

## UNICA Policy for Projects

**November 2011**

In pursuit of its stated policy objectives, UNICA initiates or engages in funded projects. Such projects may take several forms, with the institutional participation of UNICA as a network or the participation of one or more member Universities. We adopt a structural pluralism when it comes to the form of projects, as our experience has shown that diversity facilitates collaborations without impeding initiative and creativity.

The involvement of UNICA in European and international projects over the last few years provided value to our members, and increased significantly the visibility of the network and its members in the EHEA and beyond. This active presence has built trust and attracted the attention of other partner universities, networks and higher education stakeholders that have asked UNICA to share experiences and good practices with them, and to take part in collaborative projects. The direct interactions with the European Commission in the context of projects have likewise strengthened the reach of the network. The European Commission has been in regular contact with UNICA as a strategic stakeholder. It has drawn on the expertise of our member Universities or of the network organization to map new initiatives and policies.

The UNICA projects not only add value to our members and strengthen the reach and visibility of the network, but they also add financial strength. As a result of the extra funds obtained through the projects, the capacity of the Secretariat to plan and develop initiatives has doubled without increasing the direct cost to the member Universities.

This Policy Statement aims at clarifying the opportunities available to UNICA Members and Working Groups (WG). The goal of the policy is to continue raising the visibility of the Network and its Members by mobilizing the existing resources and bringing together the available expertise on a voluntary basis. The Policy aims at creating the necessary transparency in the initiation of projects, while maintaining the essential flexibility of a network such as ours where many activities depend on the voluntary initiative of our members.

The mission statement of UNICA explicitly recognizes the value of projects when it states that the network “provides members with information on European initiatives and programmes, and supports them in co-operative projects”.

The possibility of involving the different bodies of UNICA in collaborative projects better defines their role and strengthens the various discussion forums and cooperation platforms of the Network. One of the main added values of UNICA membership is that

the members have a chance to find reliable partners within the Network for international and European joint initiatives and projects.

The projects undertaken will be linked to the UNICA clusters of activities and WGs framed in the annual UNICA Work Programme. Projects are regarded as a means to acquire external resources to co-finance the activities of the Network. A project should enhance mutual experience and the development of capacities for the benefit of each institution and the EHEA as a whole.

In pursuing the policy of project initiation and participation, we establish below the procedures that provide the framework for any activity or project carried out by the Network. This document will also help identify possible project opportunities and new areas of interest, always in line with the main goals of UNICA. By establishing a clear structure and a transparent procedure, the organization avoids the pitfalls of pursuing projects that may be financially successful but are not in line with the core mission of the Network. Furthermore, carrying out activities and projects showing an evident logic and based on a coherent policy will further convey a message of who we are, what we do, and why we do it.

The procedures stated below are based on the different practices followed so far by the WGs and the Secretariat for the preparation of project proposals.

## **Procedures**

### *Principles*

1. The annual Work Programme is approved by the General Assembly and is organized by clusters of activities that shall be developed throughout the academic year.
2. If requested, the Secretariat shall give an overview of the possible funding opportunities with the requirements, workload, timeline and deadlines for specific proposals suggested by the WGs. A list of all project initiatives will be provided to the General Assembly, including their current status.
3. The Members may propose ideas for projects that may concur with the various funding opportunities available in the EHEA. The Secretariat shall support the Members in developing proposals, become a partner and, if requested and appropriate, coordinate projects. A short summary about the proposed idea should be presented including the rationale, the target groups, proposed activities and outcomes, priorities satisfied and under which call the proposal may be submitted.
4. Whenever the Secretariat finds an interesting opportunity for a project, it shall consult the Members to see if there is sufficient interest to lead to a balanced application for funding and successful implementation of the project in question. A WG meeting shall be organized if enough members show interest in

- developing a proposal. After the meeting, the Members willing to participate in the project shall confirm their commitment and support the preparation of the proposal.
5. A member of the Steering Committee or a person appointed by the UNICA Steering Committee shall be actively involved in the projects of the Network and have the responsibility of monitoring the implementation. As an academic coordinator, s/he shall have an overview of both the administrative and academic implementation of the project.
  6. The members of the UNICA Steering Committee shall be regularly informed about the projects undertaken by the Network and give their consent for the Network to become the project coordinator.

### *Project Proposal*

#### **A) Members/Working Group – Secretariat<=> Steering Committee**

The Member Universities or WG members may propose to the Secretariat ideas for developing projects. The Secretariat shall support the members in finding partners and funding opportunities to submit joint projects. If a Member, a WG or an external entity requests UNICA to become a partner in a project, the Secretariat shall accept it if the aims of the project relate to the UNICA Mission Statement, to the objectives established within any of the UNICA clusters, or to one of the activities of the annual Work Programme. The Secretariat shall inform the Steering Committee about the project initiative. A WG meeting shall be organized to draft the proposal.

#### **B) Steering Committee – Secretariat – Members/Working Group**

The Steering Committee members may propose ideas to develop projects. The Secretariat shall inform all UNICA Contact Persons and relevant WGs once a project initiative has been proposed. In case the initiative is of the interests of a minimum of three Members, a WG meeting shall be organized. If needed, new Working Groups to develop specific proposals may be established.

#### **C) Secretariat – Steering Committee – Members/Working Group**

The Secretariat shall inform the Steering Committee about the project opportunities that the Network may benefit from, and raise the visibility of its members at the European and international level. The President and the Secretary General shall analyze the strategic character of the proposal. The decision on whether UNICA should or should not undertake the project shall be taken within an established deadline (which shall depend on the specific deadline of the call). If the proposal is granted approval, the Secretariat shall inform all the UNICA Contact Persons. A person appointed by the Steering Committee shall be responsible for that project.

### *Partnership Building*

The number of partners composing the project consortium shall depend upon the type of project and on the interest of the Members. After the WG meeting has been held to start drafting the proposal, the Secretariat shall circulate e-mails to all the members of the WG with the UNICA Contact Persons in copy. A deadline for the official confirmation of the willingness to participate in the project shall be established and the members replying within this deadline shall be considered as project partners.

In line with the eligibility criteria of the call, if the number of applications exceeds the maximum number of partners required for the successful implementation of the action, a geographical balance shall be respected. Priority shall be given to the members who have not been involved in any other project coordinated by UNICA. The commitment of the experts engaged and the expertise in the field of the proposal shall also be considered in order to determine the composition of the partnership.

All project partners shall be considered as co-beneficiaries and shall act as such. A formal letter of commitment to the project as a partner shall be provided within an established deadline. The Members not taking part in the project partnership shall also follow and benefit from the project outcomes. The project shall become part of the general Working Group discussions; all the experts shall be invited to provide their expertise and to participate in the project development and evaluation.

The participation of other organizations and non-UNICA members shall be possible, but in any case priority shall be given to the Members of the Network. The selection of partners shall also maximize the variety of the membership within the project consortium in order to guarantee its successful implementation and to maximize the final outcomes.