



Coordinators' meeting

Wednesday 21 June 2023, 10-11.30 BST/ 11-12.30 CET

Online (Microsoft Teams)

Chair: Willem van Winden

**Present:**

Gabriele Agnetti (City of Parma), Thomas Baumgartner (University of Innsbruck) Stefania Baroncelli (Free University of Bolzano), Patrizia Darbellay (City of Lausanne), Andrew Dean (University of Exeter), Martina Hagen (OVGU Magdeburg), Anne Herbig (OVGU Magdeburg), Jörgen Jonsson (City of Norrköping), Marieke Merckx (Ghent University), Sabrina Michielli (City of Bolzano), Mira De Moor (Artevelde Ghent), Marc De Perrot (University of Lausanne), Micaela Sini Scarpato (University of Parma), Anna Maria Lönn Wahlqvist (University of Linköping), Lisa Westpahl (OVGU Magdeburg), Willem van Winden (Chair), Inge Willemsen (City of Ghent), Lindsey Anderson (University of Exeter) *from item 8 onwards*, Alison Ward (University of Exeter) *minutes*.

**1. Welcome**

Willem welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for any additional items for the agenda. Marieke asked about the opportunity to discuss a note produced ahead of the meeting by a small group of partners, containing suggestions regarding different ways of working for the Network. It was agreed these would be picked up at various points throughout the meeting.

Alison passed on Cornelia's apologies and her endorsement of items 2 and 5.

**2. Minutes of coordinators' meeting of 14 February 2023**

The minutes were accepted as a correct record.

**3. Matters arising from the minutes**

Marieke asked if there was any update regarding the website Forum. Alison shared an idea that she and Andrew had recently discussed which she was keen to test with members. The suggestion is to create a password-protected members' area on the website that would serve many purposes:

- To hold the records of previous coordinators' meetings
- To hold information about face-to-face events, including preparation notes, presentations, final reports, and any feedback/learning
- To create a resource library with publications that members can share and access
- To hold information relating to any thematic working groups e.g. the Mobility Working Group
- To alert members to opportunities – e.g. upcoming funding bids, student/staff exchanges or placement opportunities.

Members were in general agreement.

**Action point:** -Alison to discuss with Exeter's web design team with a view to having something operational over the next few months.

Willem asked Thomas about the follow up meeting from the Innsbruck event. Thomas confirmed there was an event in May with a large group of people from the city and the university. This was to further develop ideas that came from the Innsbruck event in 2022 and demonstrates an ongoing commitment to deepening cooperation. They are planning a further event in a few weeks and again in the autumn to identify the support required to deliver joint projects.

#### **4. Update from the Lublin meeting**

- Sincere thanks were extended to Victoria and Diana in their absence for organising an excellent programme.
- Andrew expressed the view that the workshops were a useful experience for Network members to do some in-depth group work together.
- Lublin as a city has changed over the last decade following significant investment.
- There is clear evidence of how the city and the university are working together effectively to deliver this change.
- One general learning point is the impact of late alterations to meeting dates which can prevent key people from attending.

Ideas from the discussion note produced after the Lublin event were raised, including:

- The development of a simple 6–12-month action plan with KPIs, based on the existing Network Strategy document, and including agreement about thematic areas of focus going forward.
- Involving more partners in the preparation of face-to-face meetings. This should start with the theme of the meeting and identify other partners who can contribute good practice examples or case studies, or who share the same challenge. This can also extend to sub-themes where the topic is very broad. The aim is to have contributions from many Network partners.
- There should be good keynote speakers for events who can set the challenge in a wider context.
- Re-incorporation of coordinators' meetings into event programmes (longer sessions, and not right at the end). This should start with the Magdeburg programme and could be used to kickstart development of the Network action plan for 2024.
- Clearly identify the role of students well in advance, based on the meeting theme. Students need to have meaningful engagement. This could involve nominating attendees early so that they can meet virtually before the event, and organising a parallel session during the programme while the coordinators are meeting.
- The outputs from meetings need to be tangible and shareable within partner organisations and a wider audience. This should be built into the planning process for face-to-face meetings.
- Lublin has committed to sharing outputs, the timing and format is not yet clear.
- Presenters at meetings should be guided to talk about the *process* of tandem cooperation, not just the project or outcome that was delivered. This could be achieved by having multiple presenters giving different perspectives.
- Adopting a thematic approach could be a way of attracting/involving potential new members. Willem suggested Debrecen in Hungary might be interested in the Magdeburg theme.
- Jorgen updated on their 'Lublin at home' meeting as they were unable to attend the event in Lublin. Very successful and will be having a following up in September.
- The discussion document is available from the secretariat if partners want a copy.

- We should consider using the website Forum to compile a picture of expertise across the Network.

**Action points:** -Alison to check with Victoria and Diana on the format and timing of the Lublin meeting report.

-Alison to locate the template/checklist for preparing face-to-face meetings and circulate an evaluation spreadsheet for feedback from Lublin. (as per Innsbruck)

-Jorgen to provide a summary of their 'Lublin at home' event for the newsletter.

## **5. Agree the Magdeburg meeting date and its key themes.**

The topic is student retention and how to work with the local economy to recruit a new workforce, at scale. Intel is investing 30bn Euros across Germany and building a 'Silicon Valley' hub in Magdeburg which will require significant numbers of skilled workers.

The topic is Likely to be a similar challenge for Lublin, given its rapid growth, and is of interest to Exeter. We should invite Debrecen from Hungary, including an offer to sit on the planning group.

Andrew has previously worked with Professor Philipp Pohlenz from Otto von Guericke University in Magdeburg on how regions can adapt their skills offer to changing conditions.

Bolzano is working on a retention policy for the top students that go elsewhere to study.

Parma (and others) would like to explore how to recruit students into the field of public administration.

Noted that the theme is a complex topic that could lead to a lack of focus, and will therefore, require good planning and coordination to ensure there are clear learning points.

It is also a good topic to involve students.

The dates for the Magdeburg meeting are confirmed as **5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> December 2023**.

## **6. Meeting locations for 2024 and 2025 (current offers from Ghent, Strasbourg and Bolzano)**

Ghent and Strasbourg are named in the Network's Strategy published last year to host during 2024. Bolzano have indicated they would be keen to host an event in April 2025. The mayor is very supportive.

Ghent and Strasbourg should be able to accommodate any themes if this is the new approach to meetings.

Inge suggested early thoughts for Ghent's theme is 'Learning Cities'. Organising research to address the city's real-life challenges. Broad support for this theme. Lausanne and Bolzano may be interested in helping to organise.

**Action points:** -Ghent to prepare a summary of their proposed theme.

-Pull together a small planning group to work on the Ghent theme.

-Organise an extra coordinators' meeting to initiate the Ghent planning based on a pre-prepared summary, and further develop the Magdeburg programme.

-Discuss a theme for the Bolzano meeting at a future coordinators' meeting.

## **7. Future coordinators' meetings – format and timings**

**Action point:** -Alison to set up an online coordinators' meeting for mid-October, then ensure these are incorporated into the programme for face-to-face events going forward. There will also be a need for additional virtual meetings during the year. Dates to be agreed well in advance.

## **8. Mobility Working Group – how do we progress our ideas?**

**Action points:** -Alison to circulate a questionnaire to pull together information about Network partners' use of the Erasmus scheme.  
-Ensure there is a slot on the Magdeburg programme to have an in-depth discussion on mobility. One challenge relates to the language barrier when exchanging staff between city administrations. This could be explored with the shift towards a more thematic approach.

## **9. Report from the secretariat**

### **a. Network finances**

A full financial report will be presented at the next meeting once all the membership fees income has been received.

### **b. Communication**

Alison will circulate the schedule for new items to Network partners and remind partners one week before they are due. It is vital to feed items through regularly to improve the visibility of the Network through the website, social media, and distribution of the newsletter (we currently have over 340 subscribers for the newsletter).

## **10. Membership update**

No further applications to join. Request to members to reach out to partner cities, particularly around the theme for the Magdeburg meeting.

## **11. AOB**

Marieke mentioned the EAIE session and a workshop on EUniverCities at the end of September.

**Action point:** -Marieke to circulate the details of the session.

The meeting concluded at 11.32 BST/ 12.32 CET.