



EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



ACCELERATION SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

This document summarises the ERA policy-related insights on behalf of 3 acceleration services projects: CATALISI, Accelerate Future HEI and aUPaEU

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INTRODUCTION

Excellence in research and education provided by Universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is a significant asset for the European Research Area (ERA), serving as a prerequisite for fostering innovation through capacity building, external cooperation, and the development of knowledge transfer mechanisms.

Universities, HEIs, and their networks of academic and non-academic partners occupy a central role in the EU internal knowledge market. They represent promising policy targets to enhance cooperation and coordination among European countries in Research and Innovation (R&I).

Many of the key points of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 underscore the importance of institutional transformation within Universities and HEIs as key contributors to the ERA (European Commission, 2021). This transformation aims to enable the open sharing of knowledge (Action 1), strengthen sustainability and accessibility of research infrastructures in the ERA (Action 8), and encourage innovation excellence through an interconnected knowledge space (Action 15). Addressing grand challenges, particularly those related to health, environmental sustainability, and societal issues, is another important focus involving Universities and HEIs as key contributors to the ERA (Action 10). Strengthening partnerships across industry, academia, and other stakeholders is highlighted as a means to reinforce institutional transformation and maximise the impact of ERA policies. To generate impact, both missions and partnerships require cooperation, coordination, alignment of agendas and outreach towards broad groups of stakeholders. moving from open science to open and collaborative R&I (European Commission, 2016).

By aligning with these objectives, particularly through the strengthening of partnerships and the promotion of international cooperation, HEI alliances can significantly contribute to advancing the goals outlined in the ERA Policy Agenda.

To this aim, Action 13 of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 - "Empower Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to develop in alignment with the ERA and in synergy with the European Education Area" - explicitly targets transnational cooperation in R&I by providing sufficient investments at all levels (institutional, member states, and the Union) and promoting coordination between these levels.

The primary goals of Action 13 include: (i) Raising and promoting R&I excellence within the University sector across the ERA, particularly through joint capacity building (ii) Creating effective synergies between the education and research missions of the university sector, thereby increasing the impact of excellent research on education.

Experts from Member States and Universities involved in ERA Action 13 recommended that the EU Commission continue to provide funding for strategic institutional cooperation through competitive R&I calls, such as those for European Universities. Additionally, it is recommended that the EU continues to support a wide range of individual universities or networks across the ERA to address institutional changes aligned with ERA priorities. This support includes strengthening research careers, mainstreaming open science practices, and reinforcing knowledge valorisation.

This aligns with the objectives of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme, particularly its "Acceleration Services in support of the institutional transformation of Higher Education Institutions." These calls aim to enhance excellence in R&I and build capacity throughout the entire ERA territory, and beyond. In the context of WIDERA actions, widening participation and spreading excellence actions aim to build R&I capacity for countries that are lagging.

Within this framework, the present document is proposed as a joint contribution of the three sister projects CATALISI, Accelerate FutureHEI, and aUPaEU to the generation of ERA-related policy insights. It represents the first step of a collaborative dialogue among the three projects based on a joint vision after the first year of execution.

This document outlines the primary actions and initial outcomes of the three project(s) in their first year of execution, as linked to specific ERA policy actions. It explains the most relevant methodologies shared to engage and support user groups and university communities, giving emphasis to co-creative and interactive approaches in supporting HEIs and university communities to develop in line with the ERA priorities.

In this respect, future activities will be oriented towards progressing in deeper alignment between the project activities and the transition towards the new ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027. An operational and practical link between the project activities and the advancement of the ERA objectives, particularly Action 13 of the ERA Policy Agenda, will be developed by seeking direct connections with ongoing initiatives of the Commission. These may include the use of EU Commission information sources such as HEI Innovate (<https://www.heinnovate.eu>), the EU's approach to micro-credentials (<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-building-blocks/sites/display/EBSI/Micro-credentials>), and the EU ResearchComp framework for researchers. Additionally, active contribution to the ERA Policy Platform (<https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/>), a central space for communication among all interested actors, will be considered among the initiatives to facilitate the co-development of acceleration services and foster their sustainability over time.

Key policy issues that warrant attention from policy officers and all other actors involved in the common objectives of the ERA program are underscored. The document identifies the main points of synergies that represent opportunities through which these challenges could be addressed, potentially serving as priorities for future policy actions. Furthermore, the document identifies complementarities and gaps found in the current policy agenda, shedding light on areas that require further consideration and development.

1. *Describe the main project(s) results so far. Briefly inform on the obstacles encountered, and how they were solved.*

Over the first year, the three projects started the implementation of different activities and achieved the **first results linked to specific ERA Policy actions (2022-2024)**.

In relation to ERA Policy Action 8 focused on Strengthening sustainability, accessibility and resilience of research infrastructures and **ERA Policy Action 13** focused on Empowering Higher Education Institutions to develop in line with the ERA, and in synergy with the European Education Area, the three projects have achieved the following results:

- The realisation of the [CATALYST HUB](#) (CATALISI), a virtual platform to facilitate the identification of funding opportunities, collaborations and opportunities for researchers to commercialise their research results. The function dedicated to mapping funding opportunities is already available and allows users to have direct access to the most relevant funding opportunities in their field of research. Moreover, HEIs can have access to training and knowledge related to fourteen intervention areas, through the public online [Learning Hub](#), to facilitate engagement through webinars and workshops, ensuring widespread access to knowledge on R&I topics.
- The development of online platform **Agoras** (aUPaEU), such as the [Unite! Agora](#), which aims to integrate and implement acceleration services in the context of a coordinated support system for HEIs, networks, alliances of universities, and their umbrella organisations. These platforms will serve as a central hub for universities to discover, utilise, and collaborate on acceleration services under the scope of their collaboration initiatives. The main categories of acceleration services are Catalogue of Research Infrastructures and TTOs; Events, Conferences, and Workshops; Accessing Grants and Funding; Coaching and Support Mechanism for HEIs; Methodology for an Investment Strategy; Stakeholders management; Showcases.

Specifically related to **ERA Policy Action 13** (European Excellence Initiative - EEI) CATALISI also developed a model for **Knowledge sharing and Mutual Learning**, with the aim of initiating a continuous exchange of experiences and best practices among Implementers through Mobilisation and Mutual Learning and Twinning activities, and to establish connections with - and access to - HEIs' know-how.

Moreover, the projects have made significant progress towards the implementation of **ERA Policy Action 15**, focused on the strengthening of R&I ecosystems for knowledge circulation and valorisation by establishing stronger interconnections between existing collaborative and supportive structures, engaging a diversity of stakeholders in multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaborations. All three projects actively involved diverse stakeholders in their activities.

- Establishment of **7 Acting Living Labs** (CATALISI) aiming at reinforcing the role of HEIs in local innovation ecosystems. Quadruple Helix stakeholders (Academia, Business, Public Administration and Civil Society) relevant from the perspective of institutional transformation were invited to collaborative workshops organised by HEIs in their local ecosystems.
- **9 Desired Future State focus group discussions** (Accelerate Future HEI) to define desired strategic goals in regards to institutional transformation and 9 reports (for each university partner), **9 Roadmap workshops** delivered to support universities in creating transformational pathways and 9 reports (for each university partner), an evidence-driven **status quo assessment** realised through surveys (700+ respondents) disseminated in each university reaching out to leadership, academics, professional staff and students and 9 survey reports (for each university partner).
- A **Policy recommendation workshop** (including stakeholders from sister projects) was held to reflect on the current process and collect input for the policy brief.
- **Co-creation of the Agora with core and extended stakeholders** (aUPaEU) to establish an inventory of acceleration services, formulating a guideline to refine the concept and categorisation of acceleration services and developing proof-of-concept services. A design thinking and bottom-up approach was used to craft the first outline of the catalogue of acceleration services. An estimated 300

participants engaged in the co-creation process through approximately 50 meetings. A comprehensive communication strategy was also developed to engage and inform core and extended stakeholder groups, including University Alliances (and within Alliances the single Universities and research institutions), single Universities and research institutions that are not affiliated to Alliances, Universities and research institutions in the Widening area, Citizens, Public administrations, Industry and businesses.

- A **Community of Practice (CoP)** was established to foster collaboration for institutional transformation (CATALISI) involving more than 100 members coming from different EU countries and sectors also beyond academia to share good practices, discuss obstacles, and strategize approaches adopted to achieve institutional transformations in the field of R&I with a wider community.

More generally, the three projects are contributing to the above-mentioned ERA Policy Actions through the delivery of specific **transformational pathways and monitoring systems** to assess the achievement of the goals planned in their pathways as well as the effectiveness of the acceleration services used for such aims. These include **Seven Individual Strategies and Agenda Setting** (CATALISI) and **Nine Strategic vision statements** (by each testing partner) towards becoming an Entrepreneurial & Innovative University (Accelerate HEI). In addition, for monitoring purposes, several tools have been developed, including a **Monitoring & Evaluation methodology** to continuously monitor, capture progress and evaluate the implementation of acceleration services (Accelerate HEI), **A testing (Monitoring & Validation) methodology** of testing cycles to facilitate ongoing monitoring and assessment of the evolution of the services (aUPaEU).

However, there have also been obstacles encountered by the three projects during the first year of implementation.

A first ongoing and common challenge has been aligning the schedules of different partners for joint events, especially involving external stakeholders. To address this, the projects provided as much flexibility as possible in remote collaboration using different tools, creating a valuable feedback loop that improved stakeholder engagement. A further challenge was aligning project activities with the academic calendars; this was tackled by being flexible, scheduling in advance, and thanks to a strong commitment among participating HEIs. This approach ensured that the project's timeline fit with the tempo of each university.

Accelerate HEI and CATALISI also encountered challenges in collecting a meaningful number of responses in their surveys. In anticipation, the survey was designed to be as user-friendly as possible, and the deadlines were extended to give sufficient time for universities to disseminate the survey in several rounds.

During its initial year, aUPaEU faced challenges primarily linked to data sources, particularly in terms of scope and accessibility. These obstacles stemmed from the functional diversity of systems housing different data types simultaneously, leading to fragmentation, consistency issues, and duplication of data. Additionally, varying levels of access to localised databases created further complications. To address these issues, access rights must be defined at regional levels, balancing open science principles with individual, institutional, and national interests. Technological advancements like automatic translation and Large Language Models are expected to alleviate language barriers. The project is also developing an AI-powered search engine to enhance information retrieval and utilisation within the Agora platform, promoting seamless connectivity and interoperability among researchers, institutions, and alliances.

A related challenge involves potential legal barriers related to data sharing among universities and alliances within the ERA and WIDERA. Agreements must be developed among alliance members, facilitated through consortium agreements of individual EU projects, as alliances themselves are not legal entities. This approach aims to streamline the implementation and dissemination of Agoras, exemplified by the Unite! alliance.

2. *Explain especially your most relevant (joint) finding in terms of methodology to support your user group(s) or university community to develop in line with the ERA priorities.*

The **most relevant joint finding** from the described methodologies is the **emphasis on co-creative and iterative approaches** in supporting HEIs and university communities to develop in line with the ERA priorities. The following are the key aspects of these approaches:

- **Co-creation & Stakeholder Engagement for Institutional Transformation**

During the first year of implementation, CATALISI mainly focused on analysing and assessing the current state of affairs of the R&I Intervention Areas of the HEIs as well as co-designing a transformational pathway with the support of different stakeholders. Different instruments and tools were used, such as onsite workshops in university sites to identify HEIs' priority intervention areas, with the participation of quadruple-helix stakeholders and the facilitation of project partners. In addition, one-to-one in-depth online meetings were conducted with each HEI to refine their answers and guide them in their assessment process. A reflection tool was further adopted to identify a) short-, medium- and long-term goals that each implementer will achieve and b) potential activities that the implementers will perform in order to reach the objectives. **The process of co-creation was relevant and useful to create an environment and setting skills where implementers, facilitators and the other stakeholders came together to co-create their transformational pathway, at the same time ensuring a contextualised approach and a more tailored execution of the activities which will be implemented.**

As part of this methodology, aUPaEU develops a catalogue of acceleration services based on an analysis and evaluation of R&I agendas and roadmaps of European Universities (top-down). Drawing on these findings, aUPaEU continues to identify and select operating acceleration services with the potential for implementation in Agora's catalogue. The insights from user feedback close the circle to inform and improve the catalogue, the selection processes, and the Minimum Viable Solution (MVS) of the Agora. Our methodology for identifying the initial set of acceleration services is rooted in design thinking methods, prioritising a bottom-up approach with elements of top-down input. It encompasses a thorough **engagement process with diverse actors** from the core stakeholders' group, including administrators, faculty members, researchers, and project partners. Through semi-structured interviews, formal and informal discussions (5), and meetings (5), we gathered insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by these stakeholders. **This collaborative approach ensured that the catalogue was informed by real user feedback and tailored to meet the specific needs of the target audience. The resulting initial catalogue is designed to cater to the varying needs and objectives of stakeholders within the academic partners and R&I community.**

The Accelerate FutureHEI methodology aims to develop acceleration services that cater to understanding the specific context and challenges that exist within each HEI, while at the same time identifying common challenges and issues faced by HEIs in order to develop in line with ERA priorities. The methodology therefore provides an **evidence-based approach** to identify the key challenges and opportunities for transformation per HEI partner, as well as identifying areas where support is needed. This fulfils two purposes: (1) Ensuring that each HEI can develop its strategy and roadmap for transformation based on data and evidence gathered internally; and (2) Identifying common challenge themes to develop working groups with participants across HEIs addressing similar challenges, to share knowledge and insights, and eventually inform policy. During the first year of the project, the focus was on a gap analysis, to (i) determine the current state of the HEI, then (ii) clarify the desired future state including diverse HEI stakeholders' perspectives, followed by (iii) designing a roadmap and implementation plan to achieve the desired future state and institutional transformation goals and objectives. **In terms of the most relevant methodological findings, the HEI partner reflections confirm that one of the most important aspects of acceleration services is to provide evidence-based analysis of the current state to ensure the internal buy-in of leadership stakeholders and the long-term impact of the institutional change. Another important aspect is to create ownership of the process in the project team, by co-creation and collaborative activities, as well as including a diversity of the stakeholders from each HEI.**

Overall, co-creation methodologies enabled participating universities to identify their gaps, needs, strengths and weaknesses in relation to R&I intervention areas, while also refining these outcomes continuously. These activities were of vital importance for creating individual strategies and action plans at the later stages of the project. Moreover, the inclusive methodology ensured that the initial Agora catalogue not only reflected the diverse perspectives of stakeholders but also addressed their specific needs and insights.

- **Iterative and Adaptive Methodologies**

To ensure the achievement of Institutional Transformations of HEIs, the CATALISI methodology is divided into four phases: explore, co-design, implement, and evaluate. The project supports HEIs in elaborating targeted and effective action plans within the selected Intervention Areas in an integrative and iterative process

for mutually valued outcomes that are the results of all stakeholders across the quadruple helix being actively engaged in the process from the very beginning.

Similarly, following the general methodological framework of the Design Thinking approach, aUPaEU develops acceleration services for its Agora platform by combining top-down and bottom-up elements in an iterative methodology. This methodology relies on a circular process of evaluation, selection and validation of acceleration services to support the transformation of universities and alliances. The testing plan is structured into distinct cycles, each targeting different user groups to establish a continuous feedback loop between testing activities and the development process of the single services and the platform and assess the efficacy of any modifications or enhancements implemented. The target audience of the testing comprises end users of the services. Each testing cycle comprises various activities: interviews, focus groups, usability testing and questionnaire administration.

Moreover, the **development of acceleration services** supporting HEIs is another joint methodology used by all three projects. While it is preliminary to have a comprehensive assessment of their effectiveness, the three projects have worked towards the design and testing of some of them, and a final evaluation will be possible at the end of the project cycle.

To conclude, the **complementarity in methodology among the three projects** is particularly focused on:

- Stakeholder Engagement and Co-Creation at each phase of the project activities, to ensure involvement of different perspectives and ownership of the process.
- Data and Evidence-Based Approach to identify the key challenges and opportunities for transformation.
- Institutional Transformation and Roadmap Development with regards to becoming entrepreneurial and innovative HEIs, including the identification of opportunities and challenges to address in acceleration services and coaching activities.
- Iterative and Agile Process – methodology has ongoing monitoring mechanisms built in to adapt to the new findings and gaps identified.
- Networking and Collaboration – through workshops, events and training activities, partners are presented with opportunities to network and build collaborations.

3. *Explain as well any complementarity between the three acceleration services projects and any joint actions the three projects achieved together.*

The complementarities across the projects are particularly evident with regard to the **acceleration services and expertise** provided by the consortia.

More specifically:

- **CATALISI and Accelerate HEI** are built upon two types of partners; on one side, facilitators (or ‘acceleration partners’) that will accelerate and facilitate the transformational pathways of HEIs through acceleration services, knowledge transfer, and the implementation of co-designed activities. On the other side, are the implementers (or ‘testing partners’) i.e., the HEIs that will pursue institutional transformations. These partners commit to introducing and implementing new reforms in their structures in specific domains and intervention areas.
- **auPaEU on the other hand** offers the Agora to partnerships like CATALISI and Accelerate FutureHEI universities. The Agora will enable HEIs, networks, and university alliances to build a collaborative space where stakeholders can freely access services and share information. The outline of the acceleration services catalogue along with the concept and the implementation of Agora will be presented in a workshop where sister projects will be involved as part of the extended stakeholder group in auPaEU. The initial catalogue includes, among others, **a range of services that might be complementary to those offered by the sister projects**, and among them, stakeholder engagement and interaction oversight, along with monitoring and feedback management of 1) R&I notice board and funding opportunities, 2) research infrastructures, 3) R&I ad hoc showcases, designed to cater to the varying needs and objectives of stakeholders within the academic partners and R&I community.

Thus, the complementarity among the projects’ expertise is evident; CATALISI and Accelerate HEI will match expertise and skills provided by HEIs and by facilitators in several different R&I topics, and aUPaEU will make it possible to offer this to a wider community of users, transforming it into a specific acceleration service of the Agoras.

Based on the identified complementarities, during the first year of implementation, the three projects **delivered some joint actions** and are intended to strengthen collaborative activities.

The performed joint actions during the first year are related to **communication and dissemination, collaboration with external stakeholders, policy activities as well as coaching, peer learning and mutual learning activities**:

- Communication, dissemination, cross-posting, and information sharing are occurring between the three projects by supporting each other's visibility on their respective websites and social media channels, and through newsletters publications and dissemination of events and conferences.
- Coaching, peer learning and mutual learning events were opened up for the participation of all three project partners. A webinar on "Gender and Inclusion on Higher Education" organised for CATALISI HEIs (Nov 2023) was benefitted also by sister projects' partners. A policy workshop organised by Accelerate Future HEI (Dec 2023) was also animated by the other project partners.
- Collaborations around evaluation and impact assessment activities have been performed. Two representatives of Accelerate Future HEI and aUPaEU are appointed members of the CATALISI external acceleration board (EAB) to evaluate the seven transformational pathways of HEIs.
- The three projects participated in common mutual learning events, such as a common training to the WIDERA NCP community on "acceleration services in support of the institutional transformation of Higher Education Institutions" (May 2023). Representatives of the projects are also selected members of the CATALISI Community of Practice (CoP), contributing with their expertise and experience to build collective knowledge in shared domains of interest.
- A Policy workshop has been hosted by Accelerate Future HEI, with CATALISI and aUPaEU participation to collaborate on shaping future actions crucial to supporting the institutional transformation of HEIs. The commitment to further collaborate in this area has been made.
- Due to the aUPaEU's commitment to engaging a broader range of stakeholders, including sister partner projects, in testing the acceleration services, an initial workshop was convened. The purpose was to introduce the aUPaEU Agora concept and its implementation. Sister projects and other stakeholders were welcomed to join the discussion on acceleration services. The workshop was held in early 2024.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (2 PAGES)

4. *Explain which gaps you identified in the current process in relation to the ERA policy agenda.*

This section presents preliminary recommendations from the sister projects for the ERA policy agenda. As the projects are only 12 months in, these recommendations are initial. The next set of recommendations will be provided in the second policy brief, due for release in December 2025.

Currently, there are several gaps in the ERA policy agenda that have been identified.

Firstly, the term "**acceleration services**" **lacks a universally accepted definition** and clarity about its intended users or audiences. This absence of a shared definition hinders the efficient and transparent implementation of acceleration services within the transformation framework of HEIs.

The second issue identified is tied to the **open sharing of knowledge and the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)**. The individual regulations of countries regarding public information vary, making it challenging to compile a comprehensive list of infrastructures and services across Europe. This disparity hinders coordination and cooperation among countries by complicating the understanding of available resources and infrastructure. The idea of incorporating external data sources into acceleration services to boost cooperation among HEIs might necessitate European-level legislation recommending a standardised data storage method. Moreover, the accessibility of crucial data outside the European Union must be considered in all data collection and sharing efforts.

HEIs also encounter obstacles in implementing the EOSC's strategic objectives. Despite significant progress in promoting Open Science, particularly through the EOSC and its Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), Open Science is not yet a common practice in all HEIs. To actively participate in and contribute to

the EOSC, promoting the ERA Policy Agenda, progress must be made in integrating open science initiatives into the academic environment and incorporating SRIA's objectives into HEIs' policies.

A third insight from the first year of the three related projects is a notable **disconnect between the top-level ERA policy agenda, founded on "high-level" principles, and its implementation at the HEI level**. This includes the task of increasing awareness and commitment to the agenda's objectives among HEI leaders and faculty. This gap could affect the overall effectiveness of the Higher Education Transformation Agenda and may hinder the smooth integration of ERA policies into the regular operations of HEIs.

Finally, creating a **European Community of professionals specialising in R&I** transformation at HEIs could significantly speed up reforms. This would encourage cooperation, knowledge sharing, and best practices. Moreover, it could help ensure the long-term sustainability of EU initiatives aimed at institutional transformation.

The three sister project partners face a major challenge to accomplish this within a three-to-five-year project. It's crucial to bridge the gap between the development of a transformation agenda and its implementation, to avoid giving the impression of an incomplete process and to achieve long-term change.

5. *List the actions in the policy agenda for which universities would need more support, in addition to those that your projects (will) already cover. Your answer would be helpful to shape any future calls on Acceleration services or similar activities in support of universities.*

The work of the three projects corresponds to a range of actions originating from different Priority Areas of the ERA policy agenda, which include Actions 3-5, 8-9, and 12-14. As an illustration, our objective is to develop acceleration services that promote Open Science (#3) and Inclusiveness (#5), strengthen and link research infrastructures (#8), and enable HEIs (#13). Regarding **ERA Policy Action 13** - Empowering HEIs to develop in line with ERA priorities, it is essential to have a strategy to transition from the macro level (ERA policies) to the micro level (individual HEI's needs). Additionally, it's important to assess whether individual HEIs have the resources and infrastructure needed to implement the required changes.

ERA Policy Action 1 - Enable the open sharing of knowledge and the re-use of research outputs, including through the development of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC). As mentioned in the section above, the open sharing of knowledge is hindered by the varying regulations of individual countries regarding public information. During the collaboration efforts of the three sister projects, partners have faced doubts about the possibility of integrating different requirements outlined in consortium and partnership agreements, institutional regulations, and national laws. Therefore, more support in navigating this issue would lower the barriers to collaboration. This could include greater harmonisation of regulations related to the open sharing of knowledge and research outputs across European countries. Establishing clear guidelines and best practices can help researchers and institutions navigate the legal landscape. Additionally, setting up dedicated legal support services or networks to assist with legal issues related to open science could provide valuable assistance.

ERA Policy Actions 3 and 7: Advance towards a reform of the assessment system for research, researchers, and institutions to improve their quality and impact, acknowledge more diverse achievements and upgrade EU guidance for better knowledge valorisation. In the current landscape, a lot of researchers are constrained by narrow and rigid quantitative assessment methods (e.g. journal publication metrics). This slows down the external engagement, innovation and valorisation initiatives that could increase the impact of research. Initiatives such as CoARA (<https://coara.eu/about/>) are taking steps that could create systemic change. The acceleration services that are being developed by the sister projects would benefit from complementarities created by the research assessment reform, and it would allow for more flexibility in terms of possible institutional transformation that HEIs could undergo to develop in line with current ERA priorities.

Regarding the remaining ERA Policy Actions (listed below), the three sister projects will offer more substantial recommendations in the upcoming policy briefs. These recommendations will be based on insights gathered during the pilot testing of acceleration services.

Action 5: Promote gender equality and foster inclusiveness, taking note of the Ljubljana declaration
Action 6: Which aims at strengthening academic freedom in Europe

Action 8: Strengthen sustainability, accessibility and resilience of research infrastructures in the ERA

Action 11: which strives towards an ERA for green transformation

Action 15: Build-up regional and national R&I ecosystems to improve regional/national excellence and competitiveness

Action 17: Enhance the strategic capacity of Europe's public research-performing organisations

SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGACY (1 PAGE)

6. *Indicate any project(s) output worth promoting (among others through REA Communication services) now or in the near future e.g. acceleration services joint developments or joint workshops etc.*

Based on the identified complementarities, the three projects are already planning future joint actions to be implemented during the coming years, firmly believing that creating synergies and taking joint actions are crucial for achieving sustainable institutional transformation of research organisations towards R&I. In the first year of execution of the project, joint actions have been planned as follows.

With regards to the participation in and organisation of **joint events**:

- A **Joint Policy recommendation workshop** and co-creative event will be jointly organised by CATALISI and Accelerate Future HEI in 2025. This event could be also opened to aUPaEU, building on the first Policy recommendation workshop that was held at the end of 2023 and included stakeholders from all three projects. One of the great benefits of this is having a broader geographic spectrum of EU universities represented, including both widening and outermost regions of the EU. These workshops provide an opportunity to gain valuable insights for this and future policy briefs.
- Participation in events organised by external entities, such as the **EARMA conference**, will also be pursued in coordination, potentially attending together.
- **Joint workshop on stakeholder engagement** during OLL24 (Open Living Lab Days) on 25-27 September 2024 on “Opening Universities to Stakeholders through Living Labs for Institutional Transformation) organised by CATALISI and open to the participation of all projects.
- Joint final conference to be organised by all three projects.

With regards to the sharing of **databases and platforms**:

- AUPAEU will engage users from Accelerate Future HEI and CATALISI in coaching and mentoring events, adding to focus groups and interviews to test the suite of acceleration services. For new services, specific events will be organised to initiate a co-creation process. Through user group testing and evaluations from sister projects, AUPAEU will iteratively enhance **Agora acceleration services**. Mentoring, coaching and guidance services will be extended to wider HEI networks, including institutions in the widening countries and outermost regions in the future. These services, encompassing joint developments and workshops, offer a tangible solution for enhancing collaboration and innovation within HEIs and university alliance communities.
- A shared **database of external stakeholders** (including coaches, mentors, and experts) will be created (in line with GDPR), to strengthen collaborations amongst quadruple-helix stakeholders and HEIs, thus advancing towards European values and reflecting a vision of HEIs that goes beyond academic achievement to encompass societal impact. To this end, jointly animating an online platform to engage quadruple helix stakeholders can be beneficial. Utilising the already existing Community of Practice LinkedIn group (113 quadruple-helix members) or CATALYST Hub platform, developed under the lead of CATALISI is one of the possibilities discussed, linking it with the AI-powered Agora.
- For the duration of the project, the **learning Hub** (training webinars) developed in CATALISI will be accessible to sister projects, allowing them to benefit from the available expertise for their HEIs and stakeholders.
- A **joint online repository** has been created to share documents and facilitate coordination on common activities and efforts.
- A **Zenodo community** linking the three projects together, “Acceleration Services in support of the institutional transformation of HEIs”, to consolidate efforts, improve efficiency and increase visibility.

With regards to **joint communication and dissemination activities**:

- **Joint policy briefs** will be prepared by all three projects to highlight commonalities, common achievements and areas for improvement.
- Accelerate Future HEI will organise **Cohort Knowledge Exchange events** which are dedicated for the project partners to meet and share their experience on the shared process. These events are also open to external stakeholders, which is a great opportunity to invite the partners from CATALISI and aUPaEU projects, to identify synergies and find complementarities to multiply the impact of the acceleration services.
- Monthly meetings are taking place among leaders of communication WPs in the three sister projects. The aim is to define a joined communication campaign, based on a common identity and synergies related to the communication plans. The objective is to establish a roadmap to amplify our impact and increase our reach together.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS (2 PAGES)

7. Describe the (joint and complementary) project's objectives and methodology after this first year of implementation.

After a year of implementation, the projects CATALISI, Accelerate Future HEI, and aUPaEU have made steps in aligning their objectives and methodologies to foster collaboration, drive institutional transformation, and provide policy feedback within the higher education landscape.

Joint Objectives:

These initiatives are unified in their commitment to fostering knowledge-sharing and collaboration among HEIs, recognizing the importance of dynamic and cooperative environments. They aim to create platforms and spaces for HEIs to connect with peers and external stakeholders, facilitating the exchange of ideas and best practices. Institutional transformation is a central focus for all three projects, albeit with different emphases. CATALISI targets transformations related to human capital, research methodologies, and financial frameworks within HEIs. Accelerate Future HEI seeks to implement transformation strategies through the testing and implementation of acceleration services, while aUPaEU aims for integrated and long-term R&I transformations via its Agora platform. Designing and testing acceleration services is a shared priority across the projects, with a focus on supporting HEIs in their pursuit of the Higher Education Transformation Agenda.

Complementary Objectives:

In addition to their joint objectives, the projects also pursue complementary goals. They collectively aim to improve the R&I system, enhance funding support and sustainability, and build capacity within participating HEIs. CATALISI focuses on enhancing R&I systems regionally and at the European level, while Accelerate Future HEI assesses the entrepreneurial and innovative activities of HEIs and their ecosystems. aUPaEU contributes to R&I system improvement by offering Agora platforms and facilitating acceleration services in R&I collaboration. Funding support and sustainability are addressed by each project in different ways, with CATALISI focusing on sustainable funding schemes, Accelerate Future HEI on capacity building through a skills development program, and aUPaEU exploring business processes via Agora platforms to support financial sustainability.

Joint Methodology:

All three projects employ similar methodologies to achieve their objectives. They conduct scanning and scoping activities to assess the current state of HEIs and identify areas for improvement. Capacity building is facilitated through educational and learning activities, and evaluation mechanisms are in place to assess progress and effectiveness. Dissemination and policy feedback are integral components of the methodology, ensuring that project results are shared widely and inform policymaking at the European Commission and other relevant stakeholders.

In conclusion, after their first year of implementation, these projects have demonstrated a concerted effort to work towards common objectives while also addressing complementary goals. Their shared methodologies reflect a commitment to collaboration, transformation, and accountability within the higher education sector.

PROJECT IDENTITIES

PROJECT NAMES	<p>Catalysation of institutional transformations of Higher Education Institutions through the adoption of acceleration services (CATALISI)</p> <p>Entrepreneurial & Innovative Universities Acceleration Programme (Accelerate Future HEI)</p> <p>A University Partnership for Acceleration of European Universities (aUPaEU)</p>
COORDINATORS	<p>CATALISI's Coordinator AGENZIA PER LA PROMOZIONE DELLA RICERCA EUROPEA (APRE), Rome, Italy and catalisiapre@apre.it</p> <p>UNIVERSITY INDUSTRY INNOVATION NETWORK (UIIN) BV, Amsterdam, Netherlands, rusaite@uiin.org</p> <p>Jesus Alcober, UNIVERSITAT POLITECNICA DE CATALUNYA, Barcelona, Spain, jesus.alcober@upc.edu</p>
CONSORTIUM	<p>CATALISI ARISTOTELIO PANEPISTIMIO THESSALONIKIS – AUTH – Thessaloniki, Greece ERNST & YOUNG, Advisory Spa – EY – Rome, Italy EUROPEAN NETWORK OF LIVING LABS IVZW – EnoLL - Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, Belgium KAUNO TECHNOLOGIJOS UNIVERSITETAS - KTU – Kaunas, Lithuania LUISS LIBERA UNIVERSITA INTERNAZIONALE DEGLI STUDI SOCIALI GUIDO CARLI - LUISS – Rome, Italy NETWORK IRELAND LIMITED - F6S – Dublin, Ireland STICHTING VUMC – VUMC – Amsterdam, Netherlands UNIVERSITAT JAUME I DE CASTELLON – UJI - Castellon de La Plana, Spain UNIWERSYTET GDANSKI – UG – Gdansk, Poland UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK - NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND - UCC – Cork, Ireland</p> <p>Accelerate Future HEI FACHHOCHSCHULE ST. POLTEN GMBH (STPUAS), St Polten, Austria INSTITUTO SUPERIOR TECNICO (IST DECivil), Lisbon, Portugal AGYAR AGRAR- ES ELETUDOMANYI EGYETEM (MATE), Gogollo, Hungary MOMENTUM MARKETING SERVICES LIMITED (MMS), Leitrim, Ireland TUM.INTERNATIONAL GMBH (TUMInt), Munchen, Germany UC LEUVEN (UCLL), Heverlee, Belgium UNIVERSIDAD EUROPEA DE CANARIAS SL (UEC), Laotorava, Spain Universidade da Madeira (UMa), Funchal, Portugal UNIVERSITATEA POLITEHNICA TIMISOARA (UPT), Timisoara, Romania UNIVERSITE DE LA REUNION (UR, Saint Denis, France VIDZEMES AUGSTSKOLA (ViA), Valmiera, Latvia</p> <p>aUPaEU -Karlsruher Institut fuer Technologie – KIT- Karlsruhe, Germany -Institut Polytechnique de Grenoble - INP GRENOBLE - Grenoble, France -Politecnico di Torino – POLITO –Torino, Italy -Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya – UPC - Barcelona, Spain -Uniwersytet Im. Adama Mickiewicza W Poznaniu – AMU – Poznan, Poland</p>
FUNDING SCHEME	<p>Programme(s) HORIZON.4.2 - Reforming and enhancing the European R&I System HORIZON.4.2.6 - Careers and universities Topic(s)</p>

HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-51 - Acceleration Services in support of the institutional transformation of Higher Education Institutions
Call for proposal
HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01

DURATION

CATALISI: January 2023 – December 2025 (36 months)
Accelerate Future HEI: January 2023 – December 2026 (48 months)
aUPaEU: January 2023 – December 2027 (60 months)

BUDGET

CATALISI: EU contribution : 3 219 156.25 €
Accelerate_FutureHEI EU contribution: 3 197 063 75 €
aUPaEU: EU contribution : 3 477 625.00 €

WEBSITE

<https://catalisi.eu/>
<https://acceleratefuturehei.eu/>
<https://aupaeu.widening.eu/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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