Workshop 9
Monitoring and assessment of international collaboration

Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung

From Reflection to Simulation: Experiencing Regional Engagement Assessment in Practice

Alexandra Laschkolnig, USTP

Edita Struplova, USTP

Moderation: **Maria E. Weber**, AQ Austria

WLAN:
CAMPUS_STP_GUEST
Benutzer: AQ.Tagung
Passwort: AQ2026

Co-funded by
the European Union

E³UDRES²

Engaged and Entrepreneurial European University as
Driver for European Smart and Sustainable Regions

WELCOME

From Reflection to Simulation: Experiencing Regional Engagement Assessment in Practice

Alexandra Laschkolnig & Edita Struplova
University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

WHAT TO EXPECT TODAY

WHAT WE BRING

- ✓ A brief introduction to the E³UDRES² Regional Engagement Assessment (REA) pilot
- ✓ Insights from a real assessment process within the E³UDRES² Alliance and at the University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten
- ✓ A simulation-based learning experience inspired by actual assessment situations
- ✓ Space for reflection, discussion and exchange of perspectives

WHAT WE INVITE YOU TO DO

- ✓ Step into a role that may be different from your own professional perspective
- ✓ Explore a fictional university case and its regional challenges
- ✓ Engage in dialogue, ask questions and challenge assumptions
- ✓ Contribute your own experiences and ideas

WHAT WE HOPE YOU'LL TAKE AWAY

- → A better understanding of Regional Engagement Assessment in practice
- → Insights into the opportunities and challenges of assessing regional engagement
- → New perspectives on stakeholder dialogue, institutional learning and quality development

A SMALL REQUEST

This workshop works best if you are willing to actively participate, think creatively and embrace the simulation. There are no right or wrong answers, only different perspectives.

E³UDRES²

WHAT PERSPECTIVE ARE YOU BRINGING?

2-MINUTE MENTIMETER CHECK-IN

Before we begin, tell us about the experience and perspectives you bring into the room.

Your input will help us understand who is here and make the simulation richer.

01 YOUR EXPERIENCE

How familiar are you with regional engagement in higher education?

02 YOUR PERSPECTIVE

From which role or viewpoint are you joining today?

03 YOUR FIRST ASSOCIATION

What comes to mind when you hear “regional engagement”?

JOIN THE POLL

Scan the QR code or open:

menti.com/aliwiuy6ock9

ANONYMOUS · APPROX. 2 MINUTES

EUDRES³

MENTIMETER · LIVE PRESENTATION VIEW

MENTIMETER PRESENTATION

View the live results: here

Link to mentimeter results:
https://www.mentimeter.com/app/presentation/al59qaxbxi5e69ke9joxu1qk7yk4f534/results

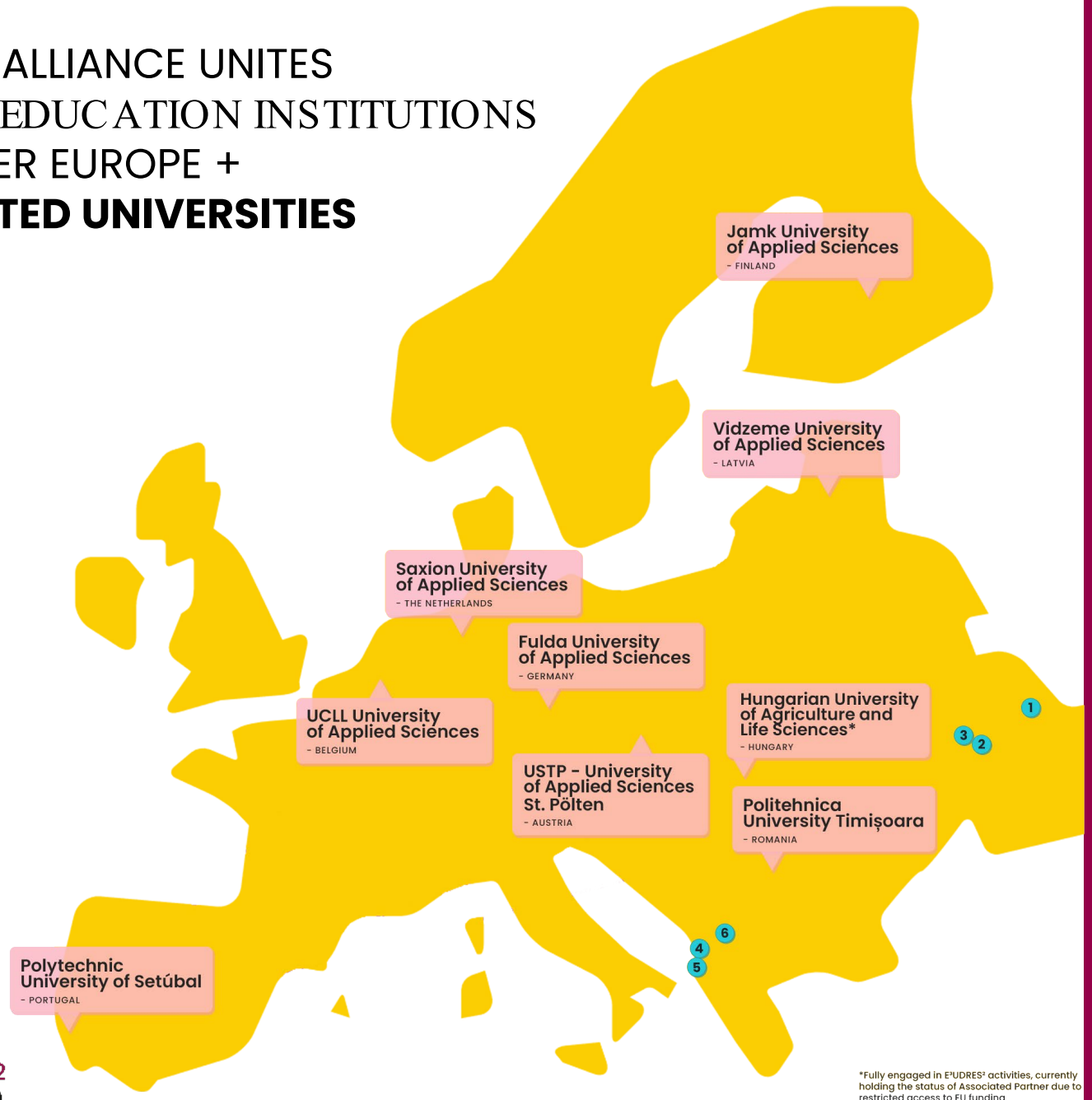
E³UDRES² EUROPEAN UNIVERISITY ALLIANCE

E³UDRES² = Engaged and Entrepreneurial European University as Driver for European Smart and Sustainable Regions

- **European Universities** are a flagship initiative of the European Commission, launched in 2019. Systemic, structural and sustainable transnational cooperation between HE institutions in the fields of education, research, innovation and services for society. Currently 73 Alliances.
- **E³UDRES²** has been part of the initiative since **2020**, bringing together **9 universities** from all over Europe. University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten (USTP) is the lead of the alliance.
- 100.000+ students and 10.000 staff
- Vision: multi-university campus across Europe
- The way of work: Challenge-based education, mission-oriented research, human-centred innovation, future-oriented universities
- Applied & regional → the core profile and uniqueness of E³UDRES²!

E³UDRES²

THE E³UDRES² ALLIANCE UNITES NINE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS FROM ALL OVER EUROPE + **SIX ASSOCIATED UNIVERSITIES**



*Fully engaged in E³UDRES² activities, currently holding the status of Associated Partner due to restricted access to EU funding

E³UDRES²

USTP- University Of Applied Sciences St. Pölten, AT (Lead)
4.000 students | *ustp.at*

Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, HU*
13.000 students | *uni-mate.hu*

Politehnica University Timișoara , RO
13.500 students | *upt.ro*

Polytechnic University of Setúbal, PT
9.300 students | *ips.pt*

UCLL University of Applied Sciences, BE
21.400 students | *ucll.be*

Fulda University of Applied Sciences, DE
8.800 students | *hs-fulda.de*

Saxion University of Applied Sciences, NL
27.300 students | *saxion.edu*

Jamk University of Applied Sciences, FI
9.500 students | *jamk.fi*

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, LV
700 students | *va.lv*

+ 5 ASSOCIATED UNIVERSITIES

1 Sumy State University, UA 2 Cherkasy State Business College, UA 3 Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National University of Cherkasy, UA 4 Luigj Gurakuqi University of Shkodër , AL 5 Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës , AL 6 University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj , XK

REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT ASESSEMENT (REA)

- HE Institutions, particularly Universities of Applied Sciences, are increasingly expected to demonstrate their contribution to regional development.
- Regional Engagement Assessment - **UASiMAP framework** (Erasmus+ project, EURASHE)
  - Assessment & enhancement the regional engagement of Universities of Applied Sciences
  - Self-reflection, combined with stakeholder consultation
- In 2026, E³UDRES² decided to pilot this framework → adjustment to the Alliance's needs and profile
- 4 piloting E³UDRES² institutions from Portugal, Finland, Netherlands, and Austria
- Evaluation of UAS' performance across four key **dimensions**:

1. Regional strategies	2. Education and lifelong learning	3. Applied research and innovation	4. Civic and community engagement

REA PROCESS

Prepare and align

Peer exchange

Exchange on the report with E³UDRES² piloting partners

Joint organization of site visits

Reflect & improve

Survey & reflection dialogues with stakeholders and critical friends

Self-access (report)

Each partner created a self-assessement report

"REA report" 4x

Critical friends review

„Site Visit" - discussion rounds with relevant stakeholders

Critical friends leading the discussions 4x

E³UDRES²

REA ELEMENTS

Which groups are involved?

- Academic leaders
- Academic key staff
- Students
- External stakeholders
- *Critical friends*
- *Core "REA group"*

REA = practical framework for accessing and strengthening how universities of applied sciences engage with their regions

What does the process deliver?

- Self-evaluation report
- Critical friends feedback
- Improvement priorities

Added value of the European University Alliance:

- Peer learning
- Benchmarking
- Pooling resources & expertise
- Practical example of how regional engagement and European cooperation can be connected!

EUDRES³²

SIMULATION GAME: „EXPRESS REA“

30 MINUTES · ROLE-BASED LEARNING

Step into a role · explore the case · challenge assumptions

For the next 30 minutes, you are not only workshop participants. You are university leaders, students, regional stakeholders and critical friends. Let’s see what happens.

EUDRES³

The picture is AI-generated

RULES OF THE GAME

30 MINUTES · EXPLORE, DON'T EVALUATE

01 DISCUSS YOUR FICTIONAL INSTITUTION

Build a shared picture of the case.

- What are the most important regional challenges?
- Who are the key regional stakeholders?
- What should the university contribute?

02 SPEAK FROM YOUR ASSIGNED ROLE

Everyone gets a role card. Speak from it throughout the discussion.

- Expectations
- Interests
- Questions
- Overlooked perspectives

03 REPORT BACK AS CRITICAL FRIEND

The Critical Friend briefly reports back during the shared reflection.

- Central conversation themes, key discussion points and open questions from the group.

BONUS

If you could invite one additional stakeholder to this assessment, who would it be and why?

Be ready to explain your choice.

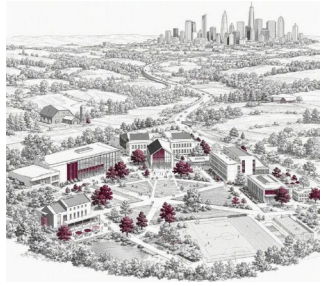
EUDRES³²

CHOOSE YOUR CASE

Discuss one case for your mini Regional Engagement Assessment.

Each scenario will be introduced on the following slides.

A



CASE A

Rural UAS near a metro area

commuters · brain drain

B

CASE B

Multi-campus university

diverse regions · shared strategy

C

CASE C

Newly merged institution

cultures · governance · alignment

step into your assigned role · begin the assessment

EUDRES³²

CASE A | RURAL UAS NEAR A METROPOLITAN AREA

FICTIONAL SCENARIO

A

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

- 4,000 students
- Located in a rural region
- 45 minutes from a major city
- Many commuting students
- Strong competition from metropolitan universities

REGIONAL CHALLENGES

- Skills shortage
- Brain drain
- Ageing population
- Low research intensity among regional SMEs

STRENGTHS

- Close relationships with municipalities
- Strong reputation in the region
- Strong practice orientation

CRITICAL QUESTION

How can the university contribute to regional development while many graduates leave the region?

Explore the tension between regional responsibility and graduate mobility.

EUDRES³

CASE B | MULTI-CAMPUS UNIVERSITY

FICTIONAL SCENARIO

B

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

- 6 campuses
- Serving highly diverse regions
- Urban, suburban and rural settings

CHALLENGES

- Different regional needs
- Limited resources
- A coherent overall strategy is difficult to communicate

STRENGTHS

- Broad regional presence
- Large partner network

CRITICAL QUESTION

What does regional engagement mean when your institution serves several very different regions?

CASE C | NEWLY MERGED APPLIED SCIENCES + COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY

FICTIONAL SCENARIO

C

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

- Recently merged
- Different institutional cultures
- New governance structures

CHALLENGES

- Developing a shared strategy
- Different stakeholder expectations
- Balancing regional and international orientation

STRENGTHS

- High level of expertise
- Strong research base
- High visibility

CRITICAL QUESTION

How can regional engagement become a shared mission in a newly merged institution?

MEET YOUR CHARACTERS

Academic leader

University leadership team (e.g. Rectorate, Vice-Rector, Dean).

Academic Key Staff

staff member actively involved in teaching, research, innovation, outreach, or community engagement.

Student

Current student and future graduate

External stakeholder

businesses, public authorities, NGOs, community organisations

Critical friend

external peer who supports the institution through constructive questioning and reflection

The picture is AI-generated

30 MINUTES: BEGIN THE ASSESSMENT

GROUP WORK · 30 MINUTES

30 MIN

GET READY

Review the role and case description provided on the A4 sheet at your table.

The critical friend can open the simulated assessment with one of these questions.

CRITICAL FRIEND OPENING QUESTIONS

01 What are the most important challenges facing this region?

02 What role should the university play in addressing them?

03 What important perspective, stakeholder or opportunity might currently be overlooked?

Listen for tensions, blind spots and opportunities worth sharing.

EUDRES³²

GROUP REFLECTION

E3UDRES2

KEY INSIGHTS & LESSONS LEARNED FROM E³UDRES² REA

- Regional engagement is highly context-specific and cannot be meaningfully assessed through numbers alone.
- Self-assessment becomes more robust when narratives, quantitative indicators and stakeholder perspectives are combined.
- Regular peer exchange among pilot institutions was essential for developing a shared understanding and avoiding isolated interpretations.
- Critical Friends Reviews added strategic distance, external credibility and valuable challenge to institutional self-perceptions.
- Engagement assessment is resource-intensive but offers significant learning value for institutions and the alliance.

WHAT USTP LEARNED FROM THE REA

01 A STRONG FOUNDATION

- Embedded in USTP's mission, teaching, applied research and community activities.
- Trusted by public authorities, companies, innovation intermediaries and civil society.
- Practice-oriented education, internships, co-creation and user-inspired research respond to regional needs.

02 OUR MAIN IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- Strong activities and partnerships still lack one coherent institutional framework.
- Engagement remains fragmented across departments, projects and individual networks.
- The challenge is to coordinate, document and strategically connect what already exists.

03 POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

- Strengthen data collection, stakeholder management and long-term monitoring.
- Make activities, success stories and contributions more visible.
- Build stronger structures for student and community engagement.

KEY TAKE-AWAY **USTP does not primarily need more regional engagement activities.**

It needs to CONNECT, COMMUNICATE and DEMONSTRATE the value of what is already happening.

EUDRES³

OUTLOOK & NEXT STEPS

- REA already proven its value as a **developmental instrument**
- Short-term perspective:
  - Methodology & learnings included in the upcoming project deliverable
  - Remaining E³UDRES² partners conduct the REA exercise
- The EURegionsWeek: local REA follow up events
- Building on the positive experiences by:
  - synthesising common insights
  - refining methodological elements
  - developing a **roadmap for scaling** the REA across the alliance
- Long-term perspective:
  - Further deepening of institutional learning
  - Strengthening the coherence of E³UDRES²
  - **Enhancement of the collective visibility and impact of E³UDRES² in European regions.**

E³UDRES²

Engaged and Entrepreneurial European University as Driver for European Smart and Sustainable Regions

Thank you!

www.eudres.eu

@eudres_european_university

E³UDRES²

E³UDRES² European University

EUDRES European University

@eudres_alliance

Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung

Vielen Dank!

Alle Präsentationen werden im Zuge der der Tagungsdokumentation (Oktober 2026) bereitgestellt.

Informationen zur Tagungspublikation (Erscheinungstermin Frühjahr 2027): ulrike.najar@aq.ac.at

Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung

14:30 – 15:00 Uhr

Kaffeepause

nächster Programmpunkt um 15:00 Uhr im großen Festsaal:

Impulsvortrag von Jakob Calice, Geschäftsführer des OeAD **-** Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung