

**Statement of the participants at the UNICA EduLAB
European Conference “*Design of European degrees –
Building flexible pathways beyond academic cycles*”
Bucharest, May 26-27, 2022**

The UNICA EduLAB European Conference “Design of European degrees – Building flexible pathways beyond academic cycles” has brought together, onsite and online, 93 participants from 13 countries, among which representatives of major stakeholders in the development of European Higher Education Area.

Nowadays higher education is at an inflexion point, strategic and visionary directions being created and implemented within universities across Europe. One of them is the need for rethinking academic curricula in a flexible manner, as universities are invited to think outside the box and adapt to the dynamical needs of today and future students, in an approach based on European Degrees, micro-credentials and enhanced professional and training opportunities for non-traditional students.

As European testbeds for change in higher education, European Alliances need to be flexible and resilient to encompass both the diversity and needs of these institutions, but also to respond to global socio-economic challenges. In this sense, European Alliances need to assume a forefront role for the co-creation of new models for universities across Europe.

In a technological and dynamic era, interdisciplinarity and flexible learning pathways enable universities to respond to students’ diversity and needs and to engage in a wider lifelong learning educational context. Competencies should be at the core of the educational process and universities should consider the advantages of European-recognized digital passports of competencies, which will co-exist for a period of time with traditional diplomas.

The European Alliances bring innovation and structural change in the European Education Area. As being some of the most prestigious in the different countries and have a positive experience in internal quality assurance, their common programs should be exempted from the ex-ante external accreditation by national agencies of quality assurance. Internal quality assurance mechanisms established either at the level of the European Alliances, or at university level, should focus mostly on the learning outcomes, and less on the evaluation of educational inputs.

European Universities play a crucial role in contributing to the democratic resilience of Europe, building a society with strong democratic and humanistic values. As lighthouses for the European way of life, universities should promote civic engagement and critical thinking, as crucial vectors for building a diverse and inclusive European society, open to change and able to cope with the challenges ahead.