

Annex 4

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Annex 4.1 Academic Exchange and Mobility Working Group (AEM WG)

Focus of Working Group

Taking into consideration the exceptional situation of pandemic as well as the withdrawal of UK from Erasmus+ Programme and its strong impact on mobility, the AEM WG is particularly obliged to revise number of activities to be realized in the upcoming future. Our focus is to prevent students and staff from being discouraged from mobility but at the same time we have to bear in mind the new conditions for implementing this exchange. We will elaborate new form of promoting the mobility and we will discuss available formats of this mobility (including virtual mobility and blended mobility), as well as assuring the maximum possible of safety precautions to all mobile participants. Moreover, we will do our best to maintain the same level of cooperation as previously with our UK partners in the new post-Brexit reality. We should also keep the track of “greener mobility” which can be a great solution especially in times when on one hand the sustainable development is urgent and on the other the prices of flight tickets can raise dramatically due to covid-19. The Eurail offer of promoting travels by trains in combination with the Erasmus+ programme can be the first stimulating step.

A university cannot exist without the continuous movement of scholarly ideas. At the core of academic life, a main facet of this movement is academic mobility. AEM Working Group is focused on international exchange and mobility of students and staff. With a wealth of challenges to respond to, the design and implementation of student and staff mobility require a collective, empathic and imaginative approach by participating institutions. The WG on one hand follows the EU policies, however its members consider them as driving force and try to introduce innovative approaches through their activities. Due to the variety of activities, the group, in order to be more effective, implements them in small focus groups. The main tasks of the AEM are:

- to increase (currently to maintain previously reached) level of academic exchange (students, scholars and administrative staff) amongst Coimbra Group universities;
- to empower the CG members’ capacity to keep collective cooperation with British universities and to share good practices in managing relationships in post-Brexit Europe;
- to exchange experience among member institutions;
- to develop joint projects aimed at improving quality of mobility, assuring safety and security in mobility as well as implementation of new schemes and tools supporting mobility;

- to advise the Coimbra Group Executive Board on possible actions to be taken to influence the development of European educational programmes with mobility components, including virtual and blended mobility.

Recent highlights

The following activities have been successfully completed:

- Contribution to the joint publication of the report “Practices at Coimbra Group Universities in response to the COVID-19 – A Collective Reflection on the Present and Future of Higher Education in Europe”.
- Several discussions with European Commission on the new Erasmus+ Programme for the years 2021-2027
- Discussions on post-Brexit mobility and contribution to discussion on further development of cooperation with UK partners.
- Sharing good practice in new circumstances – new ways of assuring safe and efficient mobility in the crisis period as well as in upcoming years.
- Contribution to “ACA – What’s new in Brussels” yearly conference with the topic: *Expectations for the future* (with regard to mobility and internationalization in general)
- Sharing good practice on the implementation of Erasmus Without Paper. Testing the online Learning Agreement between CG partners.

Current highlights refer to:

- Sharing good practice on student/staff mobility due to prolonging pandemic situation and new Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027.
- Promoting mobility in new circumstances – new ways of assuring safe and efficient mobility in the upcoming years.
- Promoting cooperation with UK partners.
- Sharing good practices and implementation of policies for widening participation in mobility.
- Benefiting from the CG project UNISAFE in better preparation to emergency situations.
- Following the new Erasmus+ project schemes to develop joint activities favoring mobility between CG universities and its partners worldwide.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

- CG Student Exchange Network as a tool for supporting post-Covid and post-Brexit CG student exchange. A large number of the member universities decided to participate in the Coimbra Group Student Exchange Network (SEN) which aims to promote and enhance an inner network exchange at all levels and academic disciplines. We aim at promoting mobilities among CG

partners in order to maintain the exchange quota and quality, as well as prevent the drop due to covid-19 and Brexit. With regard to the current situation, we have to take in consideration new challenges which we are facing. Existing possibilities and problems are discussed during virtual meetings of the AEM.

- The new Erasmus+ Programme for 2021-2027. The Programme offers wide range of opportunities, but also some challenges. We intend to meet again the EC representatives to address all problematic issues. We also share good practice to support each other in implementation of the Programme.
- Implementation of Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) and promotion of “green” mobility.
- Contribution to 2nd CG Covid-19 survey.

Annex 4.2 Development Cooperation Working Group (DC WG)

Focus of Working Group

The global social responsibility of universities requires their active engagement with development issues and challenges. The Coimbra Group aims at increasing such engagements through the pooling of expertise and through the coordination of actions targeted towards an effective response to major cooperation challenges and a fruitful relation with the main development agencies, *in primis* the EU. The academic world plays an important role as promoter of a broad and solid approach to development cooperation, based on the issues of capacity building, the promotion of a global citizenship education and the implementation of a participative approach to research on and for development. The activities of the Working Group Development Cooperation align with global and European policies in the sense that they refer to actual challenges in Development Cooperation, especially concerning the impact of Covid 19 on development and on migration in the Global South.

Three main levels of intervention are identified:

- 1) Internalization of Higher Education to make universities playing a pivotal role in generating and sharing knowledge, ideas, and concepts: Development of joint training courses and education programs (e.g., Summer / Winter Schools) to contribute to the improvements of institutional capacities,
- 2) Sharing knowledge and experience on research for development, cooperation models and evaluation, including a critical review of the actions of the main international donors,
- 3) Investigation on the role of universities as agents of development at the country or regional level, including the co-designing of experiences of higher education fostering ownership and human and institutional capacity building.

Recent highlights

- **Master program in Peace & Conflict Studies:** The Coimbra Group initiative in the field of Peace & Conflict Studies offers a scientific approach to analyse violent and nonviolent behaviors in order to understand better political conflict situations. Students are given the possibility to move between the participating universities by using the EU mobility program in order to achieve specialist knowledge as well as to apperceive different approaches too. Students can thus explore different cultural backgrounds already during the university studies. The Coimbra Group universities taking a part in the initiative on Peace & Conflict Studies benefit also their own links to partner universities in different world's regions and countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Thus, opens diverse possibilities for students for internships and thesis research. The universities participating in the study program are: University of Aarhus, University of Coimbra,

University of Galway, University of Granada, University of Groningen, University of Gottingen, University of Jena, University of Poitiers, and Vilnius University.

- **Winter School on the impact of Covid-19 in Africa:** The four-week online programme took place in February 2021. The concept has been developed by the members of the Coimbra Group Development Cooperation Working Group, under the overall coordination of the University of Würzburg. During this Winter School, over 70 students at Coimbra Group and African universities discussed about impacts, challenges and responses related to Covid-19 and Africa with a number of experts from Coimbra Group and African universities.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

- Joint organization with the University of St Petersburg: The **Third International Summer School on European Multilingualism**, planned for summer 2020, has been suspended. The project on the promotion of Multilingualism, language teaching and learning is postponed until summer 2022 due to the pandemic situation.
- Joint research project with Working Group Heritage on the decolonization of Museums, Cultural Heritage and its intercultural potential for Development Cooperation: The research project on **Colonized Objects and Bodies in Europe: New challenges and new perspectives on the Decolonialization of Cultural Heritage** puts European Museums, Cultural Heritage institutions and Universities with their collections in the spotlight and aim to discuss the following questions: How can Cultural Heritage be decolonized in science, society, politics and institutions in order to avoid ideological extremism? Are there national differences and similarities in Europe? Who are the actors and networks involved in defending the status quo or in decolonizing Cultural Heritage? What are the direct and indirect consequences of unreflect and stereotypical Cultural Heritage in Europe? How can the 'decolonialization of Cultural Heritage' contribute to the field of development cooperation with the African continent? An international conference on the subject is planned for Spring 2022.
- Planned **cooperation with HEI organizations in the Global South** like the Association of African Universities (AAU). The AAU is a network that provides a continental platform for its over 400 member Universities in order to share knowledge, good practices and to shape HEI policies in Africa. A virtual round table is foreseen for the end of 2021.
- Discussion and **draft of a common declaration for the role of universities in development cooperation**. Organization of a **debate at the EU Parliament** on the role of universities as development cooperation actors with relevant representatives of the Development Cooperation Committee of EU Parliament.

Annex 4.3 Doctoral Studies Working Group (DS WG)

Focus of Working Group

Doctoral Studies constitute a key activity and major priority for multi-disciplinary research universities and represent one of the most important contributions of universities to the development of societies, requiring creative and collaborative approaches by universities. Substantial reform of doctoral studies has taken place across Europe over recent years, and the challenges of implementation and consolidation are central to the strategies of universities. The main remit of the working group is on an exchange of information, sharing of best and innovative practice and joint activities of Coimbra Group Universities in the organisation of doctoral studies and of early research careers. In this context, Coimbra Group Universities aim at increasing their participation in European research and education projects. At the same time, the expertise of the working group members is an excellent basis for possible contributions of the Coimbra Group to European policy-making relating to doctoral studies and early research careers.

Recent highlights

- **Effects of the Covid-19 crisis on doctoral education:** For doctoral candidates, the Covid-19 situation is of big concern. Research activities have been impacted (e.g. travelling, fieldwork and placement activities had to be stopped or postponed until further notice). The adaptation to online teaching is time-consuming. Doctoral researchers with caring responsibilities face additional unforeseen challenges in balancing family duties and academic careers. Generally, the longer the pandemic situation lasts, the higher the risk for delays, for funding gaps and for mental health problems. The working group exchanges on the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on doctoral education, e.g. on the organisation of doctoral training, on providing distance-supervision and on how to address challenges which the doctoral researchers are currently facing.
- **Interdisciplinarity in doctoral research:** One of the proposed research principles according to Horizon Europe is to foster cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral innovation. Yet, interdisciplinary research is challenging in multiple respects (e.g. department structures, lacking opportunities to network with other doctoral researchers, possible disadvantages for academic career paths, organisation of supervisory committees, disciplinary reviewing panels at funding agencies and journals etc.). The working group plans to address the challenges of promoting interdisciplinarity in doctoral research and to identify possible solutions

(e.g. by looking at existing interdisciplinary programmes and specific support structures). The next step is setting up a report with findings from a survey on interdisciplinary attitudes.

- **HRS4R Career Framework:** The working group held a workshop on the HR Excellence in Researchers Award in connection with an exchange on career development for doctoral researcher (together with the RSO Working Group).
- **Participation in the Erasmus+ capacity-building project “YEBO!”:** The working group is actively involved in research and education projects with focus on doctoral education. In the past 3 years, it delivered thematic input and expertise to a capacity-building project on the internationalisation of PhD studies in South Africa (Erasmus+ project “YEBO!”). The project officially ends in 2021.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

- **Science Communication:** The past months showed the importance of science communication. Early-stage researchers should know about it and be trained in communicating with a non-specialist audience. One example is the well-established **3MT (3-Minute Thesis) Competition** of the Coimbra Group. In 2017, the DS working group initiated the first Coimbra Group-wide 3MT competition, which has been held annually ever since. It is a research communication competition, which requires doctoral researchers to effectively explain their research to a non-specialist audience in three minutes with only one slide. Within the Coimbra Group, the competition draws a lively picture of the variety and capability of doctoral research at the member universities. The Working Group would like to build on this and look closer at the aims, tools and visibility of outreach activities.
- **Employability of PhDs:** Traditionally, the doctoral training prepares for an academic career path. At the same time, many competencies and skills gained during the PhD phase are relevant for future careers both within and outside academia. In fact, there are some countries where the majority of PhD graduates leaves academia. In order to tackle the issue of doctoral employability systematically, the working groups “Doctoral Studies” and “Employability” want to organise a joint staff training week. The aims will be to exchange on the organisation of career services for PhD candidates at the member universities and to explore specific instruments of support.
- **Supervision training and support:** Both the PhD awarding institutions and the supervisors themselves bear responsibility for ensuring adequate

support. Following workshops on good doctoral supervision, work commences on a publication. The paper collates existing resources from the CG members with the aim of determining a set of universal recommendations on how to support good doctoral supervision as well as highlighting a broad range of promising institutional practices.

- **Quality Assurance and Enhancement:** The aim is to compare doctoral studies evaluation approaches at Coimbra Group member universities. So far, a scoping study has been conducted. The next step is to finalise the publication of the survey findings amended by examples of good practice. This will lead to an exchange of information on QA&E in the field of doctoral education as well as to sharing good and innovative practices.

Annex 4.4 Education Innovation Working Group (EDU WG)

Focus of Working Group

Changes in society and the widening of access to higher education call for innovations in higher education. This Working Group is dedicated to broadening cooperation among Coimbra Group Universities in education innovation in its many different forms and contexts, exchanging knowledge and experiences in the implementation of innovative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Our activities include analysing the opportunities and challenges provided by technologies, carrying out joint educational research projects, organizing seminars and contributing to the production of policy documents on these issues.

Recent highlights

- **Employability in the Curriculum Workshop.** The event was jointly organised with Employability Working Group, and hosted by Durham University. Academic and support staff working in student employability from several Coimbra Group Universities presented various approaches to including, and recognising employability in formal and non-formal educational activities. In addition to fruitful discussions on the topic of employability in the curriculum, participants approached effects of the pandemic on specific activities focused on students' employment prospects.
- **Webinars.** The working group organises webinars which are used to share knowledge and practices about themes and projects related to our field. The WG recently launched a new series of online events looking at "*Digitalization after Vaccination. What will remain in HE teaching and learning?*" (2021/2022 Webinar Series). The forced digital turn during the pandemic will certainly have long-term effects on teaching and learning practices, and the new webinar series addresses sensitive issues revealed in these challenging times. The first webinar, "*Assessing E-Assessments – Experiences from within the Coimbra Group*", attempts to answer questions raised in the process of transition to e-assessment and digital examination during the pandemic.
- **Report on teaching and learning post COVID-19.** The COVID-19 pandemic struck Europe in February 2020, and its impact on higher education has been huge, given that all universities have pivoted to emergency remote teaching. At the initiative of the Coimbra Executive

Board, the report on Coimbra Group Universities' responses to the COVID-19 emergency published in May 2020 is to be followed by a new report capturing developments in a range of aspects central to academic life. Alongside all working groups, the WG prepares the survey questions on teaching, learning and assessment during the pandemic, and will contribute in analysing and reporting data collected from member Universities.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

- **Learning Spaces.** A web resource is being developed about innovative learning spaces with digital technologies and new, flexible learning spaces which allow for a wide array of teaching approaches and student collaboration in Coimbra Group universities.
- **Teaching, learning and staff development:** The working group gathers and exchanges knowledge amongst member universities in relation to innovative practices in the different university contexts and is currently mapping activities related to teaching, learning and staff development, with a view to publishing a comparative report. The survey has been sent out to all members and results will be analysed soon.
- **Good practices in teaching and learning innovation.** The first nine examples of Good Practices from the project of sharing information on innovative approaches to teaching and learning have been published on the CG website. The project intends to facilitate knowledge transfer and foster possible collaborations among member universities. This website will be further enriched in the future, with new examples to be collected in 2021/2022.

Annex 4.5 Employability Working Group (EMP WG)

Focus of Working Group

The labour market is in a state of constant change, new professions arise and new forms of work evolve. Universities must increasingly respond to this change by monitoring their training programs to meet the challenges in society of today. Enhancing students' employability should be one of the core issues of any higher education institution's curriculum. In this context, the collaboration and exchange of experiences within the framework of the Coimbra Group must allow:

- To increase recognition and visibility of employability and Career Services inside member universities, and to support the EB in possible contributions of the CG to European policy-making regarding employability and career guidance.
- To set up projects to improve the organization and efficiency of Career Services and the way in which the services are delivered.
- To initiate actions for improving the way in which our students face the challenge of global labour market insertion of the 21st century.

Recent highlights

- **Career Services in times of Covid19: Challenges, Responses and Best Practices.** Edition of a report on the adaptations that Career Services have had to implement in order to keep being the connector between employers, students and academia during these difficult times generated by the Covid-19. The report has the aims, firstly to provide a series of recommendations and to disseminate good practices. Secondly to give visibility to the Career Services and the EWG. And lastly to offer some inputs to policy makers (in a context marked by the economic crisis and the impact of the pandemic on the labour market, as employability in universities gets even more strategic).

- **Joint Workshop: Employability in the Curriculum**

The event, initially scheduled by the end of March 2020 and postponed due to Covid-19, has been finally scheduled for 15th April 2021. Co-organized by Education and Innovation WG and Employability WG, aims to bring together colleagues from universities across the Coimbra Group to explore the topic of 'Employability in the Curriculum' – a particularly pertinent topic in the current climate where young people's employment prospects have been impacted by the effects of the pandemic. Presentations

delivered will explore approaches to including, and recognising, employability in formal modules and in co-curricular activities.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

- **Future Scenarios** We are aiming to find common ground among members to highlight the importance of Career Services field and particularly employability in many ways challenging times that we are facing. Our idea is to develop visions by combining our knowledge and experience from the viewpoints of career professionals, employers and students. We will be sharing our expertise on future challenges in the Career Services' field and brainstorm some possible scenarios. We expect to be able to present something of this work in 2021 annual meeting.
- **Alumni Mentoring Program** After pilot programme of this new activity happened during winter 2019-2020, a new edition will take place in spring 2021. We chose international-minded alumni from several CG universities to have a series of mentoring webinars to a small group of students interested of and in the future probably capable of working in the same field. After the webinar "Mentoring as a connection between university and alumni" organized in March 2021 in order to share knowledge about how to organize a mentoring program, webinars with mentors and mentees will take place from April 2021.
- **Coimbra Employability Staff Training Week.** The organization of an annual *Staff Training Week* for Career Services staff of member universities aims to allow the staff of Career Services to acquire knowledge or specific know-how from experiences and good practices abroad as well as practical skills relevant to their current job and their professional development. After the first two experiences, Pavia 2016 and Krakow 2018, the third was to take place in Groningen spring 2020. Due to current world situation the event has been postponed to the next 2022. Organized in collaboration with the Doctoral Studies WG, it will deal with employability issues of doctoral students.

Annex 4.6 Heritage Working Group (HER WG)

Focus of Working Group

The Working Group brings together researchers and practitioners working in the area of cultural heritage across the Coimbra Group institutions to:

- Understand better the unique role of heritage and the contribution it can make to the work and culture of Universities and the wider community. With their long history, many universities museums and collections had and have a very close alignment with the evolution of their towns and wider regions.
- Identify where the membership of the Coimbra Group institutions can make a distinctive contribution to the wider discussion of heritage related issues.
- Provide a network for individuals active in the area of cultural heritage at the Coimbra Group universities so they have the opportunity to learn from each other, to develop their thinking and to work on joint projects.

Recent highlights

- **Online Collections platform (<https://www.coimbra-group.eu/collections>).** We have established a new site to host an online database containing information on the collections held by the Coimbra Group institutions. Each institution in the Coimbra Group has been invited to contribute information about their own collections. The site allows researchers to identify related collections held by institutions across Europe and provides an excellent environment for joint working.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us the importance of maintaining a strong digital presence so that our communities can continue to engage with their culture. We are planning to develop the platform further to provide opportunities for institutions to develop shared storytelling and exhibitions online.

- **Survey on the impact of Covid-19 on University Museums:** The Group has gathered information on how university museums have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and how they have adapted their services. The project is being led by Professor Giuliana Tomasella from the University of Padua. The outputs from this project will form part of the wider Coimbra Group report on the impact of Covid-19 on universities.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

- **Conference on Colonized Objects, Würzburg, Spring 2022.** We are organising a conference jointly with colleagues from the Development Cooperation Working Group around the theme of decolonialisation. The aim is to hold the conference in Würzburg Spring 2022, to sharpen our view on cultural heritage from this critical point of view. The context for the conference will be BLM, migration and the place of migrants in culture. There will be an opportunity explore the topic from various national perspectives.
- **Building Bridges: Heritage Scientific Instruments.** The Heritage Working Group is supporting a piece of work being led by Professor Muriel Guedj from the University of Montpellier. The aim of this project is to explore the possibilities of using our collections of historic scientific instruments to support innovative learning and to increase the visibility of cultural heritage of the Coimbra Group universities with the help of Digital technologies. The intention is to link this work and its outputs with the Heritage Group online platform.

Annex 4.7 Latin America Working Group (LA WG)

Focus of Working Group

The Latin America Working Group aims to promote a space for interaction between Latin American Universities and Universities in the Coimbra Group, through which to ensure collaborative action takes place. Research, policy development and exchange should be rooted in understanding local and national priorities as well as strengths and benefits of collaboration in both regions, in order to implement long-term partnership. One of our key priorities has been to reinforce and develop cooperation with networks in Latin America, such as UDUAL, AUGM and CGBU, with an approach that is based on developing trust through activities promoting knowledge exchange and research opportunities. These include: research round tables, leading to joint research proposals; jointly developed capacity building programmes around themes of mutual interest; mobility and exchange opportunities; as well as joint activities aimed to generate interaction at postgraduate level. The challenges provided by the current Covid-19 pandemic, have slowed process and actions on some fronts, however, the LA WG has remained active with online meetings and concentrated efforts towards a specific selection of activities.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

- Early in 2020, the LA WG submitted a joint proposal to ERASMUS+ KA2 Cooperation for Innovation and the exchange of good practices: Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education. The project, titled *INCAS, Instruments to Connect Academia to Society*, was coordinated by Università degli Studi di Pavia. Although this proposal was not successful, it has contributed to an ongoing collaboration with AUGM in the identification of concrete joint proposals for exchange, such as seminars, research-focused events and virtual participation in courses through the “**Virtual Teaching Fellowship**” proposal developed with the University of Cuyo in Argentina (see further details below).
- The collaboration with AUGM has progressed over the past year through a number of meetings and workshops. University of Pavia is leading the organisation of a small number of activities related with the **INCAS proposal** to be implemented in the forthcoming months.

- A review of **research interests** across the group is being carried out together with a database with information from each member academic institution. Over the next few months, the group will complete the data collection and carry out an analysis of opportunities for collaboration around the strengths of the partner universities.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

- A proposal for collaboration has been developed with University of Cuyo in Argentina, based on call to lecturers to participate in a collaboration and exchange programme around teaching activities, that will contribute to the internationalisation of the participating University's curriculums. The objective is to generate knowledge exchange and global interaction through **curriculum internationalisation** within a structured collaboration programme that allows the exchange of teaching practice in the design, delivery, practical work and evaluation of course material. This proposal is currently under review for implementation in 2021-22.
- The LAWG has continued collaboration around thematic clusters identified over the past year, as areas of common interest for developing research, knowledge exchange and mobility projects. Around these, we are finalising the review of a joint publication which showcases perspectives around **'Why Latin America matters?'**, which are the result of academic research and knowledge led by members of the LAWG and associated partners. The region is often not viewed as a priority, in terms of major world challenges, such as climate change, environmental risk, migration or conflict resolution, and it risks becoming a blind spot in these global debates. Specific attention in this publication is given to Covid-19 challenges, which have had an incremental impact on regional problematics such as social and economic inequalities, access to basic services, exposure to environmental risks, etc. The proposed publication received nearly 30 essay submissions, which were reviewed by a small editorial committee and the selected papers are undergoing final revisions. The LAWG expects to complete the publication by our meeting in June 2021.
- The LAWG has worked on the development of a new edition of the **Be_a_Doc** programme led by Coimbra University, aimed to open up the existing platform to a wider number of participants in Brazil and beyond in Latin America.

- The LAWG will continue to explore the development of a **Scholarship Programme for Latin America** (in cooperation with other CG WGs), the aim is for a successful exchange programme, offering opportunities to exchange ideas with researchers from Latin American universities, beyond those institutions that are usually involved in collaboration. This work is exploring the conceptualisation and planning of open and inclusive mobility opportunities with the following principles:
 - Broader collaboration programmes that offer a wide range of opportunities whilst remaining sustainable in light of current challenges.
 - Better monitoring mechanisms listening to and proactively responding to student and staff feedback.
 - Diversification of mobility options to include short and long-term mobility programmes for a range of activities, from field trips and summer volunteering to semester internships, PGR, PhD researcher mobility and full year study abroad. Exploring virtual mobility as an opportunity.
 - Increase access, enhance inclusion and support for disadvantaged groups
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Annex 4.8 Life Sciences Working Group

Focus of Working Group

Proposed actions aim at increasing the excellence and competitiveness of our Universities in the context of the Life Sciences, considering the whole field of academic engagement, i.e., teaching, research and transfer, all understood in their widest context. The focus of the WG is clearly oriented towards the development of common strategies of teaching and research. Master programs are considered of utmost importance for high level education and development of skills for future high level bioscientists as well the initial step for the development of bioscience research and the promotion of vocations in the bioscience area. Several master program projects have been identified of common interest and two major fields to focus on for common efforts including Cancer Biology, Infection Biology. In order to harmonize the entry level to the master programs, practical research training courses would be helpful.

Recent highlights

Coimbra Group Cancer Biology: Project coordinated by the University of Salamanca: The universities of Montpellier (France), Barcelona (Spain), Koln (Cologne, Germany), Wurzburg (Germany), Turku and Abo Akademi (Finland), Vilnius (Lithuania), Coimbra, Pavia, Tartu and Salamanca (Spain) are involved.

Informations on courses that are open for incoming students have been collected and are online at the CGMLS page (<https://www.coimbra-group.eu/coimbra-group-life-sciences-masters-programs-master-in-cancer-biology/>). More than 160 research teams offer internships to master students within the Coimbra Group network.

Coimbra Group Infection Biology: Project coordinated by the University of Montpellier. The universities of Montpellier, Göttingen, Barcelona, Vilnius, Salamanca and Würzburg are involved.

Study programs have been collected and compared in order to improve the visibility of courses for exchange students at partner universities. The harmonization of Master programs in the Life Sciences are based on two major pillars: (i) the identification of complementary research efforts that may help to further focus student's choice of topics, (ii) the better harmonization at the master entry level to further increase the overall quality and competitiveness within the master program platforms.

Student's Research Internship's: A program for short duration internships for undergraduate students in Life Sciences is on discussion further to a proposal from students from the University of KU Leuven.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

In scientific domains, i.e. Infection Biology and Cancer Biology, CG LSWG members agree to intensify efforts to identify and match powerful research teams who are working on the same or complementary issues in order to facilitate cooperation between them and the establishment of competitive projects. This will also provide a richer training of our students, mainly at the Master's and Doctoral levels via actions aimed at enhancing mobility among research teams of excellence. Similar projects are also proposed to be coordinated by the University of Pavia on Heritable/Genetic diseases and biological disorders.

CG Online lectures intend to exchange and further develop common CG identity. These and other efforts will be undertaken to increase CG visibility within the universities. A lecture series on Mechanisms of Human Disease/Aging or on Regulation on Medicine and Health Products might be anticipated in the forthcoming year. Set up of a MedChem Winter School is also proposed for 2022 by the University of Montpellier

Further to the proposal from KU Leuven Life Sciences Undergraduate students, next step is how to improve the organisation to facilitate the student's access to such kind of internships.

The projects will be further discussed during the next WG meetings.

Annex 4.9 Research Support Officers Working Group (RSO WG)

Focus of Working Group

Research is an integral priority enshrined within the institutional strategies of each member of the Coimbra Group. Together with education and innovation, research is critical to addressing, not only national and European challenges, but global challenges also. By its very nature, research is a crosscutting collaborative activity and the Coimbra Group provides a unique and valuable forum to its Members to influence European research and innovation policy and to share and develop best practice in research support through the mutual exchange of ideas and experience. The Coimbra Group Research Support Officers Group brings together representatives from the Research Offices of each of the Member Universities. Since its establishment in 2015, the membership of the Research Support Officers Group has grown and now comprises 60 members from across the Network. The core areas of activity of the Research Support Officers Working Group are: 1. Research Advocacy 2. Research Policy 3. Training for Research Support Officers 4. Sharing of Best Practice of Research Management and Research Support.

Recent highlights

1- As part of Coimbra Group report, work to assess the impact of Covid-19 and the longer-term living with Covid on research and researcher productivity As part of our contribution to the Covid survey and report on the impact of Covid, we gathered information at how research in our universities is contributing at the frontline in the global effort against Covid. We assessed the impact of restrictions on researchers, on people and policy, on our research support offices and how we work and on our institutions. Our findings underscore the importance of continued investment in fundamental research which was very much leveraged in the research on Covid and showed a particular detrimental impact on researcher productivity, with confounded gender and inequality issues, and a more adverse effect on early career researchers. Furthermore, our report reinforced a recognition of the critical role of Universities in addressing global challenges and contributing to economic activity, and the importance of open science, sustained investment in human capital and initiatives aimed at addressing inequalities. We presented the findings of our report to the EC's Director for Research & Innovation Outreach, Ms Anna Panagopoulou in June 2020 and its recommendations were taken into consideration in subsequent policy recommendations.

2- Research as a profession Building on the findings of an adverse impact of Covid-19 restriction measures on researchers, and in particular, on early-career stage researchers, the Research Support Officers Working Group hosted a workshop with the Doctoral Studies Group in December 2020 to reflect on and explore the challenges linked to strengthening research careers and producing a more sustainable researcher pipeline with greater opportunities for diversification and promotion.

The Workshop explored the challenges to researcher career development at an ecosystem and individual level. Obtaining a PhD does not necessarily translate to a job in academia and the over- Coimbra Group Research Support Officer Group – Workplan Summary April 2021 arching obstacle is research is not regarded as a profession. We talked about how ‘many researchers assume they will become academics; they have no real career plan and do not realise there are other options’. Ironically, many researchers perceive leaving academia as a stigmatised ‘plan B’.

To facilitate this culture change, the resulting recommendations are to:

- Empower researchers from the outset of their research careers to take ownership of their own professional development by creating a supportive and inclusive environment for development that starts at the PhD stage and continues right through the academic pipeline.
- Ensure researchers learn to understand how to assess their skills and competencies and how to signal their strengths to the labour market.
- Provide training to PIs in how to support the career development of their researchers.
- Build employer, and particularly industry, understanding/appreciation of the broad skills and competencies of researchers, e.g., problem-solving skills, and replace a perception by some employers that researcher skills are too specific.
- Engage in foresight/horizon planning exercises with industry to anticipate labour and skills needs and trends so as to embed industry-relevant competencies in researcher training and career development programmes
- Implement a holistic development programme in PhD programmes and for post-doctoral researchers/early-career stage researchers. This should include the provision of training in leadership skills, management skills, entrepreneurial skills, and skills for lifelong continuing professional development such that researchers are equally prepared for jobs and leadership roles in academia and industry.
- Exchange examples of best practice of enabling and supporting researcher career development across institutions.

The refreshed European Research Area will support a seed change around the inaccurate perception that a PhD prepares you for an academic career only. The refreshed ERA commits, among other actions, to deliver a toolbox of measures to support researchers' careers, through a mobility scheme, trainings and more, in order to make Europe a talent magnet. This will include a European Framework for research careers reinforced by a revamped Charter and Code, aimed at nourishing talent, brain circulation, inter-sectoral mobility and widening to change how researchers are perceived and improve the overall attractiveness of research profession and careers. It is about improving visibility and building awareness of research as a job to ensure that research as a profession is recognised and valued, not just by academia, but also by industry. The vision is to enable a clear, diverse and achievable Plan A career for researchers, which raises an additional question which requires further consideration by all stakeholders. Namely, addressing the prevailing 'gap of interests' between researchers themselves, supervisors/PIs, universities, employers and policy makers.

3- Election of new Chair of the Working Group Dr Ann Ryan's term of chair of the working group concluded in March 2021. Dr Bevin McGeever was elected Chair of the Working Group on 26th March 2021.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

- Continue dialogue with Graduate Studies Working Group – engage policy makers 'research as a profession'
 - Round 2 survey, analysis and report on impact of continued Covid-related restrictions on research and innovation, researcher productivity, researcher careers and research support offices working practices Coimbra Group Research Support Officer Group – Workplan Summary April 2021
 - Harness synergies with other Coimbra Group Working Groups
 - Continue to share best practice on evolving policy landscape
 - Invitation to present to EARMA 2021 on R&I Covid Report (linked to Working Group objective to increase collaboration with other networks)
 - Refresh Working Group 3-year Work Plan (linked to appointment of new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Working Group) (timeframe June-Sept 2021).
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Annex 4.10 Social Science and Humanities Working Group (SSH WG)

Focus of Working Group

The Coimbra Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) Working Group (WG) aims to strengthen and promote the research possibilities of the member universities. WG will organize seminars and conferences on implications for multidisciplinary SSH research projects within Coimbra universities. New digitized data, current demographic and cultural trends in Europe, and increased research possibilities for the SSH will be in key focus. On the basis of seminars and conferences, WG is hoping to prepare successful research proposals for the Horizon 2020 and beyond, and find success in other appropriate international funding calls. Multidisciplinary requirements of the EU calls have previously been found problematic among SSH scholars. WG will pay attention to this issue by stressing a multidisciplinary research orientation and collaborative nature of the SSH. The WG will focus on the tasks and activities related to 1) research, 2) education and employability, and 3) outreach and visibility.

Recent highlights

- Focus on **getting to know better the interests and activities of the members of the WG and their institutions**, beneficiary both for research and cooperation between the member universities.
- Sharing of a **one-pager about Coimbra SSH WG for internal use by the member universities**.
- **Information collected on at the member universities on COVID19-related SSH research projects**, aim at deepening collaboration on research funding and joint-publications.
- Interdisciplinary conference **Machine Learning applications in the Social Sciences and the Humanities**, October 17 to 18, 2019, Würzburg, Germany.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

- An open interdisciplinary conference **Wall, Laws and Migration – Past and Present to be held online** May 27 to 29, 2021.

- **Organizing future conferences** in 2021/2022 on **Digital Data and Machine Learning**, as well as on the **Changing Role of SSH and COVID19 Pandemic**.
 - Continuous work on **funding proposals**, in connection to meetings and conferences, as well as on **increasing teacher mobility** between Coimbra member universities.
 - Preparation of **high-quality publications/proceedings** from the previous Coimbra SSH conferences.
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Annex 4.11 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Working Group (STEM WG)

Focus of Working Group

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (in this established acronym-friendly order) have benefited, over the centuries and still today, from fundamental contributions of scholars from universities which are now members of the Coimbra Group. STEM remains a major factor of modernization and progress for society at large. As research-intensive universities, the members of the Coimbra Group are firmly committed to and constantly develop and expand their research and education in STEM, also including societal outreach related to these fields.

The STEM Working Group promotes and supports the cooperation among Coimbra Group universities in STEM related fields in order to coordinate or set up highly competitive study programmes and research, in particular in the framework of Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe and Erasmus+/SEMP, to contribute to high-level policy seminars, schools, and joint events, to disseminate STEM research among wider audiences, to share good practices, especially for attracting young people and in particular girls, to STEM fields, to promote interdisciplinary research, etc.

The members of the STEM Working Group have experience in positions of responsibility within educational and research programmes in STEM as well as significant expertise in STEM research, education, dissemination and outreach.

Recent highlights

- **STEM WG meetings**, on-line meetings: December 16th, 2020; January 21st; 2021.

Ongoing/forthcoming activities:

- Collection of **good practices in attracting young people to STEM fields**
- **Coimbra Group - STEM WG - Survey:** Teaching in STEM during the Covid-19 Crisis
- Promotion of **academic cooperation in STEM programmes**
- **Women in STEM:** Student/young researcher perception of women in STEM
- **STEM WG meeting and seminar**, On the scientific heritage of the Coimbra Group Universities, Louvain-la-Neuve, (Belgium), October 22nd-23rd 2021