

D1.1A

OpenEU Governance Framework Guidelines and rules

March 2025

Version number: 01

Version History

Version	Date	Sections	Change Description
01	26/03/2025	All	First version

Prepared by	Reviewed by	Approved by
Alex Hinojo, OpenEU Pastora Martínez, UOC	WP1 Board	ExBo
06/03/2025	19/03/2025	26/03/2025



Co-funded by
the European Union

This project has received funding from the European Union (EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY - EACEA) under grant agreement No 101177241.

INDEX

0. Glossary	2
1. Rationale and Context	3
1.1 What's OpenEU	4
2. Alliance bodies	5
2.1 Rectors' Council	5
2.2 Executive Board	6
2.3 Mission Boards	6
2.4 Work Package Boards	7
2.6 Student Council	8
2.7 Advisory boards	8
2.8 Communities of Practice (CoPs)	8
3. General operational framework and procedures	10
3.1 Supporting structure	10
3.2 Information flows and decision making	12
3.3 Meetings, minutes and reporting	13

0. Glossary

CoP	Community of Practice
EAB	External Advisory Board
EACEA	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ExBo	Executive Board
GA	Grant Agreement
IC	Institutional Coordinator
ICB	Institutional Coordinators Board
MB	Mission Board
RC	Rectors' Council
SAB	Stakeholders Advisory Board
SC	Student Council
WP	Work Package
WPB	Work Package Board
WPL	Work Package Leader

1. Rationale and Context

The governance structure of our Alliance is grounded in principles of openness, flexibility, and innovation, designed to empower members, embrace a bottom-up approach, and encourage collaboration at all levels. This model aims to ensure the project's success and the Alliance's long-term sustainability and growth.

At the heart of this framework is the understanding that this agreement begins a long-term commitment to nurturing a community of learning. The success of this community depends on a governance model carefully crafted to meet the needs of diverse institutions while remaining adaptable to evolving challenges.

Our approach is informed by lessons learned from existing alliances, incorporating best practices and insights from past experiences. By reflecting on what has worked and avoiding past pitfalls, we have designed a forward-thinking yet practical governance structure.

Decisions within the Alliance are made through a consensus-based process, ensuring every voice is heard. This pragmatic approach enables us to find solutions that are informed, realistic, and actionable. By fostering collaborative decision-making, we empower members to take ownership of the Alliance's direction and success while maintaining a shared focus on collective goals.

If consensus can't be reached, issues will be escalated to a higher board for resolution, with matters not aligning with procedures addressed per the board's guidelines. This ensures a clear process for disagreements while keeping the Alliance focused on its goals. The governance model will evolve over time, with future versions of this document incorporating improvements to better support our goals and ensure ongoing success.

In summary, the governance of this Alliance is dynamic and collaborative, designed to meet the unique needs of each member while upholding the collective mission. Our commitment to innovation, learning, and mutual respect will drive the long-term success of the Alliance and strengthen our community of learning.

1.1 What's OpenEU

OpenEU, the alliance for the building of **the pan-European open university**, brings together eight leading European open and distance universities and two on-campus universities engaged in digital transformation to become the European Universities Initiative's main asset for accessing, using, and exploring digital education knowledge and knowhow in the EHEA.

Harnessing the powers of **digital technologies** and representing over **368,000 non-traditional students and lifelong learners**, OpenEU is propelled by its mission to establish the learner-centred, inclusive, digital and green European open university, widening access to higher education and lifelong learning to all, from anywhere. OpenEU focuses on achieving **5 strategic targets**:

1. Building capacity for an inclusive, high quality, digital higher education ecosystem in Europe, scaling up the potential of digital learning and R&I together with other actors of the Knowledge Square.
2. Expanding international experiences through innovative, flexible formats of mobility as well as joint degrees and programmes, OpenEU provides a digital vehicle for students and staff to build their curricula, enhance their employability and careers, and contribute to a more diversified and inclusive higher education landscape and stronger base for regional developments in Europe.
3. Empowering lifelong learners and enlarging the opportunities for all across Europe with digitally-powered, innovative and flexible learning pathways for all, working together with public and private non-academic stakeholders.
4. Widening the participation of non-traditional learners and under-represented groups in the Higher Education System. OpenEU will set up special actions for under-represented and disadvantaged student groups' success and ensure quality higher education for all.
5. Enhancing the challenge-based generation and exchange of knowledge to implement the knowledge square and address our climate emergency, threats to Democracy and European Values, and the digital transformations impacting the EHEA.

2. Alliance bodies

The OpenEU governance framework is organised in the following four layers to provide the alliance the appropriate joint structures for achieving the OpenEU strategy: governing layer (vision and strategy), steering layer (direction and guidance), managing layer (organisation and monitoring) and performing layer (implementation).

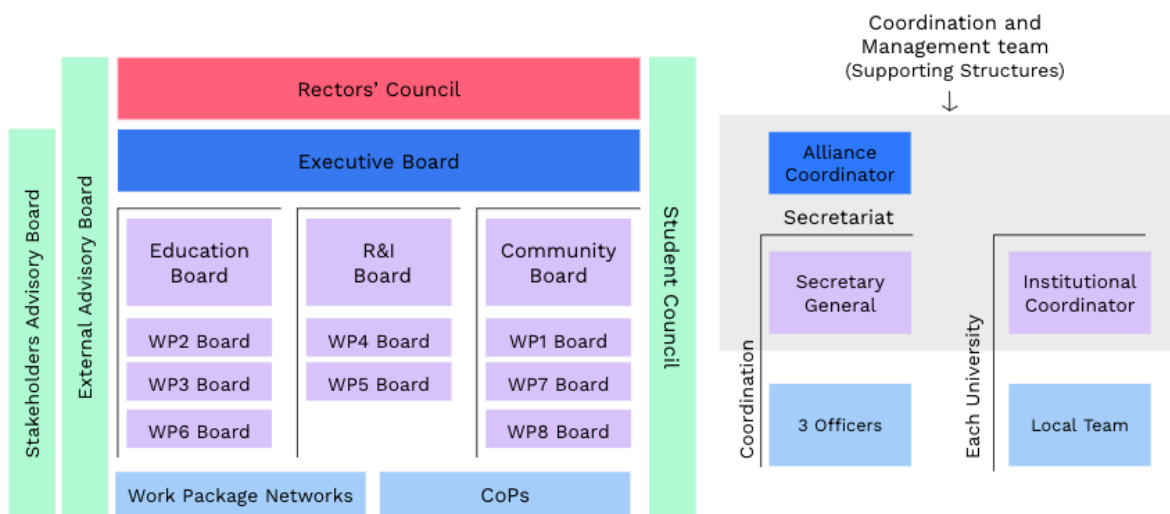


Figure: OpenEU organisational structure

The diagram above gives an overview of the OpenEU's organisational structure and the main roles in the Alliance organisation. Each of these bodies and their roles are briefly explained below. Further details on governance are described at the Consortium Agreement.

2.1 Rectors' Council

The **OpenEU Rectors' Council (RC)** is the OpenEU's governing layer body, and it determines the vision and strategy for the entire OpenEU organisation. The RC is advised by an External Advisory Board, with a consultative role.

The RC shall consist of the presidents or rectors of the Parties (hereinafter referred to as “Member”). The RC also includes the following non-voting members: the Alliance Coordinator and the OpenEU Secretary General acting as secretary to the RC. The Secretary General of EADTU and the Secretary General of IAU may attend the RC by invitation, without the right to vote.

2.2 Executive Board

The **OpenEU Executive Board (ExBo)** is the OpenEU’s steering layer body, and it provides general direction and guidance to the Alliance, keeping it focused on its objectives and coordinating the work to be done by the other boards, networks, teams and communities. It mobilises the necessary resources and monitors the OpenEU's performance to accomplish these objectives. The OpenEU ExBo reports to the RC. The ExBo is advised by a Stakeholders Advisory Board, with a consultative role.

The ExBo consists of one vice-rector or equivalent of each Beneficiary, 2 student representatives elected by the OpenEU Student Council, WP Leaders, the Institutional Coordinators’ Board chair (without voting rights) and one representative each of EADTU and IAU (both without voting rights). The OpenEU Secretary General acts as secretary to the ExBo and the vice rectors may be assisted by their OpenEU local coordinators, all of them participating in the meetings as non-voting members.

Due to the large number of members at the ExBo (23+10), a reduced **standing committee** for the ExBo is set up to ensure efficient management. Its role is scheduling meetings and preparing agendas of the ExBo meetings, as well as performing other duties as consistent with the management of the ExBo.

2.3 Mission Boards

The **Mission Boards (MB)** are the OpenEU bodies coordinating the activities related to the three main University missions to be undertaken. They are part of the OpenEU management layer. They gather academic and professional expertise

to coordinate the OpenEU activities related to the three main University missions to be undertaken within the specific WPs.

OpenEU has three Missions Boards:

- The **Education Board**, coordinating the activities of WP2, WP3 and WP6
- The **R&I Board**, coordinating the activities of WP4 and WP5
- The **Community Board**, coordinating the activities of WP1, WP7 and WP8.

Each Mission Board is formed by the corresponding WP Leaders and co-Leaders as well as one representative of each Beneficiary involved in the corresponding WPs but not leading nor co-leading any. One student representative from the Student Council and the Secretary General will also be part of the Mission Boards. Each year, the Mission Board rotates its coordination among the WP leaders. The Mission Boards reports to the ExBo about coordination strategies and transversal activities within the Alliance.

2.4 Work Package Boards

The **Work Package Boards (WPB)** form part of the management layer of the Alliance and are the boards planning and coordinating the activities of each WP. These WPBs are responsible for planning, coordinating, delivering and approving the activities, milestones and deliverables of the WP. Working closely with the OpenEU Secretariat, they are responsible for the quality and timely delivery of these. The WPBs report to the ExBo about progress made as well as any deviation or difficulty encountered.

Each WPB is formed by the WP leader and co-leader; one representative of each partner involved in the WP (both full and associated partners); one student representative from the Student Council; one representative from the OpenEU Secretariat. The partner representatives are named by each partner.

2.5 Work Package Networks

Each WP has a **WP Network** that includes the staff at OpenEU Beneficiaries working on the corresponding WP tasks. Together with the Communities of Practice and the OpenEU Offices at the Secretariat, it is part of the performing layer of OpenEU.

2.6 Student Council

The **Student Council (SC)** is a democratic body representing the student perspective in OpenEU. It ensures the students' interests and voices are included in OpenEU boards and activities and delivers recommendations for the strategic direction of the OpenEU Alliance as part of the ExBo.

The Student Council is formed by 20 student representatives, 2 from each Beneficiary and is regulated by the **OpenEU Student Council Regulations**.

2.7 Advisory boards

2.7.1 External Advisory Board (EAB)

The **EAB** is the OpenEU's advisory and consultative board providing input to the RC. It provides strategic oversight and quality assurance support. It also ensures that the OpenEU strategic plans are aligned with the political, economic, social and environmental agenda. It includes representatives from the academic and socio-economic world selected in light of their intellectual, societal or scientific influence or merits. The board shall be gender and geographical balanced and formed by 6 to 12 members.

2.7.2 Stakeholders Advisory Board (SAB)

The **SAB** is the OpenEU's advisory and consultative board providing direct input to the ExBo from the Associated Partners' perspective, ensuring effective decision-making, risk management, and strategic planning and helping the ExBo to make informed choices that are aligned with the broader economic, social and environmental stakeholders' agendas. It includes representatives from all Associated Partners of the Alliance. The board will be gender and geographical balanced.

2.8 Communities of Practice

The **Communities of Practice** (CoPs) focus on sharing best practices and co-creating new knowledge to advance a specific topic, sharing information enabling more up-to-date and effective implementation of OpenEU activities.

During the first year of the Alliance, the following CoPs will be created:

- Three CoPs related to the OpenEU thematic topics: climate change, democracy and digital transformation.
- Five CoPs will contribute to fostering a common knowledge across the Alliance on specific management topics to be addressed: CoP on inclusive equality issues, CoP on legal issues, CoP on career development, CoP on IT, and CoP on academic support services.
 - The CoP on inclusive equality issues, the OpenEU IGEP CoP, has already been established linked to the Work Package 3 (widening participation). This IGEP CoP was set up in January 2024 after an open call from the Horizon Europe Centre of Excellence on Inclusive Gender Equality in R&I-INSPIRE. The OpenEU IGEP CoP will support the means for IGEPs implementation's challenges and best practices.

3. General operational framework and procedures

3.1 Supporting structure

This section outlines the general operational framework and procedures that guide the day-to-day functioning of the OpenEU Alliance. It also highlights the supporting structures designed to ensure seamless coordination and effective resource management. By understanding these elements, teams can operate efficiently and stay aligned with organizational goals.

3.1.1 OpenEU coordinator

The **OpenEU Coordinator** is the **Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)**, the legal entity acting as the intermediary between the Parties and the European Commission (EC). The Coordinator shall, in addition to its responsibilities as a Party, perform the tasks assigned to it as described in the Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement. The Coordinator designates an **Alliance Coordinator**, the person acting as contact of the legal entity and Principal Investigator (PI) for the OpenEU project. This person is **Pastora Martínez Samper**, commissioner for international action at UOC.

The OpenEU Coordinator is assisted by the OpenEU Secretariat. In particular, the Coordinator is responsible for: monitoring compliance by the Parties with their obligations under the Consortium Agreement and the Grant Agreement.

3.1.2 OpenEU Secretariat

The **OpenEU Secretariat** is the institutionalised cooperation instrument created by the OpenEU alliance. It is responsible for the effective and efficient day-to-day management of the Alliance, its quality assurance, communication and financial management. The Secretariat also has a supporting role towards the OpenEU partners, helping them in their operational duties related to the project.

For the first 4 years of the Alliance, the OpenEU Secretariat is hosted by the UOC in Barcelona, Spain. The OpenEU Secretariat coordinates the three OpenEU

offices, i.e. a specific task force integrating one specialist of the topic from each Beneficiary and coordinated by an OpenEU officer. The three OpenEU offices are the OpenEU Quality and Management Office, the OpenEU Internationalisation and Joint Actions Office, and the OpenEU Communication and Engagement Office.

Four people initially form the OpenEU Secretariat:

- **Secretary General:** in charge of the Secretariat, represents OpenEU, drives, executes and monitors the activity plan, ensures the approval and quality of the deliverables, scales doubts about quality/delays/risks to the RC and the ExBo and is responsible for managing the staff of the Secretariat. The appointed OpenEU Secretary General is **Àlex Hinojo**.
- **Quality and Management Officer** coordinates the OpenEU Quality and Management Office to ensure the proper implementation of the project and its financial and administrative management. The person in charge supports all WPs to ensure that all the deliverables and outcomes of the project meets OpenEU quality standards and meet the compliance requirements with the standards of each territory, as well as the requirements of the EC; and also looks for external funding opportunities to guarantee the sustainability of the Alliance. Finally, he/she supports the implementation and monitoring of the Quality Assurance plan and the Ethical and Green Digital plan.
- **Internationalisation and Joint Actions Officer** coordinates the OpenEU Internationalisation and Joint Action Office for the joint management of all OpenEU forms of mobility and joint programmes development and will act as link between all the WPs involved in international and/or joint actions to ensure a smooth collaboration between them. The person in charge supports the implementation and monitoring of the Internationalisation plan.
- **Communication and Engagement Officer** coordinates the OpenEU Communication and Engagement Office and collaborates with all WPs but mainly supports WP1, WP7 and WP8 to establish the mechanisms and channels to ensure a smooth collaboration between all WPs. The person in charge supports the implementation and monitoring of the community engagement and communication and dissemination plans.

3.1.3 OpenEU Offices at Beneficiaries

Each Beneficiary constitutes an institutional coordination team at their own institutions, called **OpenEU Office**. Each OpenEU Office is led by an Institutional Coordinator that is in close contact with the OpenEU Secretariat to report on progress made. It serves as liaison between the Secretariat and the University, supporting the management of the Alliance and University contributions to the project. It is the responsibility of each university to establish such a team, including the selection/appointment of the Institutional Coordinator.

The **Institutional Coordinators** (IC) are responsible for the efficient and effective implementation of the OpenEU activities at member level. They are also responsible for supporting the internal change management that the implementation of OpenEU's activities requires, and the technical and financial monitoring of the project at each Beneficiary. They are in close contact with the WP leaders, task and subtask leaders and participants from their institution. They coordinate their work supported by the OpenEU Secretariat at the **IC Board**.

3.2 Information flows and decision making

Understanding the OpenEU organisation, its information flows and decision-making processes is essential for the OpenEU community to effectively navigate the alliance structure and collaborate across different bodies.

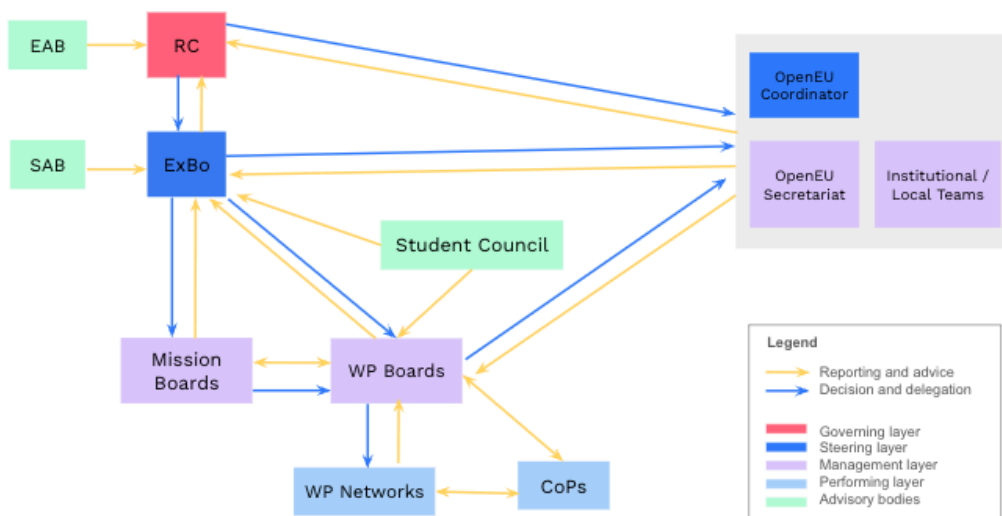


Figure: OpenEU information flows within its organisational structure

3.2.1 Voting rules and quorum

Any OpenEU body shall not deliberate and decide validly in meetings unless two-thirds (2/3) of its members are present or represented (quorum).

If the quorum is not reached, the chairperson of the body shall convene another ordinary meeting within fifteen (15) calendar days. If in this meeting the quorum is not reached once more, the chairperson shall convene an extraordinary meeting, which shall be entitled to decide even if less than the quorum of members is present or represented.

Decisions within the Alliance are made through a consensus-based process, ensuring every voice is heard. If consensus is not reached, decisions shall be adopted according to the voting rules and quorum defined in the Consortium Agreement and incorporated in this document as soon as the Consortium Agreement is signed.

3.3 Meetings, minutes and reporting

3.3.1 Representation

Any member of an OpenEU body shall be present at any meeting and shall participate in a cooperative manner. If necessary, members may be represented by an appointed proxy who may commit the represented institution and, when appropriate, cast its vote.

3.3.2 Convening meetings

The chairperson of the OpenEU body shall convene meetings of that body following the regularity below.

OpenEU Body	Ordinary Meeting	Extraordinary Meeting
RC	Once a year (in person)	At any time upon written request of at least one third of the members of the RC or written request by the

		ExBo.
ExBo	Every three (3) months. One meeting per year will be in person.	At any time upon written request of two members of the ExBo.
EAB	Once a year (alternating in person and online meetings during the execution of the project).	At any time upon written request of at least one third of the members of the RC.
SAB	Once a year (alternating in person and online meetings during the execution of the project).	At any time upon written request of at least one third of the members of the Advisory Board or written request of the ExBo.
MB	Every four (4) months. One meeting per year will be in person.	At any time upon written request of at least one third of the members of the Mission Board or written request of the ExBo.
WPB	Every two (2) months. Once every two years will be an in person meeting.	At any time upon written request of at least one third of the members of the WPB.
SC	Three (3) online meetings per year. Every two (2) years there will be the possibility to meet in person.	At any time upon written request of at least one third of the members of the SC.
ICB	At least every two (2) months.	At any time upon written request of two members of the ICB.

3.3.3 Minutes

The person acting as the body Secretary shall be responsible for taking minutes of the meeting which shall be the formal record of all decisions taken.

The minutes shall be considered as accepted if, within fifteen (15) calendar days from receipt, no member has sent an objection to the chairperson or secretary

with respect to the accuracy of the draft minutes by written notice. The minutes of any meeting may also be approved by the members at the beginning of the next meeting of the pertinent body.