

2023
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.



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Irina Ferencz | ACA Director

Looking back at 2023, for a quick retrospective, there are many developments and accomplishments to be grateful for at an organisational level. This year marked **ACA's 30th anniversary**, which was celebrated in the framework of our annual leadership event - the **ACA Strategic Summit** - with close collaborators and partners. Additionally 2023 kicked off the start of the implementation period of **ACA's 2023 - 2027 Strategy**, and brought significant advancements in each goal dimension, as well several additional ambitious initiatives.

First, and foremost, our network not only continued to grow, with three new members in 2023 - Taith (Wales), Foundation Tempus (Serbia) and SAAIC (Slovakia) - but also further intensified its collaboration with and support to member organisations, through an enhanced portfolio of activities and formats. Two well attended and inspiring conferences in **Prague** (with DZS) and **Bled** (with CMEPIUS) brought the topic of digitalisation of international higher education to the limelight, taking stock and facilitating grass-roots, hands-on discussions with higher education staff in Czechia and Slovenia on the administrative and pedagogical aspects of digital transformations, contrasted by experiences shared by renowned international speakers. Impactful training sessions for higher education institutions were also co-delivered with ACA members (AMEUP, CMEPIUS, DAAD, EDUFI, OeAD, Rannís), ACA strategic partner SIHO and external experts, in the framework of the **Inclusion ACAcademy** for over 160 staff of higher education institutions in the six countries, supporting them in advancing their practices in inclusive mobility. This was also done through a tailor-made training event with ACA member IKY, for Greek university representatives.

The effective format of the **Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs)** was extended this year to regularly convene **communication** officers and specialists from ACA members, in respective TPG meetings, streamlining peer learning and joint campaigns, while the **TPG Global Developments** inaugurated a new series of exchanges that will be continued in 2024, on **Responsible internationalisation and knowledge security**, centred around the role that national internationalisation agencies do and need to play in related developments at national and European fronts.

Second, as 2023 was a thriving year in terms of **policy initiatives at the European level**, ACA actively contributed to related developments via **two official groups** - the HE stakeholder group convened by DG EAC to inform the elaboration of the Monitoring Framework and the Investment Pathway for the European Universities Initiative and the Working Group on KA131 Higher Education Mobility. The ACA secretariat published two extensive policy statements - on the **learning mobility framework** and the **mid-term review of Erasmus+**, informing also the **Draft report** produced by MEP Milan Zver for the CULT Committee of the European Parliament. Preparing for the **upcoming EU programme period**, ACA also started essential discussions tracking the tangible **evidence of the impact of degree and credit mobility**, for the mobile individuals, as well as for economies and society at large, via its annual advocacy event.

Third, the topic of institutional transformation during uncertain times, marked by complex geopolitical developments was further explored, in the framework of ACA's internal meetings and events, but also during the ACA flagship event **What's new in Brussels?** seminar. Exchanges between ACA members in the framework of two tailor-made events - one in Washington, DC, hosted by ACA member IIE, and one in Brussels, hosted by the ACA Secretariat, DAAD Brussels and Movetia - enabled members to further learn from their own practices and approaches to contributing and advising on national policy developments for the advancement of international cooperation.

Fourth, as ACA is also known for its **studies, and knowledge development**, 2023 brought the start of important work on a **20 year impact study of the Erasmus Mundus programme at institutional level**, in collaboration with partners and experts (as part of the Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative - **EMSI**, implemented on behalf of EACEA and European Commission, and funded under Erasmus+), the full roll-out of the **HIBLend** project, mapping the evolution of **blended mobility formats** in the European context from a quality-enhancement lens, and aiming to develop a related framework and community of practice, the start of the **ECEM project** on **community engaged mobility** and the release of a very informative and explorative report on the **institutional impact of staff mobility** (in collaboration with Rannís, AMEUP, CMEPIUS, DZS, OeAD, TPF).

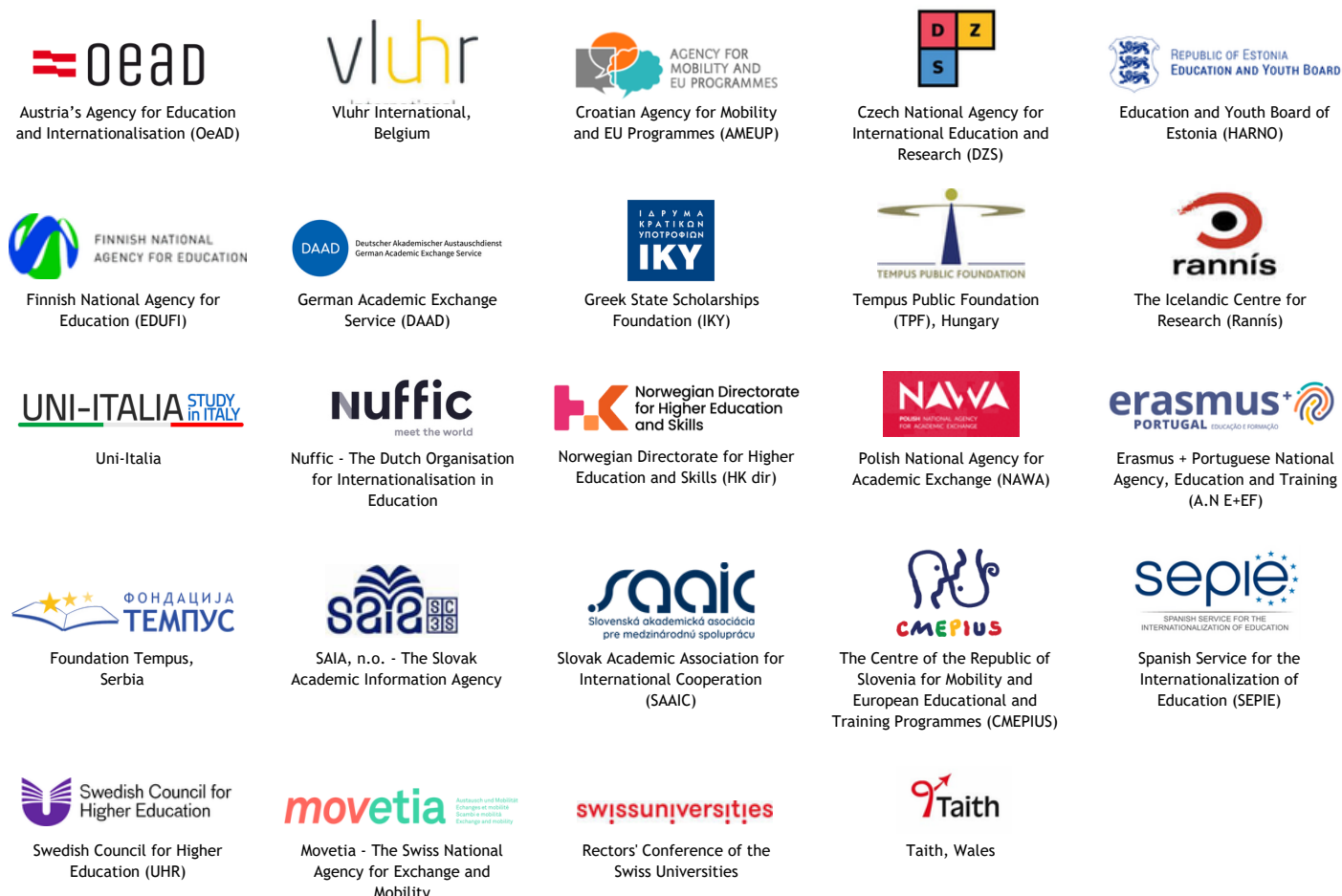
ACA MEMBERS

The European voice of national organisations
for internationalisation of higher education

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.

In 2023, ACA acquired three new members, further expanding the geographic outreach of its network: Taith, the Welsh Government funded international learning exchange programme, Foundation Tempus in Serbia and the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (SAAIC). This latest expansion brought the number of ACA members to 27 in total, including 24 full members and 3 associate members.

FULL MEMBERS



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



STATUTORY MEETINGS

In 2023, ACA statutory meetings continued to play a crucial role in steering the association's activities. The **ACA Administrative Council** convened twice, with the **Spring 2023** meeting held online on 11 May 2023. This session focused on endorsing accounts and discussing ACA's strategic direction through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). It also set the agenda for the Spring General Assembly.

The **Spring 2023 meeting** of the **General Assembly**, ACA's main decision-making body involving all member organisations, took place on 20-21 June 2023 in Brussels, Belgium. Key topics included the approval of accounts and the new membership application submitted by Taith (Wales), as well as the election of the next ACA President. The second day delved into ACA's Key Performance Indicators, potential joint Training and Cooperation Activities in 2024, and policy engagement and co-creation strategies for the Erasmus+ programme in the context of its mid-term review. On this occasion, Gro Tjore, Deputy Director of the Norwegian Directorate

for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir), was elected as the next ACA President, with a mandate officially starting on 1 January 2024.

The **Autumn 2023 Administrative Council** met online on 7 November 2023 to review the Draft 2024 work programme and budget, and to prepare the Administrative Council elections. The administrators also reflected on the progress made in 2023 and prepared the Autumn 2023 General Assembly.

The **Autumn 2023 General Assembly**, held online on 27-28 November 2023, welcomed two new members, Foundation Tempus (Serbia) and the Slovak Academic Information Agency (Slovakia). The General Assembly elected three administrators: Runa Vigdís Guðmarsdóttir (Rannís) and Stephan Geifes (DAAD) (both re-elected for a second consecutive term), as well as Amanda Crameri (Movetia). Finally, the General Assembly adopted the 2024 Work Programme and Budget.



ACA Members at the Spring 2023 General Assembly in Brussels.

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 2023, 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 GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS

Chaired by Ulrich Grothus,
ACA President

The Global Developments thematic peer group convened its meeting on 13 December 2023 with the aim to kick start a new series of meetings on a new topic of interest to ACA member organisations, that is responsible internationalisation. The participants agreed to exchange experience and identify good practices at the national and institutional level by mapping various efforts including national and European guidance, changes in funding programmes and criteria, as well as related institutional strategies and operational responses on the ground. This work will continue in 2024, building on ACA's discussions on [sensible openness of Europe's international cooperation in higher education and research](#) as well as a [series of Think Pieces](#) on European higher education cooperation in a global context opened by an article authored by ACA President Ulrich Grothus.



TPG2 RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

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

The Research thematic peer group convened a meeting on 24 May 2023 to discuss two concrete topics, namely the European Commission's plans for the Higher Education Observatory (presented by Kinga Szuly Head of Sector, DG EAC) and the added value of this tool in light of national datasets and data collection efforts, as well as the priorities and interests of group members for the upcoming meetings.

Initiative (EUI) in national contexts, including the issues of national co-funding and system-level and institutional transformations triggered by European universities.



TPG3 EUROPEAN POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

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

The European Policies and Programmes thematic peer group conducted its first meeting on 15 February 2023 to discuss the revised European learning mobility framework (with the participation of Guidrius Sudikas, DG EAC). In the second meeting organised on 22 May 2023 (with the participation of Juan Rayon Gonzalez and Rita Dias from ESN), the participants discussed the Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative (EMSI) and prepared for the mid-term review of Erasmus+ and the final evaluation of the past programme. The next meeting organised on 21 September focused on the outcomes of the internal member consultation on the mid-term review of Erasmus+ (with the participation of Henriette Stroeber from EUA). Two other meetings were held on 21 and 24 November, respectively, to finalise ACA's joint policy input "[Erasmus+: Consolidating efforts for an impactful future](#)".



TPG4 WIDENING INCLUSION

Co-chaired by Sofia Lähdeniemi and Sami Niemelä, EDUFI, and Martin Bogdan, ACA Secretariat

In 2023, the Inclusion thematic peer group welcomed two new co-chairs, Sofia Lähdeniemi and Sami Niemelä from EDUFI. The group successfully convened three annual meetings to address key issues in higher education inclusion. The first meeting on 26 February 2023, discussed latest updates and how different national agencies support higher education institutions and disadvantaged students going on mobilities based on recommendations from the SIEM project shared by ESN President Juan Rayon Gonzales. The next meeting on 26 May 2023, featuring Valerie Mertens from SIHO, delved into inclusive communication and shared updates on possible ways to support institutions and disadvantaged students in mobility programmes. The final meeting was held on 4 December 2023 to take stock of the progress in 2023 and to lay ground for the activities in 2024.



TPG5 NEW MOBILITY FORMATS

Co-chaired by Miloš Milutinovic, OeAD, and Angeliki Psychogiou, ACA Secretariat

The New Mobility Formats thematic peer group welcomed a new co-chair in 2023 (Miloš Milutinovic from OeAD). Organised on 22 February 2023, the first meeting of the year discussed the activities planned for 2023 in synergies with the [HIBLend project](#) - Enhancing the Quality of Blended Mobility in European Higher Education. The meeting on 5 June 2023 addressed the topic of micro-credentials, with the participation of Prof. Andrzej Krasniewski, highlighting the ENHANCE European University Alliance's experiences with blended mobility. The next meeting scheduled for January 2024 will tackle the topics of Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) and the green priority of the Erasmus+ programme, in synergies with new mobility formats.

TPG6 COMMUNICATION

Chaired by Courtney Hartzell, ACA Secretariat

In 2023, ACA began formalising the regular meetings of Communications Officers into a thematic peer group for communications, led by Courtney Hartzell. The group's initial meetings on 31 May and 12 June focused on introductions and future discussion topics. Plans are underway to create an official terms of reference and to nominate a co-chair from an ACA member. The group's latest meeting on 13 December 2023 concentrated on current communication trends. For 2024, the group aims to discuss impact measurement, creating engaging social media posts, using AI, and newest communication tools.

PUBLIC EVENTS

The European voice of national organisations
for internationalisation of higher education

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 2023, 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

2 - 3 February 2023, Brussels

In the latest iteration of ACA's flagship annual seminar "What's New in Brussels? Recent Developments in European Policies and Programmes" the discussions focused on integrating policy, funding through the Erasmus+ programme, and practice. The seminar attracted 80 in-person and 12 online participants from 22 countries, featuring speakers from ACA member organisations, the European Commission, the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), the European University Association (EUA) as well as several higher education institutions and European University Alliances.

Digitalisation in international higher education: forward looking perspectives

1-2 March 2023, Prague

ACA and its Czech member DZS hosted together the conference "Digitalisation in International Higher Education: Forward Looking Perspectives", organised as a Training and Cooperation Activity (TCA) under Erasmus+ and was the first, of a two-part series of conferences in 2023 focusing on digitalisation of international higher education. The event brought together more than 100 participants, including relevant stakeholders from higher education, including experts and policymakers, internationalisation practitioners and academics in the higher education field to reflect on the digital transformation in the present and the future of universities.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Digitalisation in International Higher Education: Forward Looking Perspectives

1-2 March 2023

GRANDIUM HOTEL PRAGUE

Politických vězňů 913/12, 110 00 Prague 1, Czechia

MAIN TOPICS:

- Virtual Exchange and Blended Mobility
- Digitalisation of administration
- Digitalisation policies and strategies

[REGISTRATION HERE](#)



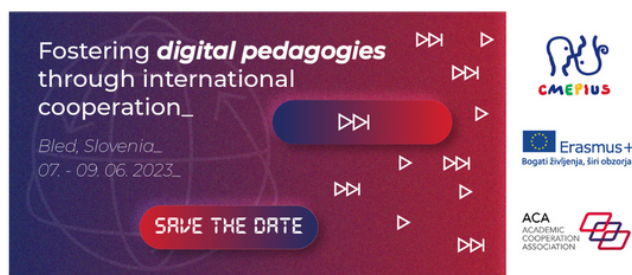
PUBLIC EVENTS

The European voice of national organisations
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Digital pedagogies - delivering and enhancing international higher education

8-9 March 2022, Bled

ACA and CMEPIUS co-hosted a conference on the digitalisation of international higher education. The event, titled "Digital pedagogies - delivering and enhancing international higher education", was funded by Erasmus+ and attracted over 130 participants, including academics, national agency representatives, policymakers, and expert speakers in the field of digital pedagogies, internationalisation, new mobility formats, and COIL. It was the second and final part of a series of conferences in 2023.



ACA Strategic Summit 2023

Internationalisation of higher education in a changing context
10-11 October 2023, Brussels



ACA Strategic Summit and 30th anniversary event 10-11 October 2023, Brussels

The 3rd ACA Strategic Summit, followed by ACA's 30th-anniversary celebratory gala, brought together leaders from member organisations and selected guests to discuss key topics in international higher education. Panel discussions focused on policy and geopolitical changes, regional priorities, leadership approaches, and organisational impact. The event also highlighted strategies employed by member organisations to remain relevant and influential in national, European, and global contexts.

Leveraging international student mobility for societal transformations and economic growth

7 December 2023, Brussels

The annual ACA Advocacy event took place on 7 December 2023 at Norway House in Brussels. The event was co-organised by ACA, the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, the DZS - Czech Liaison Office for Education and Research in Brussels, the German Academic Exchange Service, VLUHR International and Nuffic, with the aim to discuss the socioeconomic, political, cultural, and other costs and benefits of international student mobility. The event gathered around 60 relevant representatives of Brussels-based policy makers and stakeholders, including university networks and student unions, and resulted in an impactful Reflection Paper.



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.

DZS ACADEMY

In 2023, ACA continued to develop tailor-made trainings together with the Czech National Agency for International Education and Research (DZS) under the Study in Czechia 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. A training webinar was organised on 12 October 2023 to tackle the topic of working with recruitment agents. The next webinar will tackle the topic of recognition and admissions, anticipated for early 2024.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS TRAINING

The Public Affairs Training was co-designed and co-organised by three ACA members: the DAAD Brussels office, the Institute of International Education and Movetia, together with the ACA Secretariat. The aim of the training was to support participating ACA members in the further professionalisation of their policy development work aimed at promoting international academic cooperation. The training included two modules delivered on 4-6 June 2023 in Washington, D.C. and on 11-12 October 2023 in Brussels, as well as an individual action component in-between.

INCLUSION ACADEMY

The Inclusion ACAdemy is a tailor-made training series on inclusion and widening participation in international programmes, designed to support higher education institutions in implementing the Inclusion and Diversity horizontal priority of the Erasmus+ programme 2021 - 2027. In 2023, the trainings were offered to higher education institutions from Austria, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Iceland and Slovenia based on a series of six webinars and an online plenary event. The programme was developed and coordinated by ACA in cooperation with the Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO) and the SALTO Resource Centre for Inclusion and Diversity (Education and Training).

Based on this successful model, ACA delivered a two-day tailor-made Inclusion ACAdemy training event for Greek higher education institutions on 2-3 November 2023 in Delphi, Greece. The event was co-organised by ACA member, the Greek National Agency State Scholarship Foundation (IKY), the SIHO centre and external experts. It was attended by ca. 60 representatives of Greek higher education institutions and national agency's staff. The training featured presentations on relevant policies and programmes as well as collaborative sessions.



Participants of the Public Affairs Training, Module 1 - Washington, D.C.

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 2023, ACA was involved in several projects, with additional advisory roles in stakeholder meetings and speaking engagements at international conferences globally.



In 2023, ACA took part in the [Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative](#), funded by the European Union and led by NTT DATA, together with DAAD and Tipik. Under this initiative, ACA leads the work on the impact study on 20 years of the Erasmus Mundus programme. The Secretariat will also co-organise the 20th anniversary conference planned for spring 2024. As part of the work on the impact study, ACA collected in-depth quantitative and qualitative data on the institutional, national and European impact of Erasmus Mundus through a series of surveys and workshops organised with the beneficiary higher education institutions, programme coordinators, and key experts in the second half of 2023.



[Study in Europe 3](#) is a three-year project contracted by the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture. 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 2023 the ACA team produced several articles for the Study in Europe website, covering topics like recognition of prior learning in Europe, studying in its smallest countries, and tools for job-finding post-studies. Additionally, one webinar for national promotion agencies was held in March 2023, focusing on branding and networking events. Two webinars were organised for EU Delegations on 24 October 2023, and a final webinar was delivered for national promotion agencies on 14 November 2023 on the topic of "New tools and trends in higher education marketing". ACA also collaborated in content creation for the Study in Europe Teams platform and developed new operational concepts with Campus France.



[HIBLend - Enhancing the Quality of Blended Mobility in European Higher Education](#) is an Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership project submitted and approved under the centralised action for European NGOs. The project involves five partners: ACA as the project coordinator, the European University Foundation (EUF), the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK) and Masaryk University (MU). The HIBLend project aims to raise interest in and enhance the capacity of higher education institutions across Europe to develop high-quality blended mobility opportunities for students through the design, testing, and promotion of a comprehensive framework offering guidance on the existing models, quality considerations, and main steps in the set-up and delivery of blended mobility programmes. In 2023, the work focused on mapping models and approaches to blended student mobility based on a comprehensive survey and a series of focus groups. The project partners also organised several dissemination activities (e.g., a workshop at the EAIE 2023 annual conference in Rotterdam).

ECCEM

Enriching Communities
Through Engaged Mobilities

Erasmus & Community Engaged Learning (ECCEM) is an Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership project submitted and approved under the centralised action for European NGOs. ACA joined the consortium led by the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) aiming to provide tools and support European and national policies in further developing community engaged learning for international students. Other partners are SGroup Universities in Europe, CitizensLab and Institute for the Development of Education. In 2023 ACA started co-developing an engagement strategy for service learning in international education, and contributed to mapping the field through a survey and a series of focus groups.

IHES

In 2023, Internationalisation of Higher Education for Society (IHES) partners, involving 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, completed the project aiming to boost the internationalisation potential for social engagement. By testing different approaches in two regions, Catalonia and the Olomouc region, IHES generated transferrable knowledge for higher education institutions and their networks, as well as social actors and regional governments. The final conference was organised on 15 June 2023 in Brussels.



UniWeliS

Supporting Internationalisation of Higher Education through Professionalising Services for Mobile Academic Staff

In 2023, the UniWeliS project partners including SAIA, n.o. (coordinator), NAWA, Comenius University, University of Nis, Sofia University, and ACA completed the project aimed at creating 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 Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. In the early months of 2023, the partners finalised an online training package on different topics that can be used by any institution interested in improving welcoming and supporting services for international academics. The final conference took place on 21 June 2023 in Bratislava, with the participation of several ACA members and higher education institutions from members' countries and other countries in the region.



PROFFORMANCE

Building on the achievements of the PROFFORMANCE project, 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 2023, ACA took part in the expert discussions on the internationalisation dimension of the PROFFORMANCE tool and a series of ambassador training activities.



ENIS - COST 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 was co-leading, until June 2023, the Working Group “Connecting research and practice”. In 2023, the group prepared a policy brief “What role for national-level agencies in connecting researchers and practitioners working on international student mobility?” building on the experiences of many ACA members, organised a webinar, and worked on further needs’ analysis of both practitioners and researchers in ISM. The network also explored sustainability options for the post-EU funding period.

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 on the institutional impact of Erasmus+ outgoing academic staff mobility, aiming to gain more in-depth insights on the topic and to explore ways of better linking personal and institutional impact at higher education institutions. In 2023, ACA collected a large array of qualitative data by conducting nearly 30 interviews and focus groups with more than 65 mobile academics from 13 higher education institutions in the six participating countries, as well as a series of online peer learning sessions with institutional Erasmus+ coordinators. The ACA secretariat proceeded to analysing the gathered data and finalised the study report in December 2023.



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. Acting as an associate partner, ACA provides dissemination and information support through its multiple communication channels, and also co-leads the working group ‘squad’ on sustainability within digital education and training.



ACA Think Pieces - “European Higher Education Cooperation In A Global Context”

The 2023 “ACA Think Pieces” series - European higher education cooperation in a global context was launched in May 2023. Through their expert contributions in the series, the authors constructively reflect on some of the ongoing debates around the role, the principles and desired openness of international cooperation in higher education (and research), in an increasingly complex geopolitical context, addressing much-debated concepts of knowledge security and knowledge diplomacy, as well as values-anchored international cooperation and European values. Four Think Pieces issued in 2023 were authored by the renowned experts in the field, namely Ulrich Grothus, ACA President, Rik Van De Walle, Rector, Ghent University Belgium, Robin Matross Helms, Vice President for Membership and Educational services, Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), and Hilligje Van’t Land, Secretary General, International Association of Universities (IAU) and Giorgio Marinoni, Manager of Higher Education and Internationalisation, International Association of Universities (IAU).



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Erasmus Operating Grant 2023

In 2023, 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 an Erasmus+ Operating Grant, which provided EU co-funding for the association.

Other Projects

In 2023, ACA also served as an associate partner for several other EU-funded projects, including [Innovating Business Education for Responsible Global Minds \(IBE-ReGloMi\)](#) and [Piloting a joint European Degree Label \(EDLab\)](#).

ACA POSITIONS

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.

In May 2023, ACA issued a joint policy statement to support the revision of the European learning mobility framework, titled “[Towards a revised European learning mobility framework: ACA vision and way forward](#)”. This statement served as ACA’s common response to the European Commission’s call for evidence, based on the prior internal consultations.

In December 2023, ACA published a policy statement on the mid-term review of the Erasmus+ programme and the final evaluation of the past programme, titled “[Erasmus+: Consolidating efforts for an impactful future](#)”, on behalf of its 27 members, including 15 national agencies for Erasmus+. This policy input presented the key perspectives and recommendations emerged from the internal consultations throughout 2023.



PARTICIPATION IN STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

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

In 2023, ACA continued to contribute to the European-level discussions on several key topics, including the new European learning mobility framework, the mid-term review of Erasmus+ and the final evaluation of the past programme as well as the monitoring framework and an investment pathway for the European Universities Initiative. Several key meetings where the ACA Secretariat presented its policy input on behalf of its members are highlighted below: mission's call for evidence, based on the prior internal consultations.

- The launch event of the Erasmus+ review organised by the European University Foundation (EUF), European Students' Union (ESU), and Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and hosted by MEP Marcos Ros at the European Parliament on 23 March 2023;
- A stakeholder meeting organised by MEP Milan Zver, the Standing Rapporteur of the European Parliament on Erasmus+ on 6 July 2023;
- Two meetings organised under the DG EAC KA131 Working Group on automatic recognition of study periods abroad (1 June 2023) and the future of the Erasmus+ programme (12 October 2023);
- Two meetings under the DG EAC Stakeholder group on the European Universities Initiative (EUI) dedicated to the monitoring framework and an investment pathway for the EUI (19 June 2023 and 22 November 2023).

- The Erasmus+ conference (TCA) "Spreading innovative results from European University Alliances to other higher education institutions", 3-5 May 2023 - moderator, speaker
- CZEDUCON: International Conference on Strategy and Policy in Higher Education, 2023, 21-23 November 2023 - speakers
- OeAD HE Annual Conference (Hochschultagung), The many faces of internationalisation, 23 November 2023 - speaker
- EAIE Rotterdam 2023 | International education conference, 26-29 September - speakers, moderators
- 2023 EUA-CDE Thematic Workshop - Sustainability in doctoral education: Developing a strategic approach - speaker
- European Citizens' Learning Mobility Panel, 24 March 2023 - speaker
- Erasmus Generation Meeting, 6-9 April 2023 - speakers
- Spanish Permanent Representation workshop on European university alliances, 26 June 2023 - delegate
- European Parliament panel on the mid-term review of Erasmus+ hosted by MEP Milan Zver, 6 July 2023 - speaker
- EUI alliances meeting in Barcelona, 14-15 September 2023 - delegate
- IAU Global Meeting of Associations and International conference: Higher Education with Impact - Doha, Qatar 25-27 November 2023 - moderator

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

NEWSLETTER

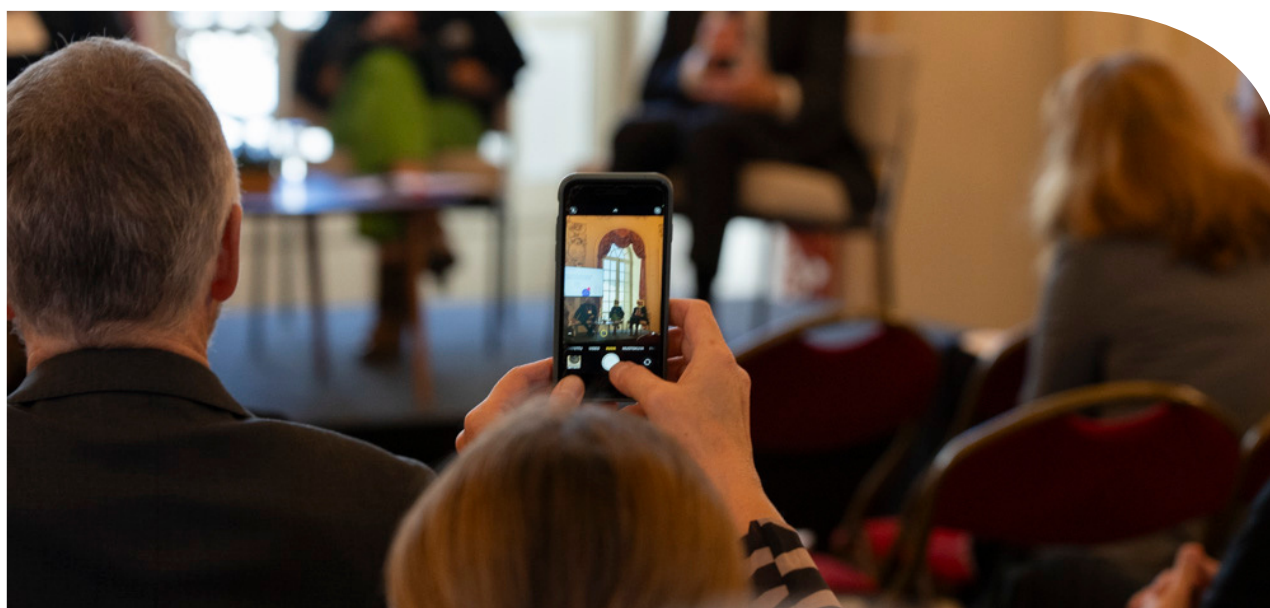
One of the ACA flagship products, the monthly electronic news service ACA Newsletter - Education Europe, is provided to a large audience of recipients in Europe and beyond with responsibilities for internationalisation of higher education, working in international and supranational organisations, ministries, national, European and international associations, as well as higher education institutions. In 2023, the ACA newsletter's overall engagement with its readers increased.

WEBSITE

In 2023, the ACA website received 41.000 visitors. ACA's most visited page on the website was the homepage with 12.444 visits. Other most visited pages were: the Newsletter, the Fostering Digital Pedagogies conference webpage, ACA Members page, and the ACA Events page. These most viewed pages confirm ACA's position as a think-tank and community builder with its events and publications; an information-providing source with its newsletter; and member-based focus proven by its members' page.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2023, ACA's communications channels experienced significant growth, both in audience reach and engagement. 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 demographics from our social media channels indicate that the majority of our active audience is in Europe, mirroring our membership base.



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. The association is represented externally by a key figure - the ACA President - who is elected for a 3-year mandate, once renewable.



Ulrich Grothus | ACA President

ACA LEADERSHIP

In the end of 2023, ACA President of the last six years, Ulrich Grothus reached the end of his mandate. The newly elected ACA President, Gro Torje will take office as of January 2024.

The following elected Administrators served on the ACA Administrative Council from the beginning of the year until the autumn General Assembly in November 2023. This General Assembly saw the re-election of two Administrators and the election of a new Administrator, replacing one 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



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



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



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



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



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



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

ACA SECRETARIAT

The ACA Secretariat is headed by Irina Ferencz (Director) supported by Veronika Kupriyanova (Deputy Director). The ACA team includes Martin Bogdan (Policy and Project Coordinator - Inclusion and Societal Engagement), Angeliki Psychogyiou (Policy and Project Coordinator - Digitalisation and Sustainability), Courtney Hartzell (Communications Coordinator), Nikolina Đurić (Junior Communications Officer), Martine De Graeve (Office Manager), and Raul Ranne (Senior Advisor) working remotely from Estonia.

ACA also had the privilege to host a trainee, İlker Bahar from Turkey, who contributed significantly to the production of the ACA Newsletter - Education Europe and enhanced ACA's overall online presence. Additionally, for a few months, ACA welcomed Leon Cremonini as a Senior Research Manager to provide support on ACA's ongoing Erasmus Mundus Support Structure service project.



Irina Ferencz



Veronika Kupriyanova



Martin Bogdan



Angeliki Psychogyiou



Raul Ranne



Courtney Hartzell



Nikolina Đurić



Martine De Graeve

ACA ACCOUNTS 2022, 2021 AND 2020 (EUR)

	2022	2021	2020
Expenditure			
Staff costs	448,236	452,962	465,467
Secretariat running costs/ infrastructure & Equipment	119,128	122,991	145,896
Project expenditure	72,199	39,656	86,022
Travel, meeting & subs.	10,955	-93	1,914
Provision	0	0	0
Total	650,519	615,516	699,299
Income			
Membership Fees	299,148	243,548	238,084
Project Income	356,978	413,492	423,301
Other Income	588	4,795	3,009
Total	656,714	661,835	664,394
Net Result	6,194	46,319	-34,905

ACA
ACADEMIC
COOPERATION
ASSOCIATION



Promoting Innovation and Internationalisation

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