Mission Statement

Summary

Our name

The words 'unidad, unidade, unità, unitate, unité' inspire our name: UNITA. It evokes the strong links and commonalities that bring us together to create a ground-breaking and innovative alliance aiming at a deeper level of integration. Universitas Montium, written in Latin, stresses a common heritage and the fact that UNITA universities all speak Romance languages, and are committed to fostering linguistic diversity and to the development of rural and cross-border mountain territories.

Our slogan 'Climb your future' reflects our commitment to supporting the aspirations of our graduates and our communities by fostering their resilience to cope with life's challenges.

Who we are

We are an alliance of comprehensive research universities with different sizes and trajectories gathering nearly 250.000 students and 21.000 staff members. We are situated in rural, mountain, and cross-border regions across Southern, Western and Central-Eastern Europe, in ecosystems sharing similar challenges and impacted by core-periphery dynamics.

Six of our institutions contributed to launch the UNITA Universitas Montium experience in its first phase. From west to east: Universidade de Beira Interior, Universidad de Zaragoza, Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, Université Savoie Mont Blanc, Università di Torino, and Universitatea de Vest din Timisoara.

Four more universities sharing the common features that make up the UNITA identity — especially Romance languages, commitment to the regional development and location in rural, mountain, and cross-border environments — were invited to join our alliance as from the second year, beginning to share some of our activities as associated partners and now they are committed to become full members: Instituto Politécnico da Guarda, Universidad Pública de Navarra, Università degli Studi di Brescia and Universitatea Transilvania Brasov.

Two more institutions within the European Higher Education Area partake of our ambitions and some activities as university associated partners: the Haute Ecole Spécialisée de Suisse Occidentale (Switzerland) and, to the extent of its now limited possibilities and within the aim of supporting the future recovery of its country, the Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University (Ukraine).

UNITA Offices

UBI   IPG   UPNA   UNIZAR   UPPA   USMB   UNITO   UNIBS   UVT   UNITBV   HES-SO   CHNU

The UNITA expansion strategy aims at strengthening one of its main objectives — the development of its territories — through the reinforcement of the impact of the four university educational, research and innovation regional clusters in Serra da Estrela, Pyrenees, Alps and Carpathians, the four mountain ranges where UNITA is based.

Who we are

Our more than fifty associated partners represent different actors in each regional ecosystem, including the socio-economic sector, public authorities, a quality assurance agency, policy makers and civil organizations. Together, we constitute a unique ecosystem that will ensure the transformative impact and the sustainability of our new University model.

The newly established legal entity UNITA Universitas Montium (European Economic Interest Grouping) will also join as full partner to support the full roll-out of the alliance.

Our values

- We share a strong commitment to contribute to the development of our societies and territories in a European dimension, including the awareness of a shared European citizenship and the contribution to the permanently ongoing construction of European identity.
- We actively and increasingly use Romance languages in addition to English in education, research, innovation and management, thus enhancing linguistic diversity and promoting inclusion but also re-sorting to them as a tool for projecting UNITA beyond Europe taking advantage of our languages in large regions of the world, particularly in the Americas and in Africa.
- We are strongly committed to promoting the European democratic values of peace, human dignity and human rights, equality, diversity and inclusion, and to the construction of a fully-fledged European University fostering the European way of life. We believe in:

1. Democratic participation

2. Societal and civic engagement

3. Diversity

4. People empowerment

5. Inclusiveness

6. Environmental responsibility

Fundamental purpose

UNITA phase one has laid the foundation for the deep institutional transformation of our institutions envisaged in this mission statement. We are proud to have established:

- A participative governance and effective management structures
- A UNITA Quality Assurance policy and assessment tools
- The cartography of courses in the three main thematic areas (Cultural heritage, Circular Economy, Renewable energies) and the corresponding Research & Innovation Hubs
- A microcredential framework and pilot courses with digital badges
- The active use of multilingualism through the inter-comprehension methodology
- New forms of mobility for instance in the rural and mountain areas
- An initial framework model for the digital campus
- A space of reflection on European citizenship and identity
- A model of global outreach for European universities based on Romance languages through the GEMINAE initiative.

Fundamental purpose

In the second phase of UNITA as a genuine European university we will build on these achievements to bring our institutionalised cooperation to the next level, contributing to the educational, scientific and cultural progress of our regions, fostering their sustainable development, strengthening the local innovation ecosystems supporting their transition to a knowledge-based economy, whilst promoting and accelerating European integration within and beyond them.

As rural, mountain, and cross-border territories, our regions face specific, similar challenges, such as depopulation, brain drain, more costly public services, and core-periphery dynamics. These challenges add up to global ones such as climate change, digital divide and ageing population. By achieving unprecedented levels of transnational cooperation and seamless mobility, the alliance will be able to respond to these challenges with all the strengths of a large, diverse and vibrant university community. A set of joint strategies covering all aspects of university activity, but always reflecting our foundational commitment with regional development, will turn UNITA into a powerful instrument of European cohesion.

Our cultural, historic and linguistic bonds constitute the common ground on which cooperation in education, research and innovation will thrive. By promoting intercomprehension and romance languages learning, UNITA will contribute to multilingualism as an essential element of the European way of life. Romance languages and academic excellence are the two pillars of our attractiveness and competitiveness in the global scene.

With more than one billion people speaking our languages, UNITA intends to exchange talents and promote Europe's values and soft power worldwide.

Fundamental purpose

We share a firm willingness to develop and implement a wide variety of shared personalised, multilingual and international study paths for different learner profiles. We cooperate on the basis of mutual trust in a transformational project aiming at establishing new models of increasingly collaborative and integrated teaching and learning, strongly linked to research and innovation, taking advantage of our complementary strengths in different fields and sharing knowledge, savoir-faire and best practices through cooperation with other European alliances.
We have translated these opportunities and challenges in a thriving European University alliance that will finish its pilot phase in 2023 and embark on a new 4-year journey set out in a 10-year perspective.

Our long-term vision

Our long-term vision is to transform the way we cooperate, educate, do research, innovate, and reach out to society. In the coming years and in an expanded structure, the UNITA alliance intends to contribute to the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area and to the full roll-out of the European Universities Initiative. To make our vision a reality, we have agreed on a workplan for the coming four years and defined milestones for the period after.

Well within 10 years from now, our learners should be able to choose their personalised, multilingual and international study paths from a rich learning offer. Students, academic and administrative staff will benefit from seamless mobility opportunities across the alliance and beyond, including rural experiences. Our institutions will function as innovation incubators within and across their territories matching the ambitions of the European Innovation

Our long-term vision

Agenda and of the European Skills Agenda. We will have deepened and formalised our cooperation with our global partners. We will have substantially diminished carbon emission and implemented strategies for financial sustainability. We want to be a forum for citizen science, a catalyst for European integration and a reliable global player with solutions for digital and green transition, addressing labour market challenges and social or societal issues through the excellent education and training, interdisciplinary knowledge and competencies and innovative research solutions.

Our content focus will be on fields, new and emerging, of direct importance to territorial development, linked to smart specialisation strategies and Sustainable Development Goals. We are currently cooperating in the fields of renewable energies, cultural heritage, and the circular economy, which yield a considerable propagative impact, both in terms of the sustainability of the ecosystems and in order to employability for graduates and citizens. New fieds will be added to mainstream innovative action of the first phase to all our faculties and departments, thus enhancing the impact of the European Universities Initiative and the performance capacity of the alliance: these new fields will be selected in the domains of Health, Computational and Data Sciences, Digital Humanities, Social Sciences and Human Sciences.

Our transformative approach

The first phase of UNITA (2020-2023) has initiated deep transformation in the member universities that will continue and fully roll out during the second phase (2023-2027) and beyond, also integrating our four new partners. Thanks to the engagement of our communities, we went beyond what we proposed, supporting our alliance's integration through the synergy of funds from the UNITA constellation of projects and from local, regional and national authorities, a model that we intend to replicate in the second phase.

Participative and inclusive methods to design and implement a model European university are at the core of our everyday action: for the second phase of UNITA over 400 students, academic and administrative staff have been involved in the drafting of the proposal. Both university actors (academic and administrative staff, students) and associated partners are represented in the governance and management bodies. Student representation is ensured also in the task teams as well as in the quality assurance task.
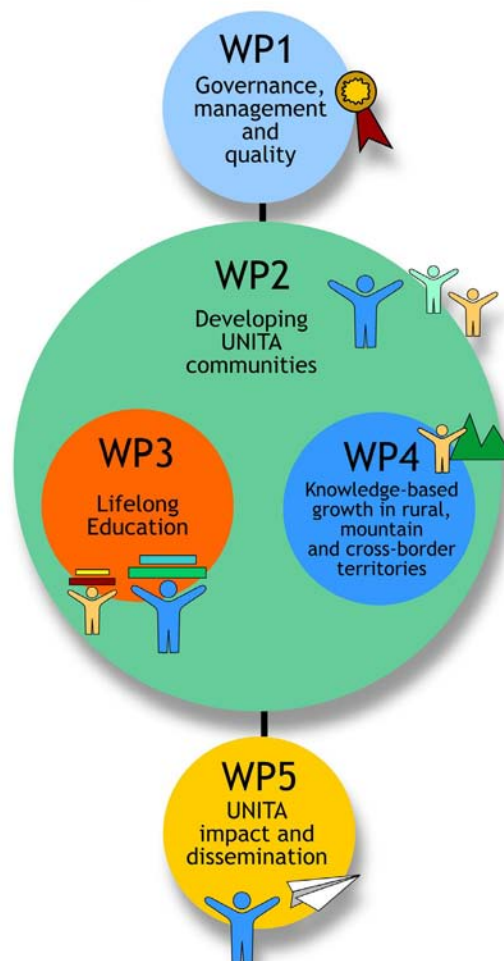
Our transformative approach

We have entrusted our day-to-day cooperation to a series of inter-institutional work package and task teams that will follow step-by-step activity roadmaps they have designed in recent months, guided by the alliance leadership.

Project WP structure

WP1
Governance, management and quality

WP2
Developing UNITA communities

WP3
Lifelong Education

WP4
Knowledge-based growth in rural, mountain and cross-border territories

WP5
UNITA impact and dissemination

Our transformative approach

They will chart and examine the state of play in their field, outline what joint actions they could undertake, assess and accommodate the implementation thereof and, based on evidence found, intensify and widen the scope of the actions taken.

Task teams will collaborate within and across work packages. They are composed of experts in their field, e.g. directors of study or Human Resources officials. They will involve students, staff, stakeholders-associated partners in wider task communities of learners and professionals who execute the tasks at local and alliance level.

To fully capitalize on our strengths together, we have created a 'European Economic Interest Grouping', as a starting point towards a new model of legal entity serving the purposes of European universities. Through this tool we will design the trajectory to transform the alliance into an institutionalised European university that deals with UNITA assets, accelerates policy convergence, facilitates the pooling of resources and houses universities that keep their autonomy.
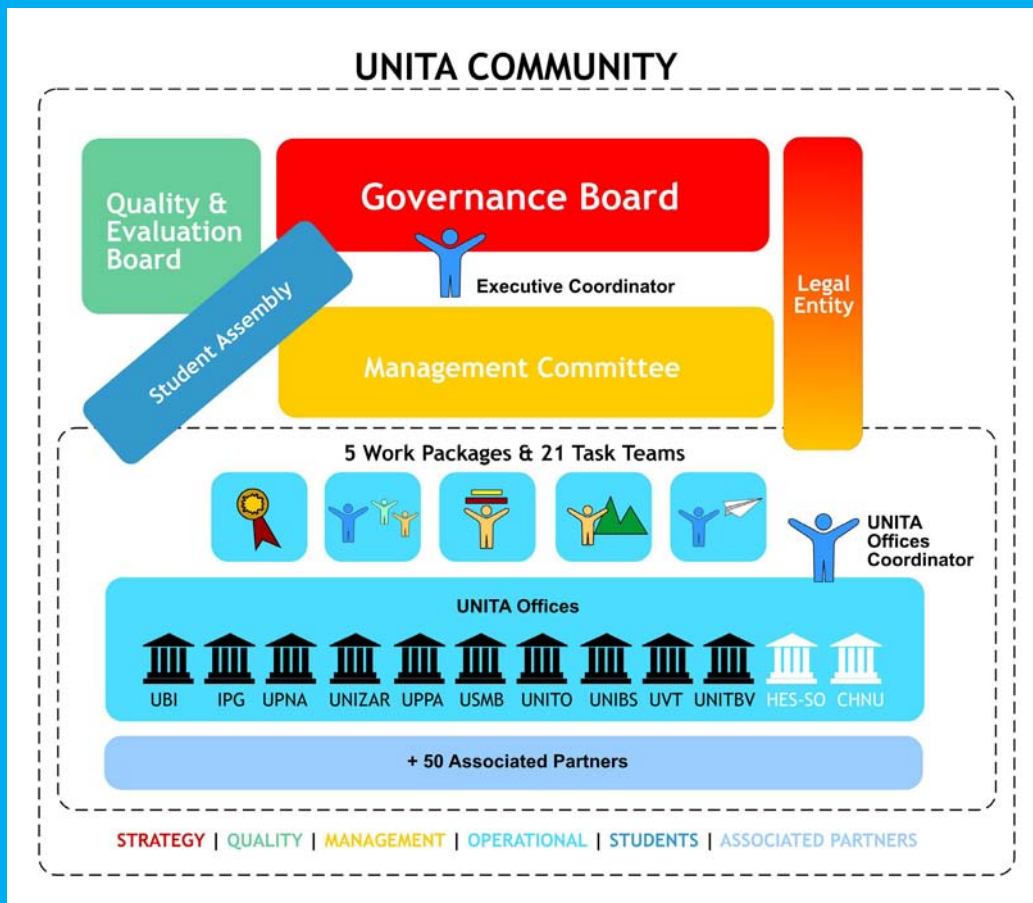
Our actions

For the next phase, we focus our action on five objectives impacting all university missions:

1) Build the model for an institutionalised European university and ensure the fully operational and measurable implementation of alliance tasks and deliverables in a quality framework with academic and societal impact.

UNITA COMMUNITY

Quality & Evaluation Board

Student Assembly

Governance Board

Executive Coordinator

Legal Entity

Management Committee

5 Work Packages & 21 Task Teams

UNITA Offices Coordinator

UNITA Offices

UBI   IPG   UPNA   UNIZAR   UPPA   USMB   UNITO   UNIBS   UVT   UNITBV   HES-SO   CHNU

+ 50 Associated Partners

STRATEGY | QUALITY | MANAGEMENT | OPERATIONAL | STUDENTS | ASSOCIATED PARTNERS

Our actions

To this purpose, we will:

- Update and maintain the governance structures, and further develop a model for an institutionalised European university through long-term visions and strategies both for effective and inclusive governance at partner and alliance level, and per policy domain, e.g. quality assurance, data driven governance and management, green, sustainability, digital, open data, open science, open education, lifelong education, linguistic policy, mobility

- Establish and maintain the management structures, in particular the UNITA Offices, fully integrating new partners, engaging students, academic and administrative staff, stimulating the involvement of associated partners

- Update and mainstream the UNITA Quality Assurance policy and assessment tools developed during the first phase, in accordance with the European Standard Guidelines

Our actions

2) Support the construction of communities of students, teachers and researchers, and administrative staff, by enabling policies for human resources, multilingualism, mobility and the promotion of the European way of life.

To this purpose, we will:

- Promote well-being, inclusion, gender and social equity, increase staff training and career development within the alliance, fostering intra- and extra-entrepreneurship and leadership capacity and connecting students' organisations and initiatives

- Integrate and combine Romance languages learning and intercomprehension in existing programmes and produce micro-credentials on these topics for different learner profiles in the framework of a UNITA language policy

Our actions

- Create and support communities of educators, researchers and innovators who share a common interest in a field of knowledge and want to develop the field further through exchanges of good practice and the launch of joint projects

- Achieve mobility opportunities for students and staff by embedding mobility as a structural feature at all levels of the alliance, with a particular emphasis on intra-alliance and rural mobility. Pave the way towards seamless mobility by reducing obstacles and simplifying procedures including automatic recognition

- Develop and promote European citizenship and identity, the European way of life and a sense of belonging among the UNITA communities (students and staff), but also among the citizens, particularly the inhabitants of rural and mountain areas, as well as regional authorities and associations, and contribute to the reflection and debate on these fundamental European concepts and values

Our actions

3) Develop and implement shared actions, labels and tools to build personalised, multilingual and international study paths, within, across and beyond the partner institutions with the aim of enhancing the internationalisation of curricula and developing a UNITA offer in Lifelong learning, open to a large public.

To this purpose we will:

• Transform learning through programme innovation, reaching out to a varied set of learner profiles, providing them with the unique and labelled UNITA multilingual learning experience through personalised international learning paths, thus contributing to the definition of a European degree label

Our actions

- Develop the UNITA lifelong learning strategy based, in particular, on UNITA micro-credentials as key training tools for lifelong learners, including students, in order to upskill and reskill their competencies

- Innovate teaching and learning in a European context through teacher and educational support, with a focus on challenge based and STEAM approach

- Create a UNITA inter-university digital campus as multi-lingual, multi-site and multi-modal integrated lifelong learning environment serving learners, staff and stakeholders from registration to certification with online access to materials, connected classrooms, our comprehensive course cartography, catalogues of UNITA opportunities among others

Our actions

4) Energise the territories of the partner universities through research-based education, research and innovation-related activities.

To this purpose, we will:

- Share strategic knowledge through inter-territorial communities and interfaces, supporting stakeholders in research, education, deep-tech and entrepreneurship training activities, in line with the Smart Specialisation Strategies and the European Innovation Agenda

- Promoting cooperative research among the alliance partners and inter-territorial research communities, working on existing and emerging alliance thematic hubs, originating in complementary competences, alliance strategies, SDGs and territorial Smart Specialisation Strategies

- Facilitate and improve the partners' sharing practices of the research infrastructures and related services according to identified needs

- Develop interconnected master and doctoral programmes targeting alliance focus areas through research-based academic, practice-oriented and industrial-based training

Our actions

5) Ensure dissemination, financial sustainability, green resilience, long-term impact and global outreach

To this purpose we will:

- Consolidate and share our common identity among UNITA partners and toward external stakeholders Ensure the financial sustainability of the alliance scouting and synergizing multiple sources of funding

- Increase the positive impact of UNITA on the environment, by incorporating sustainability in education and research activities and by stimulating environmentally responsible behaviour among the academic community

- Observe and measure the transformative impact of UNITA within our universities and at the local, regional, national and global level

- Develop a UNITA international relations policy to scale up our collaborations in Europe and beyond, notably working with European University Alliances and our global partners in the GEMINAE network