An initiative of the European Commission



European Higher Education Interoperability Framework: Implementation Resources

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The European Digital Education Hub (EDEH) is an online community for practitioners from all sectors of education and training aiming to contribute to improving digital education in Europe. To achieve this goal, EDEH is not only a place for exchange and discussions but also offers a variety of different events and activities. These activities included a dedicated workgroup and a series of squads on higher education interoperability. This document is part of the results of these specific EDEH activities.

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Experts in the field of Higher Education (HE) have set out to create a more interconnected, efficient, and inclusive European higher education landscape. They have developed the European HE Interoperability Framework to achieve this. It follows an open, stakeholder-driven approach that fosters collaboration in and beyond European University alliances (EU-As).

This document presents resources to guide EU-As in improving interoperability within their alliance.[1] They address priority use cases identified by the interoperability working group in the European Digital Education Hub (EDEH).

The hands-on materials were co-developed with the community of experts through interactive formats, including the Design Thinking approach and feedback webinars. The resources offer a modular and flexible kit with elements that can be adapted and shaped at the level of HEIs and alliances to fit their individual realities and needs. As such, the resources are not prescriptive but can provide guidance to a certain extent. Furthermore, the resources include a range of different types, such as a process guide, stakeholder management resources, communications product, and workshop package. Although they are designed for specific use cases, most formats can be used for and adapted to other cases too.

At the outset, the **Alliance Journey of Collaboration** provides the overall picture. The journey map offers guidance and structure to help young alliances set up their organisation and understand what collaboration within an alliance requires. This resource and the outlined pathway also support more mature and established alliances that are already on their interoperability path. Their experience may differ from the Alliance Journey - they may have handled things differently. The Journey map can still serve as a reflection resource. It can help these alliances identify their position from a broader perspective, clarify their needs, and set priorities for specific use cases.

[1] While interoperability between EU-As is of importance as well, this in not in the focus of the here provided implementation resources at the time being.

Alliance Journey of Collaboration

1) Signing an alliance framework agreement

The alliance member institutions mark the **official start** of the alliance journey with an agreement upon set-up.

2) WHY: Making the case for the impact the alliance wants to achieve

The Higher Education Reference Models (HERM) and its associated resources, such as the *HERM business model canvas*, can help alliances. They show the impact of the change they seek to achieve.[2]

3) WHO: Setting up basic organisational structures

The **work planning file** can help to map alliance member institutions, roles and responsibilities. It determines an alliance's governance, organisational structures, and the coordination of joint work.[3]

4) WHERE: Understanding the landscape

The **synthesis report** can help alliances understand the operating landscape and provides a broader context.[4]

5) WHERE: Reflecting on status quo and change

The **maturity model** and **self-assessment tool**[5] assess a HEI's and an Alliance's status in implementing the reference architecture. They help identify strengths and areas for improvement.

6) WHAT: Gaining clarity on own objectives and gaps

The **reference architecture** outlines current solutions and identifies gaps in interoperability for the use cases. [6]

7) HOW: Identifying solutions to fill the gaps

The **framework report** and the **mapping report** provide an overview of standards and tools. They describe the reference architecture and high-level business flow diagrams. They also provide recommendations to help find solutions for the identified gaps.[7]

8) Making interoperability become reality for selected use cases

The **implementation resources** in this document can be used to start implementation of key moments of a learner's higher education journey.

[2] Synthesis report: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/556601
[3] Link to reference architecture
[4] The business model canvas can be downloaded from Council of Australasian University Directors of Information Technology (CAUDIT): https://www.caudit.edu.au/communities/caudit-higher-education-reference-models/.
[5] Link to work planning Excel file
[6] Link to Self-assessment Excel file
[7] Links to mapping report: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/058737 and extensive framework report: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/851374

Reflecting on interoperability status quo and change

Higher education institutions (HEIs) can use the **interoperability maturity model** suggested to start reflecting on their current interoperability status. The model outlines five stages of maturity to achieve seamless cooperation between HEIs and to align their processes, systems, and policies with European standards.[8]

The **interoperability self-assessment tools**[9] provide a more detailed and use-case specific assessment to identify strengths and areas for development, which can aid in priority-setting and decision-making for next steps.

The **Higher Education Reference Models (HERM)**[10] framework seeks to standardise the understanding of, and improve processes, functions, and business capabilities within HEIs. The business capabilities and value chains defined in HERM form the foundation for the use cases outlined in this interoperability project. By using HERM, institutions can align their efforts with industry standards, improve collaboration, and achieve more efficient and targeted development. This framework lets institutions examine their interoperability more closely. They can compare the standardized business processes that underpin their capabilities and data architectures.

The **interoperability change process** describes a prototypic journey of alliances and HEIs progressing through change and taking targeted measures. Understanding the steps can help navigate change in an agile process. It will make truly interoperable and interconnected European campuses a reality.

[8] The foundation of the here suggested model was developed with the support of artificial intelligence tools. It was then thoroughly reviewed and further developed to deliver a model aligned with the specific needs of the community.
[9] Link to Self-assessment Excel files
[10] https://www.caudit.edu.au/communities/caudit-higher-education-reference-models/

Interoperability Maturity Model

Phase 1: Initial

Limited and often ad hoc efforts toward interoperability exist. Systems and processes are custom-made for specific institutions, with minimal coordination between them.

Indicators

There are isolated IT systems, minimal data-sharing practices, and no formalised agreements in place.

Outcomes

This leads to high levels of duplication and significant barriers to cross-border cooperation.

Phase 2: Emerging

There is an emerging awareness of the need for interoperability. Pilot pro-jects and basic collaborative practices are being initiated.

Indicators

There is partial adoption of common standards, agreements, and early pro-cess harmonisation is taking place.

Outcomes

Collaboration has improved but it is still inconsistent, with gaps in scalability and efficiency.

Phase 3: Standardised

Core interoperability practices are being standardised and implemented across all participating HEIs.

Indicators

Standards are being adopted at EU level (e.g., ELMO for data portability), and common platforms (e.g., Erasmus Without Paper) are being used.

Outcomes

There are reduced redundancies and smoother cross-border operations.

Phase 4: Integrated

Systems, processes, and policies are deeply integrated, building strong insti-tutional alliances.

Indicators

Interoperable systems are fully embedded in governance structures, with seamless IT and administrative workflows.

Outcomes

Student and staff mobility has been enhanced, with high efficiency and strong collaborative networks.

Phase 5: Enhanced

There is continuous improvement and innovation in interoperability, fully aligned with EU strategic goals.

Indicators

Emerging technologies (e.g., AI, blockchain) are being proactively used, and data-driven decision-making is taking place.

Outcomes

Leading-edge interoperability is supporting the EHEA's long-term vision.

Interoperability change process

Stakeholder dialogue

Focusing

Based on the alliance's priorities, use cases for interoperability can be determined.

Taking stock

A good starting point is to understand the current approaches, solutions, and standards within the HEI, across the alliance, and across alliances for selected use cases. It can also help identify areas for quick interoperability wins. The mapping conducted as part of this project serves as a reference point. Also, the self-assessment tool, provided as an implementation resource, streamlines this task. It helps identify strengths and opportunities.

Strategic planning

Actionable roadmaps turn ideas into plans. They guide the steps to take, with timelines and responsibilities.

Piloting

Having determined focus areas, one or more courses or other activities can be selected to pilot interoperability features with selected solutions.

Testing

Implementation is being explored in real-life circumstances through the pilot courses. This allows us to compare different solutions being considered. User feedback and evaluation provide valuable insights and take-aways for the roll-out.

Stakeholder dialogue

Solution

The insights finally created lead to the decision to implement a solution on a broader scale.

Implementation

Embedding the selected solutions in the existing ecosystem of tools may require connecting them and allocating responsibilities. and allocating responsibilities.

Training

New systems and tools in place might require users to receive training on the new solutions and any associated processes that have changed.

Monitoring & evaluation

They should monitor and evaluate systems and processes throughout their lifetime to ensure they meet their design objectives. This allows for adjustments, if needed, to improve the user experience and the value of the solutions.

Scaling

Successful models and approaches can be shared and adopted more widely across institutions and alliances, promoting collective growth.

Use case specific resources

The following use case specific resources are provided:

USE CASE 1 Discover

Enhancing the visibility and comparability of diverse learning and mobility opportunities across HEIs, emphasising the importance of machine-readable metadata for easy comparison and discovery.

CMS (Website) | Course catalogue | Curriculum management

Resource:
Process guide
It outlines a process for creating a joint learning opportunities catalogue (LOC) across an alliance. It focuses on defining the current state and objectives.

USE CASE 2 Apply and get recognition

Simplifying credit recognition and cross-institutional enrolment, emphasising seamless data exchange to support all form of learner mobility and academic continuity.

Admissions | Recognition

Resource:
Stakeholder management and alignment
It provides resources to guide identifying, managing, and involving stakeholders. It also guides on alignment on standardising course descriptions within a HEI and across an alliance of institutions.

USE CASE 6 Earn a credential

The digital management of educational credentials (issuance, verification, revocation), affirming the achievements from diverse learning experiences.

Micro-credentials | Portable credentials

Resource:
Communications product
It argues for the importance of micro-credentials that can be used to engage and communicate with key stakeholders and decision-makers within HEIs.

USE CASE 7 User identitiy

Achieving interoperability for user identities across educational transitions, ensuring consistent identification throughout their academic journey.

Access | Federate identity | Student cards

Resource:
Workshop series
It provides a plan for a workshop series aiming to establish a shared vocabulary and understanding of identity management across alliances.

Use case 'Discover': Process guide

USE CASE 1

Discover



Enhancing the visibility and comparability of diverse learning and mobility opportunities across HEIs, emphasising the importance of machine-readable metadata for easy comparison and discovery.

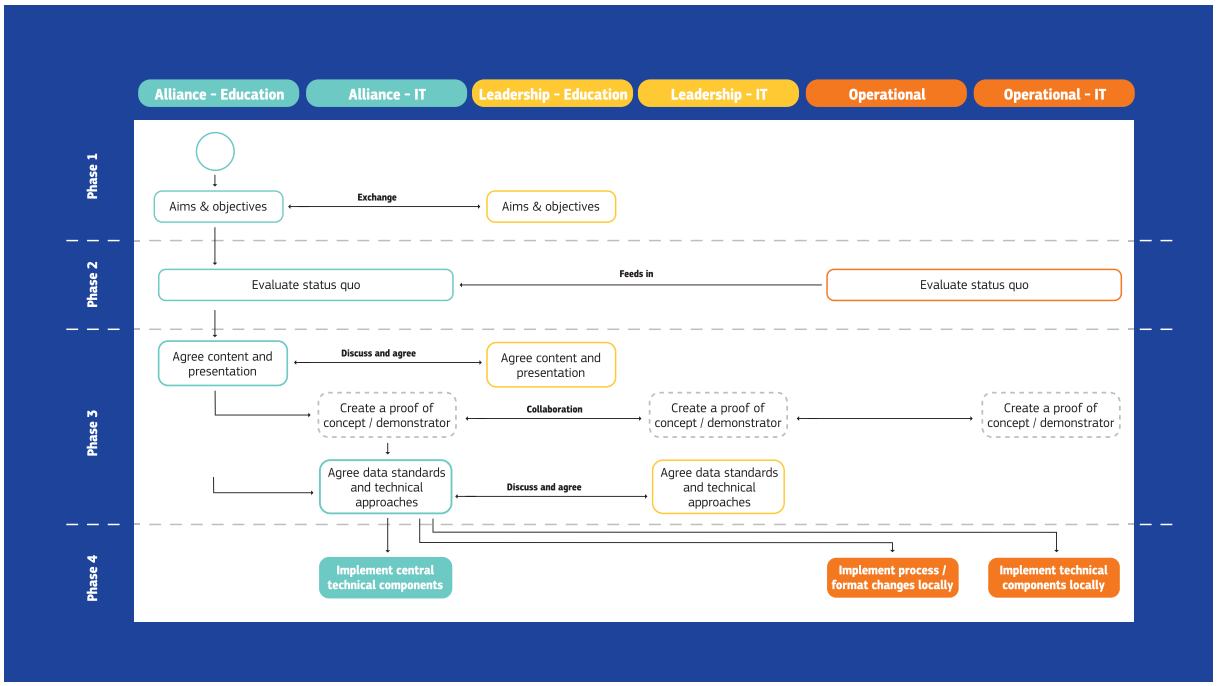
CMS (Website) | Course catalogue | Curriculum management

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This use case marks the starting point of a learner's journey, where they explore educational opportunities offered by HEIs. It aims to increase the visibility and comparability of diverse learning and mobility opportunities across HEIs. To facilitate easy comparison and discovery, it stresses the importance of machine-readable metadata.

The process guide below outlines an exemplary process for establishing a joint learning opportunities catalogue (LOC) across an alliance. This process can be broken down into roughly four phases.

The swim lanes/columns represent specific roles at both alliance and institution levels, responsible for the steps described below.



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It's worth noting that this process is typically iterative. After designing a prototype, those in charge of the education process may need to review and adjust their initial agreements on content and presentation several times.

As a result, the complexity of each phase varies, and they usually require different amounts of time and effort.

Phase 1: Define objectives

Outcomes

- Clear understanding of the aims and objectives
- Agreed timeline
- Clear internal mandates to start working
- Necessary resources (esp. workforce at operational level) allocated
- Working groups established if and where needed (alliance and institution levels)

Tasks

- Agree on aims and objectives of establishing a joint LOC.
- Identify the key stakeholders within the institution.
- Inform relevant stakeholders and discuss implications for each HEI
- Consider the resources required.
- Consider privacy issues, especially if any personal data should feature in the joint LOC.

Lead roles

- **Alliance level:** A person, like a secretary-general, who ensures overall coordination and alignment.
- **Strategic level:** A decision-maker with expertise in education policy or strategic planning, comparable to a vice-rector.

Further stakeholders

- Study programme managers
- Quality assurance offices
- International offices
- Alliance work programme coordinators
- Student representatives

Key Resources

- ECTS Users' Guide
- EU Council Recommendation on Micro-Credentials – Annex 1

Phase 2: Evaluate current status

Outcomes

- Clear understanding of the alliance's readiness

Tasks

- Evaluate the status quo within each HEI, considering the following questions, amongst others:
  - Does the HEI have a single/central course catalogue?
  - What data/information does it contain? At what level of granularity?
  - How and where is the catalogue published?
  - Is the information updated continuously or in fixed cycles (e.g. annually, each semester, ...)?
  - What level of freedom do students have in choosing different courses in their curricula?
  - What are the timelines for students to sign up/register for learning opportunities?
  - Is the data kept/made available in any standardised format?
  - Who owns the process of catalogue updates?
  - What quality/validation checks are in in place?
  - What type of IT system is used to manage the catalogue?
  - Who can implement changes to the IT system?
- Compile these evaluations to inform an alliance-wide stocktaking.Review whether the initial objectives and timeline are realistic.
- Review the resources required, if needed.

Lead roles

- **Alliance level:** A person who oversees technical coordination or managing key work packages, and is focused on implementing interoperability.
- **HEI Operational Level:** Experts like solution architects or developers, who have deep knowledge of system integration, educational technologies, and education processes and the IT infrastructure.

Further stakeholders

- Study programme managers
- Quality assurance offices
- Further IT staff

Phase 3: Agree on standards and approaches

Outcomes

- Common core course data template to use across the alliance
- Operational work processes for the joint catalogue and technical standards are agreed and ready for implementation

Tasks – education/process dimension

- Agree on the core content to feature in the joint catalogue, including required and optional fields.
- Decide which learning opportunities to include in the joint LOC (e.g. all, only those available to students across the al-liance, only those delivered online/hybrid, etc.).
- Determine the granularity for the joint LOC (e.g. programmes, modules, or courses). Consider the granularity of ex-isting local LOCs.
- Design an operational work process for the joint catalogue. Consider related is-sues, as they are the next step after a learner consults the LOC. For instance:
  - How to keep track of available places?
  - How to allocate places across the partnership
  - How to deal with exams that are on-campus and would require travelling?
  - How to monitor student progression and drop out?
  - How to arrange access to the VLE of the host institution?
  - What are the implications of the agreed process for designing and updating of learning opportunities in terms of national accreditation regulations?

Tasks – technical/IT dimension

- Consider standards that could be used to exchange data.
- Agree on the desired frontend for joint LOC:
- Central: Create a new, separate portal for the alliance-wide catalogue
- P2P: Include all courses in each HEI's existing portal (if legally possible)
- Agree on technical approach for exchanging and aggregating data.
- Develop a pilot, demonstrator, or proof of concept. For example, use a more manual or low-complexity setup. Or test a candidate standard to connect and aggregate LOC from some alliance members.

Lead roles

- **Alliance level:** A coordinator responsible for technical management and overseeing specific work packages related to interoperability.
- **Operational level:** Professionals with expertise in education processes and quality assurance.

Further stakeholders

- IT specialists (such as architects and developers) who manage system integration and educational technology solutions
- Study programme managers

Key Resources

There are several European standards related to this use case, all of which cover course data/catalogues in some way:

- European Learning Model (ELM)
- Open Education API (OOAPI)
- ELMO
- EWP Courses API
- Open Course Catalogue API (OCCAPI)
- Edu-API

The illustration below shows the range of domains covered by different existing standards beyond courses and programmes. These differences arise from the fact that these standards – or the ecosystems in which they emerged – were designed to serve different, broader purposes. By considering these varying scopes, the alliance can identify the most suitable standards for the use cases it is currently addressing.

Further details are available in the mapping report and the existing mappings of ontologies and data standards.

- QualityLink mapping of ontologies
- Data Ecosystem Schema Mapper (DESM)

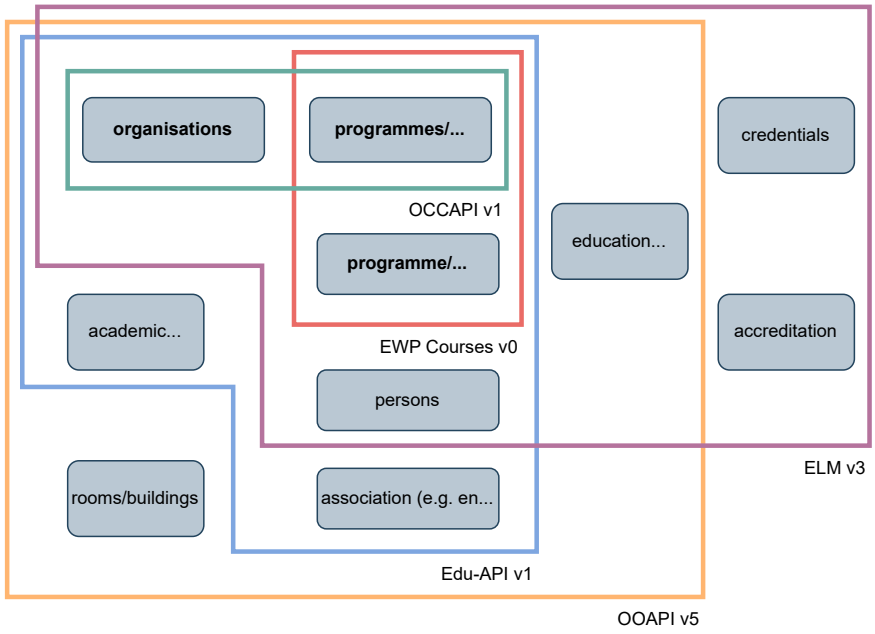


Figure 1 - Domains covered by existing data standards and ontologies.
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Phase 4: Implement

Outcomes

- Implementation

Tasks

- Map HEI's local data model to the agreed standard format.
- Adjust HEI's course data template as needed.
- Develop an internal plan/strategy how to update course data, fill new fields, etc.
- Deploy or develop a data export service for the local LOC.
- For the central strategy:
  - Deploy or develop a data aggregation service.
  - Deploy or develop a common frontend.
- For the P2P strategy:
  - Deploy or develop a data aggregation service for the local LOC.
  - Adjust local LOC frontend to include additional courses.
- Perform alliance-wide testing of the new components.
- Create or update guidance and training material (e.g., where new data fields need to be populated by academics in local LOC).
- Accompany the roll-out by communication and information measures for academics, administrators and students (e.g., launch campaigns, info sessions, training sessions, ...)
- Monitor the implementation. Plan an alliance-wide review after a time, e.g., to discuss needed changes.

Lead roles

- **Alliance level:** A person who oversees and coordinates key interoperability work packages, from a technical view.
- **Operational level:** Professionals with a strong background in both education and IT, like system architects and developers.

Further stakeholders

- Study programme managers
- Quality assurance offices
- Communication managers
- Further IT staff

Key Resources

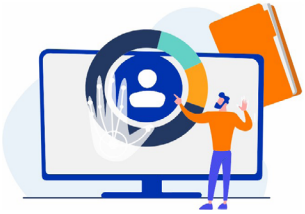
Examples from specific alliances:

- EuroTeQ: EduXchange (based on OOAPI)
- EULiST: GitLab repository (semi-automatic based on Schema.org)
- EPICUR: course catalogue (based on UniverSIS)
- 4EU+: course catalogue
- EDUC: course catalogue

Use case ‘Apply and get recognition’: Stakeholder management

USE CASE 2

Apply and get recognition



Simplifying credit recognition and cross-institutional enrolment, emphasising seamless data exchange to support all forms of learner mobility and academic continuity.

Admissions | Recognition

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This use case builds on the discovery phase of learning and mobility. It applies for a selected opportunity, including admission and recognition of prior learning. It simplifies credit recognition and cross-institutional enrolment. This is important due to the EU Single Digital Gateway Regulation [11] that mentions related tertiary education procedures. The use case prioritises seamless data exchange to support all forms of learner mobility and academic continuity.

The selected resources here offer guidance on stakeholders. They cover identifying, managing, and involving them. They also address standardising course descriptions within a HEI and across allied institutions.

Stakeholder analysis	
Outcomes • Overview of stakeholder landscape within HEI • Prioritisation of stakeholders to be involved • Identification of stakeholders’ interests and influence, potential resistance, and goals	
Tasks • Identify potential stakeholders within the HEI. Use a stake-holder map to map the identified stakeholders. Outline a) their influence and b) their interest in the topic. (See the “stakeholder map” resource below for more.) • Verify and refine this in exchange with selected key stake-holders.	**Lead roles** • A person responsible for leading the respective interoperability work package within the institution. **Further stakeholders** • Individuals with strategic insight into the stakeholders, and the influence to guide and support interoperability initiatives.

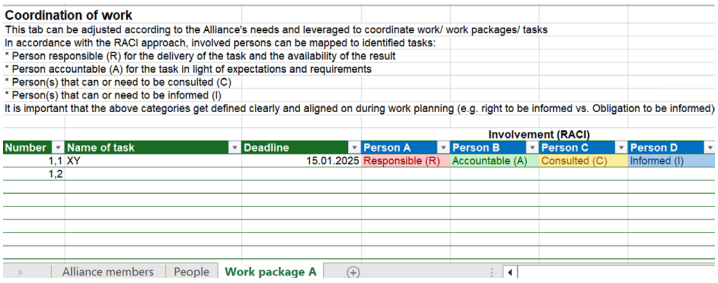
Stakeholder engagement and dialogue

Outcomes

- Deepened understanding of stakeholders' interests, motives, potential resistance, and goals
- Stakeholder communications and engagement strategies
- Raised awareness of the importance of standardised course descriptions in the HEI, which are a prerequisite for interoperability at alliance-level
- Buy-in of relevant stakeholders

Tasks

- Based on the stakeholder mapping, identify the key stakeholders. Consider their motives, interests, and likely resistance.
- If helpful, schedule interviews with selected stakeholders to advance insights and understanding.
- Create targeted engagement strategies and plans for stakeholders. They should include objectives, narratives, channels, formats, and frequency for each target group. See the "stakeholder engagement plan" below for guidance.
- Use the Attachment Work Planning resource to coordinate work using the RACI approach. Assign individuals to tasks as Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, or Informed.



Coordination of work

This tab can be adjusted according to the Alliance's needs and leveraged to coordinate work/ work packages/ tasks
In accordance with the RACI approach, involved persons can be mapped to identified tasks:
* Person responsible (R) for the delivery of the task and the availability of the result
* Person accountable (A) for the task in light of expectations and requirements
* Person(s) that can or need to be consulted (C)
* Person(s) that can or need to be informed (I)
It is important that the above categories get defined clearly and aligned on during work planning (e.g. right to be informed vs. Obligation to be informed)

			Involvement (RACI)			
Number	Name of task	Deadline	Person A	Person B	Person C	Person D
1.1	XY	15.01.2025	Responsible (R)	Accountable (A)	Consulted (C)	Informed (I)
1.2						

Alliance members | People | Work package A

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- Establish and maintain ongoing stakeholder engagement and dialogue throughout the project.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate stakeholder engagement, adjusting as needed.

Lead roles

- A person responsible for leading the respective interoperability work package within the institution.

Further stakeholders

- Key people identified through stakeholder analysis. This includes those responsible for educational leadership (such as a vice-director for education), academic representatives from various departments, IT specialists, international relations representatives, and quality assurance experts.

HEI-internal alignment process

Outcomes

- Establishment of prerequisite for cross-institutional alignment
- Identification of internal challenges and opportunities in standardising course descriptions
- Consensus on elements to be included in standardised course descriptions across the HEI
- Defined associated processes to facilitate HEI-internal standardised course descriptions

Tasks

- Outline key process milestones (e.g. stakeholder survey, workshop, etc.) and timeline
- Reach agreement on creating standardised data across HEI
- Identify requirements for course descriptions specific to HEI
- Derive minimum elements for standardised course descriptions
- Agree on a catalogue of standard elements to be included in course descriptions across the HEI
- Continuously engage and maintain dialogue with stakeholders and create buy-in
- Map the current state of processes for implementing standardised course descriptions across the HEI
- Define target processes with key stakeholders and associated responsibilities
- Roll-out standardised course descriptions and associated processes across HEI

Lead roles

- A person responsible for leading the respective interoperability work package within the institution.

Further stakeholders

- Key individuals identified through stakeholder analysis. This includes those responsible for educational leadership (such as a vice-director for education), academic representatives from various departments, IT specialists, international relations representatives, and quality assurance experts.

Cross-institutional alignment process

Outcomes

- Shared understanding of status quo across member institutions part of the alliance
- Shared understanding of challenges and opportunities in standardising course descriptions across alliance's member institutions
- Consensus on elements to be included in standardised course descriptions at alliance-level
- Defined associated processes to facilitate standardised course descriptions at alliance-level

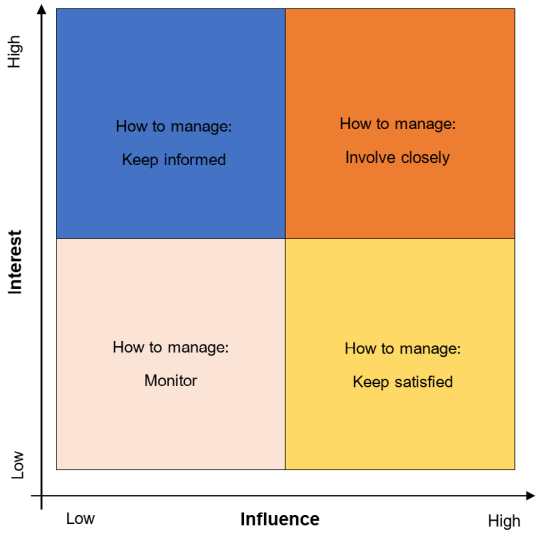
Tasks	Lead roles
• Reach agreement and secure commitment on creating standardised course descriptions at alliance-level. • Outline key process milestones and timeline. • Share the current status of different member institutions • Identify challenges (e.g. dependency of institutions' adopted systems on national requirements) and opportunities. • Identify minimum elements for standardised course descriptions required at alliance-level • Agree on a catalogue of standard elements to be included in course descriptions across the alliance • Report back to individual HEIs and align any additional required elements at alliance level with HEI-specific course descriptions	• People responsible for leading work packages within their institution, ensuring coordination with broader interoperability goals. **Further stakeholders** • Key persons in each institution, with relevant expertise and influence. They support and advance interoperability initiatives.

Resource: Stakeholder map

Outcomes

- Understanding the stakeholders at HEI relevant to the interoperability project
- Understanding of the stakeholders' a) interests in and b) influence over the project
- Understanding of the stakeholder needs, their potential resistance, and goals
- Prioritisation of stakeholders to be involved
- Identification of how to address and involve respective stakeholders and their groups effectively and according to their needs

Tasks	Lead roles
• Identify and list the potential stakeholders within the HEI, including individuals and groups who have an interest in the project's success or are affected by it in some way. • Create a stakeholder map by plotting these stakeholders. For example, do this during an interactive exercise at a meeting or workshop with the core management team. You can use a whiteboard or digital tool to discuss their roles, interests, and influence. • Engage with key stakeholders. They know the stakeholder landscape. They can guide and support interoperability initiatives. Also, verify their input. • Determine the key stakeholders and consider the implications for managing and involving them.	• Work package lead and core management team in charge of the interoperability project.



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Resource: Stakeholder engagement plan

Outcomes

- Plan to engage stakeholders in line with objectives, catering to their needs, using their preferred channels

Tasks

- Using the insights and stakeholder knowledge, plan engagement measures. Use a stakeholder plan, like this template.
- Identify objectives for each stakeholder group.
- Identify their key pain points and views to address. Then, derive key messages and the best channels to engage and maintain a dialogue.

Lead roles

- **HEI level:** Work package lead and core management team in charge of the interoperability project

	Objective	Stakeholder perspectives	Key messages	Channels	Frequency
Stakeholder group A	E.g. Obtain buy-in and convince of the importance of standardising course descriptions within the HEI	E.g. Everything works fine the way things are currently handled	E.g. Standardising course descriptions within the HEI is a prerequisite to simplify credit recognition within the alliance	E.g. bilateral meetings, intranet, email, etc.	E.g. monthly, etc.
Stakeholder group B	E.g. Address concerns that…				
…					

Use case ‘Earn a credential’: Communications

USE CASE 6

Earn a credential



The digital management of educational credentials (issuance, verification, revocation), affirming the achievements from diverse learning experiences.

Micro-credentials

Portable credentials

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This use case occurs at the end of a learner’s journey. They earn a credential that confirms their achievements from various learning experiences. It covers the entire life cycle of digital credential management, including issuing, verifying, and potentially revoking credentials. Our goal is to issue credentials as an integral part of an HEI’s services. When a learner’s earned credit is registered in the SIS, it should instantly become accessible as a digital credential, allowing them to download it easily. This streamlined process reframes the experience as downloading an earned credit rather than navigating a complex claim submission. To reinforce this, HEIs could actively communicate how these steps align with the learner’s journey, making the process both intuitive and empowering.

This resource highlights the importance of using micro-credentials. They are an innovative digital credentialing tool. They align with HEIs’ digital transformation goals. The resource gives guidance on implementation steps. It also offers resources for internal and external communications.

What Are Micro-Credentials?

Micro-credentials are verifiable, portable records. They verify the learning outcomes from short, focused courses. They are issued digitally and designed to support lifelong learning and employability, recognising specific skills or knowledge areas.

Why Focus on Micro-Credentials?

For Learners: Micro-credentials are stackable, portable certifications that support lifelong learning and align with career goals. They enable learners personalise their education. They acknowledge small achievements and motivate growth. They also showcase specific skills in fine detail.

For Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): Micro-credentials bring credentialing into the modern era. They drive digital transformation and enhancing institutional reputation. They work well with platforms like Europass and HR systems, making qualifications globally verifiable. Micro-credentials highlight the institution's commitment to flexible, industry-aligned education.

For Employers: Micro-credentials offer a secure, standardised way to verify specific skills, which is highly valued in skill-based hiring. By closing the gap between educational outcomes and workforce needs, they ensure relevance in fast-paced industries.

EU Standards for Micro-Credentials

In Europe, the EU Council Recommendation on Micro-Credentials (2022) sets out a framework to ensure these credentials are recognised and valued across borders. This framework is key to building trust among learners, employers, and educators. It promotes lifelong learning and employability.

At its core are 11 key elements that provide a blueprint for creating reliable, transparent, and interoperable micro-credentials. These elements ensure consistency in recording skills and achievements, making it easier for all stakeholders to understand, verify, and trust them.

Here are the 11 elements identified by the EU to guide the development of micro-credentials:

1. Identification of the learner
2. Title of the micro-credential
3. Country(ies)/region(s) of the issuer
4. Awarding body(ies)
5. Date of issuance
6. Learning outcomes
7. Notional workload required to achieve the learning outcomes (expressed in ECTS credits, where applicable)
8. Level and cycle of the learning experience (aligned with EQF or QF-EHEA, if applicable)
9. Type of assessment
10. Form of participation in the learning activity (e.g., online, in-person, hybrid)
11. Type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential

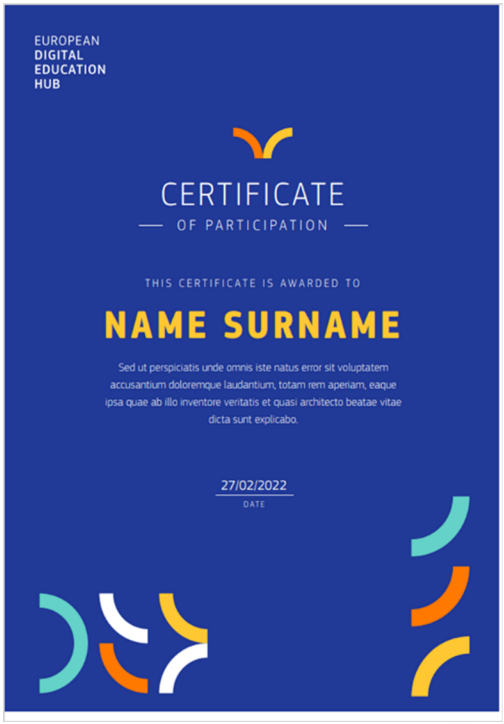


Figure 2 - Mock Visualisation of a credential as provided in the context of EDEH
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Implementation Steps

Step 1: Define Objectives

- Institutional Alignment: Clarify goals for micro-credentials (e.g., workforce readiness, learner mobility, or programme innovation).
- Stakeholder Involvement: Engage key actors, including programme coordinators, IT staff, policy advisors, and quality assurance officers.

Step 2: Build the Micro-Credentials

- Map current course information to common standard – utilise the European Language Model (ELM).
- Ensure alignment with EU recommendations and institutional policies.
- Standardise elements like learning outcomes, ECTS credits, and metadata.
- Utilise the European Digital Credential Builder as starting point. It is a digital platform to create a version of your institution's verifiable credentials, incorporating potential digital seals for security and authenticity.

Step 3: Develop Communication Strategies

- Narrative Development: Highlight learner empowerment and institutional innovation.
- Audiences:
- Learners: Focus on accessibility, portability, and employability.
- Internal Stakeholders: Emphasise operational efficiency and compliance.
- Employers: Showcase trustworthiness and relevance of credentials.

Step 4: Pilot and Test

- Conduct small-scale pilots with selected programmes.
- Integration into your local SIS – based on EDCI integrating done under step 2.
- Collect feedback from learners, staff, and external stakeholders to refine processes.

Step 5: Scale and Monitor

- Expand the initiative across the institution or alliance, ensuring processes scale smoothly.
- Consider external expertise. Institutions or alliances with limited resources, like IT teams, can benefit from collaborating with external partners or consultants on micro-credentials. This collaboration can streamline implementation, align with EU standards, and improve the rollout's effectiveness. It complements existing efforts and accelerates progress without overburdening internal teams.
- Regularly review data and user feedback. Optimise credentialing processes to align with evolving EU standards and technologies.

Practical Tools for Implementation

Internal Communications

Email Template for Staff

Introduce micro-credentials to faculty and administrative teams.

Subject: Introducing Micro-Credentials at [Institution Name]

Body: "Dear [Staff Name], We are excited to announce that [Institution Name] is adopting micro-credentials to enhance our student's learning experience. These digital records will allow learners to showcase their achievements in a portable, verifiable format. Micro-credentials align with our institutional goals for digital transformation and lifelong learning. You can learn more about how they will be integrated into your programmes and how you can contribute [link to a resource or meeting invite]."

External Communications

FAQs for Students

- *What is a micro-credential?*

A digital certificate that records your achievements in specific skills or learning outcomes.

- *How do I access my micro-credential?*

Once earned, your micro-credential will be available through [Student Portal/SIS]. You can download or share it instantly.

- *Who recognises these credentials?*

Micro-credentials issued by [Institution Name] meet EU standards. They are recognised by employers and educational institutions across Europe.

- *How can I use my micro-credential?*

You can share your micro-credential with employers or educational institutions. Just give them the secure link or QR code for verification. Your micro-credentials can also be added to your Europass profile to showcase your achievements across Europe.

- *What types of courses or skills can be certified with a micro-credential?*

Micro-credentials can certify various learning experiences. These include short courses, skills training, and specialised modules in larger academic programmes. Check with [Institution Name] for available options.

Social Media Post ideas:

"Empower your future with micro-credentials at [Institution Name]! Showcase your skills and achievements digitally – portable, verifiable, and future-ready. Learn more: [link]"

Alternative A: *"Level up your skills with micro-credentials from [Institution Name]! 💥 Get instant recognition for your hard work with a digital badge – it's like a supercharged resume! 🚀 Learn more and unlock your potential: [link]"*

- Used more active and exciting verbs ("Level up," "Get instant recognition," "unlock your potential")
- Added a relatable analogy ("like a supercharged resume")
- Removed overly formal language ("Empower your future")

Alternative B: *"Future-proof your career with micro-credentials from [Institution Name]. 💪 These digital badges prove your skills and knowledge to potential employers. 📈 Get ahead of the curve – learn more: [link]"*

- Emphasised career benefits ("Future-proof your career," "Get ahead of the curve")
- Highlighted the value proposition (proves skills to employers)
- Maintained a confident and direct tone

"Stand out in a competitive world! 🎓 Micro-credentials from [Institution Name] give you a digital, verifiable way to showcase your skills and achievements. 🌍 Recognised across Europe, they're your passport to new opportunities. Learn more: [link]"

Alternative A: *"Ready to shine? ✨ Micro-credentials from [Institution Name] are your secret weapon! 🎯 They're like a digital portfolio that shows off your skills to the world. 🌍 Explore new opportunities and land your dream job! 🚀 Learn more: [link]"*

- Used more engaging and aspirational language ("Ready to shine?," "secret weapon," "land your dream job")
- Created a more relatable image ("digital portfolio")
- Removed overly formal language ("Stand out in a competitive world")

Alternative B: *"Level up your employability with micro-credentials from [Institution Name]. ✅ Get internationally recognised skills and unlock new career paths. 🌍 Learn more: [link]"*

- Focused on the key benefit ("Level up your employability")
- Emphasised international recognition ("internationally recognised skills")
- Made the message more concise and impactful

Key Considerations:

- **Visuals**: Pair these posts with compelling visuals (e.g., images of people succeeding, relevant graphics, the institution's logo).
- **Hashtags:** Use relevant hashtags to increase visibility (e.g., #microcredentials, #skillsdevelopment, #lifelonglearning, #[InstitutionName]).
- **Audience:** Tailor the tone and language to your specific audience (e.g., high school students, working professionals).
- **Platform:** Adjust the length and style to suit the specific social media platform (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn).

Resources

Resources for Implementation

- **European Commission's Brochure on Micro-Credentials:** Provides a comprehensive overview of micro-credentials, covering their design, implementation, and recognition across Europe.
- **Cedefop's Project on Micro-Credentials for Labour Market Education and Training:** Offers insights into the role micro-credentials play in supporting labour-market-related education and training.
- **ECIU University's Micro-Credentials Paper:** Discusses the vision for European learners, values, and priorities concerning micro-credentials.
- **European Training Foundation's Guide to Designing, Issuing, and Recognising Micro-Credentials:** This guide provides practical advice for institutions on creating and managing micro-credentials.

Case Studies

The Dutch Story

The Netherlands' EduBadges system issues EU-compliant micro-credentials. It relies on a quality framework that includes peer reviews and a workload of 3-30 ECTS. EduBadges promotes collaboration and knowledge exchange. Challenges remain in cross-border recognising and credential stacking. Efforts are ongoing to scale through the Npuls digital transformation programme.

The Irish Story

Ireland's MicroCreds framework, developed by the Irish Universities Association, offers a national system for micro-credentials. It has strong quality assurance. In 2024/2025, 400 courses of 5–10 ECTS will be available. The framework emphasises stakeholder engagement. It ensures portability and alignment with EU standards. It supports lifelong learning and employability.

EU4Dual Alliance

The EU4Dual European University Alliance is a group of nine top dual universities in Europe. It is developing a micro-credential portal with industry partners. The portal will offer career development and new skills. They plan to launch a course catalogue that will feature over 120 micro-credentials and five joint master's degrees. The aim is to address major societal challenges through dual higher education.

ECIU University

The European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) is implementing micro-credentialing solutions under the European Universities Initiative. Their approach aims to boost innovation in higher education and to create flexible learning paths. This aligns with the European Commission's micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability.

Use case ‘User identity’: Workshop series

USE CASE 7

User identity



Achieving interoperability for user identities across educational transitions, ensuring consistent identification throughout their academic journey.

Access | Federated identity | Student cards

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In contrast to other use cases focused on core elements of a learner’s journey, this use case is one of two that support the underlying infrastructure. It tackles interoperability for user identities across educational transitions. It thereby aims to ensure consistent identification throughout a user’s academic journey.

Overview: Identity Management (IDM) workshop series
Outcomes • Shared vocabulary established • Understanding of identity management across alliance institutions • Cohesive approach to IDM tasks created, paving the way for a more integrated digital experience.
Description The Identity Management (IDM) Workshop series contains three workshop sessions, building on each other: 1. Establishing a shared vocabulary and vision. Focus on defining key terms and aligning on the high-level goals for identity management. 2. Identifying technical and organisational gaps. Align on specific technical and governance challenges. 3. Developing a joint action plan. Create a roadmap with clear responsibilities and timelines to achieve interoperability.

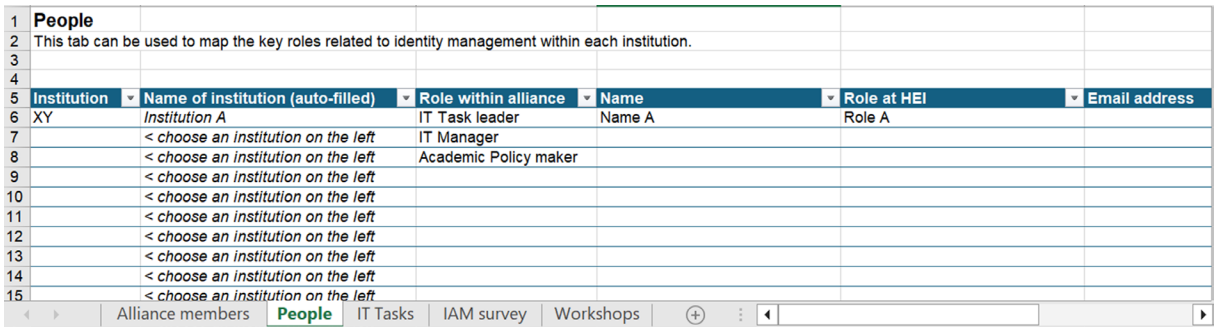
Elements	Lead roles

• Initial survey across alliance
• Identity terminology list for workshop 1
• Outline for three workshops
• Communication building blocks (for template email) for workshops
	• The IT work package leader from the alliance, responsible for overseeing and guiding technical discussions.
	
	Further stakeholders
	• Primary contact per institution: A senior IT representative, typically an IT director or equivalent, to ensure good communication and alignment.
	• Participants: 3-5 representatives per institution, including a mix of:
	  • Senior IT leadership (essential)
	  • A person with policy influence (essential)
	  • A policy officer from academic services
	  • A representative focused on internationalisation efforts
	  • A member from the IT department
	  • IAM (Identity and Access Management) process managers
	  • IDM (Identity Management) system administrators

Preparatory survey to be sent around before workshop 1

Tab 1: People involved

Purpose: Capture the key roles related to identity management within each institution.



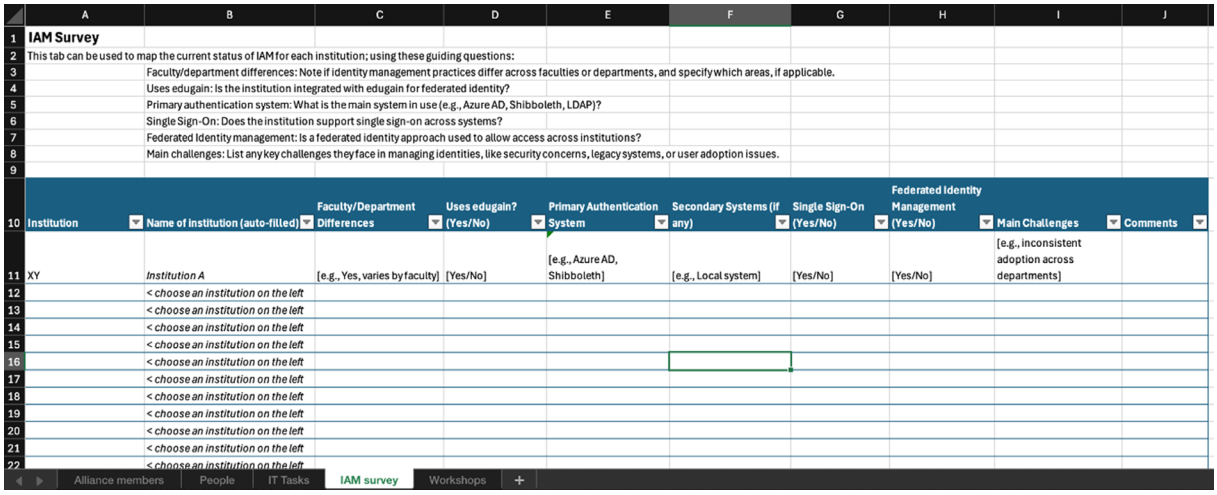
1	**People**					
2	This tab can be used to map the key roles related to identity management within each institution.					
3						
4						
5	**Institution**	**Name of institution (auto-filled)**	**Role within alliance**	**Name**	**Role at HEI**	**Email address**
6	XY	*Institution A*	IT Task leader	Name A	Role A	
7		*< choose an institution on the left*	IT Manager			
8		*< choose an institution on the left*	Academic Policy maker			
9		*< choose an institution on the left*				
10		*< choose an institution on the left*				
11		*< choose an institution on the left*				
12		*< choose an institution on the left*				
13		*< choose an institution on the left*				
14		*< choose an institution on the left*				
15		*< choose an institution on the left*				

Alliance members | **People** | IT Tasks | IAM survey | Workshops

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Tab 2: Identity management overview

Purpose: Survey the current practices and tools each institution uses for managing user identities.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	**IAM Survey**									
2	This tab can be used to map the current status of IAM for each institution; using these guiding questions:									
3		Faculty/department differences: Note if identity management practices differ across faculties or departments, and specify which areas, if applicable.								
4		Uses edugain: Is the institution integrated with edugain for federated identity?								
5		Primary authentication system: What is the main system in use (e.g., Azure AD, Shibboleth, LDAP)?								
6		Single Sign-On: Does the institution support single sign-on across systems?								
7		Federated Identity management: Is a federated identity approach used to allow access across institutions?								
8		Main challenges: List any key challenges they face in managing identities, like security concerns, legacy systems, or user adoption issues.								
9										
10	**Institution**	**Name of institution (auto-filled)**	**Faculty/Department Differences**	**Uses edugain? (Yes/No)**	**Primary Authentication System**	**Secondary Systems (if any)**	**Single Sign-On (Yes/No)**	**Federated Identity Management (Yes/No)**	**Main Challenges**	**Comments**
11	XY	*Institution A*	[e.g., Yes, varies by faculty]	[Yes/No]	[e.g., Azure AD, Shibboleth]	[e.g., Local system]	[Yes/No]	[Yes/No]	[e.g., inconsistent adoption across departments]	
12		*< choose an institution on the left*								
13		*< choose an institution on the left*								
14		*< choose an institution on the left*								
15		*< choose an institution on the left*								
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21		*< choose an institution on the left*								
22		*< choose an institution on the left*								

Alliance members | People | IT Tasks | IAM survey | Workshops | +

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Guiding Questions:

- **Faculty/department differences:** Are there differences in identity management practices across different faculties or departments? If so, which specific areas are affected?
- **Uses eduGAIN:** Is the institution integrated with eduGAIN for federated identity?
- **Primary authentication system:** What is the main system in use (e.g., Azure AD, Shibboleth, LDAP)?
- **Single Sign-On:** Does the institution support single sign-on across systems?
- **Federated Identity management:** Is a federated identity approach used to allow access across institutions?
- **Main challenges:** What are the key challenges encountered in managing identities, such as security concerns, legacy systems, or user adoption issues?

Workshop 1: Establishing a shared vocabulary and vision	
Objective • Create a unified understanding of identity management terms, goals, and high-level strategies across the alliance.	**Stakeholders** • **IT leadership from each institution:** Senior IT representatives from each alliance member institution, responsible for coordinating and aligning institutional IT strategies. • **Identity and Access Management (IAM) leads:** Professionals managing identity processes, ensuring secure and compliant access across systems. • **Senior IT decision-makers:** High-level IT leaders with insight into alliance priorities, capable of guiding strategic decisions in line with alliance goals.
Outline • **Setting the scene:** Participants understand the workshop's purpose and scope. • **Review of priorities and needs:** Align on how identity management connects to the alliance's broader digital priorities, confirming shared goals. • **Creating a joint vocabulary:** Develop, agree upon and document standard definitions for key identity management terms (e.g., single sign-in, federated identity, access management). • **Challenges and opportunities:** Identify and document common challenges and opportunities in current identity management practices. • **Defining scope for workshop 2:** Set clear expectations for workshop 2, agreeing on focus areas to address at a cross-institutional level. • **Wrap-up and next steps:** Confirm action items, including pre-work or data collection needed for the next workshop.	

Identity terminology list

- **Account:** A unique digital identifier linked to a user, allowing them access to systems, resources, or services. Each account is associated with a person or role.
- **Affiliation:** The relationship between a person and an institution (e.g., student, faculty, or staff), often determining access permissions.
- **Medium:** The method or channel used for communication or verification in identity management, such as a digital platform, mobile app, or paper-based verification.
- **Natural person:** An individual human being, distinct from a legal entity, who is the subject of identity and access management processes.

- **Assurance:** The level of confidence in a user's identity, determined by the strength of the verification process (e.g., single-factor or multi-factor authentication).
- **Attributes:** Specific pieces of information about a user, such as their name, role, or department, used to identify and authorise them within a system.
- **Claims:** Statements about a user, such as their name or email, used to verify their identity and authorise access. These claims are often verified against trusted sources.
- **Data quality:** The accuracy, completeness, and reliability of identity data. It affects the effectiveness and trustworthiness of identity management.
- **Defined vocabulary:** A set of agreed terms and definitions in an identity management system. It ensures consistent communication across systems and institutions.
- **Entitlement:** The specific rights or privileges granted to a user, often determined by their role or affiliation, such as access to resources or services.
- **Permission:** An authorisation granting a user access to a specific resource or action based on their role or attributes.
- **Profile:** A collection of information about a specific user, helping to identify them and determine their access rights within a system.
- **Proofs:** Evidence or documentation used to verify a user's identity, such as ID verification or credentials.
- **Rights:** Authorised actions or access levels granted to a user, often defined by policies or agreements within the institution.
- **Role:** A defined function or position a user holds within an institution, such as 'student' or 'staff', determining access levels and permissions.
- **Trust framework:** A set of standards, policies, and agreements. It establishes trust between institutions. It enables secure, consistent identity management across organisations.

Workshop 2: Identifying technical and organisational gaps

Objective

- Explore collaborative strategies for identity management across institutions, while using the shared vocabulary and vision established in Workshop I, explored.
- Define concrete next steps for implementation.

Stakeholders

- **Senior IT leadership: I**ndividuals with overall responsibility for IT strategy and oversight within the institution.
- **Identity and Access Management (IAM) leads:** Professionals managing identity management processes, ensuring secure and efficient user access.
- **Data privacy officers:** Experts in governance and data policies, with a focus on how these regulations affect identity management practices.
- **Technical integration leads:** Specialists responsible for system integration, ensuring seamless interoperability between platforms and technologies.

Outline

- **Recap of workshop 1:** Review the agreed terms and goals from workshop 1 to ensure everyone is on the same page.
- **Institutional overviews on identity management:** Each institution shares its current approach to identity management. Highlight key challenges and differences. Document these differences in overview for the alliance.
- **Collaborative framework discussion:** Start outlining a collaborative framework for identity management. Identify areas that need further alignment.
- **Breakout sessions: Developing strategies:** Identify potential strategies for addressing specific gaps, such as technical (e.g., cross-system compatibility, single sign-on) or organisational (e.g., data privacy, governance structures) ones. Document these strategies and assign institutions to lead on specific action areas.
- **Roadmap and action planning for workshop 3:** Draft a high-level roadmap. Include clear next steps for aligning identity management practices. Set the agenda for the final workshop.
- **Wrap-up and next steps:** Confirm action items, including documentation and preparations for workshop 3.

Workshop 3: Broader cross-institutional team, including technical, managerial, and policy roles	
Objective • Finalise a collaborative identity management action plan and assign clear roles and timelines for implementation.	**Stakeholders** • **IT leadership:** Senior IT professionals responsible for strategic oversight and alignment within the institution. • **Identity and Access Management (IAM) leads:** Specialists managing identity-related processes, ensuring secure access and compliance. • **Data privacy experts:** Professionals focused on governance and data protection, ensuring alignment with privacy policies in identity management. • **Technical integration leads and system administrators:** Key technical staff responsible for system integrations and maintaining operational functionality. • **Process managers:** Coordinators who facilitate smooth implementation across departments, ensuring consistency and efficiency. • **Policy alignment officers:** People ensuring identity management practices align with institutional policies and strategic objectives.
Outline • **Recap of previous workshops:** Review progress made so far to establish a cohesive understanding. Set the stage for action planning. • **Review of draft collaborative framework:** Confirm consensus on the draft framework from workshop 2. Make any final adjustments to align on a unified approach. • **Detailed action planning:** Create a detailed action plan, outlining short-term actions (e.g., implementing single sign-on), medium-term actions (e.g., establishing common governance policies) and long-term actions (e.g., full cross-institutional identity integration). • **Assigning roles and responsibilities:** Assign each institution roles in the action plan, with designated workstream leads. • **Setting milestones and timeline:** Agree on an implementation timeline. Include measurable milestones and regular check-ins to assess progress. • **Final wrap-up and next steps:** Confirm action items and follow-up meetings to ensure accountability. Collect final feedback from participants on the workshop series.	

Communication materials
Email template to send out per role
Subject: Invitation to identity management workshop: *[Workshop Title]* You are invited to participate in our upcoming workshop, *[Workshop Title]*, as part of our alliance's effort to establish a unified identity management framework. This workshop will focus on *[brief description of the workshop goal, e.g., "developing a shared vocabulary," "identifying gaps and aligning on solutions," or "finalising an action plan"]*. Alternative text: Join us for our workshop, *[Workshop Title]*. This event is part of our alliance's commitment to establishing a cohesive identity management framework. We will concentrate on *[brief description of the workshop goal, e.g., "creating a shared vocabulary," "identifying gaps and aligning solutions," or "finalising an action plan"]*. *[Insert relevant paragraph below, tailored to the recipient's role]* Please confirm your attendance by *[RSVP deadline]*.
Email template to send out per role
For IT directors: This workshop will depend on an understanding of each institution's technical and strategic approaches to identity management. Your knowledge of your institution's systems will help. It will define practical ways to harmonise identity management across our alliance. We need a solution that balances our alliance's goals with your institution's needs. **For IAM managers:** Seamless, interoperable identity management is our goal. So, we need expertise in authentication, access systems, and identity federation. Your input will clarify the technical scope. It will identify implementation paths that align with the alliance's vision for unified access. **For data privacy officers:** Ensuring that our identity management complies with privacy and security regulations is crucial. Your insights will help align our strategy with data protection policies. This will address privacy concerns and ensure a strong approach to data handling.

For technical leads:

Integrating systems across institutions poses technical challenges. There are issues with compatibility and functionality. Your experience will provide a practical view on how to tackle these challenges. It will help create an interoperable identity management framework.

For process managers:

Implementing identity management solutions requires coordination across departments and a process-oriented approach. Your experience with cross-functional processes will help. It will translate technical solutions into practical workflows. These workflows can be adopted across faculties and admin areas. They will support smooth and consistent user access.

For policy officers:

To keep our identity management approach sustainable and in line with institutional guidelines, we need policy insights. Your views on governance and compliance will help shape strategies. They must align with each institution's policies and the alliance's goals.

Note: The above email template and role specific paragraphs are sample text for your inspiration. Please feel free to make changes. Maybe consult your corporate communication guidelines and style guide. They cover tone, voice, grammar, spelling, and formatting for published text.

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