



## **ENHANCE, the newly born university technology alliance seeks to lead education in the European Community**

Virtual kick off event for a new generation of European University Alliances

ENHANCE is an alliance of seven leading European universities with a focus on science and engineering that was born in order to improve European education. The ENHANCE consortium, under the umbrella of the European Commission within the framework of the Erasmus + funding program, aims to create a new type of close collaboration networks, which through physical and virtual mobility of students and staff, develop innovative ways of learning and a close commitment to society at all levels.

ENHANCE is made up of the universities: Technische Universität Berlin as coordinator, Warsaw University of Technology, Politecnico di Milano, RWTH Aachen University, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Chalmers University of Technology and the Polytechnic University of Valencia.

On October 28, the European Commission signed the Grant agreement for the ENHANCE alliance that aims to create a new type of close European networks, allowing the redefinition of education with a European stamp, through innovative ways of learning and maintaining a close commitment to society at all levels.

The first major milestone of this European alliance occurred this Wednesday, November 4, when the rectors of the European universities held the first joint online meeting of heads of higher education to learn about best practices and future prospects for develop by the European Community.

ENHANCE promotes a responsible social transformation by enhancing a solid alliance of European technological universities, empowering people to develop and use science and technology for the benefit of society and turn global challenges into opportunities, a challenge which has become even more prominent in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to develop this objective, those responsible for the event are clear that fundamental changes must take place in European higher education. Some of the proposals thrown on the table seek the automatic recognition of qualifications, common agreements to guarantee the quality of education and involve more and more European universities.

Jointly with society, students and policy makers ENHANCE wants to identify innovative solutions to the usual legal, financial and administrative barriers to European cooperation. "Avoid complex structures and organizations, keep it simple and take a step-by-step approach", is the main conclusion.

For more information: [enhance@upv.es](mailto:enhance@upv.es)

## **Strengthening the Alliance / Enhancing the alliance**

13<sup>th</sup> January 2020

The first meeting of ENHANCE's Board of Directors took place this past Monday, January 11, with the participation of the alliance Presidents and representatives: Anne Borg (NTNU), Gabriela Maciejewska and Marco Guerini (students' representatives) and Krzysztof Zaremba (Warsaw University of Technology), Francisco Mora Más (Universitat Politècnica de València), Ute Habel (RWTH Aachen University), Christian Thomsen and Angela Ittel (TU Berlin), Marco Guerini and Ferruccio Resta (Politecnico di Milano) and Stefan Bengtsson (Chalmers University of Technology).

As a result of the meeting, it's been elected Anne Borg as Chair and Christian Thomsen as vice-chair of the ENHANCE's Board of Directors. In the same way, the Charter of Rules -management rules-, the Governance Structure and the different WPs teams have been approved according to the proposal sent to the European Commission for the Enhance alliance.

In addition to presenting the first results of the WPs, an official kick-off session has also been approved for the week of 22 March under the title "Launching the Future" where the European Universities project will be analyzed in the post-COVID context. In this virtual event there will be a dialogue on issues such as post-COVID education, post-COVID mobility and the climate crisis, and a series of collaborative international relations will be generated around research on different related topics.

Thus, after this event, the main questions regarding the governmental and structural organization of the Enhance alliance have been ratified and the guidelines of the alliance's events and actions that will begin in March with the workshop "Launching the Future" have been set out.

### // ABSTRACT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

After the first meeting of the Board of Directors, the deans and representatives of the partner universities have approved the governmental structure and main management issues of the ENHANCE alliance.

The Board have also given the green light to the kick-off session in March, which will go about a workshop entitled "Launching the Future". The online event will analyze the European Universities project in the post-COVID context.

## **Seven universities are involved alongside with the continent's leading universities of technology to discuss the future of higher education in Europe**

- Representatives of the government teams and the internationalisation, management and student offices of the universities participating in the ENHANCE project will meet at the UPV (Spain) from Tuesday 19 October, until Friday 22 October.
- This is the first ENHANCE in-person meeting. The partners have chosen the UPV as its venue because of the Valencian institution's strategic commitment to internationalisation and strong support to this project, which is key to the construction of the European Education Area in 2025.

Representatives of the internationalisation, management and student offices of the main European universities of technology join this week at València. The meeting will take place within the framework of the action "ENHANCE goes to the UPV", which will be held at the Vera Campus from Tuesday 19th October, until Friday 22nd October.

The ENHANCE alliance was launched in 2020, aiming to develop the concept of a joint European campus, free of physical, administrative or educational barriers, where students, faculty and staff can move freely. The Technical University of Berlin, the Warsaw University of Technology, the Technical University of Aachen (RWTH Aachen), the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, the Chalmers University of Technology, and the Polytechnic University of Milan are the UPV's partners in this project.

All of them will participate in the ENHANCE Week, which will make the UPV the main forum for debate on the future of Higher Education in Europe for four days. This is the first face-to-face event of the ENHANCE project, and the partners have chosen the UPV as its venue because of the Valencian institution's strategic commitment to internationalisation and its strong support to this alliance, which is key to the construction of the European Education Area in 2025.

"This meeting will allow us to delve into the challenges facing higher education, and how to address them through ENHANCE. The European Union is committed to this type of partnership, creating a joint campus for all the partners. And this implies a change of vision, of paradigm and of future both for the particular institutions and for the whole of the European Higher Education Area", emphasises the UPV Vice-Rector for Internationalisation and Communication, José F. Monserrat.

Nuria Llobregat, who is the director of the Office of Internationalisation and the person in charge of this project at the UPV, explains that "during this meeting, we will talk about the main challenges that we face and how to face them. Particularly, we will discuss the degrees that will be taught

jointly, and what this entails at a legislative level; the educational strategy to be agreed between the seven rectors; the identification of the training needs of the universities' staff so that they can work in the framework of this alliance; the mobility of students, teachers and staff; and, above all, the need -which is essential for real, effective internationalisation- for a common language of communication, English, among these six countries, which do not have it as their mother tongue."

### **Training programme**

During this week, there will also be an extensive training programme that will focus on areas such as innovation, internationalisation, communication and management, which are key to responding to the challenges facing higher education in general, and ENHANCE in particular. At the end of the week, an ENHANCE Escape Room will be held, allowing participants to put into practice the ideas, knowledge and skills that they will have acquired.

### **New partnerships**

Throughout the week, relationships between the participating universities and representatives of projects that are strategic for ENHANCE will also be strengthened. Thus, the week is expected to serve as preparation for the participation of the Universitat Politècnica de València representing the Enhance Alliance, in an event to be held at Glasgow Caledonian University during the Glasgow COP 26 Climate Summit in November. ENHANCE will offer to provide training for employability skills that are key to building a more sustainable society. This collaboration comes as a result of the UPV's participation in the EU funded Sustainable Fashion and Employability Skills (SFES) project (<https://sfes.eu/>).

Likewise, representatives of the ENHANCE project will meet with the organisers of World Design Capital València 2022 (<https://www.wdcValencia2022.com>) to jointly organise training activities aiming to improve the quality, the social usefulness and the environmental impact of products.

26th of may, 2022

## **Six innovative projects on diversity and artificial intelligence are the winners of the ENHANCE Challenge**

- **This competition is part of the Higher Education Innovator program of the ENHANCE Alliance, which is made up of seven universities, including the UPV, that promote the creation of a joint European campus.**
- **The challenges of the “ENHANCE Challenge” promoted the diversity and inclusion of higher education students and the use of artificial intelligence in university administration.**

Six work teams from the universities that make up the ENHANCE Alliance, have been awarded in the ENHANCE Challenge, an innovative ideas incubator competition held on the Vera campus for two days. The winning proposals have received €35,000 each in funding for their subsequent development and start-up.

The two challenges proposed by this incubator that is part of the Alliance's Higher Education Innovator program, focused on promoting diversity and inclusion among higher education students and the use of artificial intelligence in university administration.

In relation to the two topics raised, nine work teams from the different universities that make up the ENHANCE Alliance presented their projects to a jury that considered, among other issues, innovation and the viability of implementing the initiatives. Finally, three teams per topic have achieved the economic reward. In addition, their ideas will be incubated for a year at the UPV and the NTNU in Norway and later integrated into the Alliance.



The main objective of the ENHANCE Challenge has been to select the six most disruptive ideas resulting from the ten groups formed by members of various universities of the Alliance, made up of both academic and administrative staff and students, to advance the development of the European Higher Education Area. In addition to funding from the ERASMUS+ programme, the incubator for the Higher Education Innovator program is sponsored by Sensedia, BRAVE M&T and the Chair of Digital Divide and Functional Diversity of the UPV.

## WINNERS OF THE TWO CHALLENGES

Three teams were declared the winners for the first of the topics raised by the ideas incubator that promotes diversity and inclusion among students. One of the groups is made up of students and academic staff from the UPV, the Warsaw University of Technology (WUT) and the Technische Universität Berlin (TUB). Their project aims to promote diversity and fight against discrimination through a point of contact for incidents, even those of low impact and the collection of quantifiable and real data.

Another of the work teams on this subject has won the award with a proposal for a tool that uses physical, measurable sensory and cognitive indicators to improve spaces in universities. The group is made up of students and academic staff from POLIMI and TUB.

Finally, the third of the groups that has achieved recognition in this challenge is made up of students and academic staff from the UPV and WUT. Their idea is based on the connection between student projects from all universities with real users that have reduced mobility or other disabilities.

As for the second of the challenges, the use of artificial intelligence in university administration, three groups have also won the award.

One of the winners is made up of students and staff from POLIMI and Warsaw WUT, who have based their work on a sensor network that provides information for analysis, thus optimizing university spaces and thus creating a more welcoming place to study and work



Furthermore, with an idea related to the improvement of air quality through an awareness platform, a POLIMI working group has obtained funding of €35,000 to develop their project.

Finally, another working group has been awarded with an idea that aims to resolve the difficulties in the admission process at universities, turning them into more inclusive spaces and with a greater impact on society. This team is made up of students and academic staff from POLIMI, WUT and the UPV.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR INNOVATION

The closing ceremony and awards ceremony for the ENHANCE Challenge was held at the Faculty of Business Administration and Management on the Vera campus of the UPV. It was attended by the Secretary General of the ENHANCE Alliance, Naveed Syed, the UPV professor and coordinator of the ENHANCE Challenge, Elena de la Poza, the director of the Area of Internationalisation and Core Officer of the UPV, Nuria Llobregat, the Vice-rector of Internationalisation and Communication, José F. Monserrat del Río and the Regional Director of the Department of Innovation, Universities, Science and Digital Society in Valencia, Silvia Rueda Pascual.

In his speech, the Vice-rector for Internationalization and Communication of the UPV, José F. Monserrat del Río, congratulated the students and staff of the different participating universities for their "effort" in the process of developing the ideas presented and remarked that the ENHANCE Challenge is a "great example to build the higher education that we want and that our students deserve".

For her part, the regional director has indicated that the Department of Innovation, Universities, Science and Digital Society lends "all its support" to this type of university alliance and innovation centers such as the ENHANCE Challenge held at the UPV.

## **ABOUT the ENHANCE Alliance**

The ENHANCE Alliance was founded in 2019 with the aim to develop one joint European campus, free of physical, administrative, or educational barriers, where students, faculty and staff can move freely to experience the European Education Area. The mission of ENHANCE is to drive responsible societal transformation and to promote the development and utilisation of science and technology - for the benefit of society. ENHANCE is part of the ERASMUS+ programme European



University Initiative. The Alliance brings together seven member universities: the Technische Universität Berlin (TU Berlin), as the Coordinator, the Warsaw University of Technology (WUT), the RWTH Aachen University (RWTH Aachen), the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), the Chalmers University of Technology, the Polytechnic University of Milan (Polimi), and the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV).





## **ENHANCE ALLIANCE PARTNERS WITH FALLING WALLS LAB WARSAW AND CALLS FOR STUDENTS TO SHARE THEIR MOST INNOVATIVE IDEAS TO TACKLE THE WORLDS MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS**

ENHANCE Alliance invites all university students and early-career researchers to participate in the Falling Walls Lab Warsaw, the qualifier for the grand Falling Walls Lab Finale in Berlin. The Falling Walls Lab is a major global interdisciplinary pitch competition that rewards the most innovative ideas.

The winning ideas in this competition are disruptive proposals with great potential to break down barriers and tear down walls. That is why every year, students, PhD candidates, scientists, start-up founders, and innovators from all over the world give their best to convince the jury that their ideas can tackle challenges.

The Falling Wall Lab brings together renowned academic institutions from more than 60 countries and is supported by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany and the German Academic Exchange Service.

The ENHANCE Alliance is partner of the Falling Walls Lab Warsaw and supports its call for applications and the execution of the event. If you want to present your project for the Warsaw stage, you have **until 30 June to submit your ideas**. Then, for 3 minutes, you will have the opportunity to present your solutions to grand challenges in front of a high-calibre and interdisciplinary jury.

The winners of the final in Berlin will take part in an exclusive extended programme that includes an introductory session and networking dinner, expert workshops on a broad range of topics such as career development, entrepreneurial skills, and academic publishing, and events hosted by prestigious German research organisations.

From the ENHANCE Alliance, we encourage everyone to apply for the qualifier in Warsaw that can take you to the grand finale in Berlin.

Sign up on this link: <https://fallingwallslab.pl/>

## **ENHANCE ALLIANCE INSPIRES GIRLS' TO CHOOSE CAREER IN STEM WITH INTERNATIONAL IDEA COMPETITION**

One of the significant challenges in education at present is women's involvement in studies related to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). There is a gender gap, an invisible wall that is difficult to overcome in many cases. The result of this reality is most evident when students reach university, but the process of preferring science and technology-related careers starts at a younger age.

Therefore, awareness-raising work to bring STEM to future female university students must start early. The aim is to empower and convince them that they can study and then work in a STEM related field. Why is it an area of action primarily occupied by men? Why can't I work here too? These are the questions they have to ask themselves and thus overcome social prejudices.

For this purpose, The ENHANCE Alliance organised the ENHANCE Girls in STEM competition, which took place on 7-8 June 2022 in the context of the Women in Tech Summit - Europe's largest event for women in IT, technology and science, hosted in Warsaw, Poland.

Thirteen girls, aged between 16 and 19, took part in the finals: 5 students from Poland, four from Italy, two from Spain, and two from Sweden.

Inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the participants were asked to present their ideas on how to solve local environmental problems that may have a global dimension, such as overconsumption of natural resources or climate change.

Finally, the jury selected three winners based on the quality of their proposal, the innovation and technologies used, its feasibility and the quality of presentation.

First place was won by Matilde Dugoni from Italy. Matilde proposed the "Saving drops" idea. Her solution is a system made up of a water pressure sensor and an application providing data on water consumption during selected household activities. Maigualida Benitez Rondon from Spain took second place for her idea of "STEG" glasses, which can make everyday activities easier for people with eyesight problems. The glasses with built-in sensors, a GPS system, voice assistant application and powered by solar energy, can be helpful in daily situations. Karolina Kruss from Poland won third place for the "Warsaw Roofpark project" aimed at creating green space on flat residential roofs, which photovoltaic panels could power. The idea could solve the problem of overheated buildings.

The prizes consist of a laptop, two Interrail tickets and an all-expenses-paid visit to any of the seven member universities of the Enhance Alliance.

Congratulations to all the winners and we hope that this competition has served as a starting point for all participants to consider a future in STEM. The ENHANCE Alliance has arranged this competition in its work to promote diversity and gender equality at the university and in society.

Further information: <https://www.girls.enhance.pw.edu.pl/>



## **THREE YOUNG GIRLS WITH INNOVATIVE IDEAS TO TACKLE A LOCAL PROBLEM WON THE ENHANCE GIRLS IN STEM COMPETITION**

Three female high school students from Poland, Italy, and Spain won the Enhance Girls in STEM competition in Warsaw between June 7 and 8, an event arranged by the ENHANCE Alliance and the International Cooperation of the Warsaw University of Technology (WUT), during the *Women in Tech Summit 2022* conference - Europe's largest event for women in technology and IT.

The jury selected three final winners based on the quality of the proposal, the innovation and technologies used, its feasibility and the quality of the presentation:

The first position in the contest was achieved by Matilde Dugoni from Italy, with a project called "Saving drop" that helps save water in daily life. Maigualida Benítez Rondón, from Spain, reached the second position with her idea "STEG". It is a wearable glass that helps blind people with their daily life. Finally, the third place went to Karolina Kruss from Poland with her project "Rooftop park Warsaw" within the Sustainable Cities topic.

The final phase of the "Enhance Girls in STEM" competition brought together 13 European girls aged 16-19 who submitted social and environmental projects based on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), to encourage greater integration of women in science degrees at university level. Five of them were students from Poland, 4 students from Italy, 2 students from Spain and 2 students from Sweden.

The students who got the final presented an initial problem located in their local environment and proposed a solution in which the application of STEM was fundamental to its development.

In addition, the ideas that reached the final focused on offering a solution based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically on the points related to sustainable cities and climate action.

The prizes consisted of a laptop, two Interrail tickets and an all-expenses-paid visit to any of the seven European universities that make up the ENHANCE Alliance.

In the context of the work of the ENHANCE Alliance, equal opportunities and the promotion of sustainable development are two of the central axes. In this line, the "Enhance Girls in STEM" competition combines the two principles with the promotion of responsible engineering, merging traditional engineering topics with social and environmental issues.

The ENHANCE Alliance was set up to develop one joint European campus, free of physical, administrative, or educational barriers, where students, faculty, and staff can move freely to experience the European Education Area. The mission of ENHANCE is to drive responsible societal transformation and promote the development and utilisation of science and technology - for the benefit of society. ENHANCE is part of the ERASMUS+ programme European University Initiative. The Alliance brings together seven member universities: the Technische Universität Berlin (TUB), as the Coordinator, the Warsaw University of Technology (WUT), the RWTH Aachen University (RWTH), the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), the Chalmers University of Technology, Politecnico di Milano (POLIMI), and the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV).

## **STEFAN BENGTTSSON, MEMBER OF THE ENHANCE ALLIANCE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS HAS BEEN APPOINTED ENVOY TO THE SWEDISH PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL**

Stefan Bengtsson will carry out his work between January and June 2023, within the framework of the Swedish Presidency, to which he will advise and support its policies.

Since August 2015, he has served as President and CEO of Chalmers University of Technology, and has previously served as Vice Chancellor at Malmö University (2011-2015). At present, he is also a member of the ENHANCE Board of Directors.

Sweden concludes the trio-presidency which was started by France in the first half of 2022 and followed by the Czech Republic in the second half. Stefan Bengtsson's appointment will follow that of the current envoy, Vojtěch Petráček (Rector of Czech Technical University in Prague) and his predecessor Christian Lermignaux (President of ParisTech).