

2024
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

2024 has been a year of strategic milestones and impactful achievements for the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA). Guided by our **commitment to advancing internationalisation in higher education**, ACA has navigated a dynamic and often unpredictable political landscape to deliver value to its members and the broader higher education community.

The year was also shaped by elections in the European Parliament and at national level, the renewed mandate of the European Commission's President and the appointment of a new college of Commissioners, with a new role of Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness overseeing also Education, discussions on the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), and the U.S. presidential elections, among others. The ACA Secretariat has been closely monitoring these developments, adapting in real time and facilitating peer discussions through its platforms such as its statutory meetings, the Strategic Summit, and the six Thematic Peer Groups. These efforts are particularly crucial in light of the evolving political context in Europe and beyond, making **ACA's policy co-creation work** – especially securing an ambitious and well-funded future for the Erasmus+ programme – a critical priority.

A highlight of the year was ACA's completion of a study celebrating **20 years of Erasmus Mundus** under

the Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative (EMSI), which is managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) on behalf of the European Commission. This study underscored the programme's importance and added value at multiple levels, fostering debate on its future. Complementing this effort, ACA successfully organised a high-profile conference for the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) and the EACEA, which marked the 20th anniversary of Erasmus Mundus and reinforced the global dimension of the Erasmus+ programme.

ACA has continued to expand its robust **project portfolio**, undertaking studies, training activities, evaluations, and policy analyses in close collaboration with ACA members. One particular achievement was securing the continued support of the **Study in Europe initiative** (in its 4th iteration), as part of a consortium coordinated by Campus France, and engaging ACA members DAAD, DZS, Harno and Nuffic as full partners, with Uni-Italia and SEPIE as associate partners, along UEFISCDI. This success reflects ACA's ability to foster collaboration and leverage resources for collective benefit.

The year also brought **important exchanges** with the wider international higher education community in Brussels and at national level, through **ACA's and members' events**, and leadership level dialogue fostering strategic foresight and leadership development. The governance structures of the Association were strengthened as part of the regular election cycle, **ACA President Gro Tjore (HK-Dir)** starting her mandate in January 2024, and with, inter alia, a new Vice-President – Stephan Geifes (DAAD) and new Treasurer – Roman Klepetko (DZS) being elected and due to start their mandates in 2025. Special thanks go to outgoing Vice-President, Alenka Flander (CMEPIUS) for her dedication, support and substantial guidance for ACA's work.

As we reflect on 2024, ACA's achievements demonstrate the **strength of our network**, the **expertise of our members**, and the **dedication of our Secretariat**. These accomplishments not only reaffirm ACA's important role in European and international higher education, but also set the stage for continued success in navigating the challenges and opportunities of the year(s) ahead.

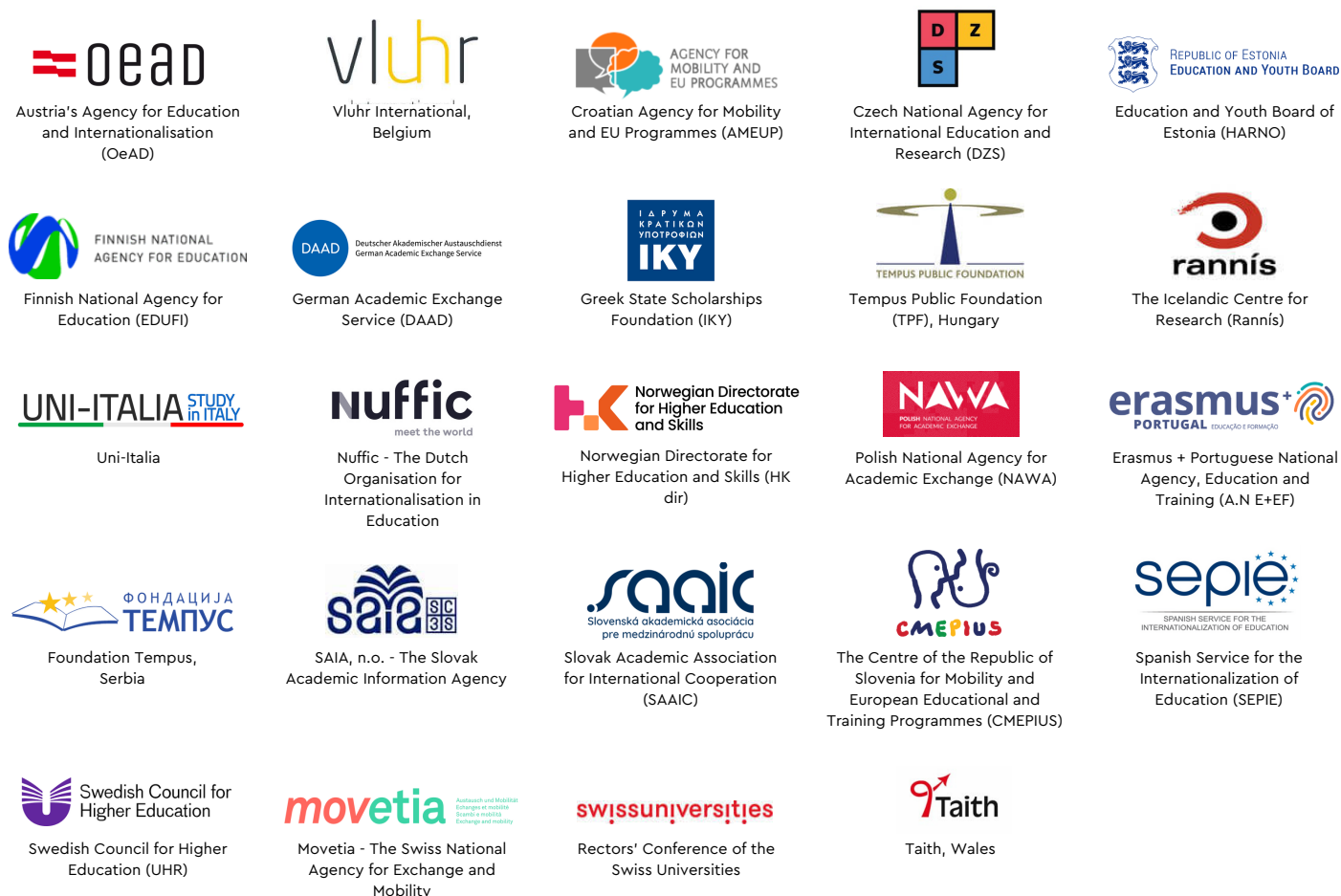
ACA MEMBERS

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ACA's strength lies in its robust and trusted network of national organisations that form its membership. These member organisations play a pivotal role in advancing the internationalisation of higher education within their respective countries. Through diverse funding and support mechanisms, they contribute significantly to the design and implementation of higher education policies and programmes, shaping the European and global education landscape.

As of 2024, ACA's membership includes 27 organisations: 24 full members and 3 associate members, each bringing unique expertise and perspectives to the Association's collective mission.

FULL MEMBERS



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



STATUTORY MEETINGS

In 2024, ACA's statutory meetings remained essential for guiding the Association's activities and strategic direction. The ACA Administrative Council convened twice during the year.

The **Spring 2024 Administrative Council (AC)** meeting was held on 23 May in Brussels, Belgium. The agenda featured key discussions on ACA's Draft Accounts for 2023, preparations for the autumn Administrative Council elections, and updates on membership developments. The Council also set the stage for the Spring 2024 General Assembly.

The **Spring 2024 General Assembly (GA)** took place on 19 June in Reykjavík, Iceland, hosted by The Icelandic Centre for Research – Rannís. Highlights included the election of **Roman Klepetko** (Czech National Agency for International Education and Research – DZS) as ACA Treasurer and a planned update of the ACA Statutes. Members also engaged in a *Tour de Table* session, sharing the latest internationalisation trends and developments in their respective countries.

The **Autumn 2024 Administrative Council (AC)** convened online on 13 November, with discussions focusing on the Draft Work Programme and Budget

for 2025, as well as preparations for the upcoming elections of ACA Administrators and the Vice-President.

The **Autumn 2024 General Assembly (GA)** was held online on 26 November. Key agenda items included the elections of ACA Administrators and the Vice-President. The elected members were:

1. **Stephan Geifes** (German Academic Exchange Service – DAAD, Germany), sitting Administrator, elected as **Vice-President**.
2. **Gerhard Volz** (Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation – OeAD, Austria), re-elected for the regular Administrator position.
3. **Maija Airas** (Finnish National Agency for Education – EDUFI, Finland), elected for the regular Administrator position.

ACA members also warmly thanked outgoing Vice-President, **Alenka Flander** (CMEPIUS) who completed her 2nd mandate as a member of the AC, of which the 2nd as Vice-President, for her extraordinary commitment to and support of ACA's cause and work. Other key topics on the agenda included **2025 membership fees**, the adoption of the **2025 Work Programme and Budget**, and a *Tour de Table* discussion, where members shared insights on their current activities and achievements, and plans for 2025.



ACA Members at the Spring 2024 General Assembly in Reykjavík

THEMATIC PEER GROUPS

ACA Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) serve as a trusted platform for ACA members to engage in focused discussions on key topics in European and international higher education, share experiences, and provide valuable insights. In 2024, TPG members tackled emerging and pressing issues in internationalisation, collaboratively developing several initiatives, including new projects and events.



TPG1 GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS

Chaired by Gro Tjore,
ACA President

In 2024, the Global Developments thematic peer group decided to focus on the pressing topics of **responsible internationalisation and knowledge security**, and convened three times. In its **first meeting**, of 15 March, the group exchanged on the evolving European policy context and institutional approaches, the members providing an update of the latest related developments in their national contexts.

The **second meeting**, held on 5 June, focused on **integrating responsible internationalisation criteria in funding programmes**, with compelling presentations by Ann-Mari Fineman (Vinnova, Sweden's Innovation Agency) and Gregory Absillis (Research Foundation Flanders – FWO).

The **third meeting**, on 1 October, provided an opportunity for ACA members to exchange updates on responsible internationalisation at both national and organisational levels. A dedicated group discussion delved into the concept of **"acceptable risks"** in international higher education cooperation, fostering a rich dialogue on this critical topic.



TPG2 RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Chaired by Irina Ferencz,
ACA Director

In 2024, the Research on International Education thematic peer group convened three times. The **first meeting**, on 18 October, provided a platform for members to share updates on ongoing studies and publications. A key topic for discussion centred was the creation of an **internal repository** of studies highlighting the impact of internationalisation activities funded through **Erasmus+** and other programmes. The repository is intended to offer evidence on the positive effects of European and international cooperation in higher education at various levels.

The **second meeting**, held on 14 November, focused on reviewing progress on the repository. Members presented initial findings and deliberated on the next steps to enhance its development and usability.

The **third meeting**, on 16 December, centered on evaluating the updated repository. Members provided feedback on its relevance and effectiveness, identifying areas for improvement. The session also included planning for the repository's long-term development and maintenance in 2025 and a discussion on proposed topics for TPG research activities in the upcoming year.



TPG3 EUROPEAN POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

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

In 2024, the European Policies and Programmes thematic peer group convened five times, addressing key EU developments and preparing for the future Erasmus+ programme.

The **first meeting**, on 21 January, focused on the EU Higher Education Package 2024. Participants examined the European Commission's latest initiatives and their implications for ACA member organisations.

The **second meeting**, on 26 March, explored the concept of a **European degree**, with valuable insights from Yann-Mael Bideau (DG EAC B1 Unit) and representatives of the EDLab pilot project (Dorothy Kelly and Laura Howard). Discussions emphasised the challenges and opportunities emerging from the pilot's implementation.

On 3 July, the **third meeting** analysed the **evolving political and financial landscape** in the EU following the European Parliament elections. Frank Petrikowski (German Permanent Representation to the EU) provided key insights, and members discussed how the Erasmus+ programme aligns with broader EU priorities and strategic goals.

The **fourth meeting**, held on 24 October, focused on the ultimate value and relevance of the Erasmus+ programme to the renewed political vision and strategic agenda of Ursula von der Leyen's second European Commission. Members reflected on the programme's current architecture and goals, and exchanged ideas on possible improvements for the next programming period.

The **final meeting**, on 3 December, centred on discussing the draft narrative highlighting the value of the Erasmus+ programme in its entirety.

and sharing ideas on the concrete recommendations for the future programme. Members discussed preferred actions, possible areas for improvement, and their financial implications.



TPG4 WIDENING INCLUSION

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

In 2024, the Inclusion thematic peer group convened three times to address critical topics related to inclusion in higher education and ongoing support initiatives.

The **first meeting**, held on 1 June, featured a presentation by Martin Bogdan on the experiences and outcomes of the recently completed **Inclusion ACAdemy training series**. The group also discussed upcoming research on the uptake of the Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) priority within Erasmus+, conducted as part of the Diversity and Inclusion in Erasmus+ iMplementation (DIEM) project.

The **second meeting**, on 9 September, included a presentation by Darwyn Bruelemnas of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), who provided updates on the inclusivemobility.eu website, particularly the country profiles managed by national agencies for Erasmus+. Additionally, Josip Luša and Martin Bogdan introduced the new **Inclusion Scan services**, designed to help higher education institutions enhance inclusive practices, which will be available as of 2025.

The **final meeting**, held on 9 December, highlighted ESN's survey findings on inclusion in higher education, presented by Neli Kalinova-Schmieder. Members exchanged insights on the Erasmus+ programme's funding mechanisms supporting inclusive participation in mobility in their respective countries. The meeting concluded with a review of the Inclusion Scan service and a discussion on priorities and plans for 2025.

MEMBERS-ONLY ACTIVITIES

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TPG5 NEW MOBILITY FORMATS

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

In 2024, the New Mobility Formats thematic peer group successfully convened four times, focusing on key developments in blended mobility and digitalisation in Erasmus+.

The **first meeting**, held on 12 January, addressed **Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs)** and the **green priority** within the Erasmus+ programme. The session featured a presentation by Robert O'Dowd, sharing insights on best practices and synergies with new mobility formats.

The **second meeting**, on 20 March, presented the first outcomes of the **HIBLend project**, summarised in a report on existing blended mobility practices.

The **third meeting**, conducted on 12 September, focused on the ongoing **digitalisation efforts** of ACA member organisations, and the presentation of the **Blended Intensive Programme Basic Toolkit**, developed collaboratively by OeAD and Nuffic to support higher education institutions in delivering high-quality BIPs.

The **final meeting**, held on 10 December, addressed **Digital Opportunity Traineeships**, an EU-funded training initiative, delivered by ESN's Darwyn Buelemans. Members also shared updates on their national initiatives and experiences. The meeting concluded with a discussion on future plans, including new collaboration opportunities and thematic priorities in 2025.



TPG6 COMMUNICATIONS

Chaired by Annemarie Willemsen,
Nuffic, Paulo Almeida, A.N E+EF,
and Courtney Hartzell, ACA
Secretariat

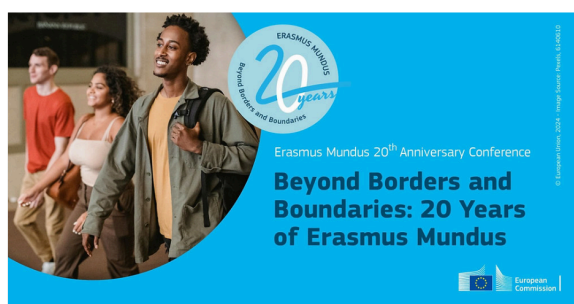
In 2024, the Communication thematic peer group met three times, addressing emerging trends, tools, and strategies to enhance communications across ACA member organisations.

The **first meeting**, on 24 February, focused on **AI tools in communications**, showcasing examples of AI applications in content creation, along with practical advice on integrating AI tools into daily communication workflows (presentation by Raul Ranne from the ACA Secretariat).

The **second meeting**, conducted on 5 June, centred on creating **impactful content**. The session featured a presentation by the Institute of International Education (IIE), followed by the exchange on the effective content strategies and ways to improve content reach and engagement.

The group's **third and final meeting** in 2024 took place on 13 November, continuing peer discussions on **measuring communication impact** by using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), gathering actionable data, and leveraging it to assess and improve communication strategies.

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 2024, ACA organised several events to foster discussion on the most topical issues of international and European higher education cooperation.



Erasmus Mundus 20th Anniversary Conference: Beyond Borders and Boundaries

27 - 28 May 2024, Brussels

Organised by ACA in cooperation with NTT DATA, Tipik, and DAAD as part of a service contract (the Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative – EMSI) for the European Commission and EACEA, the event brought together approx. **450 participants** (onsite and online).

The conference highlighted **two decades of Erasmus Mundus' impact**, with ACA presenting a comprehensive study on the programme's achievements conducted for EACEA as part of the EMSI initiative. ACA members **SEPIE** and **HK-dir** were featured prominently in the programme, contributing to discussions on the future of joint programmes and international higher education. The main take-aways of the event can be consulted in the conference proceedings.



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

25 - 26 January 2024, Brussels

Building on its tradition of highlighting the latest **novelties of the Erasmus+ programme** while integrating global perspectives, the 2024 agenda delivered a mix of **informative panels and interactive sessions**, providing valuable insights for participants.

The event attracted **115 participants**, including **40 speakers and moderators** from ACA member organisations, the European Commission, and other key stakeholders. Contributions from ACA members – including **HK-dir, EDUFI, OeAD, DAAD, UHR, and NAWA** – were instrumental in identifying good practice examples at both national and European levels. The seminar fostered lively discussions on emerging trends, policy priorities, and practical implementation strategies within Erasmus+, while offering valuable **networking opportunities** to participants from across Europe and beyond.



Strategic Approaches to Erasmus+ Academic Staff Mobility

20 - 21 June 2024, Reykjavík

Hosted by ACA's member, Rannís, this high-level conference brought together 80 institutional leaders and representatives of National Agencies for Erasmus+ to discuss the strategic importance of academic staff mobility within Erasmus+. The event was organised by six ACA members – Rannís (coordinator), AMEUP, CMEPIUS, DZS, OeAD, TPF, and the ACA Secretariat. It provided a platform for discussions on inclusive participation strategies, staff development and recognition of mobility outcomes, and knowledge dissemination based on the findings from a prior project on the institutional impact of Erasmus+ staff mobility and the ensuing publication.



ACA Strategic Summit

8 - 9 October 2024, Brussels

The 4th edition of the ACA Strategic Summit united almost 50 leaders from ACA member organisations and invited guests for in-depth peer-to-peer discussions on key developments in international higher education. The topics addressed included the latest trends and impact evidence, evolving internationalisation strategies at national and organisational levels, national pathways for European universities alliances, support activities for Ukraine, as well as strategic approaches to leadership development and advocacy within a shifting political landscape. The event enabled ACA members to exchange experiences, strengthen collaboration, and advance their organisational priorities in a comparative, forward-looking perspective.



Leadership of ACA member organisations and the ACA Secretariat at the Strategic Summit 2024

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.

INCLUSION ACAdemy

The Inclusion ACAdemy is a tailor-made training series on **inclusion and widening participation** in international programmes, supporting higher education institutions in advancing the Inclusion and Diversity horizontal priority of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027.

In March 2024, six ACA members jointly delivered the first edition of the Inclusion ACAdemy. The latter consisted of two rounds of webinars featuring institutional examples, student perspectives, and discussions preparing national action plans aimed at enhancing collaboration between higher education institutions and national agencies for Erasmus+. The activity culminated in a **final conference**, hosted by **AMEUP** in cooperation with the ACA Secretariat, OeAD, EDUFI, DAAD, Rannís, and CMEPIUS on 21 and 23 May in Zagreb, Croatia. The conference was attended by ca. 130 participants from Austria, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, and Slovenia.

The **second Inclusion ACAdemy training series** took place in the second half of 2024, coordinated by **Harno**, with support from **TPF** and **DZS**. Almost 50 participants engaged in a series of five webinars, while drafting national action plans to further advance the inclusion and diversity topics in international higher education.

FOSTERING STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO STAFF MOBILITY UNDER ERASMUS+

This TCA funded ACAdemy aims at supporting **strategic approaches to staff mobility** by raising awareness of its institutional impact and building capacity of Erasmus+ coordinators. Coordinated by **CMEPIUS**, with the involvement of **AMEUP**, **DZS**, **TPF**, **OeAD**, and **Rannis**, the partners held a series of internal brainstorming sessions in 2024 to conceptualise the content and structure of the webinars. Planned for 2025, these sessions will share good practice examples in fostering more inclusive participation, knowledge dissemination, and professional development, including better recognition of outcomes, linked to staff mobility.



Panel discussion at the Inclusion ACAdemy final conference, Zagreb

Every year ACA pursues 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 2024, ACA was involved in several projects, with additional advisory roles in stakeholder meetings and speaking engagements at international conferences globally.



In 2024, ACA continued its involvement in the [Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative](#) (EMSI), funded by the European Commission and EACEA, and led by NTT DATA, in cooperation with DAAD and Tipik. As part of this initiative, ACA conducted a [study on 20 years of Erasmus Mundus](#), based on EACEA statistics, a large-scale survey, and consultations with 165 experts, with an emphasis on the institutional level impact of this flagship EU programme. The study was presented at the [Erasmus Mundus 20th Anniversary Conference](#), co-organised by ACA under the EMSI initiative on 27 and 28 May in Brussels and online. The conference can be consulted [here](#).

Additionally, ACA organised a 1.5-day **thematic seminar**, titled "Planning and Delivering Jointness in Erasmus Mundus Master Programmes", which took place on 7 and 8 November in Brussels. The seminar highlighted critical aspects of joint programme design and delivery to be summarised in the proceedings (due in January 2025).

Further contributions under the EMSI initiative included case study publications and videos featuring several Erasmus Mundus programmes and disseminated on the [Erasmus Mundus Community Platform](#). ACA's contributions were carried out in close collaboration with DAAD Brussels Office and ACA members, ensuring EMSI's impact at institutional, national, and European levels.



The [HIBLend project](#), funded under the Erasmus+ KA2 centralised action for European NGOs, aims to enhance the capacity of higher education institutions across Europe to design and deliver **high-quality blended mobility** opportunities for students. ACA serves as the project coordinator in collaboration with the European University Foundation (EUF), The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK), and Masaryk University.

In 2024, the project team finalised a **report** summarising the challenges and staff and student perceptions of blended mobility based on the evidence collected from a series of focus groups and hackathons, organised during the EWP Back to the Future – Student Mobility Summit on 30 January and 1 February at the University of Barcelona.

The report provided important background information for the subsequent research on **quality considerations** for blended student mobility conducted via a series of mini-Delphi sessions with various stakeholders including students, academic and administrative staff, and national funding agencies (Rannís, OeAD, EDUFI, and Movetia).

On 15 November, the project consortium held a **transnational project meeting** in Brno, Czechia, to discuss the outcomes of the mini-Delphi sessions and plan the next steps. This included strategies for building a HIBLend **community of practitioners**, aimed at fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among higher education institutions.

ACA members actively contributed to the project, with CMEPIUS and Rannís participating as members of the Advisory Board.

STUDY IN EUROPE

Study in Europe 4 is a three-year initiative contracted by EACEA on behalf of the European Commission. Coordinated by Campus France, the project involves ACA and its members DAAD, Harno, Nuffic and DZS, with three other agencies as associate partners, of which two are also ACA members – Uni-Italia and SEPIE – along UEFISCDI (Romania).

In 2024, ACA and its partners worked on a comprehensive **IT tools review**, including the **EUSurvey** tool with the aim to formulate actionable recommendations for its use under the Study in Europe initiative, and completed the technical analysis of **OpenSocial** (in collaboration with Harno), preparing the design of the Study in Europe community platform. The platform's prototype was launched in December, offering a tool to connect stakeholders.

ACA also completed a **mapping of national scholarships** for Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD students based on a validation survey targeting national agencies implemented in November. This constitutes the first step in a comprehensive study that will be completed in 2025 on the scholarship offer in Europe. It also completed a series of interviews with national higher education promotion agencies in Latvia, Romania, and Finland (in collaboration with Harno), feeding into a larger study on higher education promotion strategies of European countries.

Last but not least, the association co-organised a series of events including a **webinar** titled "Student Visas in Europe – Challenges and Solutions" conducted on 14 November, and an in-person **networking meeting** organised for representatives of national promotion agencies on 12 and 13 December in Brussels, with the aim to exchange experience in promoting European higher education worldwide.

ECCEM

Enriching Communities
Through Engaged Mobilities

Trasmus & Community Engaged Learning (ECCEM), funded under the Erasmus+ KA2 centralised action, Cooperation Partnerships for European NGOs, focuses on enhancing **community engaged learning** and advancing **service learning in international education**. ACA joined the consortium led by the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), alongside partners SGroup Universities in Europe, CitizensLab, and the Institute for the Development of Education. In 2024, ACA co-developed a **stakeholder engagement strategy** to support the Erasmus+ horizontal priority "Civic Engagement, Common Values and Participation in Democratic Life". For this purpose, ACA disseminated a survey and facilitated several focus groups aimed at mapping current practices and challenges in service learning.

Two dedicated events were organised as part of the project, including a **dissemination conference** held in Brussels on 1 October, which brought together over 100 participants, and a hybrid workshop organised for national agencies. Participants exchanged experiences, discussed ongoing service learning practices, and explored future strategies to promote **civic engagement** and support community-based learning across Europe.

Diversity and Inclusion in Erasmus+ Implementation (DIEM)

The DIEM project aims to make **Erasmus+ more inclusive** by identifying barriers to mobility, improving participant experiences, and proposing evidence-based solutions.

In 2024, ACA, as a full partner alongside the Erasmus Student Network, the European University Foundation, the University of Latvia, Humboldt University, University of Pavia and the Jagiellonian University, carried out **desk research** and designed a comprehensive survey targeting national agencies. The findings provide a strong foundation for a **reinforced inclusion strategy** in future Erasmus+ programmes. ACA also participated in workshops fostering collaboration and stakeholder capacity-building.

Study on the Erasmus+ Staff Mobility Impact: From Personal to Institutional-Level Benefits and Impact

Six ACA members – AMEUP, CMEPIUS, DZS, OeAD, TPF, and Rannis published a study exploring the institutional impact of Erasmus+ academic staff mobility and offering in-depth insights into the interplay of personal and institutional benefits of outgoing staff mobility. The report was presented at the **conference** titled "Strategic Approaches to Staff Mobility" on 20 and 21 June in Reykjavík, Iceland. Organised by the same group of national agency partners, the conference gathered institutional leaders and coordinators to reflect on the study's results. The findings of the study inform a series of ACA webinars on institutional approaches to staff mobility, planned for 2025 and described in the ACAdemy training series section.

Slovak Internationalisation Audits

ACA experts Irina Ferencz and Veronika Kupriyanova took part a national project supported **internationalisation audits of Slovak higher education institutions** conducted in the framework of the EU Recovery and Resilience Fund. Concretely, they took part in evaluating and advising five of the ten participating institutions. Based on the evaluation methodology co-designed by Irina Ferencz and Daniel Casten (with the involvement of Guido Van Huylenbroeck), the experts conducted a series of site visits to Slovak universities, resulting in detailed evaluation reports and tailored action plans for each institution. These outputs provided actionable recommendations to strengthen internationalisation capacities at Slovak higher education institutions.

Study on Assessing the Economic Impact of Erasmus+ Incoming Student Mobility

Five ACA members – the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMEUP, Croatia) as coordinator, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Tempus Public Foundation (TPF, Hungary), the Portuguese National Agency for Erasmus+ (PT01) and Fondacija Tempus (Serbia) – have joined forces, together with the ACA, for a study exploring the **economic impact of incoming Erasmus+ students** in these five countries, pursuing a comparative approach.

In the first part of the project, the consortium will map various **indicators** typically used to assess the economic impact of both degree mobility (during studies, as well as upon graduation, for those that stay in the host country) and credit mobility, to elaborate a broad analytical framework (planned for winter 2024/25). In the second part, the partners will carry out a comparative analysis of the **economic effects of Erasmus+ mobility** in these five countries based on the relevant, compatible metrics.

Based on a comprehensive literature review performed in 2024, ACA organised the first methodological workshop in December to discuss the existing approaches to evaluating the economic effects of degree and credit (Erasmus+) mobility, the second workshop being foreseen in January 2025. The comparative study is foreseen for the end of 2025.



The [ENIS network](#) addresses the need for a systematic interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge on international student mobility (ISM), including theoretical frameworks, research methodologies, findings, and best practices. The network also focuses on translating research into actionable recommendations for ISM policies and practices.

In 2024, ACA and members played an active role in advancing the network's work. Contributions included participation in the **annual ENIS conference** held in **Tbilisi, Georgia**, where ACA representatives Runa Vigdís Guðmarsdóttir, Božidar Grigić, and Irina Ferencz contributed to several sessions and project deliverables.



Building on the achievements of the PROFFORMANCE project, the [PROFFORMANCE+ project](#) (2022–2025) aims to further develop and refine the **teaching excellence framework** and tools in alignment with the EHEA and EU priorities: digitalisation, inclusion, sustainability, and internationalisation.

In 2024, ACA contributed to the work of the **Internationalisation Working Group** by offering expert advice and taking part in peer learning activities to support the testing and improvement of the internationalisation dimension of the PROFFORMANCE tool and a teacher training course.



[INCLUSION SCAN](#)

In a collaborative effort to enhance inclusion efforts across European higher education institutions, ACA partnered with SALTO Inclusion and Diversity in Education and Training, led by AMEUP, to promote and support the **Erasmus+ Inclusion Scan** tool developed by Nuffic.

The Inclusion Scan provides HEIs with a **self-assessment framework** to evaluate the current state of inclusion and diversity at the institutional level through a self-reflective survey. Building on this initiative, ACA offers **tailored consultation sessions** to higher education institutions, providing expert guidance to help institutions analyse their results and implement actionable steps to strengthen their inclusive practices.



The [European Digital Education Hub](#) is a flagship initiative under the Digital Education Action Plan aimed at strengthening cooperation on digital education across the EU, national, and regional levels. It facilitates collaboration among education and training sectors, public and private stakeholders, as well as research and policy actors. As an associate partner in the consortium led by DAAD, ACA played a leading role in the sustainability working group 'squad' within digital education and training.

In early 2024, ACA coordinated the group's work, resulting in two key deliverables: [Sustainability Through a Digital Lens](#) and [Sustainability in Online Education](#).

Both outputs provide concise, informative guidance on fostering sustainability practices in the digital education landscape. In addition, ACA contributed to the organisation of a **community workshop on sustainability in digital education**, which took place on 15 and 16 February in Paris, France. This event brought together participants to exchange practices, share challenges, and explore innovative solutions for integrating sustainability into online learning and digital education systems.

ACA Expert Pool

In 2024, ACA finalised the concept of the ACA Expert Pool aiming to enhance the association's expertise-sharing capacity. A working prototype was created using OpenAI's ChatGPT technology, successfully trained on expert data, and is currently being tested, for a full launch in 2025.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Erasmus Operating Grant 2024

In 2024, 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.

Other Projects

In 2024, 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).

EU POLICY DESIGN

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

In 2024, ACA focused on three main themes in European higher education:

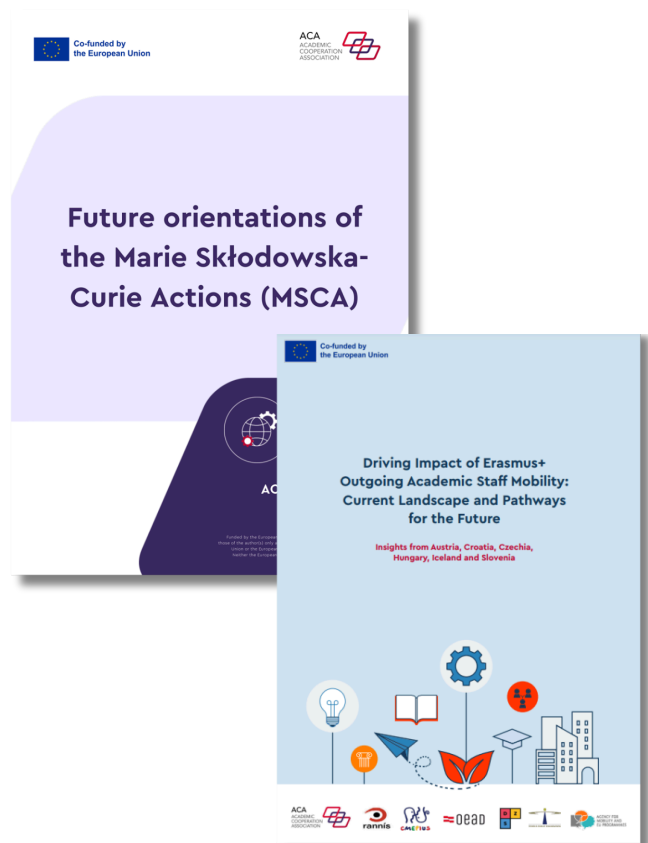
- **Erasmus+ mid-term review and the new programme generation:** ACA actively participated in a series of stakeholder events organised by DG EAC and facilitated internal consultations on the future Erasmus+ programme with its members, preparing to issue a **joint position paper** in early 2025.
- **EU Higher Education Package:** ACA stimulated the discussions on a European degree at various internal meetings and public events, and provided the evidence-based policy input for a draft Council recommendation on **sustainable and attractive careers** in higher education.
- **The value of Erasmus Mundus:** ACA highlighted the programme's **complementarity with the European Universities Initiative** and its critical role in supporting the international dimension of Erasmus+.

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 March, ACA provided a policy input to the European Commission call for evidence on **Attractive and sustainable careers in higher education**. This input already created an impact, being referenced in the European Commission Staff Working Document, accompanying the Higher Education Package (page 100).

In March, ACA issued a policy input paper titled Future orientations of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). This policy contribution provided a response to the European Commission's consultations on the future orientations of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) building on the inputs of four ACA members involved in their implementation and other related schemes (e.g., EURAXESS): AMEUP, DZS, NAWA, and SAIA, n.o.



COOPERATION WITH PARTNERS

ACA pursues to strengthen its collaboration with key partners and sister organisations in the field, reflecting its strategic approach to knowledge-sharing and ensuring its contributions remain impactful and well-integrated within the broader higher education community.

In 2024, ACA co-organised together with the European Association for International Education (EAIE) a joint policy debate and networking event and reception on 25 June in Brussels, connecting ACA members, national internationalisation funding agencies and international higher education professionals from universities across Europe, representing the EAIE, with Brussels-based higher education stakeholders.

Additionally, ACA Secretariat members Veronika Kupriyanova, Martin Bogdan, and Angeliki Psychogiou were elected to serve on three EAIE thematic committees for a two-year term (European Funded Programmes Thematic Committee, Social Responsibility Thematic Committee and Student and Staff Thematic Committee), further aligning ACA's expertise with these thematic areas.

The collaboration with ESN International also intensified during the year through joint projects such as DIEM and ECEM, as well as regular exchanges at various events, reinforcing the shared commitment to advancing inclusion, civic engagement, and community-oriented internationalisation within Erasmus+ and beyond.

Highlights of representation at international and national events

- HEM Bürgenstock conference 2024, 19 - 20 January, Luzern
- EUF Student mobility Summit, 30 January - 1 February, Barcelona
- "Mobilising Europe, Engaging Together" conference, 12 February, Ghent
- DG EAC Stakeholder Group Meeting on the upcoming higher education package, 8 March, Brussels
- ICF Erasmus+ evaluation workshop on key issues for a possible successor programme, 20 March, Brussels
- ESN EGM conference, 4-7 April, Seville
- DAAD NA and DZS/CZELO Study visits, 16 April, Brussels
- The way ahead for European Universities Alliances, supported by the Belgian Presidency, 30 April, Brussels
- TPF conference "The impact of Stipendium Hungaricum on the learning environment in HE", 5 June, online
- ICF Workshop on the draft final report on the Erasmus+ evaluation, 9 July, Brussels
- 34th EAIE Conference and Exhibition, 17-20 September, Toulouse
- ECEM conference, 1 October, Brussels
- OeAD peer-learning event on international mobility of administrative/non-academic staff, 15 October, online
- Emphasizing virtual and inclusive dimensions of Blended Intensive Programmes, 29-30 October, Zagreb
- CZEDUCON, 18-20 November, Prague
- HK-dir Erasmus Mundus conference, 27 November, online
- ICI Final conference, 11-12 December, Tarragona

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

NEWSLETTER

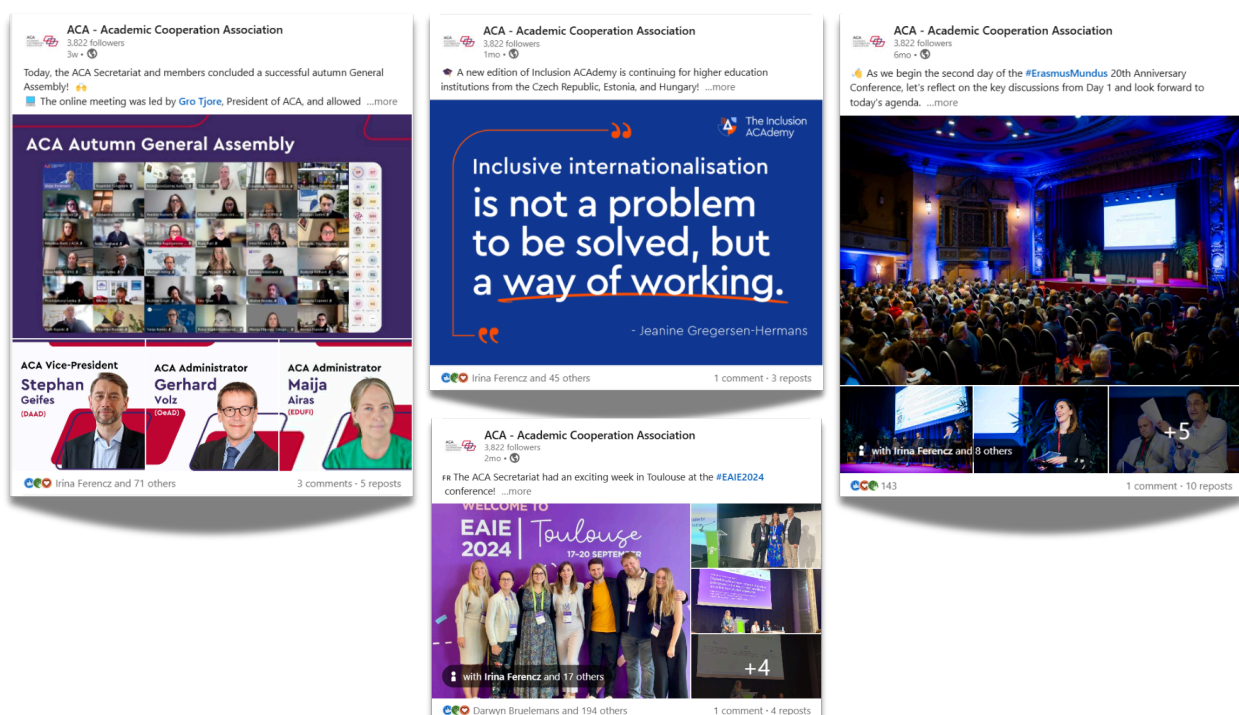
One of the ACA flagship products, the monthly news service [ACA Newsletter – Education Europe](#), is provided to a large audience of recipients in Europe and beyond with responsibilities for internationalisation of higher education, working in international and supranational organisations, ministries, national, European and international associations, as well as higher education institutions. In 2024, ACA issued twelve newsletter editions and the overall engagement with the readers increased.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2024, 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 ACA social media channels indicate that the majority of its active audience is based in **Europe**, mirroring ACA's membership base.

WEBSITE

The [ACA website](#) underwent a major update with the launch of a **new homepage** in August, improving navigation and user experience. Following this successful launch, the Secretariat initiated the next phase of **website renovations**, focusing on enhancing the publications page functionalities. Benchmarking exercises were conducted, and the initial ideas were proposed for **improving accessibility and user engagement**. Based on the testing outcomes, an updated version of the publications page is expected to be launched in March 2025.



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.



Gro Tjore | ACA President

ACA LEADERSHIP

At the start of 2024, Gro Tjore officially assumed the role of **ACA President**, following her election in June 2023.

The following elected **Administrators** served on the **ACA Administrative Council** from the beginning of the year until the autumn General Assembly in November 2024. This year saw two election rounds, the results of which are presented above in the Statutory meetings section.



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



Amanda Crameri, Head of the Higher Education Unit, Movetia - Swiss National Agency for Exchange and Mobility, Switzerland



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



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



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



Vidar Pedersen, European Programmes Director and Director for Erasmus+ at the Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-Dir), Norway (since November2022)

ACA SECRETARIAT

The ACA Secretariat is headed by Irina Ferencz (Director), supported by Veronika Kupriyanova (Deputy Director), Martin Bogdan (Policy and Project Coordinator – Inclusion and Societal Engagement), Angeliki Psychogiou (Policy and Project Coordinator – Digitalisation and Sustainability), Jenny Nygård (Project Assistant), Courtney Hartzell (Communications Coordinator), Nikolina Đurić (Communications Officer), Juliette Legrand (Office Manager), and Raul Ranne (Senior Advisor) working remotely from Estonia.



Irina Ferencz



Veronika Kupriyanova



Martin Bogdan



Angeliki Psychogiou



Raul Ranne



Courtney Hartzell



Nikolina Đurić



Jenny Nygård



Juliette Legrand

ACA ACCOUNTS 2023, 2022 AND 2021 (EUR, ROUNDED UP)

	2023	2022	2021
Expenditure			
Staff costs	482,704	448,236	452,962
Secretariat running costs/ infrastructure & Equipment	151,687	119,128	122,991
Project expenditure	286,446	72,199	39,656
Travel, meeting & subs.	14,398	10,955	-93
Provision	0	0	0
Total	935,234	650,519	615,516
Income			
Membership Fees	359,261	299,148	243,548
Project Income	582,871	299,148	413,492
Other Income	1,462	588	4,795
Total	943,594	656,714	661,835
Net Result	8,360	6,194	46,319

ACA
ACADEMIC
COOPERATION
ASSOCIATION



Promoting Innovation and Internationalisation

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