

KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCES

WHAT ARE THE AIMS AND PRIORITIES OF A KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE?

Knowledge Alliances aim at strengthening Europe's innovation capacity and at fostering innovation in higher education, business and the broader socio-economic environment. They intend to achieve one or more of the following aims:

- develop new, innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning;
- stimulate entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills of higher education teaching staff and company staff;
- facilitate the exchange, flow and co-creation of knowledge.

Main attention is turned to projects that contribute to the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems as outlined in the 2011 EU Communication on the Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education¹⁰⁸, namely to increase attainment levels; improve the quality and relevance of higher education; strengthen quality through mobility and cross-border cooperation; make the knowledge triangle work; improve governance and funding.

Additional emphasis is placed on making use of existing initiatives, and on the intelligent use of digital tools as recommended in the 2013 EU Communication on Opening Up Education¹⁰⁹.

WHAT IS A KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE?

Knowledge Alliances are transnational, structured and result-driven projects, notably between higher education and business. Knowledge Alliances are open to any discipline, sector and to cross-sectoral cooperation. The partners share common goals and work together towards mutually beneficial results and outcomes. The results and expected outcomes are clearly defined, realistic and address the issues identified in the needs analysis.

Knowledge Alliances are meant to have a short and long-term impact on the wide range of stakeholders involved, at individual, organisational and systemic level.

As a general rule, Knowledge Alliances target the cooperation between organisations established in Programme Countries. However, organisations from Partner Countries can be involved in a Knowledge Alliance, as partners (not as applicants), if their participation brings an essential added value to the project.

WHICH ACTIVITIES ARE SUPPORTED UNDER THIS ACTION?

Knowledge Alliances implement a coherent and comprehensive set of interconnected activities which are flexible and adaptable to different current and future contexts and developments across Europe. The following list provides examples of activities:

- **Boosting innovation in higher education, business and in the broader socio-economic environment:**
 - jointly developing and implementing new learning and teaching methods (like new multidisciplinary curricula, learner-centred and real problem-based teaching and learning);
 - organising continuing educational programmes and activities with and within companies;
 - jointly developing solutions for challenging issues, product and process innovation (students, professors and practitioners together).
- **Developing entrepreneurial mind-set and skills:**
 - creating schemes of transversal skills learning and application throughout higher education programmes developed in cooperation with enterprises aiming at strengthening employability, creativity and new professional paths;
 - introducing entrepreneurship education in any discipline to provide students, researchers, staff and educators with the knowledge, skills and motivation to engage in entrepreneurial activities in a variety of settings;
 - opening up new learning opportunities through the practical application of entrepreneurial skills, which can involve and/or lead to the commercialisation of new services, products and prototypes, to the creation of

¹⁰⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0567:FIN:EN:PDF>

¹⁰⁹ 2013 EU Communication on Opening Up Education: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013DC0654&from=EN>

start-ups and spin-offs.

- **Stimulating the flow and exchange of knowledge between higher education and enterprises:**
 - study field related activities in enterprises which are fully embedded in the curriculum, recognised and credited;
 - set-ups to trial and test innovative measures;
 - exchanges of students, researchers, teaching staff and company staff for a limited period;
 - involvement of company staff into teaching and research.

Knowledge Alliances may organise learning mobility activities of students, researchers and staff in so far as they support/complement the other activities of the Alliance and bring added value in the realisation of the project's objectives. Mobility activities do not constitute the main activities of a Knowledge Alliance; extending and scaling-up these activities would need to be supported via the Key Action 1 of this Programme or other funding instruments.

WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF A KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE?

The key features of Knowledge Alliances are:

- **Innovation** in higher education and innovation through higher education in enterprises and their socio-economic environment: innovation is considered as state-of-the-art project-specific and related to the partnerships context and analysed needs.
- **Sustainability** of university-business cooperation. A strong and committed partnership with a balanced participation from enterprises and higher education institutions are pivotal for the success of Knowledge Alliances. The role and contribution of each participating organisation and associate partner have to be specific and complementary.
- **Impact** going beyond the project's lifetime and beyond the organisations involved in the Alliance. It is expected that partnership and activities persist. For that, activities might be linked to/integrated into existing undertakings, schemes, projects, platforms, ventures etc. Changes in higher education institutions and enterprises have to be measurable. Results and solutions have to be transferable and accessible to a broader audience.

Knowledge Alliances are a highly competitive part of Erasmus+. Common attributes of successful proposals are:

- reliable relations between higher education institutions and enterprises: Knowledge Alliances have to demonstrate the commitment and added value of all partners, whereby strong and balanced involvement from both the business and higher education sectors is essential. A well designed proposal is the result of close cooperation between the prospective partners and based on a solid needs analysis;
- their innovative and transnational character, visible across all criteria.

A proper needs-analysis clarifies the rationale, influences the selection of partners, makes the proposal specific, helps to raise the potential for impact and ensures that end-user and target groups are well involved in the project activities.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATING IN A KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE?

Applicant/coordinator: a participating organisation that submits the project proposal on behalf of all the partners. The coordinator has the full responsibility to ensure that the project is implemented in accordance with the agreement. Its coordinating covers the following duties:

- represents and acts on behalf of the Alliance towards the European Commission;
- bears the financial and legal responsibility for the proper operational, administrative and financial implementation of the entire project;
- coordinates the Alliance in cooperation with project partners.

Full partners are those participating organisations which contribute actively to the achievement of the Knowledge Alliance's objectives. Each full partner must sign a mandate to confer to the coordinating organisation the responsibility of acting as main beneficiary and act in his name during the implementation of the project. If relevant, the same applies for partners from Partner Countries.

Associated partners (optional): Knowledge Alliances can involve associated partners who contribute to the implementation of specific project tasks/activities or support the dissemination and sustainability of the Alliance. For contractual management issues, "associated partners" are not considered as part of the project partners, and they do not receive funding. However their involvement and role in the project and different activities have to be clearly described.



WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA USED TO ASSESS A KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE PROPOSAL?

Here below are listed the formal criteria that a Knowledge Alliance proposal must respect in order to be eligible for an Erasmus+ grant:

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligible participating organisations	<p>A participating organisation can be any public or private organisation established in a Programme Country or in any Partner Country of the world (see section "Eligible Countries" in Part A of this Guide).</p> <p>For example, such an organisation can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a higher education institution; ▪ a public or private, small, medium or large enterprise (including social enterprises); ▪ a research institute; ▪ a public body at local, regional or national level; ▪ an organisation active in the field of education, training and youth; ▪ an intermediary or association which represents education, training or youth organisations; ▪ an intermediary or association which represents enterprises; ▪ an accreditation, certification or qualification body. <p>Higher education institutions established in a Programme Country must hold a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE). An ECHE is not required for participating HEIs in Partner Countries.</p>
Who can apply?	<p>Any participating organisation established in a Programme Country can be the applicant. This organisation applies on behalf of all participating organisations involved in the project.</p>
Number of participating organisations	<p>Knowledge Alliances are transnational and involve at minimum six independent organisations from at least three Programme Countries, out of which at least two higher education institutions and at least two enterprises.</p>
Duration of project	<p>2 or 3 years. The duration has to be chosen at application stage, based on the objective of the project and on the type of activities planned over time.</p> <p>In exceptional cases, the duration of a Knowledge Alliance may be extended, upon request by the beneficiary and with the agreement of the Executive Agency, of up to 6 months. In such a case, the total grant will not change.</p>
Where to apply?	<p>To the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, located in Brussels.</p>
When to apply?	<p>Applicants have to submit their grant application at the latest by 28 February at 12:00 (midday Brussels time) for projects starting on 1 November of the same year or 1 January of the following year.</p>
How to apply?	<p>Please see Part C of this Guide for details on how to apply.</p>

Applicant organisations will be assessed against the relevant **exclusion and selection criteria**. For more information please consult Part C of this Guide.

AWARD CRITERIA

The project will be assessed against the following criteria:

Relevance of the proposal (maximum 25 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Purpose: the proposal is relevant to the objectives of the Action (see section "What are the aims and priorities of a Knowledge Alliance"); ▪ Consistency: the proposal is based on a sound and solid needs analysis; the objectives and outputs are clearly defined, realistic and address
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	<p>issues relevant to the participating organisations and to the Action;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Innovation: the proposal considers state-of-the-art methods and techniques, and leads to project-specific innovative results and solutions; ▪ European added value: the proposal demonstrates clearly the added value generated through its transnationality and potential transferability;
<p>Quality of the project design and implementation (maximum 25 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coherence: the proposal presents a coherent and comprehensive set of appropriate activities to meet the identified needs and lead to the expected results; ▪ Structure: the work programme is clear and intelligible, and covers all phases; ▪ Management: timelines, organisation, tasks and responsibilities are well defined and realistic. The proposal allocates appropriate resources to each activity; ▪ Quality and financial control: specific measures for evaluation of processes and deliverables ensure that the project implementation is of high quality and cost-efficient.
<p>Quality of the project team and the cooperation arrangements (maximum 30 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Configuration: the proposed Knowledge Alliance involves an appropriate mix of higher education and business partners with the necessary profiles, skills, experience, expertise and management support required for its successful realisation; ▪ Commitment: each participating organisation demonstrates full involvement corresponding to its capacities and specific area of expertise; ▪ Partnership: contributions of higher education and business partners are significant, pertinent and complementary; ▪ Collaboration/Team spirit: the proposal includes clear arrangements and responsibilities for transparent and efficient decision-making, conflict resolution, reporting and communication between the participating organisations; ▪ Reward: Project provides clear added value and benefits to each partner organisation ▪ Involvement of Partner Countries: if applicable, the involvement of a participating organisation from a Partner Country brings an essential added value to the project (if this condition is not fulfilled, the project will not be considered for selection).
<p>Impact and dissemination (maximum 20 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exploitation: the proposal demonstrates how the outputs will be used by the partners and other stakeholders and will lead to the expected outcomes. Appropriate measures are in place for evaluating the outcomes of the project. The proposal provides means to measure exploitation within the project lifetime and after. ▪ Dissemination: the proposal provides a clear plan for the dissemination of results, and includes appropriate activities, tools and channels to ensure that the results and benefits will be spread effectively to the stakeholders and non-participating audience within and after the project's lifetime; ▪ Impact: the proposal shows societal and economic relevance and outreach. It provides pertinent measures to monitor progress and assess the expected impact (short and long-term); ▪ Open access: If relevant, the proposal describes how the materials, documents and media produced will be made freely available and promoted through open licences, and does not contain disproportionate limitations; ▪ Sustainability: the proposal includes appropriate measures and



	resources to ensure that the partnership, project results and benefits will be sustained beyond the project lifetime.
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To be considered for funding, proposals must score at least 70 points. Furthermore, they must score minimum 13 points for the categories "relevance of the project" and "quality of the project design and implementation"; 16 points for the category "quality of the project team and cooperation arrangements", and 11 points for the category "impact and dissemination".

WHAT ELSE SHOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS ACTION?

Quality assurance must be an embedded project component to ensure that Knowledge Alliances successfully deliver the expected results and achieve an impact going far beyond the partner organisations themselves. Knowledge Alliances are required to accomplish targeted dissemination activities which reach out to stakeholders, policy makers, professionals and enterprises. Along the way Knowledge Alliances should deliver publications such as reports, handbooks, guidelines, etc. Where appropriate, results should be made available as open educational resources (OER) as well as on relevant professional, sectorial or competent authorities' platforms. Knowledge Alliances should generate new ways and instruments to facilitate their collaboration and to ensure that the partnership between higher education and business persists.

Knowledge Alliances are a recent and ambitious Action; they are subject to a particular monitoring which requires active participation from all participants and stakeholders. Knowledge Alliances should foresee their participation in thematic clusters to support cross-fertilisation, exchange of good practices and mutual learning. Additionally, Knowledge Alliances should budget for the presentation of their project and the results at the University-Business Forum and/or other relevant events (up to five during the project duration).