Strengthening the capacity for internationalisation

The Council of Flemish Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts (Vlaamse Hogescholenraad) wants to collaborate internationally in education and research domains within European university consortia and further develop and implement their international strategies.

In 2023, the Flemish Government decided to support these ambitions with a subsidy. Thanks to this subsidy, the following activities were carried out:

Strengthening the capacity of the central research services



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The research service was expanded in all thirteen Flemish universities of applied sciences and arts (UASA). In all institutions, people were appointed as the single point of contact (SPOCs) for research groups. This strengthened capacity was aimed at developing or further expanding international networks, increasing participation in international subsidy projects and building up knowledge about internationalisation and transferring it.

Strategic plan for internationalisation of research & innovation (R&I)

The vision for the internationalisation of R&I was developed through participatory processes within the UASA. Some institutions set up internal working groups with the participation of central and decentralised support staff. During the meetings, UASA shared information, knowledge and experiences. Research groups discovered each other’s international activities, often resulting in increased coordination and

collaboration. UASA implemented process optimizations and established or refined internal agreements for researchers planning to submit new project proposals or undertake mobility activities. Some UASA improved their English-language websites or created new English-language web pages, making them more accessible for international partners to discover UASA expertise. Some also made significant efforts to register or join a European University Alliance. In these institutions, an internal committee was established to prepare project proposals for successful submission. All UASA submitted their multi-year strategic plan to the board to strengthen their R&I capacity.

Monitoring the progress of internationalization initiatives

A series of generic indicators has been developed in consultation with all institutions. A dashboard on the indicators was created and implemented in the thirteen UASA. This allows better monitoring and enables institutions to follow up more closely their international activities in R&I and to provide input for the follow-up and optimization of their policies.

Learning network for internationalization of R&I



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The first sessions focused on exchanging ideas, knowledge and experiences regarding the development of the strategic plans. They inspired each other in areas such as mobility, participation in European Universities Alliances and strengthening the capacity of central and decentralized services. In December they organised a learning network with five thematic topics. The Council of Flemish Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts coordinated the project. Despite the fact that the project only ran for one year, it created an important leverage effect to strengthen the internationalization of R&I in a very short time. There were noticeable increases in the number of project proposal partners, the number of submitted project proposals, professionalization, mobility of researchers and participation in the EUI.

Thanks to the subsidy, the organizational capacity for R&I could be increased and there was room to develop a shared vision and strategy for the internationalization of research

and innovation. The necessary foundations for the success of these plans were laid in 2023 and will be further strengthened in the coming years. Today, the UASA are ready to develop international partnerships with greater ambition that contribute to the quality of education and the transfer of knowledge to the regions. And all of this is valuable for European progress.

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