

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN EUA TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON SUSTAINABILITY

Context and purpose

Over the last decade, universities across Europe have been increasingly engaged with sustainability-related topics. Universities have considered themselves as key actors, acknowledging their social responsibility to drive the change within and beyond their campuses. With the United Nations Agenda 2030 rapidly approaching, critical questions emerge: what can be expected and anticipated for the future of sustainability for the coming decade? How can universities contribute to a new agenda?

In response to these questions and building on European University Association's (EUA) previous and ongoing work on sustainability, a task and finish group has been established by the EUA Board. Through foresight methodologies and future-oriented perspectives, the group will explore the continuous relevance of sustainability in the sector and co-create a vision for the role of universities in advancing the future of sustainability towards 2040.

Members of the group will contribute actively on building future scenarios for universities and sustainability. In particular, they will explore pathways beyond the 2030 Agenda, developing strategies to ensure that universities remain key contributors in shaping the development of a sustainable future over the next decade.

Role of the Task and finish group on Sustainability

The group is established to enhance and maintain the discourse around the future role of sustainability in university missions, strategies, and everyday practices beyond the Agenda 2030. The group will:

- Act as a strategic forum for university leaders to reflect on institutional developments, exchange expertise, and anticipate future trends.
- Contribute to co-creation of a common vision on sustainability by a) sharing insights on the role of universities in the 2030 agenda and b) using foresight methodologies as lenses for their contribution for the future.
- Produce an EUA Statement of the future of universities and sustainability.
- Provide recommendations for the EUA's work on sustainability beyond the duration of the task and finish group.

Specifically, the duties of each group member will be to:

- attend meetings and actively contribute to the work and discussions of the thematic peer group;
- communicate between meetings and provide feedback on the development of resources for EUA members and/or policy input contributed by EUA, as sector representative.

Duration

The task and finish group will be established for a fixed period of nine months and is expected to start operating in autumn 2025, specifically from October 2025 to June 2026.

Composition and appointment

The thematic peer group will comprise approximately 15 to 20 members. Its composition will be endorsed by the EUA Board, based on a proposal put forward by the EUA Secretariat. Interested candidates should fulfil

the following criteria:

- represent an EUA member institution;
- hold a senior leadership position with responsibility for oversight of sustainability within their institution, including but not limited to learning & teaching, research & innovation, governance, community engagement and management processes;
- have experience in the development of institutional policies on sustainability, ideally, showing a larger understanding of the development of sustainability relating to education, research, innovation, knowledge transfer and societal outreach.

Group members are selected through a combination of open call to all EUA members and recommendations from National Rector Conference's (NRC). During the selection process, attention is given to achieving balance in terms of expertise, geography and gender.

In addition, the Task and finish group can agree to invite experts or representatives of external stakeholders to specific meetings if there is a clear and concrete need for their contribution.

The Task and finish group will be chaired by Professor Maurizio Tira, as the member of the EUA Board with responsibility for championing sustainability.

Working methods

- The group will meet as is deemed appropriate by agreement among its members and the EUA Secretariat.
- Meetings will be held mainly online with the possibility to hold one or two onsite meetings if there is need and appetite. Travel costs for (potential) onsite meetings are covered by group members.
- The group is supported by members of the EUA Secretariat, who prepare the necessary documentation for the meetings and arrange the logistical elements. The meeting agendas will be set by the Chair, with input from the Secretariat, and sent to members together with preparatory documents in advance of each meeting. Meeting reports will be drafted by the Secretariat and circulated to group members as soon as possible after the meeting.
- To build effective dialogue within the group, attendance at all meetings is strongly encouraged and replacements are not accepted.
- The Chair moderates the meetings of the group and reports to the EUA Board, as requested, on the work and outputs of the group.

Deadline

The deadline to submit application is 12 September 2025. Applications received after this time cannot be considered.