



Circle U.
European University Alliance

Joint policy framework for mobility

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PREAMBLE

The nine universities in Circle U. are all engaged in creating and applying knowledge through high-quality education and research to benefit the welfare and growth of society today and tomorrow. We bring together universities from countries inside and outside the EU and cover nine countries and multiple regions. This diversity is a strength, and the ability to see the world through the eyes of others is a fundamental skill that we seek to develop in students and staff.

Internationalisation, and mobility in multiple formats, are a significant means of achieving quality through diversity within Circle U. Facilitating and boosting mobility will contribute to the knitting-together of the Alliance communities, and to building a European identity and capacity to solve tomorrow's challenges. Encouraging and supporting all students and staff to discover the potential of our collaboration and to develop a mind-set that enables one to think and act effectively in a multicultural environment is a priority.

We aim to make learning, teaching and training periods abroad the norm for all students and staff. Through a combination of traditional mobility, virtual activities, challenges and case competitions, more students and staff will gain international experience and expand their contacts. With activities also including our 44 associated partners, this will result in access to a greater European network. We are building a European inter-university campus, where students and staff can move and work together more seamlessly. This will lead to a significant increase in the international exposure of students and staff and for upscaling of the Circle U. mobility cooperation aiming for an international experience for everyone.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

With this updated policy framework for mobility, we confirm our endeavour to enable, simplify, embed, promote and strengthen all types of mobility and international exposure between the Alliance partners. The Circle U. alliance has committed to working towards the mobility goal of international exposure of 50%, in line with the ambition of the EU Commission.

To become an inclusive European University with seamless mobility for all, this framework sets out the principles for simplifying procedures, removing administrative barriers, fostering the exchange of best practices and creating solid but agile cross-institutional operations. This will in turn reduce the transaction costs for students and staff, make mobility accessible, and thereby allow us to reach our mobility goals and form the organisational basis for the implementation of activities across the Circle U. eco-system.

The Erasmus+ programme and the accompanying funding instruments, as well as the focus on digitalization, green travel and inclusion, will provide the basis for sustaining mobility while also developing new formats that will make mobility more accessible. One of the main tools of boosting mobility is the Circle U. Open Campus that will offer an increased number of joint educational activities, ranging from open conversations and courses available for a large number of students to joint programmes. It should be noted however that even though Circle U. partners will commit to these goals, the same funding instruments will not be available to all partners, thus other funding sources should be explored.

Circle U. universities are all independent entities subject to different national legislations and diverse contexts. As an Alliance, we must therefore negotiate our way towards our common goals and reach for support at home to implement the concepts and activities we develop together. By committing to this framework, all partners will ensure implementation of the objectives of the framework at university level and ensure that involved teams are properly resourced. Taking into account the differences in national legislation and other institutional constraints,

implementation in some areas may vary among the partners. Circle U. will also push for necessary changes in EU and national regulations that hamper smooth and easy student mobility and inter-university integration in Europe.

To ensure relevance and follow-up, the joint policy framework must be supplemented by action plans at Alliance and university level. Action plans will cover mobility priorities as described below and in line with the Circle U. mobility strategy. In this phase, it will be essential for all partners to add quantitative targets for the initiatives to ensure progress, measure and evaluate our impact.

The Circle U. Joint Policy Framework for Mobility covers all types of mobility and international exposure whether virtual, blended, physical and other, for students and academic and administrative staff. Student mobility includes all levels (BA, MA and PhD) and can be short term or long term for studies or traineeships. Doctoral students may be regarded as either students or academic staff depending on the context and the individual universities. This point will be elaborated in the Joint Framework for Recognition.

MOBILITY PRIORITIES

The policy framework has six priorities:

- 1 Inter Institutional Agreements
- 2 Environmentally Friendly mobility
- 3 Inclusive Mobility
- 4 Staff Mobility
- 5 Embedded Mobility
- 6 Language Preparation Activities

For each priority targets and key initiatives are listed.

PRIORITY 1: INTER-INSTITUTIONAL AGREEMENTS

While some bilateral streams of mobility are very solidly established and clearly popular with students, there is a large potential to increase overall mobility across Circle U. To do so, Circle U. partners commit to expanding inter-institutional agreements. Existing subject-specific exchange agreements will continue as the foundation for collaboration. A bottom-up approach will ensure strong commitment and long-term viability due to close academic involvement.

Circle U. partners will enter into additional exchange agreements to ensure an inclusive and diverse offer to students and staff. The nature of agreements may vary, taking into consideration institutional constraints and national legislation.

Long-term physical mobility is strongly encouraged, due to its possibility for immersion and development of intercultural competence. Circle U. partners also recognise the potential of flexible mobility formats, i.e. blended and short-term, providing students with accessible exchange opportunities for all regardless of backgrounds, circumstances and study fields. Securing funding for mobile participants is an important element in boosting mobility, and this will be a priority when entering agreements.

TARGETS

- **All Circle U. students and staff are covered by an exchange agreement**
- **Agreements are fee neutral and support various mobility formats**
- **Exchanges among alliance partners are balanced**

INITIATIVES

- **Developing the multi-lateral, university-wide agreement**
The multilateral, university-wide agreement signed in spring 2022 and renewed in 2024 will be constantly monitored. Partners will assess possibilities of adjustments on an ongoing basis to meet the needs of the partners. Subject to these adjustments, partners may explore the possibilities of increasing the mobility numbers defined in the multilateral university-wide agreement
- **Flexibility in agreements**
To ensure flexibility in all agreements, and to help maintain balanced exchanges, an exchange ratio between semester and short-term mobility options will be negotiated by the partners involved. However, if possible, and in line with national regulations, partners are encouraged not to consider short-term student mobility and/or staff mobility as part of the exchange ratio. Partners are also encouraged, whenever possible, to show ongoing flexibility in the management of the agreements.
- **Incorporating new mobility formats in agreements**
Circle U. partners will implement short-term, blended and virtual mobility formats supported by the Erasmus+ programme. Blended Intensive Programmes are a core format to be further developed in terms of administrative processes to support activities offered by the Open Campus or internal university platforms.
- **Promoting exchanges**
To support emerging agreements and mobility activities and to maintain balanced exchanges, partners will ensure the same level of visibility for all Circle U. universities and commit to promoting all Circle U. opportunities to students and staff through improving strategic communications including campaigns and channels of information.

PRIORITY 2: ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY MOBILITY

Circle U. confirms its commitment to sustainability in all actions, aligning with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The alliance prioritizes raising awareness and reducing carbon footprints by promoting sustainable transport modes and environmentally responsible behavior during mobility. Visiting students and staff will receive guidance on sustainable practices, fostering exchanges of green ideas and perspectives. Digital technologies will complement physical mobility, enabling shared teaching and learning activities like lecture videos and learning paths. Circle U. will align with existing sustainable digitalization processes, such as Erasmus Without Paper, replacing paper-based workflows and organizing eco-friendly conferences and events.

TARGETS:

- **Environmentally responsible behavior in all activities is an integrated part of campus life**
- **Virtual and digital mobility formats are available alternatives for cooperation in the alliance**
- **Information on sustainable choices for student and staff opportunities is accessible for all**

INITIATIVES

- **Accessible information regarding environmentally responsible behaviour**
Circle U. will continue developing an accessible overview for students and staff, detailing sustainable, timely, and affordable travel options between partner universities. This includes carbon calculators, alternative travel suggestions (i.e. EURAIL), and welcome materials with guidance on sustainable behaviour at the host campus and city. Introduction events for visiting students and staff will further emphasize eco-friendly practices and provide information on sustainable transport and local environmental initiatives.
- **Support for student-driven sustainability initiatives**
Circle U. partners will prioritise co-creation of events and campaigns with and for students building on existing initiatives and good practices at the partners institutions.
- **Sustainable meetings**
Circle U. partners will strive to coordinate and combine meetings, events, and choices of venue to minimize air travel. Ways to improve sustainable physical conferences and staff weeks will tested and shared on an ongoing basis
- **Development of digital infrastructure**
Recommendations and guidelines for virtual courses, conferences and seminars will be created. The work on a shared platform for virtual and blended learning courses is still in progress. This will be followed up by pilot projects, and guidelines for virtual and hybrid seminars and conferences made available on the Circle U. web pages
- **Digital administration of mobility**
Circle U. partners will continue testing and implementing efficient digital procedures for mobility cooperation, in line with overarching structures like the Erasmus Without Paper network.

PRIORITY 3: INCLUSIVE MOBILITY

Societies are increasingly diverse, and as an alliance, we must continue to navigate this diversity to create mobility opportunities that are inclusive and accessible to all. All members have systems in place to support our students and staff with special needs. Building on existing strengths and expertise, we will connect with relevant stakeholders, to develop new ways of ensuring equal and equitable access to mobile participants from all backgrounds. A joint ED&I strategy for Circle U. aims to mediate and enhance support for students and staff from diverse backgrounds across its member institutions by developing a common vision for equity, diversity and inclusion that can be accepted by all alliance members and for which responsibility is shared across the alliance. For the purposes of this priority, inclusion is defined as the process of helping students and staff to overcome specific challenges and barriers to take part in mobility. Circle U. will work towards inclusion of all students and staff, whether they are defined as having fewer opportunities or are from underrepresented groups in mobility.

TARGETS

- **Increased access for students with fewer opportunities and students from underrepresented groups is provided**
- **Increased access for staff, mobility officers and teachers is provided**
- **Teams and departments internally and across the alliance secure qualified and measurable outreach and providing support structures and alignment with national and EU policies**

INITIATIVES

- **Flexible mobility formats and accessibility in the physical and the digital world**
Circle U. will continue to develop and offer a varied range of mobility experiences ensuring more flexibility thereby providing options for international exposure for all students regardless of their background. We will add accessibility to virtual platforms as blended and online teaching elements are developed.
- **Semester mobility**
Circle U. will make every effort possible to support students from non-traditional backgrounds in their plans to partake in semester mobility. Those efforts include a targeted outreach effort, more customized advising, exchange tracks, and providing adequate funding according to national and EU policies.
- **Better support during all phases of mobility**
The partners will strengthen support to incoming and outgoing students from underrepresented groups before, during and after mobility. This applies regardless of mobility type and Circle U. partners will increase their efforts to design and coordinate efforts across this continuum.
- **Intensifying awareness about opportunities and support**
Emphasis will be placed on making information about mobility opportunities and financial and practical support available for students with fewer opportunities. This will mainly be the responsibility of the individual partners. Information about support at the Circle U. partner universities will be developed and made available in an easily accessible and comparable format.
- **Targeted campaigns**
All partners are committed to analysing mobility patterns to identify underrepresented groups of students. This will continue to be the foundation for a joint effort to develop targeted and adapted campaigns for different groups of students. Priority will be on involving students as co-creators in this.
- **A successful and measurable outreach and advising system to underrepresented groups**
Identifying the needs and especially the obstacles those groups are facing is vital, as is better outreach to underrepresented groups. A sensitive and tailored advising will increase mobility within this group.
- **Training of staff/teachers**
Institutional support plays a vital role and inclusion training for all staff who advise students on mobility should be provided. Circle U. will build on existing strengths among partners to create awareness and

training about inclusion across the alliance through communities of practice, seminars and staff weeks).

- **Connecting to existing groups focusing on ED&I**

The ED&I group in Circle U. will meet regularly to align inclusion targets with the mobility strategy and the JPF. This ongoing work in progress will ensure a further embedding of ED&I principles into the daily work of the Alliance.

PRIORITY 4: STAFF MOBILITY

Staff mobility is a valuable opportunity for academic and non-academic staff to share and acquire new knowledge and develop new expertise. It is fundamental for strengthening cooperation among Circle U. partners, enhancing a sense of belonging to a dynamic community and achieving the mobility objectives of the alliance. Academic staff are also among the primary drivers for mobility in their capacity as advisors, role models and initiators of inter-institutional agreements and new joint teaching initiatives. Staff mobility thus has the potential for a strong impact on academic quality, cooperation and innovation.

By combining education, research, and mobility, academic staff can enrich course content, implement innovative teaching methods, and contribute to curriculum development. This includes, for example, mobility tracks, embedded mobility elements, summer schools and blended intensive programmes, which are just some of the mobility initiatives that are reliant on close cooperation and trust that mobility can build. Administrative staff benefit from building up networks and communities of practice, which is essential to support the implementation of the initiatives across the alliance ecosystem. As a result, groups of administrative staff with very little or no prior mobility experience have started to become mobile.

TARGETS

- **Academic and administrative staff engage in mobility within the Alliance in flexible ways**
- **An increased number of both academic and administrative staff take part in mobility, in particular staff who are traditionally underrepresented in international cooperation**
- **Recognition of staff mobility is improved**

INITIATIVES

- **Targeted campaigns and events for staff**
The partners commit to raising awareness of the added value of staff mobility across the universities, for example by collecting and sharing testimonials from participants on the Circle U. website, and by encouraging participation in communities of practice. Each partner will in turn launch new types of staff events, including virtual events, e.g., mobility fairs for staff, seminars, and staff training weeks.
- **Simplifying and streamlining information and support procedures**
Circle U. aims to simplify administrative processes related to the application process. Fact sheets that provide contacts and information for each partner are available on the Circle U. website. This includes practicalities related to funding, travel, housing, cost of living and getting around.
- **Flexible models for staff mobility for teaching**
In the Erasmus+ Programme, the requirement for teaching of a minimum of 8 hours per week can be a barrier. It is therefore important to promote the option for combined training and teaching mobility as well as exploring options for virtual teaching before or after mobility. Virtual mobility is also encouraged.
- **Empowering early career researchers**
Targeting early career researchers to strengthen their networks as well as scientific and teaching collaboration is a priority. Specific mobility schemes for this target group are already offered under various mobility schemes and supported by the CU.ecr.
- **Engagement in activities across the alliance is supported and encouraged**
Staff mobility is a substantial contribution to Circle U.'s educational mission as well as providing opportunities for personal and professional development and collaboration. Participation and the resulting benefits to Alliance member organizations can be recognized e.g. through annual appraisals and supportive manager/line-report conversations, amongst others. Promotion of staff mobility will include the ways mobility can underpin Circle U.'s strategic goals.

PRIORITY 5: EMBEDDED MOBILITY AND INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE

To increase academic quality, recognition and variety of options for developing intercultural skills, Circle U. will work towards embedding mobility and international exposure in an increasing number of study programmes. These embedded forms of mobility will typically involve groups of students in a course or programme and can be either physical, virtual or blended. This will be a complement to the existing, traditional options for exchange mobility, where individual students plan a personalized semester, year or short-term physical mobility.

Many universities have already implemented mobility windows, where mobility may take place and is planned individually by students. Embedding mobility in study programmes will shift the burden of planning to academics and make mobility and international exposure the rule and opting out the exception.

With the Circle U. leadership's support and firm commitment to inclusive mobility, Circle U. will promote embedded mobility and international exposure with a view to the advantages it presents for addressing this aspect. Exchange mobility appeals to a smaller proportion of the student body, and by prioritising embedded mobility across our programmes, a much wider audience can benefit from another type of international exposure. Ensuring sufficient resources will be key, as well as respecting local rules and regulations being followed when embedding mobility in the curriculum.

TARGETS

- **Mobility or international exposure is embedded in increased number of study programmes at each partner university**
- **Circle U. academics and staff have the sufficient knowledge and capacity to implement embedding in study programmes**

INITIATIVES

- **Best practice**
Continuous mapping of good practices of embedded mobility and international exposure for a better understanding of successful strategies.
- **Toolkits for implementation**
Based on emerging experiences and examples the current toolkits will be expanded. The Circle U. website will be one of the main ways to highlight successful programmes and initiatives and inform about best practices.
- **Developing flexible formats**
Study programmes and subject areas differ, and a flexible approach is warranted. Circle U. partners will collaborate within selected academic areas to develop and test a diverse range of mobility schemes from low threshold to more complex formats. The development of exchange tracks can also serve as pathways to more seamless mobility.
- **Networking for quality**
Building on emerging expertise within Circle U., a community of practice for staff that can advise on how to develop and implement embedded mobility will be initiated. Staff mobility in various formats will also be employed as a means of spreading best practice across the Alliance.

PRIORITY 6: LANGUAGE PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

Multilingualism, defined as one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning by the Council of the European Union, is a core value for European University Alliances. The Circle U. members represent diverse parts of Europe, with a total of seven different official first languages and many more additional ones mastered by students and staff. Circle U. constitutes an exceptional multilingual and multicultural academic environment.

To enable students to make the most of courses offered in multiple languages, we will support language preparation prior to mobility. Recognizing that not all universities can offer formal language courses or guarantee access to them, preparation will also focus on fostering plurilingual practices with the aim of boosting student motivation and confidence and enabling students to navigate truly plurilingual environments.

In addition, we will emphasize the importance of multilingualism and intercultural competence as essential for active citizenship, democracy, and employability and we will provide guidance on how to make teaching, research, governance and communication more plurilingual. We will build on the alliance's expertise to create innovative, shared formats that promote networking, knowledge exchange, and inclusive plurilingual practices across the alliance.

TARGETS

- **A strong foundation for promoting multilingualism and plurilingual practices in Circle U. thereby contributing to a more inclusive, diverse and multilingual environment is established**
- **The role of mobility as a driver of multilingualism and intercultural competence across the alliance is strengthened**

INITIATIVES

- **Language and plurilingual preparation opportunities for all**
In collaboration with the Circle U. Multilingualism, Interculturality, and Language Lab (CU.mil) and other hubs and platforms, we will offer innovative ways to support linguistic and plurilingual preparation. Building on the CU.mil expertise, also in digitally and AI-supported language learning and teaching, we aim to identify and promote tools and practices that enhance accessibility and engagement. These may include communities of practices, resources for informal peer-to-peer learning, interactive digital tools, and formats that integrate linguistic, cultural, and academic elements.
- **Moving towards more multi- and plurilingualism**
We aim to provide guidance and tools in the form of a language policy to support the Circle U. community to embrace opportunities for multi- and plurilingualism that allow for dynamic, flexible use of multiple languages in academic, administrative and social contexts.
- **Interlinking language, intercultural skills, and employability**
Language skills and intercultural competences are highly valued by employers. Career centers can play a central role in all phases of the mobility experience to communicate and advertise these benefits. In addition, we aim to assess and recognize the skills gained during mobility, with an emphasis on their relevance for the labor market.
- **Fostering multilingual skills and recognition for staff**
As employers, Circle U. universities recognize the critical value of a multilingual workforce. We will explore policies and funding mechanisms to include language and plurilingual training in staff development programmes.