

Action required – for approval

Draft Utrecht Network Strategic Plan 2017 - 2020

Utrecht Network: a European network with a global outlook

Mission

A Europe-wide network of universities cooperating in internationalisation, the Network is committed to initiatives that strengthen the international profile of its member universities and the cohesion of the group. Through active participation institutions are encouraged to initiate joint activities leading to continuous further internationalisation of member institutions. Extensive experience gained at national and international level is shared in order to attain the highest quality in the management of European and international projects, exchanges, university services and organisation.

From a global perspective the Network is committed to building bridges between cultures through the development of mobility schemes with partners in other continents.

State of the art

Over the past 30 years the Network has established a successful reputation in European Higher Education. The Network engages in a wide variety of internationalisation activities including classic student and teacher mobility programmes, Summer Schools, staff exchanges to promote the professional development of members and joint programmes. Further internationalisation activities have taken place through participation in European funded projects.

Since 2008, the Network has described its mid-term goals and activities in a multi-annual work plan/strategic plan. The first strategic plan covered the period 2008-2012, until the 25th anniversary of the Network, which was celebrated in Utrecht in April 2012 and which marked a change in the institution hosting the Network Secretariat. The Secretariat moved from Utrecht University to the University of Hull on 1 January 2013. 2013 was a “transition year” for the Network, during which no mid-term strategic plans were developed and in which a new format for the AGM was tested. For the 2014-2017 work plan the general aims below (FORCES) were developed. The Network will continue to be guided by these aims during 2017-2020. This document therefore presents the goals and objectives that members, Task Forces and the Steering Committee will be called to pursue during the period 2017-2020.

General aims

For the period 2017-2020, the Network will be engaged in achieving the following goals, which can be summarised in the acronym **FORCES**.

- Foster internationalisation of education

- Open up to new forms of cooperation
- Respond actively to European HE policies
- Collaborate effectively within the Network
- Enhance internationalisation processes in member institutions
- Strengthen the profile and global outlook of the Network

“FORCES” encapsulates the ongoing transition of the Network and reiterates the importance of connecting its traditional activities (quality of internationalisation activities, internationalisation of education) with the changing international context (new forms of collaboration, European HE policies, and expanding the global outlook of the Network). FORCES means to take advantage of the new opportunities of the global arena starting from the strengths and traditions of the Network and improving cooperation amongst its members.

Specific aims

Each general aim has been expanded into one or more specific aims. Activities proposed by members, Task Forces and the Steering Committee will have to be connected to these specific aims.

The rationale behind this structure is to define mid-term aims and areas of cooperation, leaving freedom to operative teams on how to reach them on an annual basis.

1. Foster internationalisation

- Foster the internationalisation of academic curricula through, for example, student and staff mobility, joint study and research activities and summer schools. The development of joint curricula and the delivery of double/joint degree programmes will be actively supported.
- Explore and promote new and alternative forms of mobility
- Develop and offer improved professional services for all target groups
- Promote students and staff’s personal and professional development and international competencies
- Provide financial support to encourage the mobility of top-ranked graduate students and/or young researchers within the Network
- Raise cultural awareness

2. Open up to new forms of cooperation

- Investigate and implement forms of cooperation between higher education institutions and the labour market and/or non-academic stakeholders
- Initiate cooperation with other university networks

3. Respond actively to European HE policies

- Explore synergies between Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020
- Exploit opportunities offered by European funding
- Utilise the Network’s expertise in the field of internationalisation to engage and influence European policy and practice in this area
- Collect, share and disseminate information from the EU

4. Collaborate effectively within the Network

- Encourage new initiatives and the exchange of good practice in the area of international education and support joint initiatives between network institutions
- Develop strategies and tools for outreach and internal cohesion
- Encourage co-operation between Network Task Forces on specific issues

5. Enhance the quality of internationalisation processes in member institutions

- Support and optimise the professional development and potential of staff working in the field of internationalisation
- Develop international training initiatives including offering places to Network partners for in-house events
- Share best practice in internationalisation strategies

6. Strengthen the profile and global outlook of the Network

- Connect to partners in other countries and continents in the context of the Network's global policy
- Strengthen existing links and increase communication with all exchange Network partners
- Explore and initiate various forms of cooperation with networks outside Europe
- Develop UN initiatives as a brand
- Enhance the external and internal (i.e. intra-institutional) visibility of the Network aided by the development of effective promotional tools

Activities and implementation of the Strategic Plan

The Steering Committee and the Task Forces will develop activities in line with the aims above. Progress against the aims will be reported on annually.

Individual members will be able to contact the Steering Committee if they wish to develop a new initiative in line with the aims. The Steering Committee will monitor activity to ensure that all the Network's aims are being met.

The AGM and Steering Committee will consider the budget for the Network with a long term perspective and annually allocate funding in line with the aims above.