

## EELISA Governing Board

Hosted by Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM)

20-21 May 2026 – Madrid, Spain – DOC 7 – For Signature

### Joint Statement on EELISA Communities: A European Role Model for Collaborative Knowledge Co-creation and Impact

#### Where we stand

EELISA Communities are mission-driven working groups that bring together academics, researchers, students and administrative and technical staff across our partner universities with professionals, citizens, civil-society organisations, private companies and public institutions to co-create interdisciplinary, innovative solutions to real-world challenges. Contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Green and Digital Transitions, and in alignment with the EELISA Strategic Research Areas, EELISA Communities generate learning opportunities and societal impact that are formally recognised at the Alliance level through the EELISA Credential. In so doing, EELISA Communities embody a distinctive European model of higher education where technical excellence, inclusion, and engagement converge to drive societal and environmental impact.

Five years on, EELISA Communities have grown from pilot initiatives into a structuring ecosystem of the Alliance: 76 active Communities, more than 6750 members on our shared digital hub the EELISA Digital Campus, and over 300 challenge-based learning activities have been implemented since the pilot phase, mobilising more than 9,000 participants. The ecosystem now covers the full range of the Sustainable Development Goals and engages the entire disciplinary spread of our institutions, at a scale that positions it as a mature and replicable model. As highlighted by the external evaluators in the European Commission mid-term review of EELISA 2.0, “EELISA Communities and Joint Calls stand out as a major achievement in building European knowledge-creating teams through challenge-based approaches. These bottom-up instruments demonstrate real transnational cooperation across missions and sectors and are supported by monitoring tools, credentials, and growing stakeholder engagement.”

Building on this scale and impact, EELISA Communities are today one of the main drivers of the vision, mission and strategy of the EELISA Alliance, contributing to the internationalisation of our campuses and to the construction of a European University. EELISA Communities enhance the skills and employability of our students and the professional development and intercultural competences of our staff while creating an added value for society. By advancing gender equality and diversity, fostering inter- and multi-disciplinarity, and creating the conditions for attracting and nurturing talent, EELISA Communities are also where some of EELISA’s most important joint policy commitments are pursued through concrete collaborative actions. Moreover, Communities are by their very nature one of the most natural fora within EELISA to promote the principles of openness, integrity and societal engagement we have together affirmed in our Declaration on Advancing Open Science. Consequently, EELISA Communities have

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emerged both as a defining hallmark of the Alliance and as a role model for collaboration, knowledge co-creation and impact within European University Alliances.

## Our commitment

As members of the Governing Board, we recognise EELISA Communities as a strategic initiative of our Alliance and reaffirm our commitment to continue supporting our shared ecosystem.

We commit to increasing institutional support and top-down communication about our Communities within our institutions, beginning with our rectorate teams, Centres, Faculties, Schools and Departments, increasing their presence on our websites and newsletters.

EELISA Communities can be strengthened by promoting leadership and participation across disciplines. To grow in number, we commit to empower students as leaders or co-leaders, supporting student-led initiatives and ensuring that the student voice is reflected in the governance of the ecosystem. To grow in strength and consolidation, we seek to advance the recognition of the engagement of academic, administrative and technical staff in EELISA Communities beyond EELISA Credentials, with the objective of progressively integrating it in national and institutional career progression systems, building upon relevant recommendations and actions such as the framework endorsed on 19 November 2025 in Istanbul (*Towards a Framework for EELISA Institutionalisation, Staff Engagement & Recognition*).

To increase the impact and quality of their activities, our institutions should help enable EELISA Communities to engage industry, public institutions and civil society in lasting partnerships. This will strengthen the position of EELISA Communities as a privileged interface between education, research and innovation within the Alliance, fostering systematic links with EELISA's Strategic Research Areas, the Network for Researchers and Talent, and the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Ecosystem. With this in mind, we commit to mobilising existing institutional, national- and Alliance-level mechanisms to provide Communities with appropriate, predictable and flexible funding and in-kind resources for their activities and collaborative needs.

## Looking ahead

Europe and the world face converging transitions in the technological, geopolitical, ecological and social realms that are reshaping the role of universities and the demands placed upon them. In this context, the case for higher education that is open to society, integrated across missions, and capable of acting collectively across borders has never been stronger. EELISA Communities give that ambition practical form: they are where our institutions already operate together, with society, around shared challenges. Our task now is to consolidate this ecosystem as a lasting feature of European higher education. This means deepening their roots in our institutions, and widening their engagement with the other actors of the quadruple helix (universities, industry, public institutions and civil society). We invite our students, our staff, our external partners and our peer Alliances to take this work forward with us.

Madrid, 21 May 2026

The members and attendees of the EELISA Governing Board



Rector Hassan Charaf, Budapesti Műszaki  
és Gazdaságtudományi Egyetem

Rector Mihnea Costoiu,  
Universitatea Națională de Știință și  
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Director Anthony Briant, École nationale  
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Rector Óscar García Suárez,  
Universidad Politécnica de Madrid

Vice President Kathrin Möslein on behalf of  
President Joachim Hornegger, Friedrich-  
Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

Silvio Lorenzetti on behalf of  
President Regula Jöhl, Zürcher  
Hochschule für Angewandte  
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Rector Hasan Mandal, İstanbul Teknik  
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Pro-Rector Andrea Mina on behalf of  
Rector Nicola Vitiello, Scuola  
Superiore Sant'Anna

President El Mouhoub Mouhoud,  
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Dale A. Martin, EELISA President

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