

2022

Annual Report

ACA Academic Cooperation Association

The European voice of national organisations
for internationalisation of higher education

ACA
ACADEMIC
COOPERATION
ASSOCIATION



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The Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) is a Brussels-based stakeholder organisation active in the field of international higher education, bringing together national-level internationalisation (funding) agencies. Since its establishment in 1993, the association resides as a membership platform and a think tank that caters to the needs of the European higher education community. ACA's work encompasses a broad range of knowledge-building, peer learning and capacity-building activities including research and analysis, evaluations, advisory services, advocacy, publications and events.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Foreword | 2 |
| Who we are: Our members | 3 |
| ACA Vision, Mission and Strategy | 4 |
| What we do: | |
| Members-only activities | 5 |
| Public events. | 8 |
| ACAdemy training series | 9 |
| Projects and studies | 10 |
| Advocacy and knowledge-sharing activities. | 13 |
| ACA Online presence and newsletter. | 15 |
| Administration, governance and finances | 16 |



The year 2022 was marked by the association's remarkable growth and impactful work. Yet, it was also a year of deep reflections, solidarity and renewed commitment.

First and foremost, ACA welcomed **four new members** from Europe's south and north: the Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Education (Nuffic), the Erasmus + Portuguese National Agency, Education and Training (A.N E+EF), the Spanish Service for the Internationalization of Education (SEPIE), and the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR). Nuffic and UHR re-joined the association after a short break.

This expansion greatly enhanced ACA's membership network with new expertise, knowledge, and passion for the internationalisation cause. It also came in timely, as ACA embarked this year on developing its **2023-2027 Strategy**. The intensive member consultations and discussions with other partner organisations resulted in the sharpened vision, mission and strategic goals guiding the association's activities in the next few years.

In 2022, ACA continued fostering peer learning and collaboration among its members on the key topics of digital and green transitions, as well as inclusion and global

cooperation in higher education. ACA thematic peer groups were instrumental in this respect and yielded positive results such as a joint **training programme on inclusion** for higher education practitioners, which will be launched in 2023, and a collaborative [study on students' motivations for blended and virtual international exchanges during COVID-19](#). Next to that, the association steered the public debate on **digitalisation** in the international higher education field through its [Digitalisation Think Pieces](#) series, which attracted significant interest across Europe.

As the international higher education community started to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it was urged to mobilise support for the Ukrainian academic sector terribly hit by Russia's war in Ukraine. ACA members called for a [tangible support for the Ukrainian higher education sector in a statement](#) published in late February 2022. The association also provided a discussion and peer learning platform for its members through a thematic peer group "Global Developments" chaired by ACA's President Ulrich Grothus. Through this peer group, ACA members exchanged timely information on the sector's needs, coordinated their responses to the crisis, and jointly reflected on the long-term support measures for Ukraine.

The evolving context also triggered deep reflection within ACA on the values that underpin European higher education collaboration, the role of knowledge diplomacy, and the organisational development of ACA member organisations. The internal discussions among ACA's top leaders held in the framework of the ACA [Strategic Summit](#) and at more operational, expert level reconfirmed the importance of an open approach to European higher education collaboration informed by possible risks and with due respect to academic values. In this vein, ACA's [reflection paper](#) published in late 2022 outlined five key principles underpinning Europe's global cooperation and engagement in higher education and research.

I am looking forward to building upon these positive results and to embarking on ACA's ambitious work programme 2023 and beyond with ACA members, partners and friends.

Irina Ferencz | ACA Director

ACA's strength rests on a trusted network of national organisations that comprise its membership. ACA members fund and support internationalisation of education in their respective countries in various ways and play a key role in international higher education policy and programme design and implementation.

The year 2022 was remarkable for the association as four new members joined ACA: the Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Education (Nuffic), the Portuguese Erasmus+ National Agency, the Spanish Service for the Internationalization of Education (SEPIE), and the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR). This latest expansion brought the number of ACA members to 24 in total, including 21 full members and 3 associate members.

FULL MEMBERS



Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD)



Vluhr International



Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMEUP)



Czech National Agency for International Education and Research (DZS)



Education and Youth Board of Estonia (HARNO)



Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI)



German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)



State Scholarships Foundation (IKY)



Tempus Public Foundation (TPF)



The Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís)



Uni-Italia - Academic promotion center for study orientation in Italy



Nuffic - The Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Education



Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-Dir)



Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA)



Erasmus + Portuguese National Agency, Education and Training (AN E+EF)



Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA, n.o.)



Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (CMEPIUS)



Spanish Service for the Internationalization of Education (SEPIE)



Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR)



Movetia - The Swiss National Agency for Exchange and Mobility



Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (swissuniversities)

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



The International Education Center (IEC)



ETS Global



The Institute of International Education (IIE)

One of the 2022 highlights was the development of ACA's new Strategy setting the common goals for the period 2023-2027. This process was steered by the **ACA Strategy Committee** represented by experts in strategy development from ACA member organisations:

- Maija Airas, Counsellor of Education, the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI)
- Katarzyna Aleksy, ACA Treasurer and Director, Department for Programmes for Institutions, the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA)
- Heli Aru-Chabilan, Director, Department for Internationalization, Education and Youth Board of Estonia (HARNO)
- Irina Ferencz, ACA Director
- Alenka Flander, ACA Vice-President and Director, the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (CMEPIUS)
- Tina (Stamatia) Garani-Papadatos, State Scholarships Foundation (IKY)
- Ulrich Grothus, ACA President
- Michael Hörig, Director, DAAD Brussels Office
- José Aurelio Llana Villanueva, Director, Unit of Higher Education Internationalization, the Spanish Service for the Internationalization of Education (SEPIE)
- Raul Ranne, ACA Senior Advisor
- Olivier Tschopp, Director, the Swiss Agency for Exchange and Mobility (Movetia)

Building on a year of in-depth member consultations and stakeholder discussions, the Strategy was formally adopted at the ACA General Assembly meeting in Warsaw, Poland on 29 and 30 November 2022.

The new document presents an updated vision, mission and a strategic orientation for the association in the next five-year period. In line with the new Strategy, ACA seeks to be the platform of choice for national-level internationalisation organisations and their higher education communities, serving societal needs directly, and via international cooperation, enhancing the quality of education and research.

ACA's vision is of a closely interconnected world of thriving, fair societies, empowered by international higher education.

To achieve this, ACA's mission is to serve as a sound, future-oriented and collaborative European platform for national organisations active in international higher education, empowering its members, supporting their higher education systems, and working closely with strategic partners to maximise the potential of internationalisation.

The association put forward **four strategic goals** for the period 2023-2027:

- Strengthen ACA as THE European platform for national-level international education organisations and agencies
- Strengthen ACA's role as an advisor to the EU and European institutions
- Reinforce ACA's position as one of the main international higher education knowledge providers in Europe
- Become an information gateway on trends and developments in European higher education internationalisation, translating European developments for the higher education community worldwide.

Next to that, **five focus areas** were selected to guide ACA's activities in the new strategic period until 2027:

1. Role of higher education cooperation in times of crisis – science and education diplomacy
2. Societal relevance of internationalisation
3. Supporting inclusive and diverse internationalisation
4. Sustained digitalisation of international education formats and activities
5. Future-oriented institutional transformations, supporting institutional change, sustainability, and resilience.

STATUTORY MEETINGS

Similar to past years, ACA statutory meetings provided an important channel for the association's work in 2022. This year was particularly marked by the assessment of ACA's progress in the previous strategic period and the revision of its mission, vision, and strategic goals as part of the preparations for ACA's new Strategy 2023-2027.

Acting as a strategic advisory board, the **ACA Administrative Council** met formally twice in 2022. The **Spring 2022 meeting** took place on 12 May 2022 in Brussels. The administrators endorsed the positive balance accounts and advised on the Strategy development progress. They also addressed the preparation of the ACA Strategic Summit, which took place in October 2022, and adopted the draft agenda for the Spring General Assembly.

The **Spring 2022 meeting** of the **General Assembly**, ACA's main decision-making body involving all member organisations, took place online on 9 and 10 June 2022. The first day was dedicated to the accounts approval, the tour-de-table discussions and the Strategy development updates. The second day featured several workshops focusing on the

different aspects of ACA's operations and collecting inputs for the new Strategy 2023-2027.

The **Autumn 2022 Administrative Council** meeting was held online on 10 November 2022 to discuss the Strategy's final draft, the work programme 2023 and the upcoming elections to the Administrative Council. The administrators also reflected on the progress made in 2022 and prepared the Autumn 2022 General Assembly.

The **Autumn 2022 General Assembly** meeting, hosted by the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA), took place in Warsaw, Poland on 29 and 30 November 2022. The General Assembly participants officially welcomed two new member organisations: the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR) and the Erasmus + Portuguese National Agency, Education and Training (A.N E+EF) and elected one new administrator – Vidar Pedersen from the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-Dir). They also adopted the 2023-2027 Strategy, along with the 2023 work programme and budget.



ACA Members at the Autumn General Assembly 2022 in Warsaw, Poland.

THEMATIC PEER GROUPS

ACA Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) provide a trusted platform for ACA members where they can discuss specific topics in international higher education, exchange experience and provide insight. In 2022, the TPG members addressed the evolving and immediate areas of interest in internationalisation and jointly developed several initiatives such as new projects and events.



TPG1 COVID-19 CRISIS/GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS

Chaired by Ulrich Grothus, ACA President

This TPG went through a transformation in 2022: its mandate shifted from covering members' responses and adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic, to a broader area concerning the implications of wider global developments for ACA member organisations. The first two meetings were organised on 13 January and 24 March 2022 and focused on members' plans in the post-pandemic context, particularly the actions fostering the recovery of student and staff mobility in the 'new normal'.

Building on regular member exchanges since 24 February 2022, including several exchanges on members' responses to the war in Ukraine, the first TPG Global Developments meeting, held on 5 September 2022, provided an update on ACA members' support measures for the Ukrainian students and higher education institutions. It also touched upon the status of (non-)cooperation with Russia as well as the national approaches to cooperation with countries involved in the existing and new geopolitical tensions, more broadly.



TPG2 RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Co-chaired by Irma Garam, EDUFI,
and Irina Ferencz, ACA Director

The Research thematic peer group met on 28 February 2022 to discuss the annual priorities and engagement formats. In the second half of 2022, the group conducted two connected mini-seminars on student mobility impact covering latest research findings and assessment methods. The first mini-seminar held on 18 September 2022 addressed professional outcomes of student mobility, featuring Dr Nicolai Netz (The German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies -

DZHW) as main presenter and Prof. Christof Van Mol (Tilburg University) as discussant. On 16 October 2022, the group members discussed, in the second mini-seminar, personal and institutional effects of student mobility, with Prof. Christof Van Mol as main speaker and Dr Nicolai Netz as discussant.



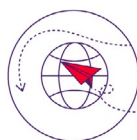
TPG3 EUROPEAN POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

Co-chaired by Ragnhild Solvi Berg, HK-dir,
and Veronika Kupriyanova, ACA Secretariat

The group meeting on 24 February 2022 featured the discussion on Russia's aggression on Ukraine, resulting in ACA's [joint statement on tangible support for the Ukrainian higher education sector](#). The second meeting was convened on 31 May 2022 to exchange views on the European Degree label pilot with the participation of several EU policy makers and experts: Yann-Maël Bideau, Policy Officer, DG EAC, European Commission; Florian Pecenka, Higher Education Attaché, Austrian Permanent Representation; Colin Tück, EQAR Director; Andries Verspeeten, Policy Adviser Internationalisation, Ghent University. The third meeting, conducted on 26 October 2022 addressed the first attempts to evaluate the European Universities Initiative with the participation of two experts: Daniela Craciun and Ariane de Gayardon de Fenoyl from the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS), University of Twente. The final meeting on 16 November 2022 was dedicated to the mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and the final evaluation of the past programme with the participation of Fadime Altintas from DG EAC, European Commission.

**TPG4 WIDENING INCLUSION**Co-chaired by Ieva Serapinaite, HK-dir,
and Martin Bogdan, ACA Secretariat

The first meeting took place on 25 February 2022 to provide an update on target groups for additional support measures and areas for collaboration. The second meeting, held on 22 June 2022, addressed latest updates and national agencies' approaches to the support of higher education institutions and disadvantaged students going on mobilities in autumn 2022, featuring an external input from Aamena Meidell from the De Montford University. The third meeting organised on 15 November 2022 explored the latest developments in mobility programme management, with the participation of Juan Rayón González, President of Erasmus Student Network (ESN) who provided valuable input based on the [technical recommendations](#) derived from the [Social Inclusion and Engagement in Mobility \(SIEM\)](#) project. The group designed the concept of a joint training on inclusion related matters for higher education institutions and responsible staff at six national agencies, planned for 2023.

**TPG5 NEW MOBILITY FORMATS**Co-chaired by Božidar Grigić, CMEPIUS,
and Angeliki Psychogiou, ACA Secretariat

The first meeting was organised on 21 February 2022 to take stock of past activities and to address the latest developments in digitally enhanced mobility in members' respective countries. The group focused on Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) from an administrative and pedagogical point of view in 2022. The second meeting convened on 27 June 2022 tackled the organisational challenges of and experience with BIPs, featuring guest speakers Dr. Andrea Koblizkova from the University of Pardubice, Terhi Topi from the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, and Juan Rayón González from the Erasmus Student Network (ESN). The meeting on 18 November 2022 featured several institutional experiences with BIPs presented by Nanna Teitsdóttir, Project Manager at the University of Iceland, and Laura Pauwels, International Relations Advisor, University College Leuven-Limburg. In June 2022, the group published the report "[Students' motivations for Blended and Virtual International Exchanges During COVID-19](#)" based on the joint survey conducted in 2021 among 1197 responding students from 35 countries.

Bringing the expert community together for lively discussions, debates and deliberations on the current trends in innovation and internationalisation in higher education is one of ACA's core activities. In 2022, ACA organised several events to foster discussion on the most topical issues of international and European higher education cooperation.



What's new in Brussels? Recent developments In European policies and programmes

3-4 February 2022, Brussels and online

ACA's flagship annual event "[What's new in Brussels? Recent developments In European policies and programmes](#)" was organised on 3 and 4 February 2022 in a hybrid format with the aim to provide up-to-date information on European policies and programmes in the field of higher education. The event was attended by ca. 130 online participants as well as several onsite speakers representing ACA member organisations, the European Commission, Ghent University, the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), the AURORA network, VLUHR QA, and the European University Association (EUA).

"Inclusive Excellence" - a Global Approach for European Higher Education?

11 May 2022, Brussels

This [event](#) focused on the strategic scope and role of Europe's global higher education cooperation outlook and approach, through the emergent concept of inclusive excellence, aiming to provide tangible ideas for policy design and implementation to EU policymakers and stakeholders. Co-organised by ACA members with representation in Brussels – DAAD, HK-Dir, CZELO/DZS, and VLUHR International, it was attended by ca. 100 participants onsite and online.



ACA Strategic Summit

5 October 2022, Brussels

The second [ACA Strategic Summit](#) brought together 49 senior leaders of ACA member organisations and other invited national agencies in a unique trusted setting to jointly address organisational development issues, strategy-making in times of uncertainty, and advocating for internationalisation in the national context.

Tapping into its vast expert network and in-house knowledge, ACA offers bespoke training programmes and professional development sessions for institutional practitioners and administrators employed by national ministries and agencies with internationalisation portfolios.

In 2022, ACA continued delivering a series of training jointly developed with the **Czech National Agency for International Education and Research (DZS)** under the Study in the Czech Republic initiative. The series was designed for international education professionals at Czech higher education institutions and addressed key topics supporting further strategic action and professional development. The first training webinar was organised on 29 April 2022 to tackle the design and implementation of sustainable joint programmes. The second event delivered on 20 May 2022 addressed support for teaching in English and building

capacity for English-medium instruction. The final webinar in the 2022 series, which took place on 22 June 2022, was dedicated to the selection of priority countries for student recruitment.

In September 2022, the ACA Secretariat delivered a one-day online training on European higher education policy and programme trends in the field of internationalisation for staff members of the **Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA)** as part of its annual professional development programme.



The graphic features a top-down view of several people sitting around a table, working on laptops and documents. Overlaid on this image is a large, dark blue hexagon with a red border. Inside the hexagon, the text "STUDY IN academy" is written in white, with "STUDY IN" in a larger, bold font and "academy" in a smaller font. Below the hexagon, the text "Webinar #13" and "Priority Countries" is written in a large, bold, red font. At the bottom left, the date "22/06/2022" is displayed. At the bottom center, the text "STUDY IN ACAdeMy #13 – Priority Countries" is shown. At the bottom right, the number "1" is displayed. In the bottom right corner, there are two logos: "Study in the Czech Republic" and "ACA ACADEMIC COOPERATION ASSOCIATION".

**STUDY IN
academy**

**Webinar #13
Priority Countries**

22/06/2022

STUDY IN ACAdeMy #13 – Priority Countries

1

Every year, ACA pursues – and is invited to take part in – a broad range of research projects, studies, consultancy work and other activities related to its core areas of expertise in higher education internationalisation. ACA's research work is carried out by its Brussels-based Secretariat staff in close partnership with a network of experts from Europe and beyond, many of whom come from ACA member organisations.

In 2022, ACA was involved in several projects, with additional advisory roles in stakeholder meetings and speaking engagements at international conferences globally.

STUDY IN EUROPE 3

STUDY IN EUROPE

Study in Europe is a three-year project contracted by the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture for the European Union. It is implemented by a consortium involving ACA, Campus France, as project coordinator and ACA members DAAD, HARNO, and Nuffic. It is supported by a stakeholder panel of national higher education promotion agencies across Europe. In 2022, ACA delivered several intellectual products for the project including:

- Two best practice webinars focusing on student ambassadors (March 2022) and national level branding/rebranding (December 2022) organised for national promotion agencies.
- Two back-to-back webinars organised for EU delegations worldwide to advance their cooperation with the Study in Europe project.
- A series of articles authored for the Study in Europe portal on various topics (e.g., doctoral studies, recognition of prior learning, most attractive study programmes, opportunities for students with special needs, graduate job search tools).
- A photobank built for the consortium's promotional needs.

IHES – INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SOCIETY

IHES

Introducing IHES project
#IHESproject
#internationalisation

IHES is a Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership project in the Czech Republic. It is implemented by Palacký University Olomouc (coordinator), Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Departament D'Empresa

i Coneixemen, Grupo Santander, Lifelong Learning Platform, Global Impact Institute, the Olomouc Region in the Czech Republic, and ACA, to activate the internationalisation potential for social engagement. By testing different approaches in two regions, Catalonia and the Olomouc region, IHES aims to generate transferrable knowledge for higher education institutions and their networks, as well as social actors and regional governments.



Following the publication of the report on institutional approaches to linking societal outreach and internationalisation and the launch of the online good practice repository in 2021, ACA revised the collected good practices and helped expand the IHES network in 2022.

UNIWE LIS - SUPPORTING INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH PROFESSIONALISING SERVICES FOR MOBILE ACADEMIC STAFF



UniWeLiS is a Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership project in Slovakia, implemented by ACA member SAIA (coordinator), NAWA, Comenius University, University of Nis, Sofia University, and ACA. The project aims to create practical tools to facilitate the development of welcome services and professional capacities to support mid-term and long-term mobility of international PhD students and academics in the Central-Eastern and South-Eastern European (CESE) region.



In February 2022, ACA published a [report presenting the findings of the comparative study on attracting and supporting international academics](#) – PhD students, lecturers, and researchers – in ten host countries located in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Jointly with other partners, ACA contributed to the development of the online [UniWeLiS Explorer](#)

comprising more than 150 good practice examples of support activities for international PhD students, researchers and academics across Europe. Finally, the association developed a pilot training module on global marketing and visibility for higher education managers and support staff, which was tested on 3-7 October in Sofia, Bulgaria.

MICHE - MONITORING INTERNATIONALIZATION OF CZECH HIGHER EDUCATION

The MICHE project is funded by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and implemented by ACA member organisation – DZS, to increase the quality of internationalisation and global attractiveness and competitiveness of Czech higher education. In 2022, ACA continued to be involved in supporting Czech higher education institutions (Czech Technical University and Palacky University Olomouc) that are part of European

Universities Alliances with advice on maximizing their participation while linking it to the strategic objectives at national level and system-level developments.

STUDY ON THE ERASMUS+ STAFF MOBILITY IMPACT: FROM PERSONAL TO INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL BENEFITS AND IMPACT

In 2022, six ACA members – AMEUP, CMEPIUS, DZS, OeAD, TPF and Rannis - launched an exploratory study of Erasmus+ staff mobility impact. This study aims to gain more in-depth insights into the institutional effects of staff mobility and to explore ways of better linking personal and institutional impact at higher education institutions. In 2022, ACA conducted a series of focus groups with mobile academic staff from four countries: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, and Hungary, with Iceland and Slovenia still to be covered in the year to come. The report presenting the outcomes of the study will be published in 2023.

ENIS – COST EUROPEAN NETWORK ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY: CONNECTING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE



European Network
on International Student Mobility
Connecting Research
and Practice

ENIS responds to the need for systematic interdisciplinary and international exchange of knowledge on theoretical frameworks, research methodologies, findings, and best practice examples, as well as translating scientific findings into recommendations for international student mobility practice. ACA Director and expert Irina Ferencz co-leads one of the working Groups (WGs) focused on connecting research and practice. In 2022, this work involved organising a webinar on the topic of 'Connecting research and practice in international student mobility' and a network meeting in May in Lisbon, Portugal. The network also held its first large-scale conference in Tartu, on 6 and 7 October, hosted by HARNO and the Study in Estonia team. The network has been recognized as a good practice example in COST, being one of the largest and active networks in the action with more than 260 members.

PROFFORMANCE AND PROFFORMANCE+



The [PROFFORMANCE](#) project aimed to support the quality enhancement of teaching and learning at higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It created a set of criteria and an assessment tool for teachers' performance, which was tested in selected higher education institutions, and developed recommendations on incentive systems for teachers' development at institutional, national and European level. ACA contributed to the project activities focused on internationalisation of higher education as an associate partner. The project came to an end in 2022 with the final conference on 16 June 2022 in Budapest, Hungary.

Building on these achievements, the **PROFFORMANCE+** project started in 2022, aiming to further develop the framework and reinforce the tool's horizontal aspects in line with the main EHEA and EU priorities: digitalisation, inclusion, sustainability and internationalisation. In 2022, ACA took part in the expert discussions on the internationalisation dimension of the PROFFORMANCE tool and a series of ambassador training activities.

PLAR-4-SIMP - PEER LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION IN MOBILITY PROGRAMMES

PLAR-4-SIMP inclusivemobility.eu

[PLAR-4-SIMP](#) was a two-year project co-funded by Erasmus+ KA3 Support to Policy reform "Support to the implementation of EHEA reforms - 2019". It was led by the Ministry of Education and Training Belgium/Flemish Community with the Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education – Artevelde University of Applied Sciences (SIHO). Supported by ACA experts, the consortium developed a multi-use 'toolbox on inclusive mobility' that contains a policy report and database on national social inclusion measures and practices that have been implemented across EHEA to widen the participation of students from disadvantaged groups in mobility, with ACA providing expert input.

[PLAR-4-SIMP](#) was a two-year project co-funded by Erasmus+ KA3 Support to

DIGITAL EDUCATION HUB

The Digital Education Hub is an overarching action of the Digital Education Action Plan. It seeks to improve cooperation on digital education at the EU, national and regional levels, between the different education and training sectors and stakeholders in the private and public sectors, in research, policy and practice. The Hub is implemented by a consortium of partners led by DAAD. ACA in its role as an associated partner provides dissemination and information support to the Hub through its multiple communication channels. In 2022, ACA experts attended two community workshops and participated in a working group ("squad") focusing on digital education in times of crises and emergency education enablers.

ACA THINK PIECES – *Digitalisation in International Higher Education*

In 2022, ACA published a [series of reflections \[Think Pieces\]](#) on the multi-faceted nature of digitalisation in the higher education sector from thought leaders around Europe. Throughout the year, leading voices on the digitalisation of higher education shared their reflections to explore key digitalisation trends at higher education institutions from an international cooperation perspective.

ERASMUS OPERATING GRANT 2022



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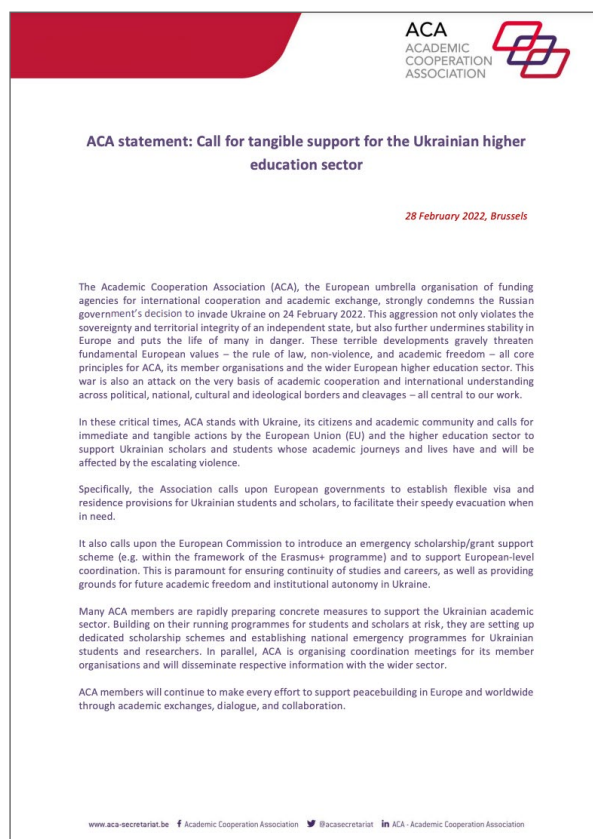
In 2022, ACA conducted a series of activities related to its thematic peer groups and European higher education policies and programmes awareness-raising in the framework of Erasmus+ Operating Grant, which provided EU co-funding for the association.

ACA position papers, joint statements, and reflection papers serve to advocate for or initiate discussion on a topic of importance to ACA membership and a broader higher education community.

ACA POSITIONS

In February 2022, ACA members issued a joint statement condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine and calling for [tangible support for the Ukrainian higher education sector](#).

The arising geopolitical tensions triggered deep reflection among ACA membership on the original role and value of international higher education cooperation in Europe, the evolving approaches to dealing with countries involved in such tensions, and the importance of science diplomacy. The outcomes of this reflection were presented in the [ACA Reflection paper, Europe's International Higher Education and Research Cooperation in Times of Uncertainty – The Quest for Sensible Openness](#), published in November 2022.



ACA actively participates in policy design and co-creation meetings organised by the European Commission or other stakeholder organisations in the field.

PARTICIPATION IN STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

In 2022, ACA contributed to the European-level discussions on several key topics, including the European Strategy for Universities, the transformational impact of European Universities Alliances, the European Degree label pilot, and the legal status for alliances of universities. Several meetings are highlighted below:

- Lunchtime debate with Commissioner Mariya Gabriel – The EU Strategy for Strengthening the European Dimension in Higher Education and Research, DG EAC
- Online workshop on the necessity and the feasibility of a possible legal status for alliances of universities, such as European Universities, DG EAC
- Online technical workshop on a Joint European Degree Label pilot, DG EAC and PPMI

- Online workshop to co-create an indicator framework to assess the progress of European Universities alliances, DG EAC and PPMI
- IGLO Higher Education Working Group meetings on the European Education Area progress report, novelties of the Erasmus+ work programme 2023, EIT HEI Innovate initiative, and the European Degree label pilot.

Apart from project-related missions, the ACA Secretariat staff members regularly present at international events, organised by ACA members and other stakeholders in the higher education community, as panellists, advisors or trainers. The year 2022 was busy for the Secretariat in terms of presence at third-party events. Some of the highlight events include:

- CZEDUCON: *International Conference on Strategy and Policy in Higher Education* – speakers
- DAAD G7 + Partners Higher Education Summit - *International Academic Cooperation amidst a World in Crisis: Chances and Challenges* – delegates
- DAAD “Internationalisation strategies in the Applied Sciences: *An international comparison*” – speaker
- EAIE 2022 sessions – speakers and moderators
- EUA event “Deepening, widening, focusing: *How to navigate transnational university cooperation into the future?*” – moderator
- Nuffic 70th anniversary Symposium: *Shaping futures* – delegates
- OeAD Hochschultagung 2022 - *Internationalisation in Higher Education in Times of Crisis of Confidence* – panel moderator and speaker
- The Networking Meeting of the European National Promotion Agencies hosted by the French National Higher Education Promotion Agency Campus France – moderator
- The 6th IAU Global Survey on Internationalization of Higher Education – member of the Advisory Committee

ACA relies on a wealth of communication platforms to support the dissemination of ACA Secretariat's and members' activities, updates, events and publications.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

In 2022, ACA adopted its Communications Strategy and Plan. The Strategy outlines three areas to be woven into and articulated more prominently for all dissemination in order to boost ACA's visibility: ACA's internal expertise, valuable connections to members and to important stakeholders, and ACA's uniqueness through our position and mission. The Strategy also set dissemination goals for ambitious engagement and audience growth for the next two years to come. It is accompanied by the Communications Plan, which assesses dissemination activities and data of 2021 and includes internal process mapping.

ACA WEBSITE

In 2022, the ACA website underwent an expert review. This process resulted in some improvements including the launch of the [Thematic Peer Groups page](#), the addition of cohesive symbols in line with ACA's visual identity, the addition of Youtube recordings to every event page, and the re-design of the homepage planned for 2023.

ACA's website's most visited page in 2022 (apart from the homepage) was Publications, featuring reflection and position papers, research project reports, and Think Pieces. The top visitors of the ACA website were from Belgium, the United States, France, and the Netherlands.

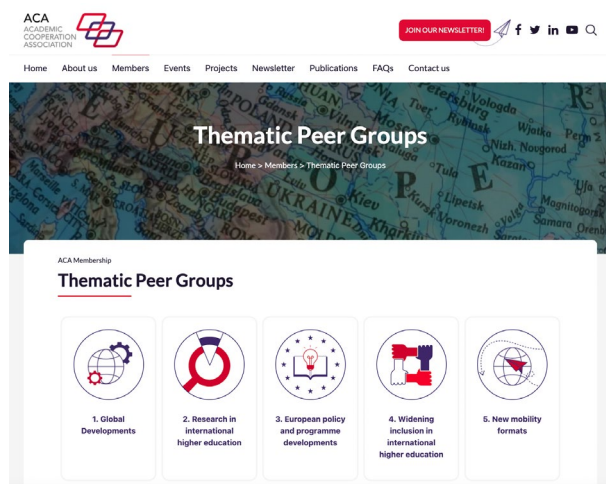
SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2022 ACA's communications channels experienced significant growth, both in audience reach and engagement. The demographics indicate that ACA continued to serve a European and global audience. Amongst LinkedIn followers, the great majority were from Belgium, with the Netherlands and France following. The vast majority of followers worked in higher education together with those in education administration programmes, government administration, and research services. The top viewers of the Association's Youtube channel were from Belgium, Russia, and France.

NEWSLETTER

One of the ACA flagship products, the monthly electronic news service [ACA Newsletter – Education Europe](#), is provided to a large audience of recipients in Europe and beyond with responsibilities for internationalisation of higher education, working in international and supranational organisations, ministries, national, European and international associations, as well as higher education institutions.

ACA newsletter's overall engagement with its readers was growing steadily throughout 2022. By end of the year, the newsletter expanded the overall number of subscribers, reaching out to various age, gender, and country groups.



ACA is governed by its General Assembly (GA), its highest decision-making body on which all ACA members are represented. The GA decisions are based on proposals of the Administrative Council (AC). The AC consists of up to seven elected members who are elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly from amongst senior staff of ACA member organisations. The Brussels-based ACA Secretariat handles the day-to-day affairs of the association, with a high priority placed on professionalism, cost efficiency, and high-quality service delivery. Very importantly, the association is represented externally by a key figure – the ACA President – who is elected for a 3-year mandate, once renewable.



President, Ulrich Grothus

ACA LEADERSHIP

During the whole of 2022, the ACA President was Ulrich Grothus, who was re-elected for the second three-year term in 2021.

The following elected Administrators served on the ACA Administrative Council from the beginning of the year until the autumn General Assembly in Warsaw in November. This General Assembly saw new elections in the case of one Administrator whose mandate had come to an end.



Alenka Flander, ACA Vice-President and Director of the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (CMEPIUS), Slovenia



Vidar Pedersen, European Programmes Director and Director for Erasmus+ at the Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-Dir), Norway (since November 2022)



Katarzyna Alexy, ACA Treasurer and Director of the Department for Programmes for Institutions at the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA), Poland



Jakub Tesař, Head of internationalisation of Studies, Czech National Agency for International Education and Research (DZS), Czech Republic (until November 2022)



Stephan Geifes, Director of the Erasmus+ National Agency Higher Education within the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Germany



Olivier Tschopp, Director of the Swiss National Agency for Exchange and Mobility (Movetia), Switzerland



Runa Vigdís Guðmarsdóttir, Director of the Erasmus+ National Agency within Rannis, Iceland



Gerhard Volz, Head of the Department for International Cooperation in Higher Education at the Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD), Austria

ACA SECRETARIAT

The ACA Secretariat is headed by Irina Ferencz (Director), since 1 September 2020. The ACA team includes Veronika Kupriyanova (Senior Policy Coordinator), Martin Bogdan (Policy and Project Officer - Inclusion and Societal Engagement), Angeliki Psychogyiou (Policy and Project Officer – Digitalisation and Sustainability), Courtney Hartzell (Communications Officer), and Raul Ranne (Senior Advisor) working remotely from Estonia.

ACA also had the privilege to host three trainees who contributed to the production of the ACA Newsletter –

Education Europe and ACA's online presence overall. The ACA Newsletter Junior Communications Officers in 2022 were Carlo Prato from Italy, Salome Dermati from Greece and Ilker Bahar, from Turkey, who will continue his traineeship until March 2023.

ACA also hosted a fourth trainee in 2022, Natalya Sharovatova, in cooperation with the Master in Research and Innovation in Higher Education (MARIHE) programme. Natalya supported the Secretariat in data analysis for the exploratory study of Erasmus+ staff mobility impact.



Irina Ferencz



Veronika Kupriyanova



Martin Bogdan



Angeliki Psychogyiou



Courtney Hartzell



Raul Ranne

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

ACA Accounts 2021, 2020 and 2019 (EUR)

| | 2021 | 2020 | 2019 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Expenditure | | | |
| Staff costs | 452,962 | 465,467 | 455,143 |
| Secretariat running costs/ infrastructure & equipment | 122,991 | 145,896 | 157,718 |
| Project expenditure | 39,656 | 86,022 | 227,234 |
| Travel, meeting & subs. | -93 | 1,914 | 206,428 |
| Provision | 0 | 0 | 24,178 |
| Total | 615,516 | 699,299 | 864,273 |
| Income | | | |
| Membership Fees | 243,548 | 238,084 | 255,286 |
| Project Income | 413,492 | 423,301 | 563,692 |
| Other Income | 4,795 | 3,009 | 3,851 |
| Total | 661,835 | 664,394 | 822,829 |
| Net Result | 46,319 | -34,905 | -41,444 |



ACA
ACADEMIC
COOPERATION
ASSOCIATION



Promoting Innovation and Internationalisation

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