



POLICY VALIDATION SESSION

11 November 2025

CATALISI Final Conference



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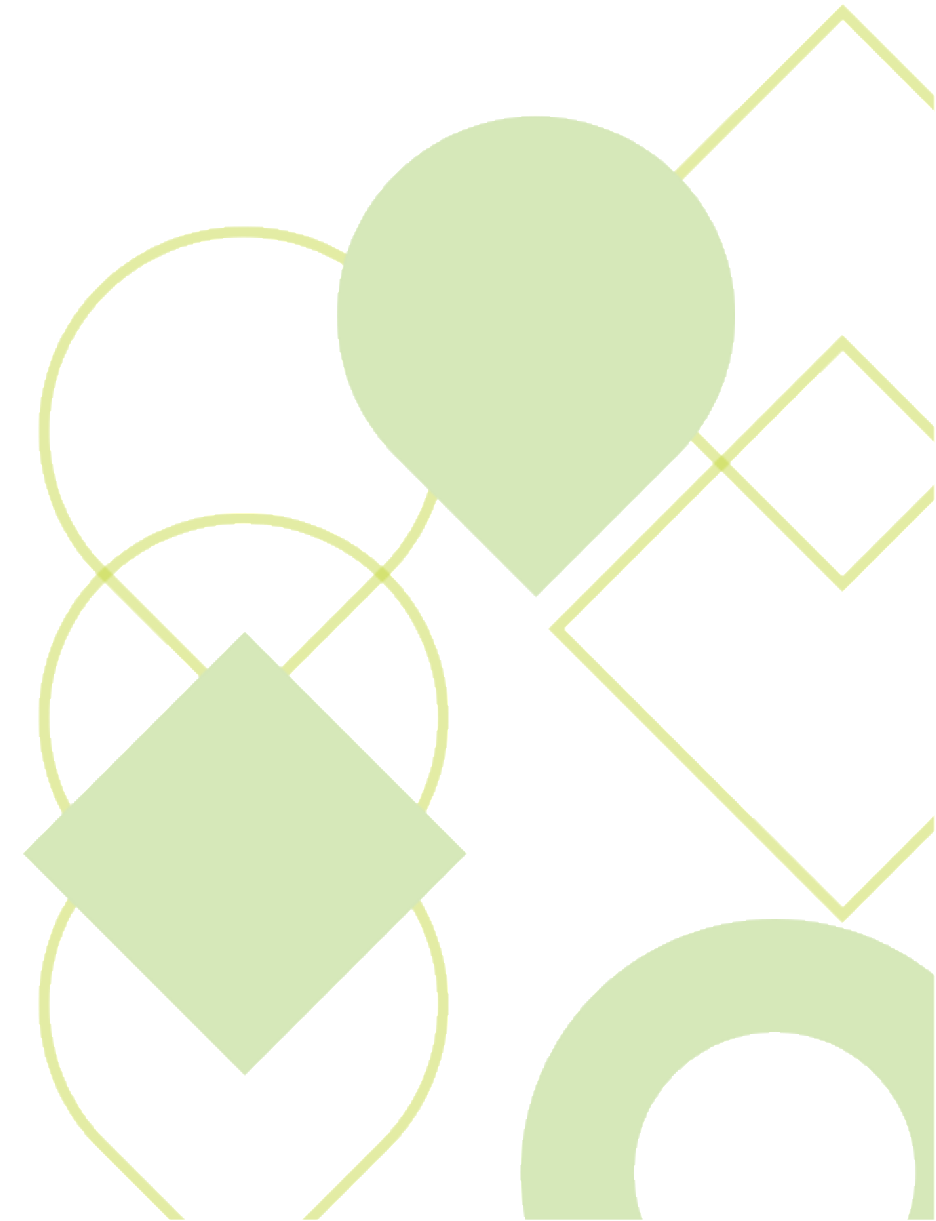
Welcome & Introduction

Stefania Laneve,
CATALISI Coordination team, APRE

Introduction and Objectives



- Present draft policy recommendations developed by the three sister projects – [CATALISI](#), [aUPaEU](#) and [Accelerate Future HEI](#)
- ERA Action 13 ***Empower Higher Education Institutions to develop in line with the ERA and in synergy with the European Education Area***
- [First Policy brief](#) ACCELERATION SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS **2023**
- Invite feedback from experts and stakeholders
- Purpose: Validate draft policy recommendations for the **Second Joint Policy Brief (Dec 2025)**



Agenda

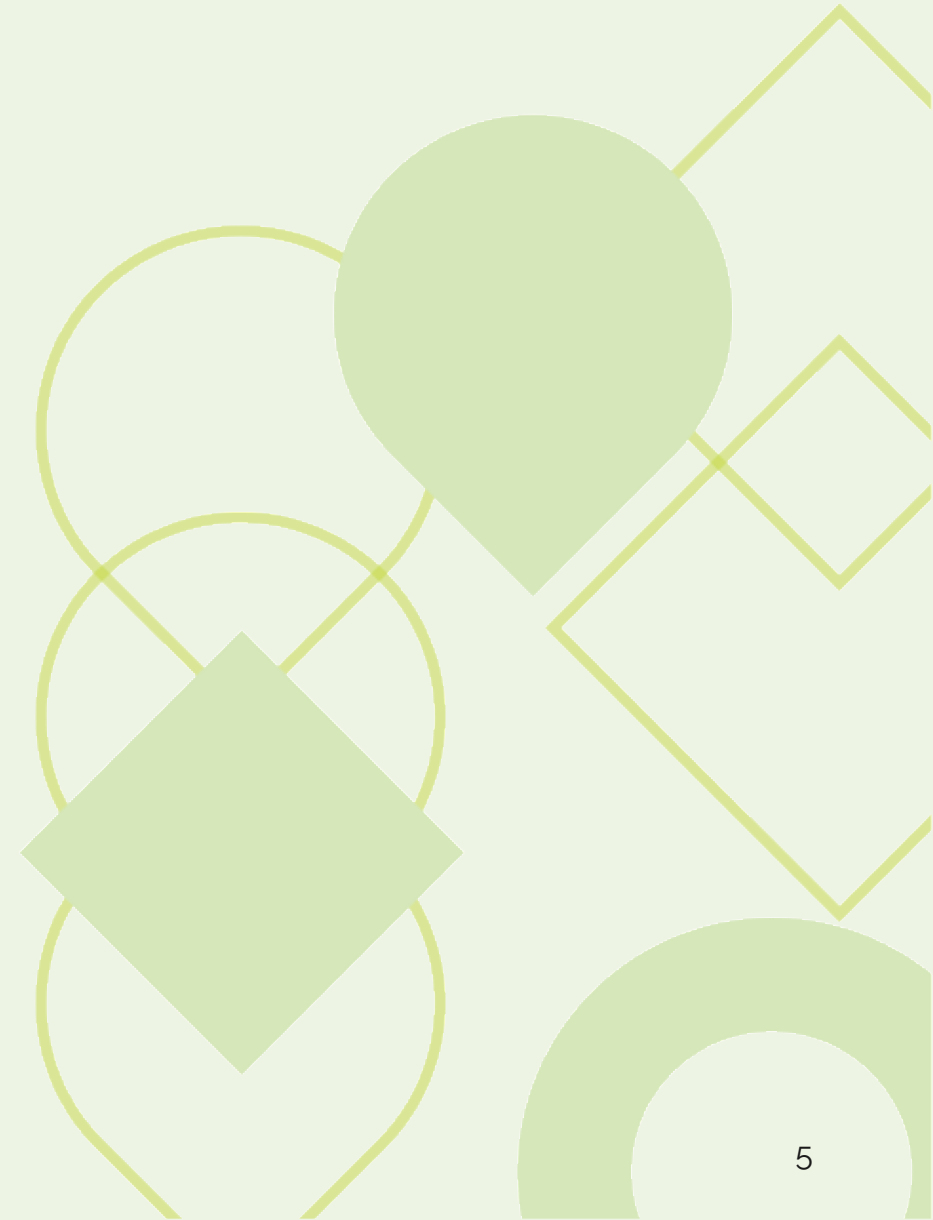


	Session	Presenter
14:05	Policy context and feedback: Acceleration services joint forces in Europe	Rinske van den Berg , <i>Project Officer</i> , European Research Executive Agency (REA)
14:20	Presentation of the Joint Policy Brief Presentation of draft key policy recommendations Feedback from panel of experts and discussion: Rinske van den Berg, <i>Project Officer</i>, European Research Executive Agency (REA) Rimante Rusaite, <i>Senior Project Officer and Project Coordinator Accelerate Future HEI project</i>, University Industry Innovation Network (UIIN) Jesus Alcober, <i>Associate Professor and Project Coordinator aUPaEU project</i>, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC) Audrone Telesiene, <i>Deputy chair of the Research and Innovation Committee, KTU Senate</i>, Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) Mariëtte van den Hoven, <i>Full Professor and Chair of NRIN</i>, Amsterdam UMC Martin Galvin, <i>UCC Civic & Community Engagement Manager</i>, University College Cork (UCC) Interactive Q&A with the audience	Laura Mentini & Stefania Laneve, CATALISI Coordination team, APRE Moderators: Suhida Dermani & Jacopo Cardilli, EY
15:55	Synthesis & Next Steps Summary of key points, next steps for recommendations, and information on continued involvement.	Laura Mentini & Stefania Laneve , CATALISI Coordination team, APRE

2.

Rinske van den Berg,
Project Officer, European
Research Executive
Agency (REA)

Acceleration services joint forces in Europe



3.

Draft Joint Policy Recommendations

Laura Mentini & Stefania Laneve,
CATALISI Coordination team, APRE

Methodology and Data analysis



Based on evidence from **60+ HEIs and alliances across Europe**

Comparative analysis, projects are at different stages of implementation and different focus of intervention

Data from pilots, living labs, workshops, surveys, stakeholder interviews, exchanges and discussions

Internal barriers, (governance, culture); **External barriers** (policy, funding), **Mixed barriers**, (ecosystem engagement, monitoring systems, infrastructures).

Focus: **Acceleration services** as tools for institutional change

7 challenges + 1 cross-cutting issue

Challenge	Barrier Type	Thematic Dimension	Level of Intervention
Shared definition and operational framework for acceleration services	External	Conceptual / Operational	EU, National, Institutional
Leadership commitment and cultural changes	Internal	Governance / Cultural	EU, National, Institutional
Institutional capacity and coordination	Internal	Organisational / Structural	EU, National, Institutional
Stakeholder engagement and ecosystem anchoring	Mixed (Internal & External)	Institutional / Ecosystem Collaboration	EU, National, Institutional
Sustainability and national policy support	External	Financial / Policy	EU, National
Fragmented joint infrastructures	Mixed (Internal & External)	Infrastructural / Operational	National, Institutional
Limited monitoring and evaluation capacity	Mixed (Internal & External)	Structural / Policy	EU, Institutional
Prioritisation and focus of transformation efforts	Cross-cutting	Strategic / Operational Planning	EU, National, Institutional

CHALLENGE 1: Shared definition and operational framework for acceleration services

Problem	Evidence	Recommendations
▪ Recurring lack of clarity and shared understanding regarding what constitutes 'acceleration services' ▪ Fragmentation hindered comparability and limited impact.	✓ Partners often required clarification from facilitators, revealing diverse interpretations. ✓ Heterogeneous approaches to such services within alliance. ✓ Emergence of certain acceleration services as particularly impactful Living Labs engaged multiple stakeholders in co-designing and testing solutions in real contexts. Mutual learning workshops and twinning exchanges enabled structured onsite peer-to-peer learning, knowledge transfer, and inspiration from diverse institutional practices.	EU level ❑ Promote modular and flexible acceleration service frameworks adapted to diverse HEI needs. ❑ Develop a common typology and taxonomy of acceleration services. National level ❑ Provide practical guidance and financial/policy instruments that support institutions in deploying such services. HEIs/Alliances ❑ Embed and prioritize high-impact acceleration services in long-term governance and strategic planning

CHALLENGE 2: Leadership commitment and cultural changes

Problem

- Lack of visible **top-level leadership and recognition**

Evidence

- ✓ Transformation work as unrewarded 'extra work'.
- ✓ Mid-level staff mobilized but need to integrate high-level decisionmakers in actions
- ✓ Transformation also requires human factor (top down and bottom-up process)
- ✓ Institutional and cultural diversity created misunderstandings.

In CATALISI, stronger transformation results happened where top-level leadership were engaged and consulted throughout (6/7 HEIs had department head support, 5/7 vice-rector-level).

Recommendations

EU level

- ❑ WIDERA calls on institutional change should require demonstrable **leadership commitment**.
- ❑ Research **career frameworks** should recognize engagement and transformation roles as valued academic contribution.

National level

- ❑ Fund leadership mentoring and **training programmes**, equipping senior and mid-level leaders.

HEIs/Alliances

- ❑ Identify and establish "**duos**": key top and low/mid-level actors as change enablers.
- ❑ Reform promotion and career **progression criteria** to recognize innovation, engagement, and transformation.

CHALLENGE 3: Institutional capacity and coordination

Problem

- Organisational silos and limited internal communication reduced efficiency

Evidence

- ✓ Difficulties engaging multiple departments under a unified agenda
- ✓ Psychological and organisational barriers
- ✓ Weak links between research and education
- ✓ Lack of awareness and visibility of particular topics, tools and resources (open science, citizen science)

Recommendations

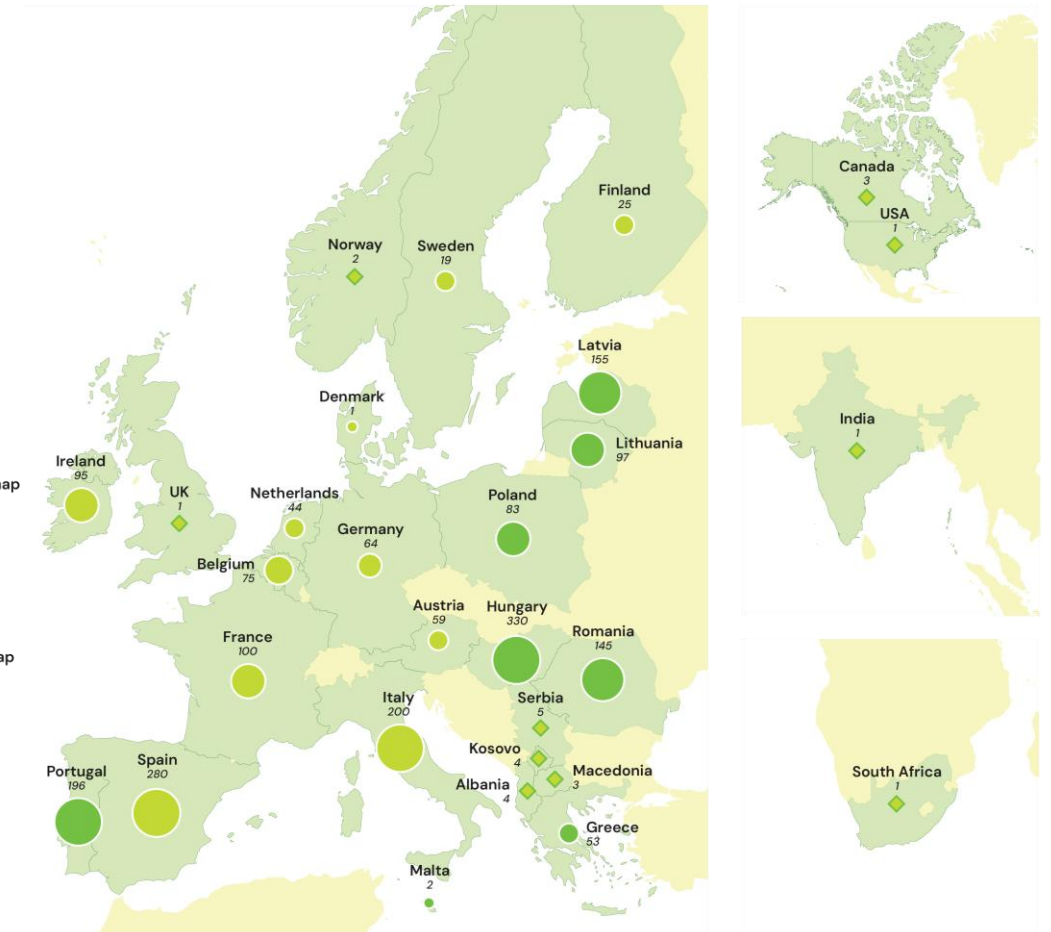
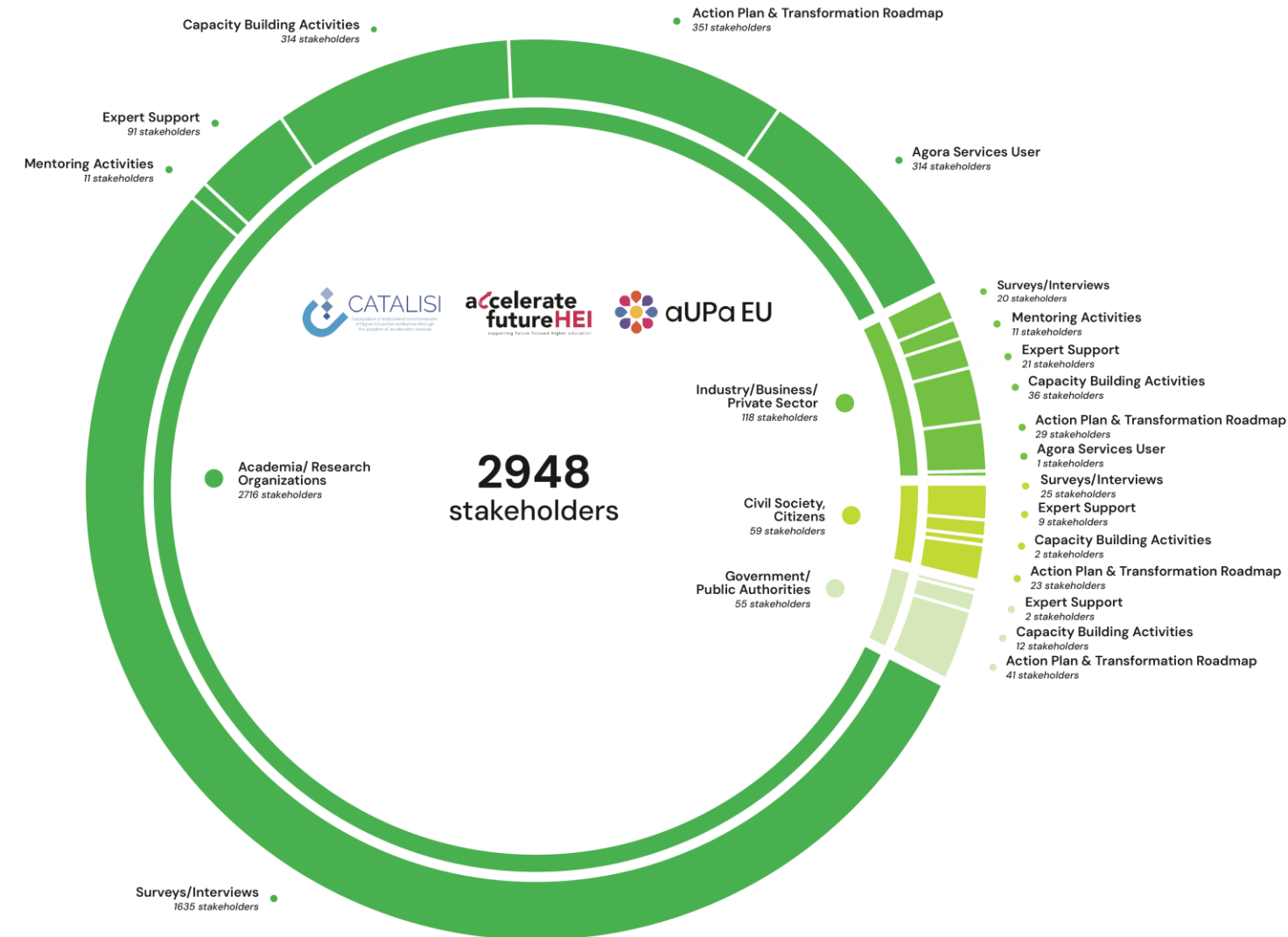
EU/National level

- ❑ Support **cross-departmental coordination** and peer-learning mechanisms.
- ❑ Establish funding schemes for **shared infrastructure and training** within Alliances and regional networks.

HEIs/Alliances

- ❑ Establish central transformation **steering groups** with department-level focal points.
- ❑ Provide clear **onboarding** materials, training, and well-defined roles and responsibilities.

CHALLENGE 4: Stakeholder engagement and ecosystem anchoring



CHALLENGE 4: Stakeholder engagement and ecosystem anchoring

Problem

- Limited inclusion of **all** quadruple-helix stakeholders in transformation process

Evidence

- ✓ Living Labs proved affective, but not all quadruple helix stakeholders relevant for transformation processes.
- ✓ Sustaining stakeholder participation during and beyond project life cycles is challenging
- ✓ Weak student engagement, low user engagement and network effects
- ✓ Lack of dedicated offices to connect with industry and external actors, low awareness about existing support structures

Recommendations

EU level

- ❑ Foresee **incentives** for HEIs to create permanent engagement structures aligned with ERA Action 7 on knowledge valorisation.
- ❑ Support **Living Labs** and **ERA Hubs** that strengthen the third mission of universities.

National level

- ❑ Support regional innovation **clusters** linking HEIs, industry, civil society and public authorities.

HEIs/Alliances

- ❑ Promote institutional **Third mission** strategies
- ❑ Create **formal offices** for engagement and valorisation
- ❑ Implement **tools** to map expertise and partnerships.

Challenge 5: Sustainability and national policy support and alignment



Problem	Evidence	Recommendations
▪ Project-based funding limits long-term impact. ▪ Institutional transformation requires predictable long-term policy and financial commitment	✓ Limited understanding of “exploitation” and absence of long-term mechanisms to absorb, scale, or sustain transformation. ✓ Scarce funding and high staff turnover affect continuity. ✓ High costs of digital transformation tools and services. ✓ HEIs, especially in Widening Participation, struggle to secure long-term funding. In CATALISI, those HEIs where transformation efforts are supported and aligned to national reforms, demonstrated faster and deeper change (e.g. national (ENCA, DORA) and European (CoARA) frameworks).	EU level ❑ Establish follow-up schemes for tested transformation models and acceleration services. National level ❑ Develop multi-year predictable funding for institutional transformation ❑ Embed transformation within national higher education strategies. ❑ Prioritise joint initiatives and interoperable solutions across HEIs and alliances.

CHALLENGE 6: Fragmented joint infrastructures

Problem

- Fragmented platforms and digital governance

Evidence

- ✓ aUPaEU project revealed gaps in interoperability and shared mechanisms for collaboration across alliances and systems

Recommendations

- National/HEIs and Alliances:**
- ❑ Develop **interoperable and user-friendly platforms** and adopt shared policies to align digital governance and resource use across Alliances.
 - ❑ **Link and connect** existing platforms with common access.
 - ❑ Improve **design**, raise awareness and offer user guidance.
 - ❑ Ensure **sustainable resourcing** and institutional support

CHALLENGE 7: Limited monitoring and evaluation capacity

Problem

- Lack of shared benchmarks and fragmented data

Evidence

- ✓ Absence of common indicators, benchmarks, or evaluation frameworks between sister projects and within HEIs.
- ✓ HEIs action Plans' definition and KPIs identification occurred late

Recommendations

EU level

- ❑ Develop shared ERA indicators for HEI transformation and valorisation.
- ❑ Open M&E dashboard template for ERA-related institutional transformation.

HEIs/Alliances:

- ❑ Provide digital M&E tools and training for partners
- ❑ Adopt harmonised M&E practices and integrate impact tracking into institutional systems

CROSS-CUTTING: Prioritisation and focus of transformation efforts

Problem

- An overly broad scope of interventions may dilute focus and hinder the depth of transformation achieved across HEIs

Evidence

- ✓ 14 intervention areas too ambitious
- ✓ HEIs that concentrated on a few high-impact domains achieved more progress
- ✓ Challenging to establish common benchmarks and measure comparable impact when HEIs pursued diverse transformation domains

Recommendations

EU level

- ❑ WIDERA calls define **key transformation domains** and promote phased approaches focused on high-priority areas.

National level

- ❑ Diagnostic and self-assessment tools to help HEIs **identify 3–5 priority areas** for transformation, aligning them with national and European strategic goals.

HEIs/Alliances:

- ❑ Use internal action plans and strategic frameworks to select the domains with the **highest transformative potential**.

Panel Discussion & feedback



Jesus Alcober

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aUPaEU, Universitat
Politècnica de
Catalunya, UPC

Rimante Rusaite

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Accelerate Future HEI,
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Mariëtte van den Hoven

NRIN Director,
Amsterdam
University Medical Centre,
AUMC

Martin Galvin,

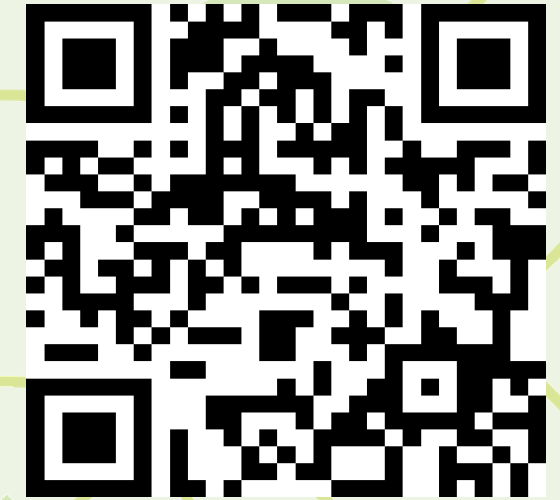
Civic & Community
Engagement
Manager,
University College
Cork, UCC

Audrone Telesiene

Deputy chair of the
Research and Innovation
Committee,
Kaunas University of
Technology, KTU Senate

Rinske van den Berg

Project Officer,
European
Research Executive
Agency, REA



**Q&A from the
audience**

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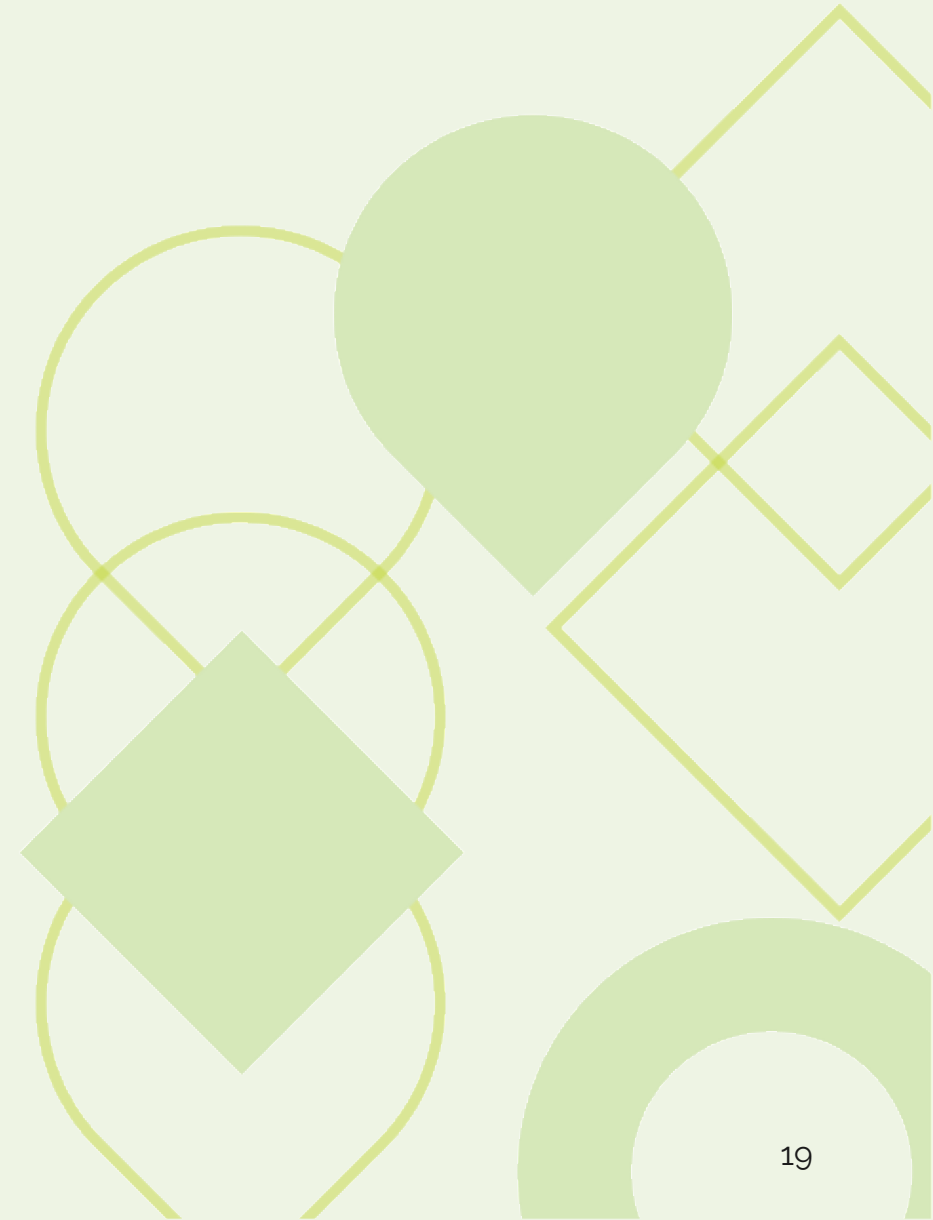
Moderators: *Suhida Dermani & Jacopo Cardilli, EY*

1.

Shared definition and operational framework for acceleration services

What are the key elements needed to build a shared operational framework that allows both comparability and local adaptation across diverse institutional contexts?

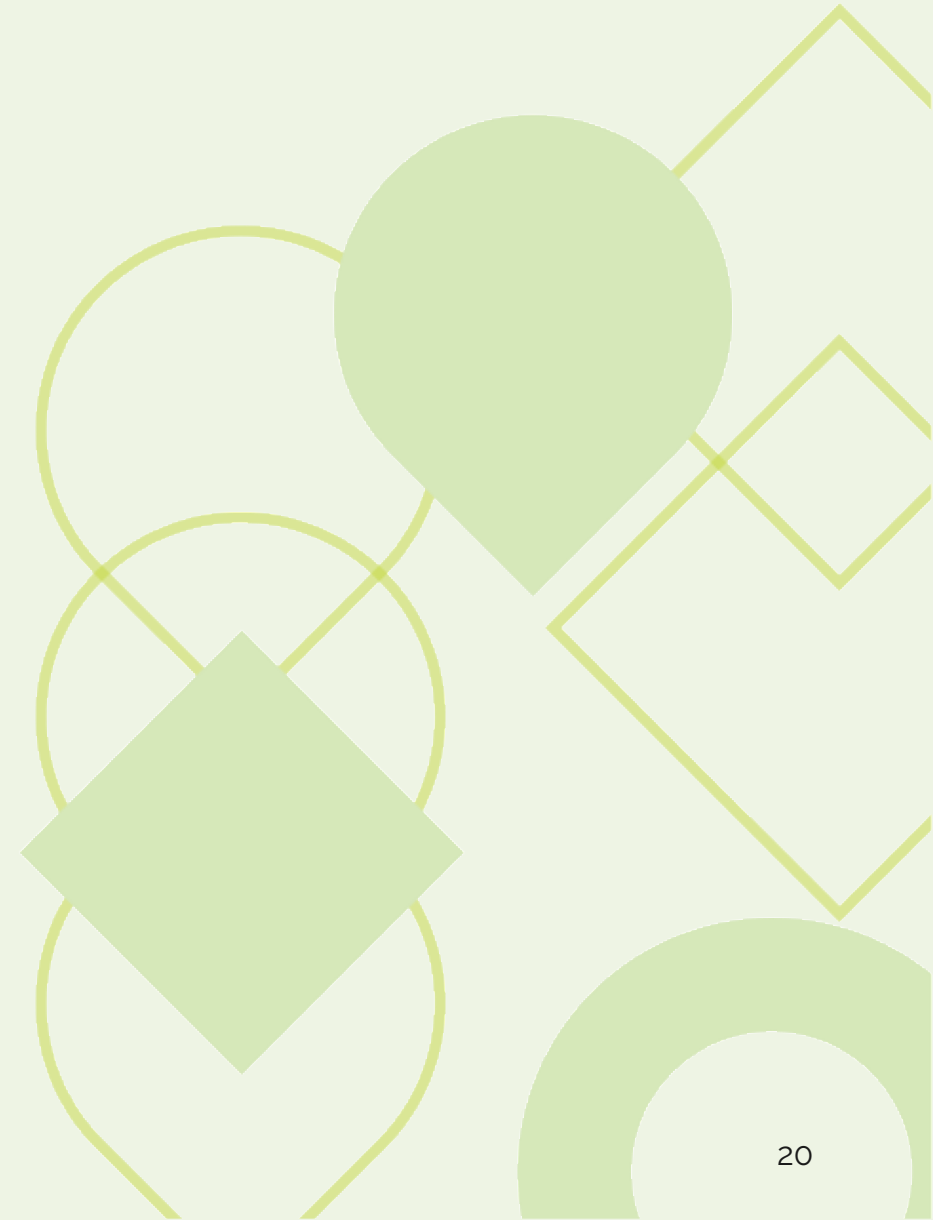
How did the Agora platform address or struggle with this fragmentation?



2.

Leadership commitment and cultural changes

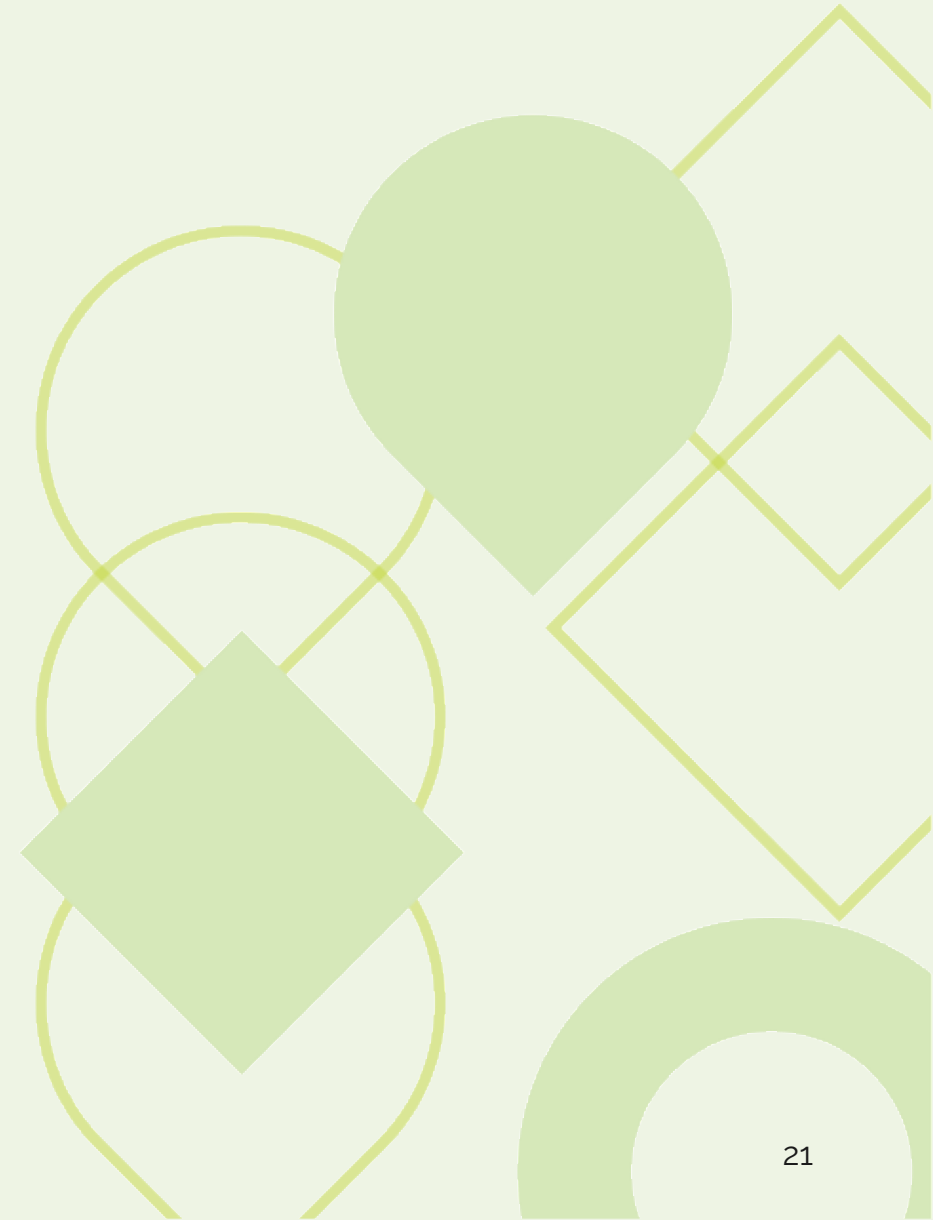
What challenges have you faced in relation to this aspect? What strategies do you believe are most effective in securing sustained leadership commitment and fostering a culture that values institutional transformation within HEIs?



3.

Institutional capacity and coordination

What have been the main reasons for weak coordination within HEIs, and what strategies do you think are more effective in breaking down these silos and fostering cross-departmental and ecosystem collaborations that support transformation agendas?

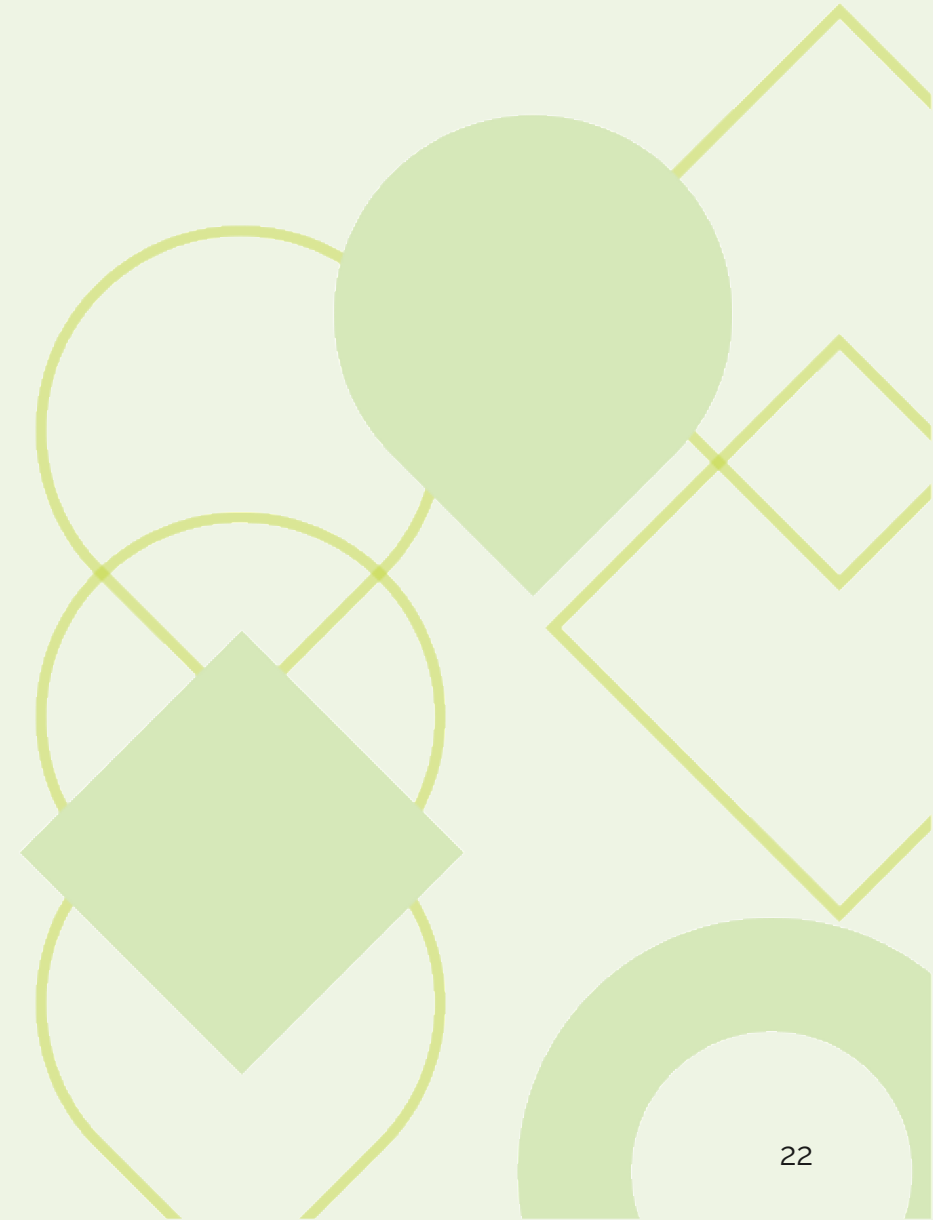


4.

Limited monitoring and evaluation capacity

What kind of monitoring systems or indicators would you recommend tracking transformation progress across diverse HEIs? Should these be standardized or tailored locally?

How can HEIs and policymakers ensure that the monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and impact of institutional transformation are effective and harmonized?

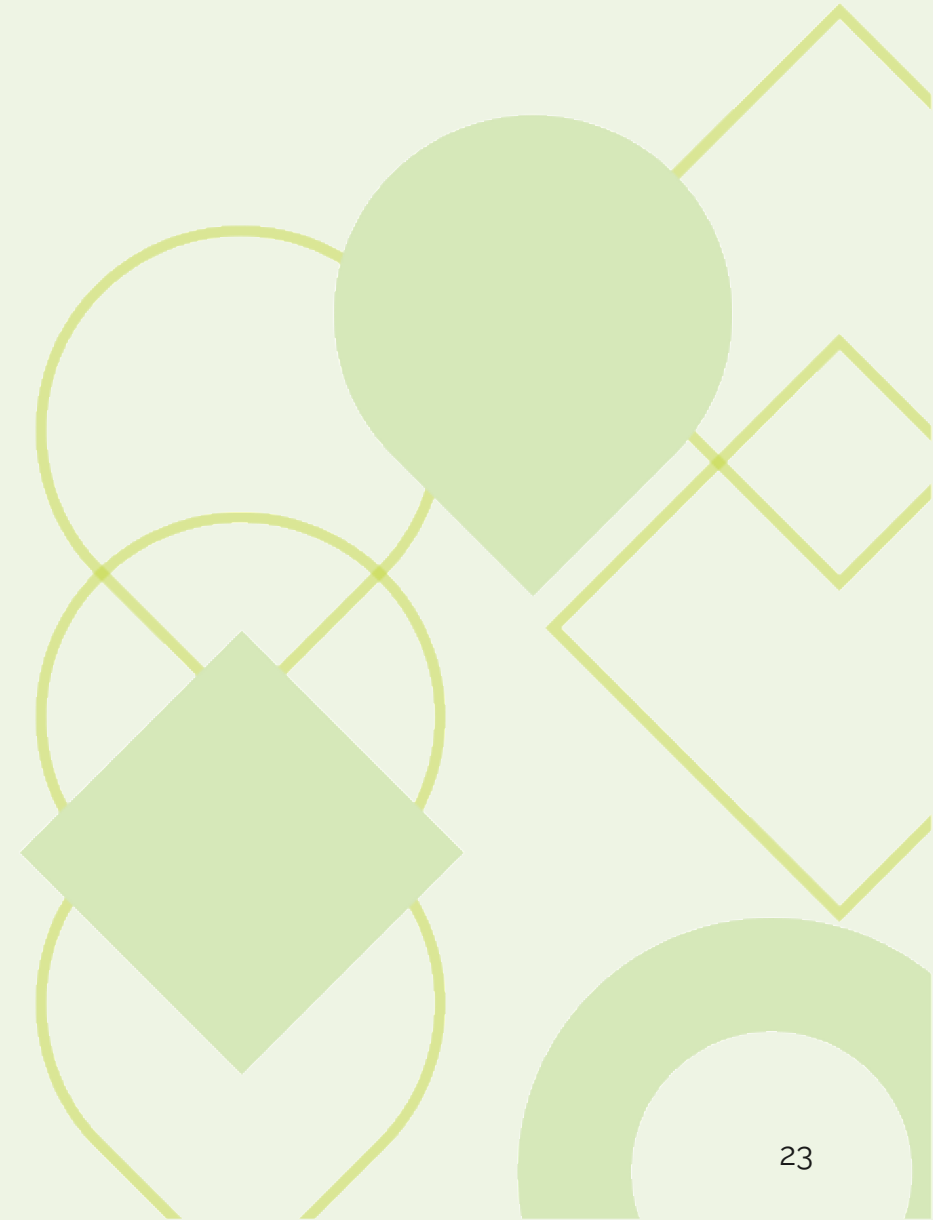


5.

Stakeholder engagement and ecosystem anchoring

What institutional mechanisms or strategic commitments are most effective in embedding external stakeholder engagement within the university's core mission?

How can the 'Third Mission' be operationalized to move beyond project-based participation and strengthen stakeholder collaboration?



6.

Connection with the ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027

*From the Commission's perspective, how can the lessons and tools emerging from these projects, especially acceleration services and transformation pathways, be embedded into the implementation of **Structural Policy 9** to ensure that institutional transformation becomes a structural component of the ERA, rather than a temporary project outcome?*

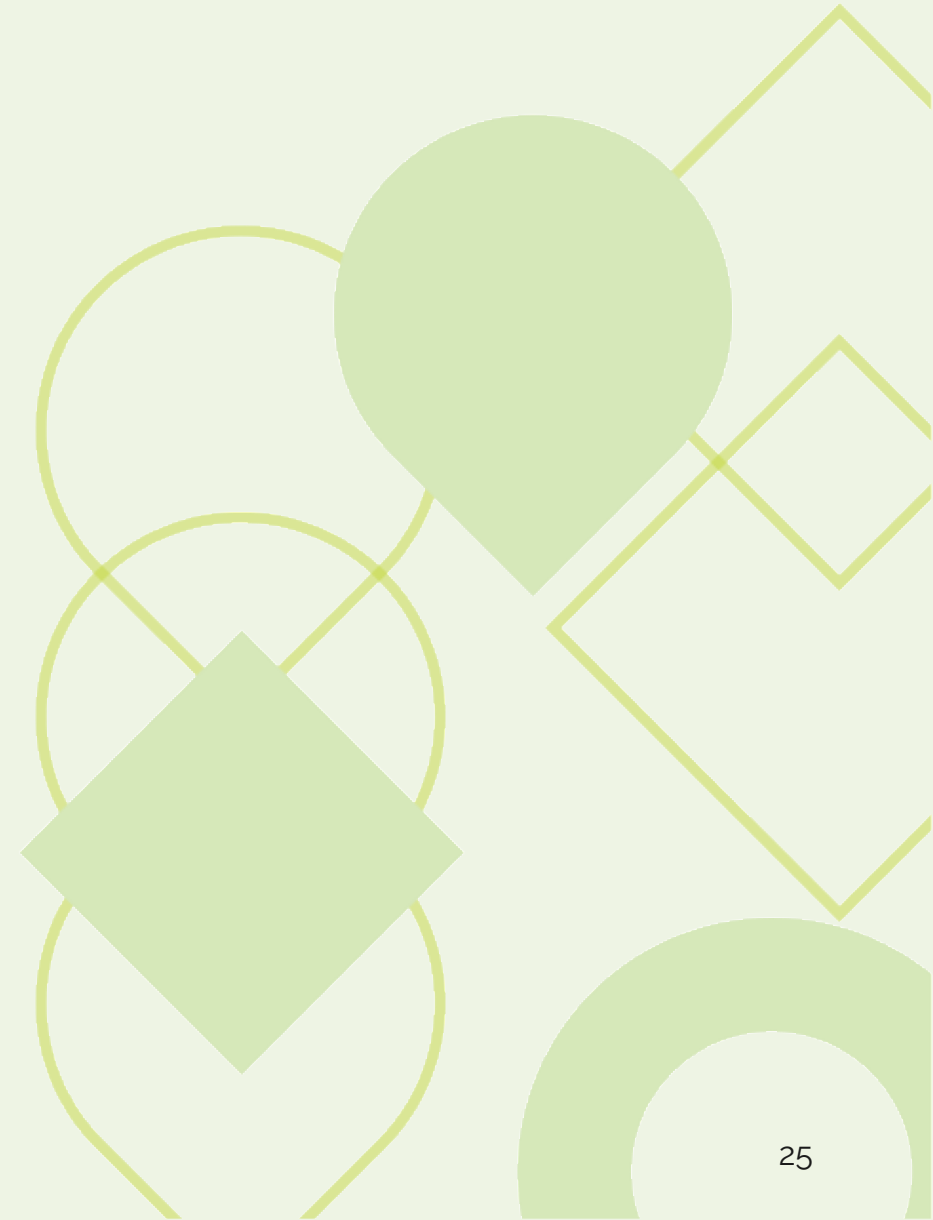
And how might the Commission foster stronger synergies between the ERA and the European Education Area so that HEIs can act as integrated drivers of change across both dimensions?

Common question

Prioritisation and focus of transformation efforts

Based on your experience, which transformation domains should be prioritized by the European Commission in the next Framework Programme?

How can institutions balance the need for strategic focus with the flexibility to respond to local needs and contexts? And what criteria should guide this prioritization?



Q&A with audience

Share your thoughts via Slido

***In your opinion which
transformation domains do you
think should be prioritized in the
next EU Framework Programme?***



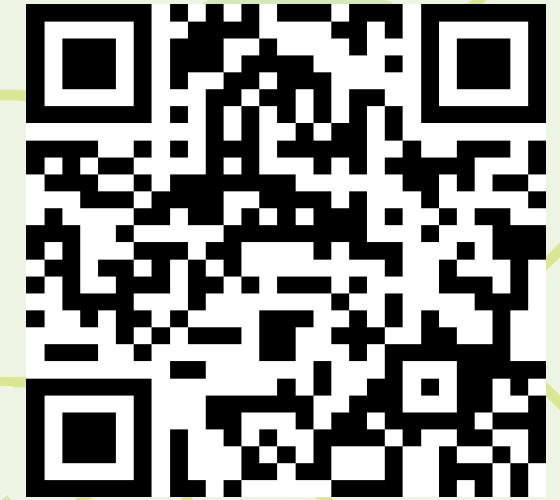
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**Slido Q&A from
the audience**

Q&A with audience

Share your thoughts via Slido

In one word, what would you say is key to successful HEI transformation?



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**Slido Q&A from
the audience**

Wrap-up and next steps

1. **Joint Policy Brief** published **Dec 2025**, informing **ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027**
2. Joint webinar with **INSPIRING ERA project (28 November 2025)** emphasis on **Action 13**
3. aUPaEU & AccelerateFuture HEI events (**Agora workshop 30 January 2026**) and **policy briefs 2026, 2027**



Thank you!



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