

# Global Trends in the Internationalisation of Higher Education: Focus on Mobility

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# What Does Internationalisation Mean Today?



Internationalisation represents the **intentional process of integrating international, intercultural, and global dimensions** into the purpose, functions, and delivery of higher education. This strategic approach fundamentally reshapes how universities operate in an interconnected world.

The primary goal is to enhance **quality, foster innovation, and deepen global engagement** across teaching, research, and service missions. What was once considered a privilege for elite institutions has evolved into a **mainstream priority** embraced by education systems worldwide, from research-intensive universities to community colleges.

Today's internationalisation encompasses curriculum reform, faculty development, international partnerships, and creating inclusive campus environments that prepare students for global citizenship and cross-cultural competence.

# Global Drivers of Internationalisation



## Demographic (and Financial) Shifts

Expanding youth populations in Asia and Africa are driving unprecedented student demand for international learning experiences and globally recognized credentials.



## Labour Market Globalisation

Employers increasingly seek graduates with cross-cultural competencies, digital literacy, and the ability to work in international teams and virtual environments.



## Rankings & Reputation

International rankings heavily weight global engagement metrics, creating powerful incentives for universities to expand their international footprint and visibility.



## Soft Power Diplomacy

Governments recognize academic mobility as both an economic driver and a strategic diplomatic tool for building international influence and fostering bilateral relations.





# Evolution of the Mobility Paradigm



## From Elite Exchange to Mass Mobility

What began as selective programmes for privileged students has transformed into accessible opportunities reaching millions of learners across diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.



## From Physical to Hybrid Formats

Traditional semester-long exchanges now coexist with blended mobility combining short physical stays with sustained virtual collaboration and online learning components.



## From One-Way to Balanced Partnerships

The historical pattern of South-to-North student flows is evolving toward reciprocal exchanges and genuine co-creation between institutions in all regions.



## Inclusive, Sustainable & Digital

Contemporary mobility prioritizes accessibility for underrepresented groups, environmental sustainability through reduced travel, and technology-enabled participation at scale.

# Quantitative Overview

2024–2025 Global Mobility Estimates

6M+

Students Study Abroad

The global population of internationally mobile tertiary students has reached record levels, reflecting sustained growth despite pandemic disruptions.

40%

Choose Europe

Europe maintains its position as the world's leading destination region, hosting over two-fifths of all international students worldwide.

## Fastest-Growing Regions & Virtual Mobility Expansion

**Asia and Africa** represent the most dynamic outbound regions, with middle-class expansion and improved access driving double-digit annual growth in student mobility from these continents.

Simultaneously, **Virtual mobility programmes** have emerged as essential complements to physical exchanges, particularly through Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange and similar initiatives that democratize access to international learning.

# The European Vision

01

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## Bologna Process & EHEA

The Bologna Process created the **European Higher Education Area**, harmonizing degree structures across 49 countries and establishing the foundation for seamless academic mobility and mutual recognition.

02

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## European Strategy for Universities

The EU's comprehensive strategy aims to strengthen cooperation, enhance quality, and position European higher education as a global reference through systemic transformation and investment.

03

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## Joint European Degree Label

The groundbreaking **Blueprint 2024** establishes a framework for officially recognized joint European degrees, removing longstanding legal and administrative barriers to truly integrated programmes.

04

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## Values-Driven Transformation

All initiatives emphasize **inclusion, multilingualism**, and alignment with **green and digital transitions**, ensuring internationalisation serves broader societal goals and sustainable development.







# European University Alliances

## A Game Changer for Integrated Cooperation

The European Commission's flagship initiative has catalyzed the formation of **over 60 transnational alliances** connecting more than **500 universities** across the European Union. These alliances represent a fundamental reimagining of how universities collaborate, moving beyond traditional bilateral partnerships to create deeply integrated networks.



### Leading Examples

CIVIS, UNITA, EUt+, Aurora, and ENLIGHT represent diverse models—from civic engagement to technological innovation to regional development focus.



### Joint Academic Infrastructure

Alliances develop shared curricula, co-located laboratories, joint research facilities, and common governance structures that transcend institutional boundaries.



### European Campus Concept

Students can seamlessly study across multiple institutions within an alliance, experiencing truly integrated mobility without administrative friction or credential recognition barriers.

# The Case of CIVIS Alliance

The **CIVIS Alliance** brings together **11 European and 6 African universities** in an ambitious project centered on **civic engagement and transdisciplinary innovation**. This alliance exemplifies the new generation of university cooperation that bridges continents and disciplinary silos.

CIVIS has already launched **over 200 blended mobility programmes** and established **24 joint degrees**, demonstrating remarkable productivity in creating tangible opportunities for students and faculty across its network.



## Micro-Credentials

Stackable, short-cycle qualifications that address specific competencies and facilitate lifelong learning across the alliance.



## Innovation Bootcamps

Intensive, collaborative learning experiences bringing together students from multiple institutions to solve real-world challenges.



## Transdisciplinary Hubs

Thematic centers where researchers and students from diverse fields collaborate on complex societal problems.

- 📌 **Flagship Programme:** The CIVIS-TRACEE Joint Master unites **12 universities** in delivering a truly transnational degree with integrated mobility, demonstrating how alliances can create programmes impossible for single institutions.



# UNITA and EUt+ Alliances

## Specialized Models of Cooperation

### UNITA Alliance

The **Universitas Montium** alliance connects universities from **mountainous and cross-border regions**, with a distinctive focus on **bilingual education and rural outreach**. This geographical specificity enables unique programme development tailored to regional challenges.

UNITA has pioneered innovative **dual degree models between Romania and Italy**, creating seamless pathways that leverage complementary institutional strengths and provide students with genuinely bicultural academic experiences.

The alliance emphasizes **sustainable development in alpine and peripheral regions**, connecting academic programmes to local community needs and environmental stewardship.

### EUt+ Alliance

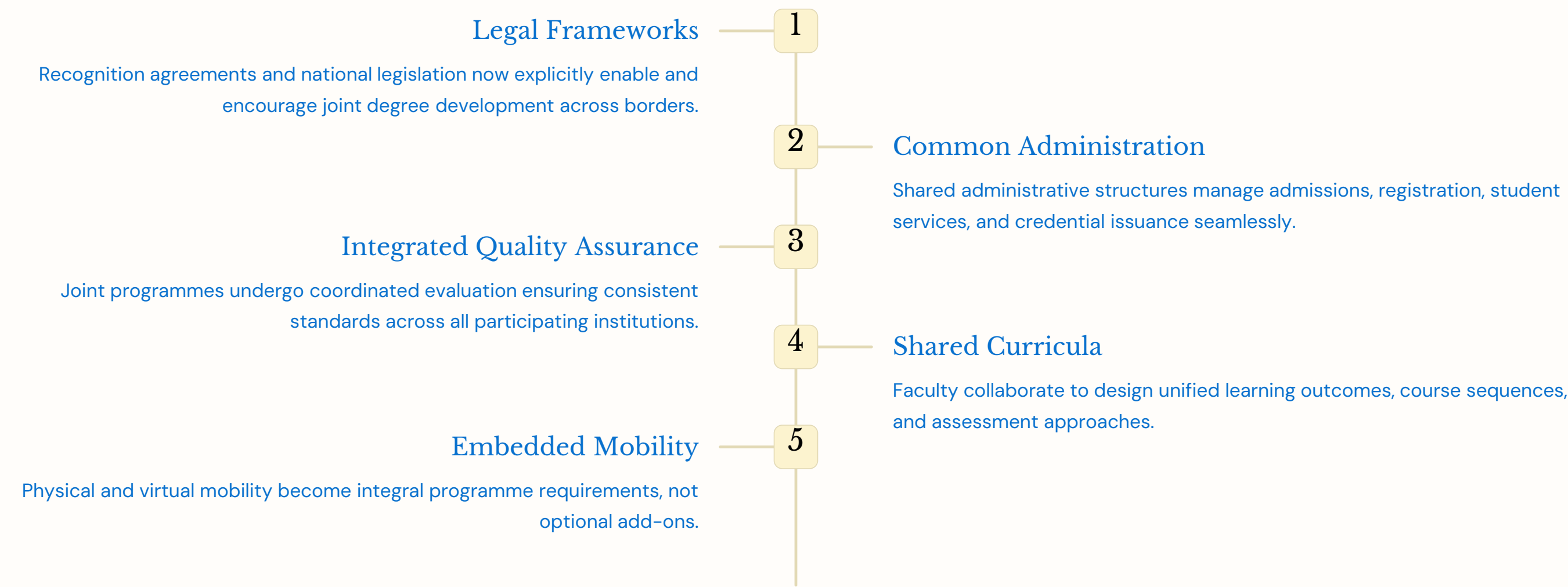
The **European Universities of Technology** network brings together leading technical institutions to advance **engineering education and applied research** through coordinated innovation.

EUt+ is developing comprehensive **quality frameworks specifically for European degrees in engineering**, establishing common standards that facilitate recognition while respecting institutional diversity.

The alliance strengthens both **academic and staff mobility across technical disciplines**, creating communities of practice that share pedagogical innovations and research methodologies in engineering and technology fields.

# New Models of Joint and Double Degrees

Joint and double degree programmes have evolved from experimental initiatives to **mainstream offerings** supported by robust legal frameworks at both EU and national levels. These programmes represent the deepest form of academic integration, requiring sustained commitment and sophisticated coordination.



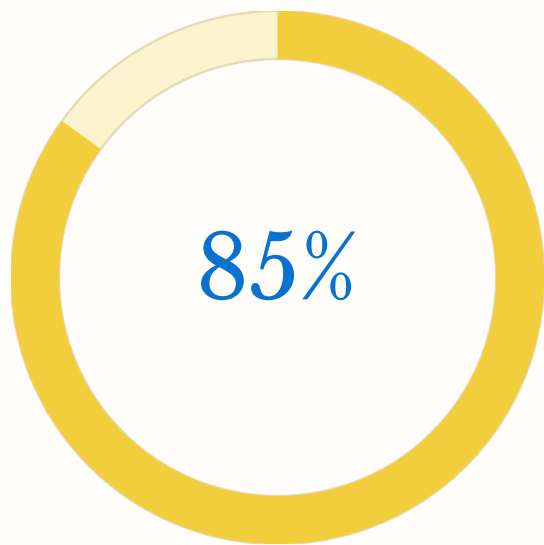
At the doctoral level, **co-tutelle research degrees** enable candidates to benefit from supervision by experts at multiple institutions, accessing diverse research environments and methodological traditions while earning jointly awarded credentials.

# Digital and Hybrid Mobility

Digital technologies have fundamentally expanded what we mean by "mobility," creating new pathways for international learning that complement rather than replace physical exchanges. These innovations address longstanding equity and sustainability challenges in internationalisation.

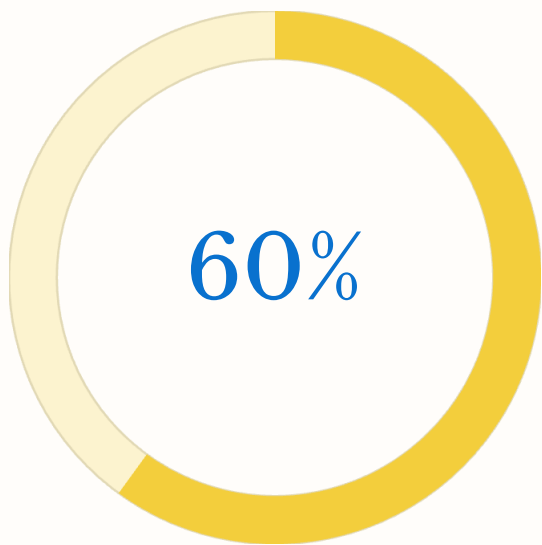
**Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange** has pioneered large-scale virtual mobility, connecting thousands of students across continents for collaborative learning experiences. The **CIVIS Virtual Mobility Handbook** and **StudyinEurope** platforms provide practical frameworks and tools for implementing high-quality virtual programmes.

Hybrid models combine **short physical stays with extended virtual collaboration**, maximizing the benefits of face-to-face interaction while reducing costs and environmental impact. Students might spend 2–4 weeks on campus, then continue project work remotely for an entire semester.



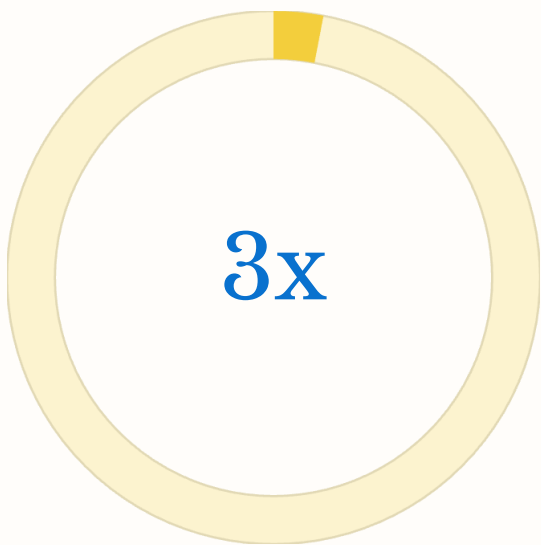
Accessibility Increase

Virtual components enable participation by students facing financial, family, or disability-related barriers to traditional mobility.



Carbon Reduction

Hybrid formats can reduce programme carbon footprints by over half compared to semester-long physical exchanges.



Reach Multiplication

Universities can engage triple the number of students through virtual components at comparable resource investment.



# Internationalisation at Home

While mobility creates transformative experiences for participants, the vast majority of students never study abroad. **Internationalisation at Home** ensures that all students, regardless of mobility, develop intercultural competencies and global perspectives through their regular degree programmes.

## Curriculum Transformation

**Multilingual and intercultural learning outcomes** are systematically embedded into programme objectives, course content, teaching methods, and assessment practices across disciplines.

Faculty integrate diverse cultural perspectives, international case studies, and global challenges into standard coursework, making the international dimension visible and relevant for all learners.

## Diverse Learning Communities

Institutions actively foster **cooperation with foreign lecturers** through guest teaching, joint course delivery, and co-supervision arrangements that bring international expertise directly into the classroom.

**Diversified student cohorts** that include both local and international students create natural opportunities for cross-cultural exchange, peer learning, and global network building within the home campus.

This approach democratizes internationalisation benefits, ensuring that geographic mobility is one pathway among many for developing global competencies essential in today's interconnected professional world.

# Global South and North–South Partnerships

The geography of internationalisation is shifting dramatically, with **Africa, Asia, and Latin America** emerging not merely as source regions for mobile students but as **essential partners in education diplomacy and knowledge creation**.

Progressive alliances **are expanding cooperation with African universities**, recognizing that addressing global challenges requires genuinely global participation and Southern perspectives that have historically been marginalized in academic discourse.



## Reciprocity

Moving beyond extractive relationships toward balanced exchanges where all partners contribute expertise and benefit equitably from collaboration.



## Co-Creation

Joint programme design, collaborative research agendas, and shared governance structures that reflect equal partnership rather than donor–recipient dynamics.



## Fair Partnerships

Attention to power asymmetries, resource imbalances, and historical inequities that shape institutional relationships across North–South divides.

This evolution represents a fundamental rethinking of international cooperation, acknowledging that **innovation, knowledge, and academic excellence exist in all regions** and that Southern institutions must be engaged as equal partners in shaping the future of global higher education.

# Trends in Policy and Governance

Internationalisation has matured from ad hoc initiatives to **strategic national priorities** integrated with foreign policy, economic development agendas, and innovation systems. Governments increasingly recognize higher education cooperation as a strategic asset for building influence and advancing national interests.

## System-Level Integration

The shift from **project-based** to **system-based internationalisation** means embedding international dimensions into fundamental structures—funding formulas, quality assurance frameworks, and institutional performance indicators—rather than treating them as supplementary activities.

## Professional Capacity Building

Professionalisation of **international offices and support staff** has become essential, with specialized training, career pathways, and recognition for international education professionals who manage increasingly complex partnerships and regulatory environments.

## Evidence-Based Management

Focus on **evidence-based policymaking and performance indicators** drives adoption of sophisticated data systems tracking mobility flows, partnership outcomes, and internationalisation impacts on institutional quality and graduate employability.



# Romania's Recent Experience

## National Strategy and Implementation

Romania has positioned internationalisation as a **government priority**, codified in **Law 199/2023**, which provides the legal foundation for systematic expansion of international engagement across the higher education sector.

The strategic framework sets ambitious targets to **increase foreign student enrollment by 35% by 2027**, recognizing international students as both revenue sources and contributors to institutional diversity and global reputation.

The newly launched "**Study in Romania**" platform provides comprehensive information for prospective international students, streamlining recruitment and improving Romania's visibility in competitive global education markets.

**New visa facilitation measures** reduce bureaucratic barriers for international students and researchers, making Romania more accessible and attractive compared to destinations with more restrictive immigration policies.

📌 **Regional Priority:** Collaboration with the **Republic of Moldova** remains central to Romania's mobility strategy, building on historical ties, linguistic affinity, and geographic proximity to create mutually beneficial educational pathways.

# Mobility with the Republic of Moldova

A Strategic Partnership

50%+

Moldovan Students in Romania

Over half of all non-EU international students in Romanian universities come from Moldova, representing the single largest source country.

100+

Active Partnerships

More than one hundred bilateral agreements enable student and faculty exchanges between Romanian and Moldovan institutions.

The Romania–Moldova educational corridor exemplifies successful regional cooperation built on **shared linguistic and cultural foundations** that facilitate academic integration and social adjustment for mobile students. Romanian universities have become primary destinations for Moldovan students seeking EU-aligned degrees and international credentials.

**Joint programmes and double diplomas** operate under bilateral governmental agreements, enabling students to earn credentials recognized in both countries while experiencing complementary academic strengths of partner institutions across the border.

Current cooperation focuses primarily on student mobility, but significant **potential exists for expansion into joint research projects and innovation partnerships** that could address shared regional challenges in areas like agriculture, public administration, digital transformation, and sustainable development.

# Measuring Impact and Quality

As internationalisation becomes mainstream, institutions and governments demand **robust evidence of impact and return on investment**. This has driven development of sophisticated measurement frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms.

**New key performance indicators (KPIs)** go beyond simple mobility numbers to assess learning outcomes, intercultural competency development, graduate employability, research collaboration quality, and contribution to institutional strategic goals.

**Quality assurance frameworks** like the EUt+ "Styx" standards establish benchmarks for international programme quality, ensuring that partnerships deliver genuine value rather than simply generating mobility statistics.

01

## Student Feedback Integration

Systematic collection and analysis of student and alumni experiences drive continuous improvement and programme refinement.

02

## Benchmarking Systems

Comparative analysis against peer institutions and best practices enables identification of strengths and improvement opportunities.

03

## Transparency Dashboards

Public reporting through interactive dashboards ensures accountability and enables prospective students to make informed choices.



# Future Outlook

## The Next Decade of Internationalisation



### Global Recognition of European Joint Degrees

Movement toward **worldwide acceptance** of joint European degrees as gold-standard credentials, facilitated by the Joint European Degree Label and enhanced quality assurance mechanisms that build international trust.



### Micro-Credentials Revolution

Proliferation of **micro-credentials and stackable learning opportunities** enables flexible, lifelong learning pathways that combine elements from multiple institutions and respond rapidly to evolving labor market needs.



### Sustainable Digital Ecosystems

Mobility becomes fully **integrated into sustainable, digitally-enabled ecosystems** that balance physical and virtual elements, optimize environmental impact, and maximize accessibility across socioeconomic groups.



### Regional Collaboration Deepening

**Stronger regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe** leverages geographic proximity, historical connections, and shared development priorities to create distinctive models of academic integration.

# Recommendations for Moldova's Universities

1

## Strategic Alignment

Develop comprehensive institutional strategies aligned with EU trends and the European Higher Education Area framework. This requires leadership commitment, stakeholder consultation, and integration of internationalisation across all institutional functions rather than treating it as an isolated activity.

2

## Partnership Expansion

Expand joint programmes with Romanian and broader European partners, leveraging existing bilateral agreements while pursuing inclusion in European University Alliances and other multilateral networks that provide access to resources, expertise, and mobility opportunities.

3

## Digital Infrastructure

Invest in digitalisation and comprehensive student support services that enable effective participation in virtual mobility, hybrid learning, and international collaboration. This includes learning management systems, language support, career services, and mental health resources for mobile students.

4

## Curriculum Internationalisation

Use mobility experiences to internationalise curricula at home, ensuring that returning faculty and students share their learning with non-mobile colleagues and peers. Develop intentional mechanisms for knowledge transfer and curriculum reform based on international exposure.

# Internationalisation is no longer optional

Internationalisation is the pathway to sustainable quality, global relevance, and institutional resilience in an era of rapid change and intensifying global competition.

**Mobility**—physical, virtual, and transdisciplinary—remains the beating heart of the global university, creating the human connections, shared experiences, and mutual understanding that no technology can fully replace.



# Thank you! Your Questions & Discussion



## Engage & Discuss

We welcome your questions and reflections on today's presentation.



## Moldova's Context

How do these global trends specifically apply to higher education in the Republic of Moldova?



## Global Collaboration

Let's explore opportunities for international cooperation and future resilience in higher education.