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2026

ECIU UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

FROM
KNOWLEDGE
TO IMPACT
PEOPLE SHAPING
THE FUTURE

Impact

ECIU
university

ECIU University Magazine is a publication of the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) and was created in collaboration with U-Today, the independent journalistic medium at the University of Twente.

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FOREWORD

KNOWLEDGE THAT MATTERS

Knowledge truly matters when it changes lives. At ECIU, we measure the value of knowledge by its ability to drive progress, strengthen communities, and build more sustainable, just societies. This year’s ECIU Magazine, “From knowledge to impact; people shaping the future,” showcases not just what we do, but the tangible results we deliver.

Across Europe, research and innovation (R&I) are proven engines of well-being and competitiveness. As the European Commission’s 2024 Impact Assessment on Horizon Europe confirms, every euro invested in R&I can generate up to €11 in societal benefits, fueling advances in health, climate action, and digital transformation. This multiplier effect underscores the indispensable role of universities in building a resilient Europe. At ECIU, R&I is at the core of our mission. Through our R&I Hub — a network of over 1,200 researchers — and initiatives like the Researchers Mobility and Seed Programmes, we break down barriers. We foster international collaboration and provide crucial funding to ensure groundbreaking research is translated into solutions with real-world relevance.

But innovation cannot happen in a vacuum. Our deep collaboration with industry, municipalities, and local stakeholders ensures that learning is transformative and directly addresses emerging skills gaps — a challenge affecting over 80% of European employers. Within ECIU University,

we have pioneered microcredentials and a teaching model that empowers students, educators, and researchers to co-create solutions with society. The bridge between discovery and impact is built through action. Our innovation hubs, incubators, and cross-sector partnerships are the engines that convert academic knowledge into tangible solutions. This magazine provides the proof: we feature pilot projects that have already improved community well-being, reduced environmental footprints, and spawned new startups and technologies. These stories of measurable impact include Traceless, a startup creating sustainable alternatives to plastic; cutting-edge medical implants that are improving patient lives; and the Manufacturing Box, which upcycles plastic waste into building materials.

These examples, alongside strategic projects like CREATE, DIVERSE+, and NEXT-UP, demonstrate how cross-border and interdisciplinary collaboration magnifies our effect. In an exclusive interview, Mindaugas Bulota, Chair of the ECIU Innovation Directors’ Group, adds a critical perspective, explaining how universities can actively drive European competitiveness by turning research into societal benefit. Ultimately, impact is not a final destination but a continuous journey of learning and collective action. ECIU is committed to this path, proving that knowledge reaches its full potential only when it delivers measurable benefits for all — setting a new standard for the universities of the future. ✍️

PAULO FERREIRA, ECIU Vice-President and Rector of the University of Aveiro



PAULO FERREIRA, ECIU Vice-President and Rector of the University of Aveiro

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OUR MEMBERS

ECIU University is an European University alliance co-funded by EU



‘RESEARCHERS SHOULD MAKE USE OF THE ECIU COMMUNITY’

TEXT:
MICHAELA NESVAROVA
PHOTO:
FORUM TRENTO 2025

While education lies at the heart of the ECIU University, research and innovation have been ECIU's core activity since its foundation in 1997. In fact, the ECIU has a lot to offer to scientists - from access to a large network, incentives for collaboration to niche funding opportunities. ‘We strongly believe in fostering joint research and try to promote tools for all our researchers,’ stresses Laura Paternoster, EU Funding Advisor from the Central Office.

Implementing new things in existing systems is rarely easy...

‘Education represents the biggest part of the ECIU University, which means research can seem a bit hidden, but it is a very important part since 1997, not in the least because all teachers are researchers as well,’ says Paternoster.

She and her colleagues from the Central Office and the SEPO (Strategic European Project Office that brings together the EU Funding Experts from all ECIU member universities) are dedicated to advancing the ECIU research community. One of the main tools at their disposal is the Research & Innovation (R&I) Hub, a digital platform where researchers can network, collaborate and connect. Currently functioning as a Teams page with various channels, the R&I Hub includes over 1200 members – ‘a huge number which shows how potentially powerful this tool is’, highlights Paternoster.

The Hub doesn’t only serve as a meeting place, but also as a space where scientists can find unique funding opportunities, which they might otherwise not be aware of. ‘Our partners already have strong grant offices, and so – in order to avoid duplication of efforts – we mostly share very niche funding sources, such as funding from foundations or bilateral agreements,’ clarifies Paternoster.

International collaboration

To promote interactions and strengthen collaboration, researchers can make use of the Researchers Mobility Fund, allowing them to spend time at ECIU partner universities. Moreover, they are welcome to apply for the Seed Programme, which has in 2024 funded 14 proposals in five different research fields, spanning various partners and covering topics such as sustainability, transport, citizen science and AI. In both cases, there is a dedicated funding via the involved institutions.

In the spirit of cross-disciplinary cooperation, ECIU also organises digital and hybrid events such as online networking events or this year’s Research Labs initiative (see page 21). The research conference in Barcelona in 2023 was a great success, and hopefully, a similar physical event can be repeated in the near future as ‘this would help create a stronger research community’, adds Paternoster.

As she emphasises, regardless of the initiative, the goal has always been the same: to help all researchers utilize the network. ‘Researchers should make use of the ECIU community,’ says Paternoster. ‘Some scientists believe that they already have a good network, so they don’t feel the need to expand, but with ECIU you gain additional partners you can trust, as well as additional support from the Central Office. We are dedicated to helping you find the right opportunities.’

Laura Paternoster

ECIU RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES IN NUMBERS

- Seed programme 2024**
26 submitted proposals, 14 approved proposals with a total financial commitment by involved institutions of €376.850,00.
- Researchers Mobility Fund**
160 researchers benefited from a grant since 2023.
- Strategic European Project Office (SEPO)**
Pools the expertise for fundraising across ECIU partner institutions. In the past three years, ECIU submitted 187 proposals to Erasmus+. Horizon Europe, Digital Europe and COST. 60 were awarded, resulting in an overall success rate of over 32%.
- Research & Innovation Hub**
More than 1200 researchers of the ECIU have already joined the Hub to get tailor-made information on research calls, find connections across the partner universities for joint research activities and calls.



Researchers from the ECIU can sign up via the website

‘ECIU EFFORTS COVER RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND INNOVATION’

TEXT:
MICHAELA NESVAROVA
PHOTO:
DCU

It is in the DNA of the ECIU to create a strong research and innovation (R&I) ecosystem, and a support system that brings ideas to the market. ‘You need to provide support along the entire pipeline because most researchers didn’t enter academia to start their own company,’ says John Doyle, Vice President for Research in Dublin City University (DCU) and chair of the ECIU VP Research Group.



What makes the R&I ecosystem of the ECIU partner universities unique?

‘We all have similar values. We are all close to our regions and challenges and initiatives within them. At the same time, we do not aim for small technical changes but also focus on the grand challenges faced by Europe. This requires the full breadth of research and innovation.’

What are the main R&I facilities and possibilities offered by the ECIU?

‘I would say the number one is networking. Not a single one of the partner universities can rely solely on its internal and national funding. International funding mechanisms, such as Horizon Europe, have become absolutely crucial in securing our future. And consortia, which are needed for large European projects, require trusted relationships. You do not want to start a project worth millions of euros with people you do not know. When it comes to facilities, every university has something different to offer. For example, we have built a large R&I campus adjacent to our university (i.e. DCU), which provides easy access to all forms of companies.’

Can you mention examples of successful bottom-up initiatives and/or meaningful valorisation activities?

‘For me, the answer lies in the processes. It has always been a challenge to convince academic staff that universities value valorisation efforts. Especially since most academics do not enter the field to start their own company. To persuade them to give it a go, you need processes in place. To this end, at DCU we have organised simple lunch talks and initiatives for PhDs, provided help with accessing small grants through local agencies, and guided the staff to determine which ideas are potentially marketable. In Ireland, we have the highest number of successful spin-out companies per €10 million in research expenditure, and I believe that support for our staff is at the heart of this success.’

What types of incentives are effective in promoting valorisation?

‘You need to provide support along the entire pipeline. We should expose PhD researchers – and everyone else – to the possibility of starting their own business and have high-quality support activities. For example, at DCU we have developed an in-house AI tool to help us assess marketable ideas and judge their potential for being patented and commercialised. Normally, we would need to spend hours or

even days assessing the provided materials, but with this tool, we can give results within minutes. This has encouraged more academics to explore this option.’

Furthermore, at DCU we have not only a spin-out programme, but also a spin-in programme. Entrepreneurs who have an idea, but do not have the right technology yet, can come to work at our university and collaborate with academics to develop the idea further.’

In your opinion, what is ECIU’s recipe for success?

‘I think we have a better network than other European University Alliances. Many alliances stem from existing collaborations but they still need to be known among the student population and the faculty. ECIU is deeply embedded in the partner universities. It is part of daily reality. This is very unique. Moreover, ECIU efforts cover research, education and innovation. Although our alliance has received funding only for education, we do not believe that you can have a European University Alliance that does not focus both on research and education. In fact, we believe that the alliance will collapse if the research aspect is not properly addressed.’

Founded in 1997, ECIU brings together 13 universities with a collective emphasis on innovation, creativity and societal impact. The ECIU member universities have a long track record in university-industry interaction and collaborating with their regions. **Since 2019**, all members also form ECIU University one of the first European University Alliances. In ECIU University, learners, teachers and researchers cooperate with cities and businesses to solve real-life challenges.

European University Alliances

The European Universities Initiative is a bold EU effort to build strong alliances among higher education institutions across Europe, benefiting students, staff, and society. Funded mainly through Erasmus+, it supports long-term, strategic, and sustainable cooperation. Its goals include strengthening the international competitiveness of European universities, while fostering European values and identity.

‘MORE RESEARCH EXPLOITATION IS NEEDED’

TEXT:
EDITORIAL TEAM
PHOTO:
ULI SCHILLEBEECKX

Valorisation, the translation of research results into society, is a crucial part of the Commission's proposal to revitalise the European Research Area (ERA). Through the ECIU Innovation Directors group, good practices in innovation that impact society are shared and brought to the EU level. Mindaugas Bulota (Kaunas University of Technology), chair of this group, shares experiences and recommendations.

What are the strongest recommendations from the ECIU position paper "From Valorisation to Impact" for the EU to become more competitive?

‘In our paper we emphasise how enhancing knowledge valorisation can strengthen European competitiveness. More research exploitation is needed. Europe needs to do more to increase the commercialisation of research results. There is a significant potential to better harness the commercialisation of research results generated through EU-funded research and innovation activities. Notably, recent reports by Mario Draghi and Enrico Letta have underscored the need for increased focus on this area.’

How can universities contribute to this?

‘We believe that universities can serve as agents for Europe's competitiveness. Through ECIU, we advocate for a more coherent and integrated approach to innovation across Europe. Some key recommendations include streamlining Intellectual Property (IP) rights across Europe to facilitate innovation and ensuring consistency in the management of intellectual assets. We also see the need to simplify State Aid rules related to technology resulting from university R&D,

as these can often be too complex for effective collaboration between universities and industry.’

What additional recommendations are included in the report?

‘At the EU, national, and institutional levels, financial resources need to be made available to provide a pathway for commercialising research results. Many research results have great innovation potential but are too early-stage to secure private investments. Improved access and flexibility in financial support are required at all levels: from early-stage funding to mechanisms for funding disruptive, high-risk ideas. This also relates to funding coming from private investors. Our group is keen to collaborate on European Commission strategies such as the European Innovation Act and the Start-up and Scale-up Strategy.’

What organisational and cultural changes are required within universities to move from valorisation as a side activity to an integrated, systematic driver of societal impact?

‘At ECIU member universities, we have taken steps to integrate entrepreneurship into the curriculum and foster stronger industry-academia partnerships through initiatives such as dual appointments.

Mindaugas Bulota



ENGAGEMENT IN EU PROJECTS

The Innovation Directors have recently submitted two projects in the field of Knowledge Valorisation under Horizon calls, bringing together different players from regional innovation ecosystems.

The VALORAI project (European AI-powered Network for Strategic Knowledge Valorisation Intermediaries) aims to unite technology transfer offices, incubators, innovation agencies, and NGOs into a durable, inclusive community of practice to strengthen cooperation and turn knowledge into societal and economic value.

The second proposal, the AI4KV project (Artificial Intelligence for Knowledge Valorisation), aims to bridge the gap between research excellence and societal impact by providing tailored AI tools for IP assessment, adoption pathways, and funding matchmaking. ➤

We have seen that Technology Transfer Offices (TTO) can play a key role in bridging research and industry. TTO professionals can act as trusted intermediaries to connect commercial and non-commercial entities to apply research findings. Another proposed intervention is to establish Industry-Academia Sabbaticals, allowing researchers to immerse themselves in industry environments. Furthermore, creating innovation residencies where researchers collaborate with start-ups or tech incubators can facilitate the application of research to real-world products.’

And how does that apply at a later stage, when discussing start-ups and scale-ups?

‘In the context of the start-up and scale-up strategy, the European Commission called for more adequate rewards for multi-track careers. The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) is a key initiative that a university should sign up to, aimed at changing current research assessment methods in Europe by including the broader impact of research on society and academic entrepreneurial activities

as assessment criteria. This would award time spent in industry, start-ups, or tech incubators.’

How do we engage societal stakeholders in co-designing valorisation pathways?

‘For the commercialisation of research results, a partnership with the local ecosystem is key. University Science Parks, for example, can help to ensure the readiness and acceptance of the innovative idea. Science Parks can act as platforms to foster these relationships, facilitating interaction between researchers, businesses, and community stakeholders to co-create innovation pathways that address societal needs. Stakeholders such as entrepreneur or industry professionals can establish close links with university research groups, for example, through structured mentoring programmes. They can to help researchers identify pathways to valorise research results and commercial opportunities. Overall, a collaborative mindset is essential for creating more impactful and relevant research outcomes.’ ➤



ECIU University Forum 2025

TWO DAYS OF MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS AND REAL IMPACT

TEXT:
ANASTASIA BUKHTIAROVA
PHOTOS:
PIERRE TEYSSOT, ALESSIO COSER

Scan the QR
and watch the
Forum video



In June, 230 people arrived at the University of Trento for the yearly networking event that unites the entire ECIU University community. Among the participants, were more than 60 students and also societal partners.

This year's topic was Innovation for Sustainable Futures, with 23 training sessions, workshops and discussions taking place across different venues in the city centre of Trento. The goal was to inspire collaboration for a sustainable future, all while connecting across different disciplines and cultures.

For two days, attendants participated in diverse parallel panels and events, from training on design thinking and an inspiring conversation about AI trends. Not only did it encourage exciting discussions about sustainability and innovation, but it also created new connections and deepened the existing ones, all thanks to the joint passion for change.

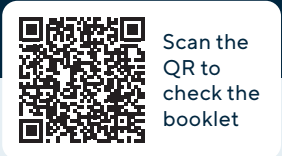
'The 2025 Forum demonstrated the ability and readiness of learners, academics and societal partners of the ECIU member universities to tackle challenges. Think of competitiveness, innovation and preparedness in Europe by developing new modes of academic activity that include AI, innovation, entrepreneurship and mobility', points out ECIU University director Niall Power. 'As the higher education sector changes rapidly, we continue to cherish and promote such values as critical thinking, active citizenship and academic freedom', he notes. ➡

ECIU SHOWCASES
UNIVERSITIES’
IMPACT IN BRUSSELS

The European Consortium of Innovative Universities highlighted the vital role of universities in shaping Europe’s future during its high-level event “From Valorisation to Impact”, held in Brussels, last Spring.

The gathering brought together more than 100 participants to discuss how research excellence can be translated into tangible societal and economic benefits.

Central to the event was the presentation of the ECIU Innovation Paper, which sets out recommendations for strengthening Europe’s innovation capacity through university-driven initiatives. Complementing this was a booklet of impact case studies, showcasing how ECIU partner institutions are delivering real-world solutions. In this article, we highlight a few. ➤



Scan the QR to check the booklet



The Traceless management team from left to right: Anne Lamp, Jakob Röskeamp & Sina Spingler

THE
FUTURE OF
SUSTAINABLE
PLASTICS

Traceless, a Hamburg-based bioeconomy start-up, is pioneering the valorisation of agricultural by-products into high-impact biomaterials. The technology was invented by Anne Lamp during her PhD research at Hamburg University of Technology (TUHH), where she explored sustainable resource use and circular economy principles. Supported by TUHH’s entrepreneurial ecosystem, she transformed her scientific work into an application-ready innovation.

Together with co-founder Johanna Baare, Lamp established Traceless in 2020 to commercialise Traceless, a naturally regenerative, fossil-free plastic substitute made from grain-processing leftovers. Unlike conventional plastics or many bioplastics, Traceless is free of harmful chemicals, does not generate microplastics, and is fully compostable at home and in the environment.

Its impact is substantial: a Life Cycle Assessment conducted under ISO 14040/14044 standards confirmed that Traceless reduces CO₂ emissions by 91% and fossil energy use by 89% compared with traditional plastics.

With €36.6 million in Series A funding, federal support, and a large-scale Hamburg plant under construction, Traceless is scaling up to deliver thousands of tonnes annually—driving systemic change towards a circular and sustainable materials economy. ➤



CLIMATE
AND ENERGY
TRANSITION
CHALLENGE

Organised at INSA Rouen Normandie under the leadership of Professor Bruno Renou, the climate and energy transition challenge focused on strengthening metropolitan strategies through systemic, cross-sectoral approaches. Grounded in the Plan Climat Air Énergie Territorial (PCAET), the initiative highlighted the shortcomings of compartmentalised policies in housing, transport, and economy, instead promoting integrated methodologies relevant not only to Rouen but also adaptable to other European cities.

The challenge fostered collaboration between academia and local authorities, engaging stakeholders such as Rouen’s urban planning agency, a Negawatt specialist, and municipal representatives. These exchanges deepened institutional ties with the Rouen Normandy Metropolitan area and sparked discussions on long-term partnerships and shared research projects.

Educationally, the challenge united 23 students from eight ECIU member universities, spanning undergraduate to doctoral levels. Their cultural and disciplinary diversity encouraged rich dialogue, empathy, and global thinking, leading to innovative, practical strategies for reducing energy use and expanding renewable energy adoption. Participants emphasised the interpersonal and systemic problem-solving skills gained.

Outcomes were shared across multiple platforms, including presentations to INSA Strasbourg, the French Ministry of Higher Education, and wider public channels. The project also developed a transferable framework for metropolitan transition planning, laying the foundation for future collaborations and student-driven innovation in sustainability. ➤



MEDICAL IMPLANT TECHNOLOGY

The collaboration between the Institute of Materials Science and Engineering at Lodz University of Technology and Medgal Ltd has resulted in a breakthrough innovation in medical implant technology with profound societal and economic impact.

The patented technology for modifying orthopedic implants with Silicon-Doped Carbon Layers (Si-DLC) offers a unique combination of superior biocompatibility, durability, and safety. Silicon-doped (Si-DLC) means that silicon atoms are added into the DLC layer to improve its properties. By preventing the penetration of toxic elements from metallic implants into surrounding tissues, these coatings significantly reduce allergic reactions and post-implantation complications, improving patient outcomes and quality of life. This is particularly relevant given the global rise in orthopedic, neurosurgical, and dental procedures driven by aging populations, lifestyle factors, and trauma.

Since its industrial implementation and certification in 2019, Medgal has introduced hundreds of thousands of Si-DLC modified implants—including screws, nails, and hip endoprotheses—into the global market. These products accelerate healing, expand treatment

options for patients with metal allergies, and contribute to safer, more effective surgical interventions. The technology represents the only industrially applied solution of its kind worldwide, positioning Poland at the forefront of biomaterials innovation. Beyond health-care, the innovation strengthens the competitiveness of Medgal, now exporting to around forty countries, while fostering academic progress, patents, and further research collaborations in advanced biomaterials. 📌



TOBE: INTEGRATED POLICIES AND TRANSFORMATIVE INDICATORS

The Horizon Europe project ToBe (Towards a Sustainable Wellbeing Economy: Integrated Policies and Transformative Indicators), led by Tampere University has played a leading role in shaping EU-level policy debates on sustainable and inclusive wellbeing.

Together with four sister projects, ToBe co-authored a policy advocacy paper requested by the European Commission, which outlines a policy agenda for a more secure, equitable, and future-oriented Europe. The paper's impact lies in translating research insights into actionable proposals, reviewed by senior policymakers across multiple Directorates-General to maximise influence.

The agenda highlights three transformative priorities: (1) strengthening a science-based policy toolkit with robust “beyond GDP” metrics and models; (2) reforming the European Semester process to align economic and social governance with wellbeing goals; and (3) advancing policies for societal transformations, including citizen-driven

governance, sustainable finance, and transformative research and innovation. These recommendations span 13 policy domains with concrete measures.

The co-operation among the projects has also led to a new joint project, a coordination and support action called MERGE which brings together the outputs of the sister projects in terms of indicators and policy frameworks.

ToBe has amplified its visibility and reach, creating a unified research voice and a platform for long-term societal impact. Dissemination through open science (Zenodo), presentations at high-level events (e.g., OECD World Forum), and strong engagement with EU institutions underscore the valorisation of research into tangible policy influence. 📌



FROM PLASTIC WASTE TO CONSTRUCTION BRICKS



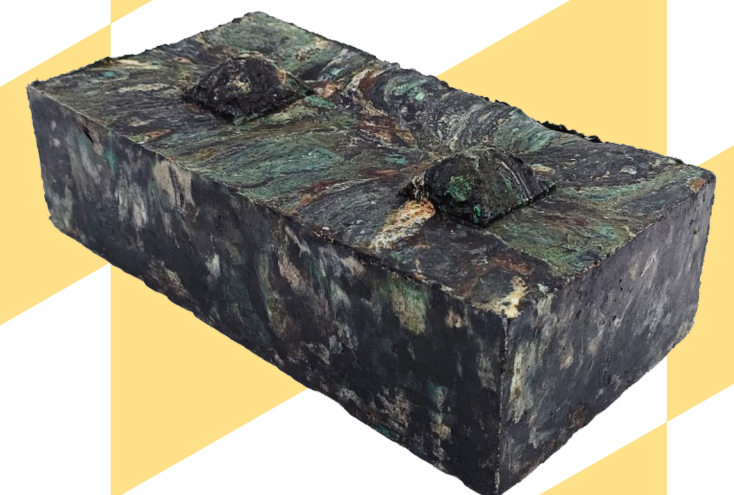
The University of Twente's Humanitarian Engineering department has expanded its Edubox concept—an adaptable, container-based learning lab—into two new applications: the Agribox and the Manufacturing Box.

The Edubox, currently deployed in Jordan, equips Syrian refugees with practical skills in areas such as digital marketing, waste management, and climate change. Its success highlights the potential of containerised labs as scalable educational infrastructure in crisis-affected regions.

The Agribox extends this model to agriculture, providing farmers with training in vertical farming, soil testing, and irrigation. Early evaluations stress its potential to

enhance food security and resilience by combining technical know-how with community-driven ownership. Partnerships with local associations, such as EcoYouth Jordan, are key to adapting the Agribox to specific farming practices and resource constraints, paving the way for sustainable market introduction.

The Manufacturing Box, still under development, transforms plastic waste into construction bricks for essential infrastructure. This project is carried out in collaboration with Engineering Without Borders NL in Ghana, where initial tests on brick construction for school restrooms have shown potential. Its anticipated benefits include improved sanitation facilities, job creation, and environmental gains through recycling. 📌



WHERE PIONEERING MINDS FIND THEIR HOME

The European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) is more than a network, it is a driving force shaping the future of research and education in Europe. With its Brussels Office, ECIU plays a strategic role in influencing EU policy in education, research and innovation and funding programmes. By engaging directly with European institutions and sharing practises from the partner universities, ECIU ensures that initiatives like Horizon Europe are designed to meet the needs of researchers and respond to society's most urgent challenges.

At the core of these efforts is the ECIU Brussels Office. Led by Olga Wessels (Head of Office), Lisa Pohl (EU Policy Officer), the coordinator of FOREU4ALL, and Giulia Consoni (Intern), the team drives strategic outreach to EU institutions and academic networks.

The EU is always seeking for experts and good practises from universities to contribute to EU policy-making. The Brussels Office helps to make the voice of the ECIU community heard at the EU level. Moreover, the office serves as a meeting point for the ECIU community, offering facilities for delegation visits and collaborative sessions. Whether you are organising a meeting or coordinating a visit, the ECIU Brussels team, located close to the European Parliament in Rue Luxembourg, is ready to support you.

Horizon Europe


The EU's proposed budget of €175 billion for research and innovation (R&I) for the next Horizon Europe programme 2028-2034, emphasises the importance of R&I in Europe's social and economic transformation.

The Brussels' office, together with the Vice-Presidents for Research and R&I experts of partner institutions, makes sure that the next Horizon Europe programme fits the needs of researchers.

European Research Area and Innovation Act

ECIU has recently made significant contributions to important legislative initiatives, including the European Research Area (ERA) Act and the European Innovation Act. The ERA Act aims to establish the EU's fifth freedom: the free movement of research, innovation, and knowledge. For ECIU, this is a pivotal opportunity to ensure that the Act reflects the experiences of institutions that are already operating across borders.

The European Innovation Act marks another milestone to which ECIU contributed its expertise. It seeks to support an innovation-friendly environment in Europe. While ECIU's partner universities are already at the forefront of innovation and creating societal impact, the Act offers a chance to align EU policy with these innovative practices by providing better legal frameworks and funding mechanisms.

ECIU is more than just a consortium, it is a home for pioneering minds. By connecting researchers across borders and disciplines, ECIU empowers them to create impact where it matters most. The future of research, education and innovation is collaborative and it starts here. 

TEXT:
LISA POHL,
OLGA WESSELS
PHOTO:
ULI SCHILLEBEECKX




Olga Wessels

Lisa Pohl



FOREU4ALL

The ECIU Brussels Office coordinates the FOREU4ALL project, a joint initiative of all 65 European University Alliances and the 8 Seal of Excellence Alliances. It provides a shared platform for all alliances to share good practices, exchange experiences, and strengthen cooperation across the European Higher Education sector. 

TRAINING A HUNDRED KNOWLEDGE VALORISATION AMBASSADORS

How to make the still quite vague concept of 'knowledge valorisation' concrete? The project CEETNOVA is taking steps to materialise the concept, which includes educating a hundred 'ambassadors' within ECIU partner universities. Project leader Utku Ali Riza Alpaydin explains.

TEXT: RENSE KUIPERS

What is CEETNOVA about?

'Connecting European Innovation and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Through Knowledge Valorisation Ambassadors. Ensuring that the knowledge we produce gets turned into sustainable products and solutions that benefit society, that is what knowledge valorisation is all about. There is however quite a gap between what is mentioned in documents and what it means in practice. What we are trying to do in this project is to materialise the concept, while also developing the competencies of people when it comes to knowledge valorisation.'

By educating so-called ambassadors, right?

'Yes, that is one of the key points of the project. We call them ambassadors because they will be the first cohort of people who are knowledgeable on the concept. They will be the ones sharing their experience and knowledge, starting from their respective universities, to the entire ECIU consortium – and hopefully the EU level next.'

The project has been up and running for about a year.

What would you say are the major milestones up until now?

'An important first step was conducting a survey amongst 125 stakeholders at five ECIU partner universities. We identified three target groups; early-career researchers, senior academics and non-academic staff. While early-career researchers tend to want to develop their communication and dissemination skills, senior academics prefer to sharpen their strategic skillset and impact policies. Over the last few months, we have developed a training programme tailored to each specific target group's needs. We aim to launch this programme in November 2025.'

UTKU ALI RIZA ALPAYDIN



The project is coordinated by the University of Stavanger in collaboration with four ECIU partner universities: Kaunas University of Technology, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, University of Trento and Linköping University.

For more information, scan the QR to visit CEETNOVA



How does the ECIU network benefit from this project?

'We want to expand this initiative to the entire ECIU network. So the training programme will be available to all ECIU partner universities in the future. We are also in talks about embedding some elements from CEETNOVA into ECIU's Leadership Development Programme. Besides that, we want to showcase best practices, so the institutions can learn from each other.'

With about one-and-a-half years to go with this project, what do you hope to have achieved by then?

'If we have been able to train these one hundred ambassadors, that would already be a great achievement. We will then have the opportunity to implement what they learned on a more practical level, via co-creation workshops. If we can equip people with theoretical knowledge and give them the tools for practical implementation, I would consider that a success. So we start with strengthening the local ecosystems and hope to continue and expand from there to a national and European level. We hope to get the snowball rolling.'

INNOVATION FOR A SMARTER EUROPE

ECIU research is team-based, and the universities work closely with partners from industry, government and civil society. This article discusses various examples that make an impact on society.

TEXT: EDITORIAL TEAM

NEXT-UP: SUPPORTING YOUTH TRANSITIONS IN POST-COVID EUROPE

Since January 2025, Tampere University has been coordinating the EU-funded Horizon Europe project NEXT-UP under the leadership of Prof. Yuzhuo Cai (initially the Principal Investigator and currently the Co-Investigator following his transition to The Education University of Hong Kong in April 2025) and Prof. Jussi Kivistö (current Principal Investigator). This 3.5-year initiative tackles one of Europe's most pressing challenges: helping young people navigate the transition from education to employment in the wake of COVID-19. Although youth unemployment has declined over the past decade, it remains double the adult rate, while the share of young people not in education, employment, or training still exceeds EU targets. The pandemic worsened these inequalities, leading to growing skills mismatches and risks of social exclusion. With each excluded young person potentially

costing society up to €1.2 million, the stakes are high for Europe's social and economic future. NEXT-UP aims to generate real impact by co-developing actionable solutions with youth, policymakers, educators, and employers. Using innovative tools—such as Living Labs, machine learning, and foresight modelling—the project will identify emerging skills gaps, create typologies of education-to-work transitions, and deliver evidence-based, future-proof policy recommendations. The project brings together a consortium of eleven partners from nine European countries, including eight universities (six of which are part of the ECIU network), one private association, one student union, and one UN-affiliated intergovernmental organisation, supported by an international advisory board. ▀



JUSSI KIVISTÖ



RESEARCH PROJECTS

DIVERSE+:
FAIRER AND MORE INCLUSIVE
RESEARCH ASSESSMENTS

The DIVERSE+ project (Advancing Diverse and Qualitative Research Assessment Across Europe) has been awarded funding under the CoARA second Boost call. The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) is a collective of organisations committed to reforming the methods and processes by which research, researchers, and research organisations are evaluated. Current research assessment methods rely heavily on publication-based metrics such as citation counts, and often fail to recognise the wide array of contributions made by researchers. The project is led by Łódź University of Technology, and in collaboration with Linköping University and the University of Aveiro. The project’s impact lies in piloting a structured scheme for the exchange of practices on new forms of research evaluation. Its focus is twofold: recognising the diversity of research contributions and promoting assessment approaches based on qualitative evaluation rather than narrow metrics. ‘The proposed joint knowledge-sharing pathway has the potential to enhance research evaluation standards at each institution, which in the medium and long term may lead to higher-quality research’, says Agnieszka Dybała-Defratyka, Director of the Research Support Centre at Łódź University of Technology.

DIVERSE+ seeks to empower institutions, enrich academic careers, and create lasting impact by valuing the full spectrum of contributions that drive science and society forward. Dybała-Defratyka: ‘The concrete results from DIVERSE+ will include the report of the mapping’s findings, the written guidelines and the plans for institutional changes. Finally, all of these will be shared within ECIU.’



AGNIESZKA DYBAŁA-DEFRATYKA



SUSTAINLIVWORK:
MAKING AI SUSTAINABLE,
AND ETHICAL

What’s in a name? SustAlnLivWork is a so-called Centre of Excellence for sustainable living and working, set up by ECIU’s member Kaunas University of Technology. The main goal is building a responsible, sustainable AI ecosystem that serves society. The SustAlnLivWork Centre of Excellence was launched in 2023 and is built on strategic collaboration between Lithuania’s four leading universities and ECIU partners Hamburg University of Technology and Tampere University. The centre focuses on four sectors: industry, energy, transport, and health, that all have their respective challenges. SustAlnLivWork hopes to tackle these challenges with sustainable, AI-driven advancements.

Because that’s at the heart of the initiative: advancing AI for a sustainable world. It means that artificial intelligence should be explainable, sustainable and ethical. As the Centre of Excellence’s director, Agnė Paulauskaitė-Tarasevičienė, explained in an article on the initiative’s website: ‘It is not enough to have AI – you need to understand how it works and who it serves.’ Instead of the big tech ‘black box’ that AI currently is packaged as, Paulauskaitė-Tarasevičienė hopes the ‘glass box approach’ becomes the norm. ‘Having explainable AI puts people back into the decision chain and allows AI to be used as an assistant rather than an autonomous tool.’ What separates SustAlnLivWork from many other initiatives and projects is that the Centre of Excellence does not solely focus on developing technology or skills. It is a long-term cross-sector platform which connects research, business, the public sector and society. This means the centre does not only offer training and education facilities, but is also working on AI laboratories and systems, testing and data analysis and creating new patents, just to name a few activities.



AGNĖ PAULAUŠKAITĖ-TARASEVIČIENĖ



'The ECIU Research Labs foster collaboration across disciplines and countries'



RESEARCH LABS:
BUILDING THE FUTURE
OF COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

ECIU is always looking for innovations in research and aims to use the strength of its network to develop and submit strong funding applications. ECIU and INSA Rouen hosted online and physical events during 2025, designed to spark new collaborations and shape ambitious research proposals across the ECIU network. In total, 50 researchers and research support staff from eleven ECIU partner universities connected, shared ideas, and laid the foundation for joint applications to European, international or interregional funding opportunities.

The impact of this initiative lies in its structured approach to nurturing research collaboration. Researchers participating in the online event worked together to refine ideas into one-page proposals, that are then further co-developed in a dedicated two-day on-site workshop at INSA Rouen. This novel approach combines early online networking with deeper, face-to-face co-creation to strengthen proposals and partnerships.

‘The ECIU Research Labs foster collaboration across disciplines and countries and empower researchers from across the ECIU to transform ideas into impactful projects that address Europe’s most pressing societal challenges’, stated Gilles Gasso, Director of Research at INSA Rouen.



GILLES GASSO



DEVELOPING CUSTOMISED CAREER PATHWAYS

The project Building R&I Talent Ecosystems to Advance Careers in Health Innovation (BREATH) aims to establish a well-structured and sustainable talent ecosystem in health innovation (HI) across three key European regions—Catalonia, Flanders, and Lithuania. Within this ecosystem, talent managers from academic and non-academic institutions will work together to drive institutional change and implement initiatives that strengthen research careers, foster talent retention, and support mobility.

‘To achieve this, BREATH will engage stakeholders in assessing the current needs of the HI ecosystem’, says Begoña Miñarro Vivas, Institutional Projects Office at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. ‘Including labour market demands, skills gaps, and emerging career pathways.’ Building on this analysis, the project will provide early-career researchers (ECRs) with tailored tools and guidance. ‘We have two main objectives: to deliver personalised training by co-developing customised career pathways, identifying essential skills, and addressing gaps with targeted training modules, and to offer individualised guidance through enhanced career support services at partner universities.’ BREATH will pilot and evaluate these new pathways, training programmes, and guidance services across the three regions, generating evidence-based policy recommendations to improve research career management at national and European levels.

The BREATH consortium brings together a diverse network of partners from three European regions, combining expertise in research, innovation, and talent management. In Catalonia, it includes Biocat – BioRegion of Catalonia Foundation, the Agency for Management of University and Research Grants (AGAUR), the Department of Research and Universities of the Government of Catalonia (DREU) as an affiliated entity, and WeDo | Project Intelligence Made Easy, which supports project intelligence and innovation analytics. From ECIU side, the project involves Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), the Innovation Agency Lithuania (IA), and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (SMSM), contributing innovation policy and strategic guidance. In Flanders, the consortium partners are Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KLU), the health innovation cluster Biovia and the Council of European Bioregion (CEBR), bringing academic excellence and cross-border collaboration expertise. ➤



BEGOÑA MIÑARRO VIVAS



ULALABS: A LAB OF LABS FOR ECIU

*How do you keep track of all ECIU lab initiatives across Europe?
How do you coordinate and facilitate collaboration between them?
That is where ULALABS steps in. Coordinator Konstantinos Kourkoutas from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona explains.*



KONSTANTINOS KOURKOUTAS

TEXT: MARTIN TER DENGE

ULALABS, which stands for "University Lab of Labs", is meant for transformative societal innovation, creating collaborative spaces where various stakeholders, such as researchers, community members, industry representatives, and local governments come together to address urban challenges. Their focus areas are fighting against climate change, promoting inter-connected higher education systems, and supporting innovation and entrepreneurial skills of students. The project received Erasmus+ funding after a seed call from ECIU.

Living labs

‘The idea of ULALAB is creating a network of living labs and urban experimentation spaces such as testbeds, citylabs, and fablabs, and seeing how they fit together in various stages of ideation, experimentation, and specialisation. Four ECIU member universities are currently involved: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, University of Stavanger, Linköping University,

and University of Twente. This facilitates cross-continental collaboration on solving societal problems,’ says Kourkoutas. ‘As our main goal is bringing various labs together and promote cross-case learning.’

Preparing for the pilot phase

‘We’ve only just kicked things off, after one and a half years of preparing. the first year was all about getting to know each other, mapping what kind of labs everyone was running, seeing how we can reinforce and learn from each other, and then prepare for the pilot phase this year. The idea is to identify an urban challenge and test how emerging technologies and participative concepts can fit into urban design processes.’

Achievements so far

‘We’ve mapped different urban labs and experimentation spaces, connecting them and encouraging collaboration. One key publication

is our Emerging Lab of Labs report, and we’re preparing pilot projects with toolkits and micro-credentials to support learning. Working closely with other partners has helped spread the impact, while building learning communities remains central to sharing knowledge and tackling urban challenges.’

He continues: ‘We’re currently working on a methodological framework, for the integration of the Lab of Labs into the ECIU ecosystem structure and function, and we’re hoping we can scale up this framework, and learning to include all ECIU members in the future.’ ➤



For more information, scan the QR or visit ulalabs.eu

LATEST EDUCATION NEWS


ECIU University is an alliance of 12 universities, where learners from around the world work with teachers, researchers, organizations, communities and businesses to solve real-life challenges, build connections, develop new skills, and make a societal impact. On this page, we touch on the latest developments and news. Below an explainer of our most important concepts.

CHALLENGES learning opportunities where you collaborate with stakeholders to find solutions to real challenges faced by businesses, institutions and communities.

CHALLENGE-BASED LEARNING (CBL) a learning model where you study by tackling real-life problems – with a focus on critical thinking, creativity and soft skills development. It gives learners more autonomy over their studies and helps prepare for their future career.

MICRO-MODULES short courses that help learners develop new relevant skills, broaden their perspectives and prepare for upcoming challenges.

MICRO-CREDENTIALS digital, e-sealed and tamper-proof records of courses you successfully finish at ECIU University. They can be stored and shared online.

FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS a learning model where the students decide on their own learning path and process, based on their goals. 

ECIU UNIVERSITY IN NUMBERS*

493 LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FROM 12 ECIU MEMBERS PUBLISHED IN THE ENGAGE PLATFORM. 30% OF THEM ARE CHALLENGES, 70% MICRO-MODULES.

7100 participations and **3300 individual participants** in the learning opportunities.

2500 micro-credentials issued.

350 teamchairs, teachers that facilitated teams in Challenges.

3600 teachers trained in CBL workshops.


1300 researchers in the ECIU University R&I Hub.

Scan the QR and explore our engage platform



* January 2023 - October 2025

INCREASING INTEREST

A new wind is blowing within the University of Twente when it comes to ECIU University. The vice-chancellor also notices this. 'There is a change going on', says Veldkamp. 'Several things are coming together. This initiative is here to stay. In the upcoming years, the European Commission will continue to support alliances between higher education institutions. ECIU University is such an alliance, and we are noticing increasing interest.' 

Scan the QR to read the whole interview



TOM
VELDKAMP



EDUCATION: EQUIPPING LEARNERS FOR A RAPIDLY EVOLVING WORLD

Joint University challenge-based Minor Program (JUMP) for future generation of innovative entrepreneurs is a pioneering ECIU University initiative, led by the University of Trento with the ECIU partner institutions Linköping University, Łódź University of Technology, and INSA Toulouse. 'The main tangible artefact of the project will be a European Challenge-Based (CBL) Minor, a co-created distributed minor based on CBL, composed of online micro-modules, blended CBL projects, and CBL internships and thesis', says Project Coordinator, Maurizio Marchese.

JUMP responds to recommendations by the Council of the EU (2021) to better equip learners with innovation and entrepreneurship competences suited for a rapidly evolving society. 'It promotes cross-disciplinary, intercultural, and inter-sectoral learning, engaging students, educators, and external stakeholders through communities of practice.'

By integrating Erasmus+ mobility, building shared educational infrastructure, and facilitating real-world challenge engagement, JUMP paves new paths for European higher education, enhancing both student competencies and institutional collaboration. 

MAURIZIO
MARCHESE




CREATE PROJECT AWARDED ERASMUS+ KA2 FUNDING FOR A CREATHON-BASED EDUCATION MODEL

The CREATE project (Creathons for Real-World Education and Applied Societal Transformation in Europe) has been awarded funding as part of the upcoming Erasmus+ KA220-HED initiative, set to begin in October 2025. With a funding and a planned 3-year run, it is led by Linköping University, in collaboration with Kaunas University of Technology, University of Aveiro, and University of Twente.

CREATE's goal is to develop a global, flexible Creathon model for higher education institutions, as inspired by the original Creathons' focus on creativity and Challenge-Based Learning (CBL).

This model aims to engage institutions and stakeholders across Europe to address real-life societal challenges while encouraging broader collaboration between learners, staff members, and stakeholders.

In order to achieve its goal, CREATE will align stakeholders' needs within the CBL context, co-design and refine the Creathon format to address EU priorities, and develop a framework to support stakeholders and institutions. In the proposal authors' own words, the project sets course not just for an innovative educational model but for a mindset shift – empowering shared social responsibility. 



STUDENT-LED PLATFORM UNIMATE RESHAPES DECISION-MAKING

TEXT:
ANASTASIA
BUKHTIAROVA

Choosing a university can feel overwhelming: the options are endless, the information scarce, and the consequences life-changing. Alberto Macagno and Gabriele Tealdo, Human-Computer Interaction students at the University of Trento, know the struggle firsthand. They responded by creating UniMate, a digital platform built by students, for students.

The idea was to create a platform that would offer aspiring students insights into different universities, study programs and student life, helping them make well-informed decisions when applying. Participation in ECIU University challenges did what it does best – laid the foundation for future work and new partnerships. But even more importantly, it opened the door to new perspectives. ‘ECIU University has played a key role in our journey, not only by connecting us with our future teammates, but also by offering excellent learning resources and opportunities’, says Alberto.

A new vision

Originally, the team wanted to launch a chatbot trained on university data to help students with orientation decisions, Alberto explains. However, the fast evolution of tools like ChatGPT and Gemini made them realise that a different solution might be needed – less similar to what they already knew and more human.

They also made an important observation that changed the project’s course. According to the team’s findings, a major reason for university dropout was the misalignment between students’ expectations and experience. Students wanted to understand what university life and courses were really like – but did not have the opportunity to find out.

‘That is when we shifted focus,’ shares Alberto. ‘While still aiming to support students, we decided to offer something unique: insights from learners who actually experienced those universities.’

UniMate is a platform with a focus on real student experience and perspectives. Here, learners can leave reviews about their degree programs for others to look up, gaining a better understanding of what they might expect as well.

How does UniMate work? There are two main features on the platform. In the Reviews section, you can leave your reviews on universities and degree programs, or read the ones created by other users. In the Explore section, you can browse universities and study programs to see the highest-rated ones, Alberto explains.

During a survey conducted among bachelor’s and master’s students across Italy, 8 out of 10 bachelor students said UniMate could positively impact their decision-making. Meanwhile, 9 out of 10 master’s students described the platform as ‘helpful’, and 8 out of 10 said they would like to use it for their studies. The participants praised the platform for offering a new, unique point of view – something they have not been able to find elsewhere. ➡

In 2024, Alberto Macagno and Gabriele Tealdo (pictured with certificate in hand) presented the idea of UniMate to the European Commission for Education during the DigiEduHackathon. They won the Experienced Award.



IMPACTA: A FRAMEWORK TO AMPLIFY CHANGE AT ECIU UNIVERSITY

TEXT: EDITORIAL TEAM
PHOTO: ALESSIO COSER



GIO FORNELL

IMPACTA, which stands for "Individual & Multi-stakeholder Process for Amplifying Collaborative Transformative Action", provides a structured approach to understanding and driving change within the ECIU community.

The framework equips learners, researchers, and partners with tools to plan, track, and monitor impact. More than a measurement system, IMPACTA fosters a culture of co-creation, encouraging individuals and stakeholders to design solutions with real societal relevance.

‘IMPACTA looks at impact both collectively and individually,’ says Gio Fornell, Innovation Adviser at Linköping University and lead of the Impact Work in ECIU University. ‘Collective impact is built up from many of ECIU University’s activities. For example, students engaging in Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) or researchers tackling societal challenges together with external stakeholders. Ultimately, it is those stakeholders who determine whether societal impact has been achieved.’

On the individual level, the impact is felt by the student. ‘It is the change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ambitions that comes from working with real-life challenges in a CBL context,’ Fornell explains. ‘KPIs are often used to capture the quantitative side of impact, but it’s equally important to consider qualitative aspects, as highlighted in Impact Case Studies.’

Making societal impact is part of the DNA of both ECIU as a consortium and of the participating universities’, Fornell states. ‘IMPACTA encourages both the institutions and individuals in a strategic and systematic way. It will also provide methodologies for follow-up on impact and to communicate what we as a consortium contribute to European values and European competitiveness. Both European and national funding organisations do not only want to see ambitions regarding impact, but they do also increasingly expect to see evidence on impact.’ ➡



Scan the QR to check out the paper



DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY WINS TEAM IMPACT AWARD 2025

TEXT:
ANASTASIA BUKHTIAROVA
PHOTOS:
PIERRE TEYSSOT

Dublin City University's story of innovation and collaboration captured the spotlight and has been named the winner of the prestigious Team Impact Award 2025 at the ECIU University Forum in Trento, Italy, last Spring.



Scan the QR for more information

The winning project grew out of the EcoTech Challenge: Pioneering Innovative Technologies for a Sustainable Future, where DCU partnered with Uisce Éireann, Ireland's national water utility. Their mission was clear: improve access to safe, clean water for vulnerable communities. Twenty-eight students from across the ECIU partner universities joined the challenge, working on practical solutions that blended research, technology, and social impact.

'We were inspired by last year's winners and what they had achieved to support students' health,' says Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Director of Micro-Credential Strategy and Innovation and Head of DCU Studio. 'But we also knew that we had done something special and in a completely different domain. We felt that we made an impact on a very personal level and wanted to celebrate the collaboration that inspired us to do more.'

'We felt that we made an impact on a very personal level'



The winning team of DCU. From left to right: Martina Crehan, Clare Gormley, DCU student Aoife Butler, Cliona Mcparland and Mairead Nic Giolla Mhichil.

The collaboration proved transformative. Among the student-led recommendations were a new social media strategy to strengthen communication with the public and a text alert system for vulnerable groups—both of which Uisce Éireann has since implemented. The text alert initiative even featured in a national television campaign earlier this year. Students described the challenge as a confidence-building experience. 'The skills that we learned during the challenge are very future-proof,' says Cathal McFarland, one of the participants and a student at the Digital Business and Innovation (DBI) programme at DCU Dublin Business School. 'After applying them in a real-world situation, I've gained a lot of confidence.' The victory not only celebrates DCU's success but also highlights how academia and public bodies can collaborate to drive meaningful change. 'What began as a simple conversation has evolved into an impactful shift—one that our students can connect with on multiple levels,' says Cliona McParland, Assistant Professor at DCU Business School (pictured right).

CLIONA MCPARLAND



TEXT:
ANASTASIA BUKHTIAROVA



'BE OPEN TO NEW PERSPECTIVES'

ECIU University places students at the heart of shaping education. What do they consider important? What could be improved? To gather this information, ECIU University works with so-called Student Ambassadors. Judita Švaikauskaitė, at Kaunas University of Technology, is one of them.

Švaikauskaitė had just begun her PhD studies when ECIU University learning opportunities caught her attention. Soon after, the KTU student enrolled in her first challenge hosted by Linköping University.

'At the very beginning, I had a lot of information available, but no one to ask about things, like their own experience with challenges or travelling to different universities,' she explains. 'I thought about how much easier it would be if a student at my university could answer my questions. So, when I received an invitation to join the ambassadors, I decided to become that student to others.'

Make sure voices are heard

Being an ambassador is a two-way street – not only does Švaikauskaitė raise awareness among students, but she also helps to make sure their voices are heard. 'As ambassadors, we represent both ECIU University and the students. We listen to what they have to say and try to find the most suitable solutions to their problems.'

While this comes with a fair share of challenges, for Švaikauskaitė it is also one of the best things about being an ambassador. 'I am very independent by nature and used to working by myself. But now I am learning to adapt to others,' she explains. 'We are all from different fields and disciplines, but we find a way to work together and find common ground. Be open to new perspectives.'



JOINING ECIU UNIVERSITY RESHAPED SANTOS' LEARNING PATH

In João Pedro Santos's own words, ECIU University placed him at the forefront of innovation, one of the best experiences of his life. Now, as a master student of the University of Aveiro, he enjoys sharing stories about his ECIU University adventure.

Santos was preparing for his third year, the final one before getting the bachelor's degree, when he realised he really needed a fresh start. Physics, which he studied at that time, just wasn't for him, and he wanted things to change. Santos started analysing different courses and came upon Environmental Engineering. The challenges ECIU University offered, caught Santos eye and he sealed the deal.


Through ECIU, Santos completed three challenges focused on sustainability, all aimed at rethinking consumption and waste. These experiences didn't just deepen his understanding of recycling across the European Union, they reshaped his worldview.

'Different cultures, different mindsets, different everything'

'I really thought the way we recycle in Portugal would be the same as in Lithuania, France, or Germany. But it is different for everyone. And people do not just recycle differently, they do and see most things differently. The challenges taught me a lot about understanding others' mindsets. Different cultures, different mindsets, different everything.'

Each project became a chance to learn from others, find innovative solutions, and understand problems from multiple perspectives. 'I worked with great, diverse teams. We realised that we could all contribute to the challenge in different ways due to our different ways of thinking. It is not just about connecting with people, improving your communication skills. It is about learning how to tackle real-world problems, discovering why they exist, and exploring how to solve them, with the support of teachers and peers.' Looking back, Santos believes switching courses, and joining ECIU University, was a true lifesaver that reshaped both his studies and his mindset.

NORWAY
SINCE 2004



University
of Stavanger

01


UNIVERSITY
OF STAVANGER

12.000 STUDENTS

1.600 STAFF

Produces more business ideas per researcher
than any other university in Norway.

IRELAND
SINCE 1989



DCU
Official Charter
Bhula Aha Clath
Dublin City University

02

DUBLIN CITY
UNIVERSITY

18.500 STUDENTS

1.919 STAFF

Ireland's University of Enterprise, leading
for licensing and innovation partnerships
with SMEs and multinational companies.

FRANCE
SINCE 1957



GROUPE
INSA

03

INSTITUT NATIONAL DES
SCIENCES APPLIQUÉES

20.000 STUDENTS

3.500 STAFF

Since they were created, INSA Group and its
schools have implemented a model based on
innovation and diversity, invented by one of
its founders, the philosopher Gaston Berger.

MEXICO
SINCE 1943



Tecnológico
de Monterrey

04

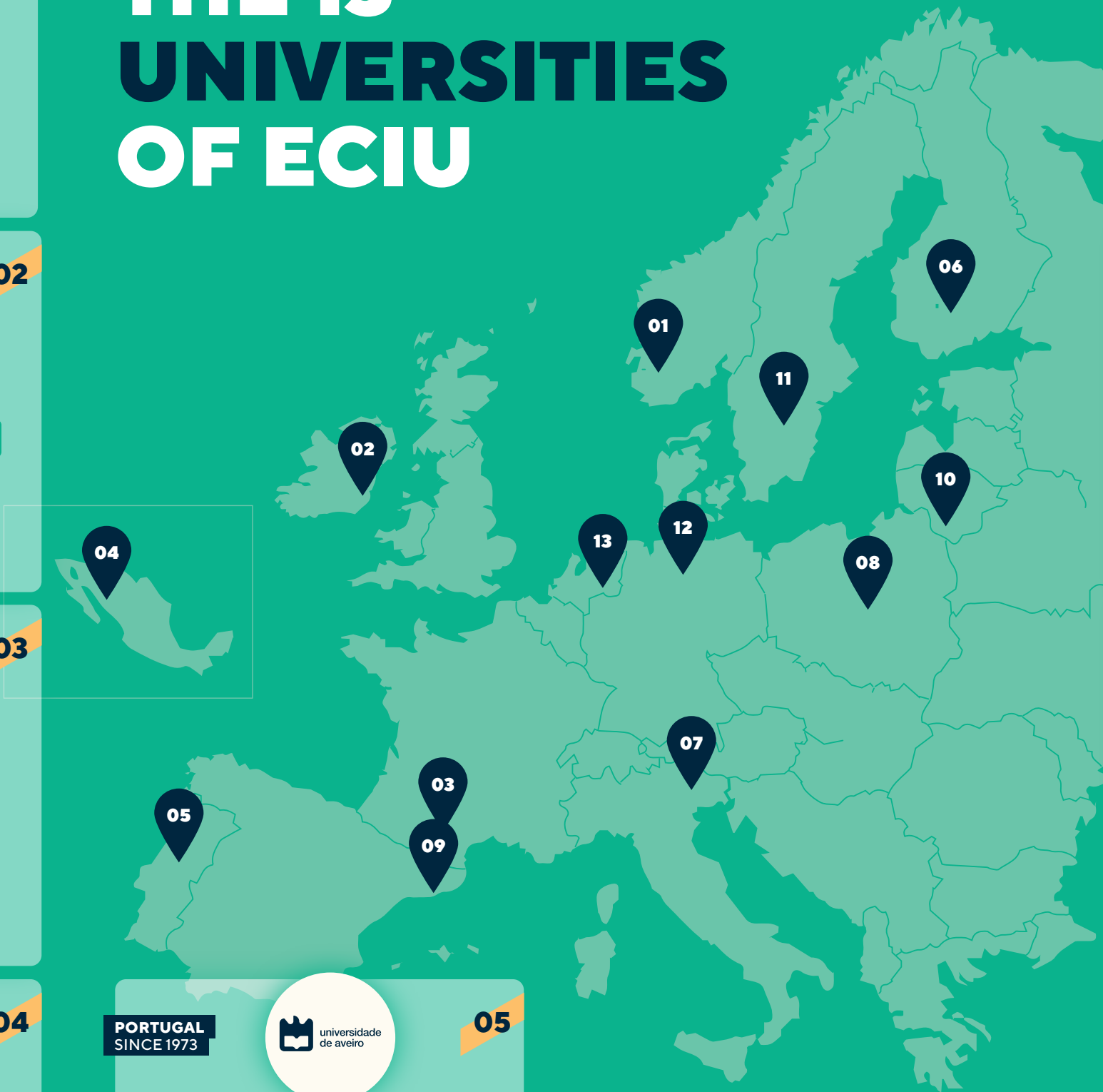
TECNOLÓGICO
DE MONTERREY

89.641 STUDENTS

10.117 STAFF

Is in the Top 25 Undergraduate Schools (NO. 14)
of the Princeton Review's Top Schools for
Entrepreneurship Studies for 2018.

THE 13 UNIVERSITIES OF ECIU



PORTUGAL
SINCE 1973



universidade
de aveiro

05


UNIVERSITY
OF AVEIRO

17.000 STUDENTS

2.800 STAFF

2024 Highly Commended EAIE Award for
Excellence in Internationalisation.

FINLAND
SINCE 2019



Tampere
University

06

TAMPERE
UNIVERSITY

22.500 STUDENTS

4.200 STAFF

Formed by merging the University of Tampere
and Tampere University of Technology, brings
together research and education in technology,
health and society.

ITALY
SINCE 1962



UNIVERSITÀ
DI TRENTO

07


UNIVERSITY
OF TRENTO

17.300 STUDENTS

1.640 STAFF

Leading University in Italy for quality of research
and education. At the center of the economic and
social innovation in the Trentino region.

POLAND
SINCE 1945



Lodz University
of Technology

08

LODZ UNIVERSITY
OF TECHNOLOGY

10.227 STUDENTS

2.610 STAFF

The 4th most frequently chosen university
in Poland, known for innovative teaching
methods, and the 1st one in Europe to have
implemented the Mobility Window.

SPAIN
SINCE 1968



UAB
Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

09

UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA
DE BARCELONA

42.649 STUDENTS

10.762 STAFF

The UAB is a public and groundbreaking university.
A leader in rankings and a benchmark in research.
Supportive, diverse, sustainable and participative.

LITHUANIA
SINCE 1922



kaunas
university of
technology

10

KAUNAS UNIVERSITY
OF TECHNOLOGY

7.407 STUDENTS

1.754 STAFF

One of the largest technological universities in the
Baltic States, offering interdisciplinary, industry-
oriented studies and acting as an R&D hub.

SWEDEN
SINCE 1975



LiU
LINKÖPING
UNIVERSITY

11


LINKÖPING
UNIVERSITY

40.400 STUDENTS

4.500 STAFF

In close collaboration with business and society,
LiU is an innovator in education and research.
Ranked among the top 2% in the world in
international university rankings.

GERMANY
SINCE 1978



TUHH
Hamburg
University of
Technology

12


HAMBURG UNIVERSITY
OF TECHNOLOGY

7.620 STUDENTS

708 STAFF

Offers one of the top 5 combined Management
and Engineering study degree programs
in Germany.

NETHERLANDS
SINCE 1964



UNIVERSITY
OF TWENTE

13

UNIVERSITY
OF TWENTE

11.000 STUDENTS

2.950 STAFF

Europe's most entrepreneurial
university with more than 700 spin-offs.

STAY TUNED



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