of integration. Only then will INGENIUM have a chance of becoming a truly integrated European university.

Members willing to go further will need to take risks and experiment with new forms of integration. The next model of European university does not yet exist and remains to be invented. It will come with inevitable challenges: how to integrate strategic processes, existing governance bodies, funding models, academic frameworks? It is up to the members to come up with creative, out-of-the-box solutions to address these questions. Risk-taking will be essential to the success of this major transformation. All options are open and can be explored, including the possibility of partial mergers between certain members, as well as the creation of joint services and structures.

This diverse approach will also require an increased level of mutual learning and transparency between the members with regards to their readiness and capacity to dedicate internal resources to INGENIUM. Future allocation of responsibilities within the alliance should be done taking into account these different contributions.

[17] An important exception, which convinced us of the need to change models, was the decision to create an EGTC which was made by majority vote.

Case study 1: Penn State University

The study of university systems and multi-campus universities provides an interesting perspective for reflecting on INGENIUM's institutional model. University systems are groups of higher education institutions governed by a central administrative body, like the University of California, the State University of New York, or the University of London, to name but a few. Such a system helps coordinate policies, funding, academic programs, and sometimes faculty across the different institutions in the group. They differ from multi-campus universities, in which central governance is stronger and where campuses would not form coherent entities if they were independent. The case of Penn State University is interesting because it falls somewhere between these two categories.

Penn State University claims to be a single multi-campus university. It combines a multi-campus structure (24 campuses distributed throughout Pennsylvania[18]) with a large student population, the vast majority of which are undergraduates (88,000 students of which 73,000 are undergraduate[19]). It delivers a single Penn State degree, regardless of the campus. Hence, Penn State appears to have achieved the ambition of INGENIUM: to be a large, single multi-campus university, operating on a vast territory.

However, external stakeholders tend to consider each Penn State campus as a distinct university. First, international rankings do not consider Penn State as a single university. For example, ARWU does not rank the university as such, but instead exclusively its main campus (Penn State University Park)[20]. Similarly, the US News and World Report ranking, one of the most influential rankings in the United States, ranks each campus separately and does not include Penn State alone[21]. Second, not all campuses are considered equal in the job market. Although all campuses claim that they deliver the same Penn State degree, the name of the campus is still indicated in small letters on the parchment, and this tiny indication is often regarded as a key information by employers. Penn State may thus appear to be one single university, but external stakeholders see it differently.

To address this issue, PennState has promoted the 2+2 transfer system that guarantees smooth student mobility between campuses. Penn States' campuses vary in terms of size and academic focus. The main campus (University Park) focuses on postgraduate education and research, whereas the 19 commonwealth campuses provide local 2 and 4 year undergraduate education. These campuses complement each other. Thanks to the "2+2 transfer system", students can – after 2 years – either stay on their campus to complete their 4 year bachelor or, if they have obtained good results, transfer to University Park for the last two years. This system particularly works when the campuses are small and clearly focused on the first two years of undergraduate teaching with little to no research. For example, the Shenango campus (550 students) is not in competition with the other campuses of the university because it targets local students at the associate degree level (first two years) and encourages the best ones to transfer to other campuses after 2 years. Larger Penn State campuses focusing on both

[18] Interestingly, also in Pennsylvania, University of Pittsburgh has a similar structure with 4 other campuses (Bradford, Greensburg, Johnstown and Titusville only delivering master, bachelor and certificate level degrees.
[19] https://datadigest.psu.edu/student-enrollment/
[20] https://www.shanghairanking.com/institution/pennsylvania-state-university-university-park
[21] For example: https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/penn-state-erie-3333

undergraduate and graduate courses, such as Behrend (4'700 students), tend to compete with the main campus to attract the best students.

Lessons for INGENIUM. The 2+2 model of Penn State is interesting for INGENIUM because it shows how campuses with different profiles can co-exist within the same institution and play clearly differentiated roles. Like Penn State campuses, INGENIUM members offer complementary educational programmes without competing with each other, coupled with a highly integrated student mobility system. Furthermore, INGENIUM has a major advantage over PennState thanks to the fact that none of our campuses are in direct competition and they potentially provide strong complementary advantages in terms of culture and language and in terms of areas of specialisation.

2.2. Establishing the INGENIUM European Campus

INGENIUM is currently developing a joint academic offer of various types:

- The INGENIUM Joint Programmes. An INGENIUM joint programme involves partnerships between two or more universities, working together to design and deliver a cohesive curriculum that combines the strengths and expertise of each institution. At their meeting in Ud´A in October 2024, rectors and president decided on 6 Flagship Joint Programmes that INGENIUM should prioritise in the development of its joint academic offering. As of 2025, six flagship programmes are being designed, involving all partner universities. We expect at least two of them to launch in the academic year 2026/2027, and the remaining 4 to start by the academic year 2027/2028.
- The INGENIUM Pathway Programme. Initially branded as "INGENIUM Open Degrees"[22], the INGENIUM Pathway Programme will allow students to add to their regular study programme one or several study fields and embed physical mobility and international learning in their curriculum. As of 2025, the Alliance published the INGENIUM Pathway Framework which lays the groundwork for future advancements in how academic offerings are structured and delivered across the INGENIUM European University. In the coming years, more than 10 Pathway Programmes will be created, and the majority will start to be implemented in the academic year 2026/2027.
- The INGENIUM micro-credentials will be able to flexibly respond to the needs of working life and offer meaningful learning experiences. The deliverable 5.7 "INGENIUM micro-credentials and materials" established a comprehensive framework for creating, delivering, and accrediting micro-credentials within the INGENIUM Alliance. Besides, several mechanisms have been created to facilitate the creation of micro-credentials, such as the Joint Education Lab Projects, Joint Research Groups, Staff Academy, and the Learning Management System. So far, one micro-credential has been fully developed and tested, and at least 5 others are expected before the end of the funding period.

[22] The Open Degree Framework has been rebranded as the "INGENIUM Pathway Framework" to reflect an increasingly innovative and open vision while avoiding confusion with nationally regulated open degree concepts, which might impose restrictions on its implementation.

> The INGENIUM Ecosystems and Joint PhD Programme. The aim is to establish at least 4 Joint Doctorate Programmes and to structure doctoral cooperation around 5 thematic ecosystems that support collaboration between PhD candidates. These programmes, which require the cooperation among research departments from at least three partner universities, will be supported by the INGENIUM Scholarships in order to cover transnational cooperation costs. The Joint PhD Programme in Well-being and Technology will be the first in a series of collaborative doctorate programmes offered by the consortium, focusing on high-priority areas with significant societal impact.

INGENIUM needs to go faster in the implementation of the joint academic offer. During the INGENIUM Alliance Council Meeting of October 2025, rectors and president endorsed a series of measures to ensure the successful completion of the key joint education objectives for the current period, while laying the foundations for long-lasting cooperation. At this meeting, the IAC discussed the final joint education call, the creation of a scholarship fund to support the implementation of INGENIUM programmes across all educational levels, and the role that the future INGENIUM EGTC may play in supporting the joint education offer.

As in any EUI, the obstacles that INGENIUM faces include incompatibilities in regulations at national level[23], as well as degree structures, ECTS degree requirements, academic calendars, grading systems, higher education entry requirements, and student selection criteria[24,25]. To overcome these obstacles, members will implement flexible and creative solutions accommodating this diversity of frameworks, structured around the three pillars of the impact framework presented in the revised version of D2.1

Table 2. *INGENIUM Impact Framework pillars*

Pillar	Focus	Expected Outcome
Institutional Transformation Plans	Regulatory/organisational changes at each university	INGENIUM embedded in university systems; smoother joint education, Standardized processes (admissions, tuition, funding)
Multilateral Agreements	Alliance-wide legal pacts (e.g. Erasmus+, scholarships, credentials)	Shared scholarships and micro-credentials, streamlined mobility
INGENIUM EGTC (legal entity)	New EU legal structure coordinating the alliance	Centralised coordination of programmes and mobility; unified advocacy on QA and funding; single point for data/scholarship management.

In the medium to long term, INGENIUM will also strive to award joint European degrees (and, in the shorter term, Joint Programme recognised with the European Degree Label). The

[23] Bossuyt, S., Brogueira, P., Castro, C., David, F., Dellabale, A., et al., 'Unite! European University: Main difficulties regarding Flexible Study Pathways identified by Partners with Impact on Joint Programmes – Results of a survey across Europe' in Jarvinen, H-M., Silvestre, S., Llorens, S., and Nagy B. V., (Eds.), Proceedings of the 50th SEFI Conference (European Society for Engineering Education, 2022, pp. 1866-1871 (link).
[24] HEInnovate, Jongbloed, B., Innovation in teaching and learning through internationalisation: Initiatives by the ECIU and EPICUR European University Alliances, February 2023 (link).
[25] European Commission: European Research Executive Agency, O'Neill, G. and Acheson, H., Progress of University Alliance Projects – Projects funded under Horizon 2020 IBA-SwafS-Support-1-2020 Call - Pilot I, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023 (link).

European Commission is currently working on the creation of a joint European degree, a new type of degree that will be automatically recognised everywhere in the EU. This process will take place in two steps. First, in 2026-2028, a preparatory label given to joint degree programmes that meet the European criteria will be created. This means students will receive a European degree label certificate together with their joint degree. Second, from 2029 onward, the EU will reflect and make an evidence-informed decision on next steps towards a joint European degree per say. This means students would receive a European degree. This new type of qualification could be awarded *"either jointly by several universities from different countries or possibly by a European legal entity established by such universities"*[26].

Through its future legal entity, INGENIUM will be well positioned to be among the first alliances to award the joint European degree and stands ready to take the necessary measures as soon as they are specified, in case that the recommendations incorporated into the Council Recommendation on a European Quality Assurance and Recognition Framework are implemented by EU Member States.

In order to prepare for those regulatory novelties, INGENIUM has started to use the agreed European Degree criteria as guiding principles for the design of the Cooperation Agreements of its flagship programmes.

2.3. Shifting from a project-based to a sustainable organisation

2.3.1. Establishing a sustainable legal structure

To implement its high level of ambition, INGENIUM decided to acquire legal status. As stated above, INGENIUM is committed to develop a new institutional model focusing on one key outcome: answering the need for better skills at European scale. To give body to this ambition, the members needed a powerful legal structure enabling true strategic steering rather than simply managing projects. This need was identified by the members from the moment they designed their joint application in 2021. The work package-based organisation, although essential to launch the project in its early stages, must be moved beyond to drive a genuine joint training offering across the Alliance.

An in-depth preliminary study was conducted to select the most adapted status. The Alliance conducted a thorough evaluation of INGENIUM's needs and the available legal frameworks. Before settling on the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), the members considered two other legal instruments: the European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG), and the option of becoming a national foundation or association. The latter option covers many statuses, the most popular being that of the international non-profit association under Belgian law (AISBL)[27], chosen by Circle U, CIVIS, EU-CONEXUS, EUNICE, EUTOPIA and YUFE. However, these options are based entirely on national legislation and lacked the EU-wide scope that INGENIUM was aiming for.

[26] Council of the European Union, *Council resolution on a joint European degree label and the next steps towards a possible joint European degree*, 7 May 2025 (link).
[27] *Association internationale sans but lucratif.*

Specifically designed for cross-border public cooperation, the EGTC emerged as the most strategic option. Other academic networks like Eucor or the *Wissenschaftsverbund* already opted for it, but INGENIUM could be the first EUI to take this legal form. It is expected to bring numerous benefits for the sustainability of INGENIUM, notably to:

- Enhance credibility with stakeholders. The creation of a legal structure sends a clear signal of long-term commitment both to internal stakeholders (staff, students) and external ones (EU institutions, national authorities, academic partners, private actors…). It shows that the Members have shifted from a project-based logic to an institutional one.
- Hire staff, especially administrative staff. These individuals may be employed by the Alliance, and in that case, they would no longer be legally affiliated with a member university. They may reside anywhere in Europe and would not necessarily be required to work at the Finnish headquarters. They would be treated on an equal footing in terms of salary, tax, social security, pension, etc., wherever their location.
- Facilitate access to public funding. The EGTC establishes a structure which is the sole interface with national and European levels, and improves the possibility to participate in funding programmes as a single beneficiary. It thus facilitates the submission of joint applications to European calls for projects (Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, etc.) and to receive financial support from national and regional governments.
- Receive revenue from private actors. The legal personality will allow the Alliance to enter into contracts with third parties to deliver fee-based services, such as continuing education. This opens interesting avenues for contributing to the financial sustainability of the Alliance.
- Invest into and manage properties. The legal personality will allow the Alliance to invest into its own goods (facilities, technical equipment, etc.) and to buy services for the benefit of all members.

Finland was chosen as the EGTC's host country following extensive internal consultations. Its transparent and responsive public administration, coupled with a legal system that supports cross-border cooperation, and its regulatory flexibility, particularly in defining applicable laws and employment frameworks, made it an ideal choice. This location will be decisive for various rules, including financial management and auditing, public tendering procedures, fiscal rules, recruitment and payment of staff, social security rules, etc. However, partners also agreed on the possibility of establishing additional INGENIUM offices across member institutions.

The establishment of the EGTC has gone through several stages:

- Drafting of the convention and statutes: By October 2025, these documents will define the EGTC's name, objectives, structure, financial arrangements, staff rules, and applicable law. As per European regulation[28], the EGTC will have at least an assembly and a director. The assembly will be composed of representatives of all the members and have the power to decide on the annual budget of the entity. The director will represent the EGTC and act

[28] Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (link).

on its behalf. The statutes may provide for other bodies as long as they have clearly defined competences.

- Notification of Member States: According to European regulations, each Member State must be notified, with a six-month period for objections. Finland, as the host country, must provide explicit approval.
- Operational launch: By late 2026, the EGTC will formally be registered in Finland, gaining legal status. Its statutes will be submitted to the Committee of the Regions for publication in the Official Journal of the European Union. The EGTC will be fully operational and able to convene its first meetings.

Table 3. *EGTC creation timeline*

2024	2025				2026			
Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Initial legal research	*Decision to create an EGTC*	*Drafting of the convention and the statutes*		*Notification of Member States and legal registration*			*The EGTC becomes fully operational*	

Members are committed to work towards pooling their resources within the EGTC. Recent research[29] recognises that the EUI provides opportunities to pool resources and enable efficiency gains, thereby helping to achieve critical mass and improve global competitiveness. Pooling resources involves various challenges in terms of academic calendars, administrative processes, and technical interoperability. Most of them can be overcome without changing national regulations. At this stage, the INGENIUM members have already set up shared digital platforms (website, open data and open science repository, e-learning platform) and are developing a shared catalogue of research infrastructure that can be pooled. In the coming years, they will go further and explore the possibility of hiring joint staff or creating joint services that would benefit every member. The EGTC is expected to facilitate these types of pooling.

2.3.2. Adapting our governance and operational structures to support long term cooperation

The governance structure plays a key role in ensuring the sustainability of alliances. The European Commission's bottom-up approach did not impose a universal governance model and led to a diverse range of models among EUI. INGENIUM took advantage of this flexibility to set up an inclusive governance structure engaging senior academic leadership, staff, students and external stakeholders through its main bodies: the Alliance Council, the Steering Committee, the Student Board, and the High-level International Advisory Board.

The implementation of the current INGENIUM project has already exposed a number of challenges in this governance structure, such as the overload of topics attributed to the

[29] Lambrechts, A.A., Cavallaro, M. and Lepori, B., 'The European Universities initiative: between status hierarchies and inclusion'. Higher Education, Vol. 88, 2024, pp. 1227–1247, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-023-01167-w

Steering Committee and the lack of differentiation of strategic and operational responsibilities below the rectors' level, as leading alliances such as UNA Europa have done.[30]

Besides, the selection and future implementation of core activities that INGENIUM would commit to support even in a scenario of funding interruption, as described in section 4, will require defining operational structures that are embedded in the universities and that have the responsibility to carry out those core activities. The next step in the consolidation of the alliance will be closely linked with those discussions about the definition of such a core set of activities, as well as the resources (financial, human, political) gathered to support them.

2.4. Developing a sustainable implementation and funding model

Sustainability is closely linked to resources - financial, human, and as INGENIUM progresses, also of other kinds. The lack of a common entity until this point has not allowed for a real centralisation of resources to dedicate to joint priorities. However, INGENIUM has made initial efforts to plan a real joint budget and build a technical secretariat for the whole alliance - although these efforts need to be reinforced to ensure the sustainable growth of the alliance.

The current INGENIUM funding model combines 3 sources of revenue. The Erasmus+ funding is the first and main source of income of the Alliance. It amounts to €14.4 million (the maximum possible sum under the call for proposals) and has been distributed among the 10 members in the form of lump sums. It is limited to a maximum of 80% of the approved Alliance budget. The remaining 20% are covered by contributions from each member university, which constitutes INGENIUM's second source of revenue. On top of this, 8 out of 10 Member States provide additional national or regional financial support to their universities because they are part of an EUI (see table below). Apart from these 3 sources, INGENIUM does not receive funding from private actors (associations, non-profit foundations, companies, etc.), which is fairly normal since only 16% of EUIs declare using private funding[31].

This funding model demonstrates the commitment of Europe, States and universities, but it also comes with challenges. In particular, State-level funding is greatly heterogeneous in scale. While some INGENIUM members benefit from substantial national support (for example, 1.46 M€ for the University of Rouen), others receive little to no governmental funding (€45,000 for the University of Skövde, no reported support for UoC and XAMK). These heterogeneous levels of support create unequal conditions between members, which do not have the same resources to hire staff, support new flexible models of international mobility, develop joint infrastructure, and, ultimately, commit to the Alliance. The INGENIUM mid term report by the European Commission highlighted the challenges that INGENIUM has faced to involve all partners in all project outputs due to the institutional differences in traditions, financial and human resources.

[30] UNA Europa Governance Model: webpage description. Available at: https://www.una-europa.eu/governance#:~:text=Una%20Europa%20is%20governed%20by,from%20the%20Una%20Europa%20Association.
[31] European Commission, *Report on the outcomes and transformational potential of the European Universities initiative,* 2025, p. 121 (link).

Table 4. *Funding by partner university*

	Erasmus+ funding	State funding	University funding
UNIOVI	1,57 M€	Yes (~278 000 €)	20% of the Alliance budget
MUS	0,84 M€	Yes	
UoC	1,15 M€	No	
HKA	1,60 M€	Yes, from DAAD and Baden-Württemberg	
XAMK	1,91 M€	No	
Ud'A	1,40 M€	Yes (~300 000 €)	
HS	1,40 M€	Yes (~45 000 € from UHR)	
MTU	1,97 M€	Yes	
URN	1,46 M€	Yes (~1,46 M€ from ANR)	
TUIASI	1,12 M€	Yes (~295 000 €)	

In the long term, financial sustainability will be a key challenge for INGENIUM, as it will be for many alliances. Recent studies have highlighted financial sustainability as one of the main challenges of EUIs[32,33] and showed the dependence of EUIs to European grants and national contributions[34]. INGENIUM is no exception. According to the surveys and interviews, it still needs to be more deeply embedded into university institutional structures to be able to operate without extra funding, and few activities could be taken over directly by the member institutions at this stage. Although the existing strategies, policies, best practices and digital platforms could be used by universities at little or no additional cost, it is clear that all other activities - particularly international mobility and the development of joint study programmes - require sustainable funding.

To prepare its long-term sustainability, the Alliance must prepare for various funding scenarios. In an ideal scenario, the Alliance would receive long-term financial support from

[32] European Parliament, *The European universities initiative – First lessons, main challenges and perspectives: Research for CULT Committee*, 2023 (link).
[33] European University Alliance, The European Universities Initiative and system level reforms: Current challenges and considerations for the future, 2022 (link).
[34] European Commission, *Final report of the study on the state and effectiveness of national funding systems of higher education to support the European universities initiative. Volume I*, 2023 (link).

the European Commission and would have considerable room for manoeuvre to continue its activities. However, considering the level of uncertainty surrounding this assumption, the Alliance must prepare for more difficult scenarios, ranging from extra funding for a short period of time (typically two years) to a complete funding interruption. In the latter case, the Alliance would operate solely on the financial contributions of its members and any external funding it might be able to obtain. As a result, it would be forced to refocus on a minimum core set of joint activities.

To avoid being caught off guard, the scope of this minimum activity will be discussed and defined by the members before the end of the current funding period, designing new operational structures that would support the execution of those core activities and making concrete pledges by all partners that will also help to shape the participation of INGENIUM in future project calls.

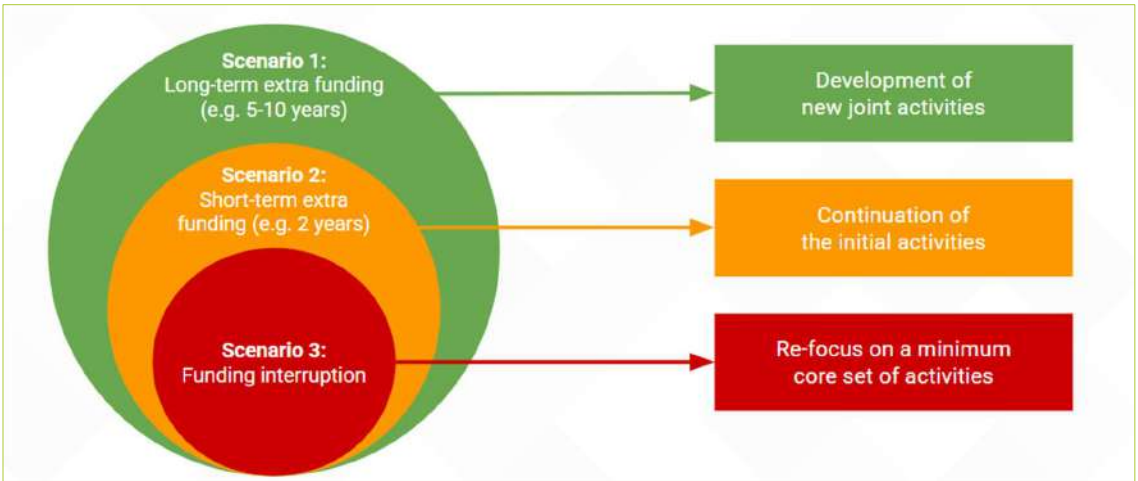

Fig.2. *Example of funding scenarios*

INGENIUM must also establish a diversified funding strategy. In addition to the Erasmus+ funding dedicated to EUIs, various sources of income can be mobilised, such as:

- **Partner contributions, which will have two main components:**
  - Membership fees and other contributions to the EGTC, which will represent a highly efficient way to channel resources to INGENIUM. The EGTC will be able to use these resources to work towards the joint objectives of the partners
  - Other partner contributions, mostly in-kind through the dedication of human resources to the implementation of INGENIUM, and the creation of self-funded INGENIUM initiatives
- **European calls for projects**, in particular from Horizon Europe and Erasmus+. A working group led by TUIASI has been set up to identify relevant European calls for proposals. This is an essential first step towards submitting joint applications. In the coming years, members will define an action plan for responding to calls for proposals, with concrete measures to identify relevant calls and support the drafting of proposals. The EGTC status

will facilitate the participation in such funding programmes by providing a structure with legal personality that can act as a single beneficiary.

- National and regional fundings. In addition to national funding for participation in an EUI, some States and regions may offer funding for international training or research projects. Members should explore any funding opportunities available at their level.
- Revenue-generating activities. According to a 2025 report of the European Commission, "one in five alliances also benefits from tuition fees for executive education, life-long learning activities or degree awarding programmes"35. Although this funding option is not a priority, INGENIUM will explore the possibility of offering fee-based educational programmes (e.g. micro-credentials), particularly for businesses. The Alliance can here leverage the strong ties that some members have with their local industrial ecosystem, in particular universities of applied sciences.

The best way to guarantee the sustainability of the alliance is to ensure that the minimum core set of activities is fully covered by institutional resources, including membership fees to the legal entity and other contributions. These contributions may be adapted to the different realities of the partners and reflect the different levels of integration expressed in this strategy. They may also combine financial contributions with other types, such as the allocation of staff through secondment of other mechanisms. In any case, **it is fundamental that the decision on defining a core set of activities is accompanied by an agreement on the resources that will make them possible, and the structures that will be responsible for their operationalisation.**

INGENIUM must also keep advocating for sustainable funding. Advocacy work will be essential to demonstrate that members are fully committed to making the initiative a success and need financial support in the long term. This work must mainly need to be carried out at the level of rectors and addressed to European and national authorities. INGENIUM can draw inspiration from joint statements made by other alliances, notably ECIU ("A much needed investment pathway for European Universities post 2027") and ENHANCE ("A sustainable funding pathway for European University Alliances"). The possible opening of an EGTC office in Brussels could also contribute to this advocacy work.

Most important of all, the EGTC provides us with a basis to start pooling institutional resources. This will be essential to perform missions that are currently carried out by each institution separately. This approach is key to long-term financial sustainability because it will enable gains in quality and efficiency as well as potential financial savings.

[35] European Commission, *Report on the outcomes and transformational potential of the European Universities initiative*, 2025, p. 120 (link).

Case study: The funding model of Eucor - The European Campus

Presentation. Created in 1989, Eucor - The European Campus is a trinational alliance of 5 universities: Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (Germany), University of Freiburg (Germany), University of Strasbourg (France), University Haute-Alsace (France) and University of Basel (Switzerland). The Alliance adopted the EGTC status in 2015. In parallel, 4 of the 5 members are part of the EPICUR European University Alliance.

Activities. Eucor's activities are diverse. In the field of education, the Alliance offers 11 joint programmes, the possibility for students to create their own bi- and trinational schedule (by taking, for example, one course a week at another university), and joint doctorate programmes. In the field of research, it has specialised in 4 focus areas (Quantum sciences and technology, Personalised health, Sustainability, European identities), established in a dozen research networks, and created cross-borders professorships.

Funding model. In 2024, Eucor budget amounted to €850,105 and combined various sources of income:

- **Members' contributions (€720,000).** Each member paid an average of €144,000, including €84,000 of membership fee and a €60,000 contribution to the Seed Money instrument, which funds calls for projects within the Alliance. **Not all members paid the same membership fee: the amount is determined by the number of students and, as a result, almost doubled between the smallest university** (University Haute-Alsace, €64,571) and the largest one (University of Strasbourg, €125,790). However, the contribution to the Seed Money instrument is the same for all members.
- **External funding (€130,105)**.
    - **European funding**. In recent years, Eucor has obtained two important European grants: €4.2 million in 2019 and €3 million in 2021 as part of two COFUND calls for projects under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (Horizon 2020).
    - **National and regional fundings**. In 2021, Eucor received €800,000 for the feasibility study "Innovation Region Fessenheim" from the French national government, the French Region *Grand Est*, the German Federal Government, and the State of Baden-Württemberg. Besides, some member universities received funding from their national government to implement Eucor projects: €5.5 million from the State of Baden-Württemberg to the University of Freiburg and the KIT, €1 million from various French authorities to the University of Strasbourg, and €800,000 from the Swiss agency Movetia to the University of Basel.
    - **Private funding**. For the realisation of the doctoral programme QUSTEC, Eucor also receives €320,000 in funding from Santander Universities, an organisation that supports higher education worldwide.

Lessons for INGENIUM: The analysis of Eucor's economic model shows that a European academic alliance can be sustained in the long term by combining different sources of funding. A considerable membership fee, coupled with a joint strategy for applying to calls for projects, are essential for moving beyond initial project funding and building a sustainable European campus.

Sources: Eucor website (in English) and Eucor 2024 budget (in French)

3. DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN INPUT-ORIENTED AND OUTPUT-ORIENTED COMMITMENTS

In order to ensure the sustainability of the INGENIUM European University and pave the way to become a true transnational institution, it is key that all INGENIUM partners are ready to step up their contributions to this common endeavour. The successful achievement of the ambitious objectives set out in this strategy will not be achievable without an increase in the resources allocated to INGENIUM by all partners. Therefore, output-oriented commitments should be backed by input-oriented commitments, such as:

- Membership fees for the INGENIUM EGTC that help it to become a strong entity with the capacity to support INGENIUM partners and take functions from them
- Allocation of staff beyond those funded directly by concrete projects, co-financing the participation of staff members with internal resources to support the execution of the core activities defined in Scenario 3 of the funding scenarios description
- Embedding INGENIUM in the core functions of leadership and management personnel, beyond those working in the general INGENIUM management
- Complete introduction of INGENIUM in the academic planning of the partner institutions, with firm commitments to ensure that at least a part of new academic offerings have an INGENIUM dimension

Although a multi-speed approach that welcomes diverse models of integration can allow for different types of contributions, a transparent agreement on minimum commitments to INGENIUM is absolutely fundamental to reinforce trust and ensure effective planning. Without a clear understanding on the capabilities and resources that each partner is willing to allocate to INGENIUM, it won´t be possible to have an effective division of responsibilities for the achievement of the joint objectives included in this strategy, which will necessarily shape the participation of INGENIUM in future project

Therefore, as part of the implementation of this strategy, it is key that all INGENIUM partners make clear commitments of the contributions they are willing to make to the alliance in the short, mid and long term horizons. These commitments can be a stepping stone for future decisions on the allocation of responsibilities in future Erasmus+ projects, as well as other division of responsibilities between alliance members. For instance, partners with more capacity to hire staff and allocate it to INGENIUM, or with more expertise on a topic could be prioritised to lead work packages in future Erasmus+ programmes.

As part of this effort, INGENIUM partners commit to do the following before the end of the current funding period:

- Make individual pledges expressing their institutional commitments in terms of staff allocation, leadership involvement and other types of contributions that would support the execution
- Determine the key elements for the initial membership fee of the INGENIUM legal entity

The diversity between INGENIUM partners may also be reflected in the type of contributions to the alliance. For instance, the membership fees of the EGTC can be different based on the

number of students or the annual budget. Once again, it will be key to avoid taking a lowest common denominator approach and combine the discussion on partner contributions to those related to the commitments

4. OUR 2025-2035 ROADMAP TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

The successful implementation of the long-term sustainability strategy relies on the collective engagement of all members. The accompanying 2025-2035 roadmap translates the overarching strategic priorities into concrete initiatives, led by clearly identified stakeholders, within defined timelines, and supported by measurable indicators to monitor progress. It embodies the joint commitment to build a single and completely integrated European University with a permanent structure and supported by a financially sustainable model.

Table 5. *INGENIUM Roadmap toward sustainability*

#	Action	Leader	Timeline	Indicator
	Foundations for long term sustainability and transformation			
1	Define a list of core activities for a funding interruption scenario	IAC	IAC Meeting January 2026	List of activities approved
2	Define Financial commitments an institutional pledges to ensure the viability of the core activities	IAC	Meeting January 2026 (discussion and initial agreement) Final approval: October 2026	Initial financial commitments discussed in 2026 for the period 2027 onwards
3	Define operational structures to carry out the execution of core activities	IAC	Agreement in January 2026 Piloting 2027 Final implementation post 2028	Document on pilot operational structures approved in IAC meeting TUIASI Operational structures piloted from the academic year 2026/2027
4	Define and implement institutional transformation plans across the 10 partner institutions	Coordinating team IAC members IPCs	Plans (or equivalent) approved in all partner universities by June 2026	At least 8/10 partner approving a transformation plan in their governing councils or equivalent
5	Create thematic clusters that institutionalise cooperation between faculties/departments	Coordinating team IPCs	Networks established by July 2027	At least 3 networks
	Establishing the EGTC legal structure			
6	Draft and approve the convention and statutes	UNIOVI, IAC	Q3 2025	Final versions of convention and statutes approved by the IAC
7	Get approval from national authorities	UNIOVI	Q2 2026	Approval documents
8	Set up EGTC governance, appoint director, define membership fee considering diverse levels of integration	UNIOVI, EGTC governing bodies	Q4 2026	Meeting minutes

9	Initiate the hiring of joint staff and creating joint services	EGTC	Analysis done by the end of Q2 2026 Hiring from 2027	Analysis of joint staff First hiring
	Consolidation INGENIUM as a transnational university engrained in the partner institutions			
10	Ensuring political and strategic involvement at the highest level	IAC, ISC	From 2026	% of Rectors and Vice-Rectors (or delegates) attending IAC and ISC meetings Governance review by the end of the current funding period
11	Strengthen representation and accountability of students	UNIOVI, Student Board	Q4 2025	INGENIUM Student Board Regulations approved
12	Strengthen engagement with external stakeholders	UNIOVI	From 2026	Blueprint on a new model for stakeholder engagement ready by the end of 2026
	Developing a sustainable funding model			
13	Define an action plan to identify and apply to European calls	ISC, Working Group on European calls	2026	Number of applications, Number of projects funded, amount of funding obtained, success rate to calls
14	Advocate for sustainable funding	IAC	From 2026	Number of advocacy actions
15	Offer fee-based educational programmes, such as micro credentials	IAC, ISC	From 2026	Number of programmes, number of students enrolled
	INGENIUM European Campus: Joint Programmes			
16	Launch of the joint education call	WP4, WP5, WP6, technical secretariat	Autumn 2025	At least 50 proposals
17	Embedding EDL criteria in future Joint Programmes	Academic Committee	From 2026	Number of programmes that embed EDL criteria in their Cooperation Agreements, programmes officially awarded the ED Label
18	Pilot new co-creation models with stakeholders and industry	Academic Committee	From 2027	Number of co-created programmes, collaboration activities organised
19	Launch of the first INGENIUM flagship programmes	Any interested members	At least 2 programmes launched by the academic year 2026/2027 At least 4 more programmes by academic year 2027-2028	Programme accreditation documents, number students, scholarships allocated, success rate, satisfaction rate, employment rate of graduates

20	Design and launch the first Joint Doctorate Programmes	Any interested members	At least 2 programmes by the academic year 2026/2027 At least 2 other programmes by the academic year 2027/2028	Number of enrolled students Scholarships allocated
	INGENIUM European Campus: Flexible learning pathways and micro credentials			
21	Design and launch the first Pathway Programmes	All partners	September 2026	Number of students, scholarships allocated, success rate, satisfaction rate, employment rate of graduates…
22	Review the Pathway Programme concept and prepare an upscaling plan to increase outreach in co-creation with stakeholders	All partners	From academic year 2027/2028	Agreement signed by all partners
23	Design and approve the micro credentials agreement	UNIOVI and XAMK lead, all partners sign	Signature 2026	Agreement signed by all partners
24	Design and launch additional micro-credentials	Any interested members	From 2026	Number of enrolled students Number of stakeholders and associate partners involved Creation of a micro credentials administrative agreement
	Consolidating as a true transnational university			
25	Consider the creation of joint centres that offer services for all INGENIUM partners	Voluntary members	From 2026	Joint services/centres created Participation of students/staff
26	Apply for the +2 funding for European Universities in the 2026 call	All partners	2026	Successful application
27	Apply for the long-term funding for European Universities in the Erasmus+ programme 2028/2034	All partners	2028	Successful application
28	Achieve self-accreditation status for joint education if the changes of the Council Recommendation of Quality Assurance are implemented by Member States	All partners	Before 2030	Successful accreditation if legal framework exists
29	Experiment with partial mergers of voluntary members	Voluntary members	2030-2035	-

CONCLUSION

This Long-Term strategy is the key document to approach the finalisation of the first funded period of the INGENIUM, and the main roadmap for its transformation from an alliance of universities to an actual European University with 10 campuses across the union.

The consultations that took place for the preparation of this strategy have confirmed that INGENIUM rectors and presidents remain fully committed to the Alliance. However, they have also demonstrated that INGENIUM will only be able to unleash its full potential with a revamped governance model and working dynamic where the most ambitious initiatives are rewarded and not constrained for the continuous search of consensus.

INGENIUM partners see this long-term strategy as a way to reaffirm their highest priorities and consolidate a clear identity for our European University. Due to the nature of the funding instrument, alliances like INGENIUM started its implementation trying to explore all kinds of objectives at the same time, without tackling the necessary trade-offs that an integration process such as the creation of a transnational university requires. This strategy is a response to those trade-offs, offering a clear identity to INGENIUM while identifying concrete actions that will support the consolidation of this identity.

The strategy also reaffirms that INGENIUM´s highest priority is the development of an inter-university European Campus that provides a wide range of opportunities for students and staff, while responding to the societal needs of the cities and regions that host the partner universities. The different strategic components of the strategy (focus on skills, legal entity development) are all oriented towards the support and expansion of the educational components of the campus.

Although INGENIUM partners do not have the same level of experience in deep transnational cooperation as universities from other alliances, we have repeatedly demonstrated our level of ambition and our capacity to propose and implement creative and innovative solutions to create joint educational opportunities that can reach a substantial part of the student population. The creation of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation is a testament to that ambition - and even before the official registration of the entity, our creation process (and our willingness to share it) is serving as a role model to the whole higher education community, while supporting the policy objective of the European Commission to potentially create (or adapt) a legal status for alliances of European Universities.

INGENIUM partners are convinced that, after the lessons learned in the first three years of project implementation, this strategy constitutes the necessary leap forward to become a leading member of the community of European Universities Alliances, for the benefit of our students, staff, and societies.

Annex I. Exploitation Strategy

1. Introduction and context

The INGENIUM European University Alliance recognizes that its value extends far beyond the immediate benefits to its ten member institutions. As a pioneering alliance committed to tackling skills and labour gaps at the European scale, INGENIUM has developed innovative models, frameworks, and practices that hold transformative potential for the entire European higher education sector. This exploitation strategy, which constitutes an Annex to INGENIUM's long term strategy, outlines how INGENIUM will disseminate and transfer its results beyond the project lifecycle, positioning the Alliance as a role model for institutional transformation in European higher education.

European University Alliances are called upon to serve as test beds and laboratories for the universities of the future benefiting the entire higher education sector by testing new approaches and methods for systemic institutional-level cooperation. INGENIUM commits to being at the forefront of this movement.

The European Commission's evaluation reports emphasize that alliances should drive policy progress at EU level, acting as pioneers in shaping the future of European higher education. Furthermore, the alliances have demonstrated transformative potential at the national level, prompting numerous Member States to adapt legislation and policies to remove barriers to transnational cooperation. INGENIUM's exploitation strategy is designed to maximize this catalytic role.

2. Exploitable Results and Innovations

INGENIUM has developed a portfolio of innovative results across four key dimensions that are ready for exploitation and transfer to the wider higher education community.

2.1. Educational Innovation

Pathway Programme Framework

The INGENIUM Pathway Programme represents a new approach to flexible learning pathways[36]. This framework allows students to add one or several study fields and international mobility components (both virtual and physical) to their regular study programme at a member institution. The framework has been fully documented and is designed for adaptation by other higher education institutions seeking to enhance student mobility and interdisciplinary learning.

INGENIUM Pathways can be implemented by any Higher Education Institution, although they are particularly suitable for alliances and networks. Their biggest value is their scalability, since unlike newly accredited joint programmes, they can be set up without having to go through burdensome administrative procedures.

[36] https://ingenium-university.eu/celebrating-a-milestone-the-ingenium-european-university-launches-pathway-framework/

Micro-credentials Ecosystem

INGENIUM has established a comprehensive framework for creating, delivering, and accrediting micro-credentials within a transnational alliance. The framework includes mechanisms such as Joint Education Lab Projects, Joint Research Groups, Staff Academy integration, and Learning Management System delivery.

This model is particularly relevant for institutions seeking to respond flexibly to working life needs while maintaining academic quality.

Joint PhD ecosystems and Joint PhD Programmes

The INGENIUM Doctoral Ecosystems[37] offer an innovative approach to doctoral education, bringing together researchers, institutions, and industry partners across Europe. The Ecosystems will support enhanced collaboration among the 10 partner universities, increasing opportunities while allowing for different models of cooperation. In some cases, the Ecosystems will incorporate Joint PhD programmes, while in other cases they may be used to create cooperations around training activities for PhD students.

The INGENIUM approach to Joint Doctorate Programmes requires cooperation among research departments from at least three partner universities, supported by dedicated scholarships to cover transnational cooperation costs.

The first programme, the Joint Doctorate Programme in Innovative strategies for Well-being, serves as a blueprint for collaborative doctoral education addressing high-priority societal challenges. This programme is particularly innovative due to the involvement of XAMK, a University of Applied Sciences that does not award PhDs under Finnish law, but can make a great contribution to international programmes thanks to its cutting edge facilities and innovation expertise.

2.2. Governance and Institutional Innovation

EGTC Legal Structure for European Universities

INGENIUM is set to be the first European University Alliance to adopt the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) legal form.

This represents a pioneering governance innovation that provides:

- Full legal personality enabling the alliance to act as a single entity
- Capacity to hire staff directly employed by the Alliance
- Enhanced credibility with external stakeholders and funding bodies
- Ability to manage properties and enter contracts for fee-based services
- Improved access to European, national, and regional funding programmes

The EGTC model, specifically designed for cross-border public cooperation, offers a sustainable legal framework that other alliances have begun to explore but INGENIUM will be first among European Universities to implement. The statutes, convention, and

[37] https://ingenium-university.eu/doctoral-ecosystems/

implementation roadmap developed by INGENIUM will provide a comprehensive blueprint for other alliances considering similar legal structures.

As part of the implementation process of the EGTC, INGENIUM also plans to produce recommendations on the type of regulatory changes that the EU and Member States can make to improve the effectiveness.

2.3. Digital Infrastructure and Platforms

INGENIUM has developed or is developing several digital platforms that facilitate transnational cooperation:

- Shared digital platforms including website, open data and open science repository
- Course Catalogue as the main hub to share educational offers among all the partner institutions
- Learning Management System integrated across all member institutions

These platforms are designed with interoperability and scalability in mind, making them potentially adaptable for use by other alliances and institutions.

2.4. Community engagement model

INGENIUM's community engaged model has been based in the organisation of multi-stakeholder events through the initiative “The 10 Days of INGENIUM”.

These events have combined:

- The organisation of training events for students (schools) of the 10 partner institutions. In these events, students practised real-life skills and engaged with stakeholders from across the partner institutions.
- Training events for staff focusing on innovative pedagogies (staff academies)
- Governance and operational meetings for INGENIUM structures
- Activities to bring together all four stakeholders: students, staff, governance/management, and external stakeholders

These events have been instrumental to raise awareness about the Alliance and gain visibility across the local communities of the 10 partner institutions. They provide a blueprint for any university network/alliance.

3. Target Groups and Exploitation Objectives

INGENIUM's exploitation strategy identifies distinct target groups, each with specific objectives tailored to their needs and potential to benefit from INGENIUM's innovations.

3.1. European University Alliances

Objective: Position INGENIUM as a role model and knowledge partner for other alliances, particularly those with similar profiles (regionally-based, skills-focused institutions).

INGENIUM will share experiences, frameworks, and practical solutions with other alliances through the FOR-EU4ALL community of practice, which brings together all 60+ European University Alliances into a unified structure for sharing best practices.

Specific areas of knowledge transfer include:

- EGTC implementation roadmap and lessons learned
- Flexible learning pathways
- Community engagement models

3.2. Higher Education Institutions Not in European University Alliances

Objective: Transfer INGENIUM's innovations to European and global HEIs not currently involved in the European Universities Initiative.

Many of INGENIUM's frameworks and methodologies are adaptable for bilateral or smaller-scale partnerships. INGENIUM sees great potential in introducing these results into its collaborations with HEIs from across Europe and the world.

Specific exploitable results for this group include:

- Pathway programme framework adaptable to any institutional partnership
- Micro-credentials development and delivery framework
- Digital platform architectures and interoperability solutions
- Quality assurance approaches for joint programmes
- Stakeholder engagement methodologies

3.3. National and Regional Authorities

Objective: Influence policy development and regulatory frameworks to facilitate transnational cooperation in higher education.

INGENIUM's experiences identify both barriers and solutions related to:

- Recognition of joint degrees and qualifications
- Funding mechanisms for transnational cooperation
- Legal frameworks for institutional cooperation
- Quality assurance for joint programmes
- Student mobility support systems

INGENIUM will actively engage in policy dialogue, presenting concrete cases and evidence-based recommendations derived from implementation experiences.

3.4. European Commission and EU Policymakers

Objective: Contribute to the development of European policies and initiatives related to higher education, particularly the future Erasmus+ programme, joint European degree, the development of legal entities, and the broader Union of Skills agenda.

As a pioneer in several areas (EGTC legal form, skills-focused alliance model, multi-speed integration), INGENIUM provides valuable insights for European policy development.

The alliance is well-positioned to:

- Pilot the joint European degree label and provide implementation feedback
- Pilot the joint European degree and provide implementation feedback
- Demonstrate how alliances contribute to addressing skills gaps
- Test and refine quality assurance approaches for transnational cooperation
- Showcase the value of diverse institutional profiles within alliances

3.5. Business, Industry, and Civil Society Partners

Objective: Demonstrate effective models of university-business-society collaboration that enhance innovation, knowledge transfer, and regional development.

INGENIUM's member institutions maintain strong ties with regional industries, particularly SMEs, and civil society organizations. Exploitable results for this group include:

- Micro-credentials and continuing education models aligned with labour market needs
- Industry-engaged programme design methodologies
- Knowledge transfer mechanisms (spin-offs, patents, consultancy, collaborative research) Regional development impact frameworks

4. Dissemination Strategy and Activities

INGENIUM will use different channels to ensure that its innovations reach target audiences effectively and sustainably

4.1. Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

High-level engagement: INGENIUM will maintain dialogue with European institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, Council of the European Union), national ministries of education and research, and regional authorities

Key activities:

- Participation in European-level forums such as the Forum of European Universities Alliances
- Preparation and dissemination of policy briefs and position papers
- Advocacy for sustainable funding pathways for European Universities post-2027 Presentation of INGENIUM's model at ministerial conferences and policy roundtables Potential establishment of an EGTC office in Brussels to facilitate policy engagement

Timeline: Ongoing from 2026, with intensification ahead of the 2028-2034 Erasmus+ programme negotiations.

4.2. Academic and Professional Publications

Objective: Ensure that INGENIUM's innovations are documented in academic and professional literature, contributing to the knowledge base on transnational higher education cooperation.

Key activities:

- Working papers and case studies documenting implementation experiences
- Presentation at academic conferences (European Association for International Education, etc.)

Timeline: Minimum 2 publications per year from 2026 onwards.

4.3. Conferences, Workshops, and Training Events

Objective: Provide interactive learning opportunities for practitioners and decision-makers from other institutions.

Key activities:

From 2027, organization of annual INGENIUM International Conference showcasing alliance innovations and inviting external participants

- Thematic workshops on specific topics (EGTC implementation, joint programme quality assurance, resource pooling, micro-credentials, etc.)
- Training sessions for staff from other institutions interested in implementing INGENIUM methodologies
- Participation in conferences organized by other alliances and networks
- Contribution to FOR-EU4ALL events and activities

Timeline: Arranging minimum 2 major events per year from 2027, plus participation in 4-6 external events annually.

4.4. Open-Source Educational and Management Materials

Objective: Make INGENIUM's frameworks, guidelines, and tools freely available for adaptation and use by other institutions].

Key materials for publication:

Pathway Programme Framework (already published)

- Pathway Programme Manual
- Micro-credentials Framework and quality assurance guidelines
- EGTC Convention and Statutes
- EGTC Operational Plan
- Joint Programme Development Guidelines
- Digital Platform Technical Specifications and Interoperability Standards

Dissemination channels: INGENIUM website, European Commission's EU Bookshop, academic repositories, specialized higher education platforms.

Timeline: Progressive publication from 2025 onwards, with major releases in 2026 (EGTC materials) and 2027 (rest of the materials and deliverables, following EACEA approval).

4.5. FOR-EU4ALL Community of Practice

Objective: Leverage the structured Community of Practice that brings together all European University Alliances to systematically share INGENIUM's innovations [

FOR-EU4ALL is a project funded by the European Commission that runs from 2024-2028. It provides a coordinated framework for:

- Sharing best practices among alliances
- Transferring experiences to the broader higher education sector
- Addressing shared challenges collaboratively
- Engaging with stakeholders and policymakers

INGENIUM will actively contribute to FOR-EU4ALL activities by:

- Participating in thematic working groups
- Presenting case studies and lessons learned
- Contributing to FOR-EU4ALL publications and events

4.6. Direct Institutional Partnerships and support

Objective: Provide targeted support to institutions and alliances seeking to implement specific INGENIUM innovations.

Key activities:

- Bilateral partnerships with institutions interested in adapting INGENIUM frameworks
- Consultancy services for alliances considering EGTC or similar legal structures
- Peer learning and exchange visits
- Twinning arrangements for joint programme development
- Technical assistance for digital platform implementation

Timeline: Pilot activities from 2026, established support provision from 2027.

5. Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

The exploitation of INGENIUM's results is designed to create lasting impact that extends well beyond the current funding period

5.1. Embedding Exploitation in Core Alliance Activities

Exploitation is not a separate or supplementary activity but is integrated into INGENIUM's core mission and governance structure.

Key integration mechanisms include:

- Designated responsibility: Within INGENIUM's governance structure, exploitation and dissemination responsibilities are assigned to specific structures and individuals, with clear accountability and performance indicators.
- EGTC capacity: The EGTC legal structure will enable INGENIUM to sustain exploitation activities independently, with dedicated staff and resources beyond project-based funding [1].
- Quality assurance: All major innovations undergo internal quality review before external dissemination, ensuring that shared materials meet high standards and reflect genuine good practice

5.2. Measuring Exploitation Impact

INGENIUM will track and evaluate the uptake and impact of its innovations using specific indicators:

Quantitative indicators:

- Number of institutions/alliances expressing interest in INGENIUM frameworks/activities
- Use of INGENIUM publications and materials
- Attendance at INGENIUM events and workshops
- Number of bilateral partnerships and collaboration engagements
- Policy changes at national or European level
- Media coverage and visibility metrics

Qualitative indicators:

- Testimonials and case studies from institutions implementing INGENIUM innovations
- Recognition by peer alliances and higher education organizations
- Invitations to contribute to conferences, policy consultations and expert groups

Reporting: Annual exploitation reports will be prepared and discussed by INGENIUM's governance bodies. An overview of the main results will be shared through the final reporting exercise to EACEA.

5.3. Evolving the Exploitation Strategy

This exploitation strategy is a living document that will be reviewed by the Alliance Governance and updated regularly based on:

- Feedback from target groups
- Emerging opportunities and priorities in European higher education
- Evolution of INGENIUM's own innovations and practices
- Lessons learned from dissemination activities

Annex II. Executive Summary of the EGTC Operational Plan[38]

The INGENIUM Alliance of 10 European universities is creating a joint legal entity—the INGENIUM EGTC—to strengthen transnational cooperation and deliver on its European Campus vision. The EGTC will centralize services, reduce administrative burdens, and unlock funding, while acting in full respect of national and institutional autonomy.

Why the EGTC?

- Legally recognized EU instrument for cross-border cooperation;
- Flexible, efficient, and aligned with the "fifth freedom" (mobility of knowledge);
- Already used successfully by EUCOR and supported in EU legal statute policy work.

What It Will Do:

- Support the coordination of INGENIUM's joint academic offer (programmes, mobility, micro-credentials;
- Manage shared resources and logistics (e.g. scholarships, IT platforms, staff support);
- Apply directly for EU and national funding (e.g. Erasmus+, Horizon);
- Act as a policy voice at EU level;
- Enable smoother implementation of transformation reforms across institutions.

What's Needed Now:

Each university must approve the EGTC Convention and Statutes in its decision-making bodies before the end of Q3 2026. Ministries will be asked to approve based on national procedures aligned with the EGTC regulation.

Table 6 *Key Timeline for EGTC implementation*

Phase	Timeline	Responsible Bodies
Internal Approvals	Oct 2025 – March 2026	University Senates/Governing Councils
Ministerial Approvals	March– July 2026	Finnish Ministry (legal seat) + tacit approvals elsewhere
EGTC Registration	Summer 2026	Finnish authorities + EU registry
Start of Operations	Late 2026	Founding Assembly: Elect Chair, appoint Director
First Activities	Early 2027	Launch calls, support programmes & funding

[38] The complete version of the EGTC Operational Plan is available upon request

What's Being Prepared in Parallel:

The Legal Task Force is drafting key internal regulations so the EGTC is fully operational from day one, including:

- Detailed activity plan;
- Standing orders, financial and HR rules;
- Initial budget (a minimum of around €300K) and membership fee model;
- Risk, data, and communications plans.

Why It Matters:

This is not just a legal formality, it's a strategic leap to embed INGENIUM in EU higher education infrastructure. The EGTC will be the driver of INGENIUM's long-term impact, sustainability, and visibility.