



**RI4C2**  
Research & Innovation  
For Cities & Citizens



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101035803

# **Creation of four new Virtual Institutes**

## **Report**

**DELIVERABLE 2.6**  
MONTH 33



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## I. Executive summary

This report focuses on the formal and administrative establishment of four new Virtual Institutes within the EC2U Alliance. The creation of these new Virtual Institutes aligns with the strategy outlined in Deliverable 2.3 EC2U R&I Agenda, where the groundwork was laid for agreements among the seven consortium partners. It is the result of the dialogues with Vice-Rectors of Research, Rectors and partner universities research support offices that led to the present consensus.

A round of bilateral meetings and the 7th EC2U Forum in October 2023 served to kickstart the design of a strategy, with the involvement of research managers. It also helped establish a basic consensus around the concept of Virtual Institutes based on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). Additionally, during the Annual RI4C2 Conference held in Salamanca in April 2024, the essential governance features for both existing and upcoming Virtual Institutes were further defined.

Similarly to what was done with the three Virtual Institutes that were created during the first EC2U Erasmus+ funding phase, the creation of the four new Virtual Institutes is formalised through a Supplement to the EC2U Consortium Agreement, signed by all Rectors, representing the now eight partner institutions. This Supplement is meant to formalise the creation or renewal of the 7 Virtual Institutes.

Three existing Virtual Institutes (VIQE, GLADE, VISCC) will continue their activity during the second phase of EC2U until 2027. The activities of the four new Virtual Institutes will be initiated during the period 2024-2027.

During the consolidation phase of EC2U, which commenced in November 2023, a new Virtual Institute will be established, with a dedicated focus on SDG#16 "Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions." Additionally, VIQE will undergo restructuring and split, leading to the creation of a new Virtual Institute specifically dedicated to Educational Sciences within the framework of SDG#4 Quality Education.



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The remaining two Virtual Institutes will be established in alignment with the EC2U R&I Agenda. One Virtual Institute will focus on SDG#15 "Life on Land," while the other will explore research themes concerning "Materials and Methods for a Sustainable Future," cutting across a wide range of SDGs.



## II. Overall objectives

Virtual Institutes based on UNSDGs play a crucial role since the inception of the EC2U Alliance, positioning themselves as versatile entities that combine education, research and innovation as fundamental missions. Within the RI4C2 project, the aim is to bring the number of these Virtual Institutes to a total of 7.

The main goal of this report is to present the formal agreement between the seven RI4C2 partners, and the informal agreement of the University of Linz (JKU), which recently joined the Alliance at the beginning of the new EC2U consolidation phase. JKU is not a member of the RI4C2 project but is a new partner of the EC2U Alliance that will also contribute to the development of both existing and new Virtual Institutes. These agreements arise from prior technical work, involving consultation with university communities on relevant research topics (Deliverable 2.1), mapping research infrastructures (Deliverable 2.2), and establishing an R&I agenda (Deliverable 2.3). At a decision-making level, this process engaged research management structures and bodies within universities, including Vice-Rectors for research and research support offices.

This process of consensus-building is inherently political, and the grassroots development of the agenda is fully endorsed by the universities' governing bodies. This collective strategy for EC2U partners transcends the timeframe of the SwafS RI4C2 project, integrating this outcome into the global EC2U consortium sphere.

The administrative formalisation of the new Virtual Institutes also aligns with the recommendations formulated by the Vice-Rectors and their research departments in previous meetings. These recommendations include consensus in leadership, transparency in decision-making processes, and providing incentives to researchers to engage with the new entities, fostering a culture of collaboration and interdisciplinary involvement. The challenge is significant for all partners considering that some of these new entities do not have specific funding secured.

### III. Previous administrative background in the existing VIs

During the first phase of EC2U, three Virtual Institutes were created and developed and their relevant research activities and associated research groups have been reviewed in a specific report which precedes this one: D2.4 Identification of priority research groups within existing Virtual Institutes.



Figure 1: EC2U Virtual Institutes during the E+ pilot phase

As a reminder, the establishment of the initial three Virtual Institutes within the EC2U Alliance was formalised through a Supplement to the EC2U pilot phase Consortium Agreement, signed by all Rectors, which serves as the foundation for their governance.

This process formalised and organised the collaboration among the participating institutions, clearly outlines roles and responsibilities and the operation of the Virtual Institutes. Incorporating these elements into a Supplement to the Consortium Agreement ensured a robust legal and operational framework for the development and management of the existing Virtual Institutes. Realising the benefit of this previous decision, it has been agreed that the EC2U consortium and



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the RI4C2 project should proceed in the same way and reflect the agreement on the formation of new Virtual Institutes under a first Supplement to the EC2U Consortium Agreement (see VIII. Annex).

## IV. Steps towards a proposal for new VIs

### A. Operational framework

In addition to the main objective, this report follows the recommendations agreed upon by the Vice-Rectors in previous meetings (in particular the physical meeting in Poitiers, October 2023) and serves as an interim operational framework which can be summarised as follows:

1. **Creation of four new Virtual Institutes**, correlated with identified Sustainable Development Goals. The identified areas include "Education Sciences", "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions", "Life on Land" and "Materials and Methods for a Sustainable Future", the last one being transversal to several SDGs.
2. **Administrative formalisation:** Sign a Supplement to the EC2U consolidation phase Consortium Agreement for all these Virtual Institutes that will be valid through the new Erasmus+ funding phase of the EC2U Alliance (2023-2027), and expectably beyond that timeframe.

### B. Decision-making process

The process of creating the new Virtual Institutes began in early 2023 following the completion of a technical work (M1-M18), which included consulting university communities and mapping research infrastructures. During this phase, a series of best practices and key recommendations were identified to articulate and implement a decision-making framework involving key decision-makers at each university, in this case, the Vice-Rectors for Research, and Research Support offices.

The EC2U R&I Agenda was presented at M28, and individual meetings with each Vice-Rector for Research from the 7 partner institutions solidified the construction of a consensus ratified during a meeting held during the seventh EC2U Forum in October 2023. Following this milestone, WP2 activities shifted focus towards achieving a feasible and viable consensus to foster the

partners' genuine and pragmatic interest in the topics outlined for the Virtual Institutes in the agenda.

The roadmap outlined in the WP2 work plan can be viewed in the following graph:



Figure 2: RI4C2 WP2 Roadmap until the end of the project

RI4C2 WP2 staff, in collaboration with the Global Coordination team, organised a dedicated session with EC2U Universities Vice-Rectors for Research during the RI4C2 Annual Meeting in Salamanca. The purpose of this session was to define each partner's interests in the new Virtual Institutes. It is important to note that the goal of the RI4C2 project is for each partner to take on the leadership of one of the 7 Virtual Institutes, with all others contributing to its activities.

The principles that have guided this decision-making process can be summarised as follows:

- Developing internal processes of agreement with partner institutions to ensure the assignment of research staff to their respective Virtual Institute of interest.
- Clearly identifying the focus of the research activities of the new Virtual Institutes to ensure they are meaningful and relevant.

### C. Decisions taken regarding the four new Virtual Institutes

In the scenario outlined previously, and in accordance with the recommendations in D2.3 - EC2U R&I Agenda provided during M28, an iterative reporting exercise has been conducted with university Rectors and Vice-Rectors of Research, followed by validation from the RI4C2 Management Committee.

The new Virtual Institutes within the EC2U Alliance for the period 2023-2027 are formally and administratively established in this report as follows:

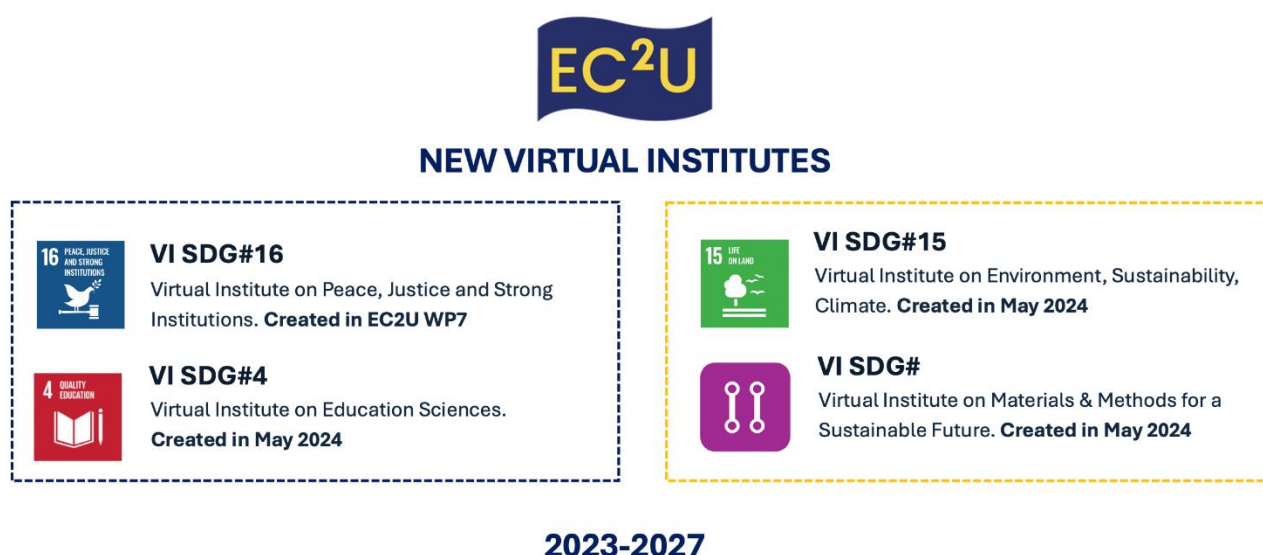


Figure 3: New Virtual Institutes during the EC2U consolidation phase

- **Virtual Institute on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:**

Focusing on SDG#16 with a strongly multidisciplinary nature, this Virtual Institute precisely showcases the EC2U Alliance's commitment to addressing societal challenges.

- **Virtual Institute on Education Sciences:**

Centred on SDG#4, its inception arises from the need to split the Virtual Institute on Quality Education. Originally, this Virtual Institute encompassed broad areas like Modern Languages and Education Sciences — disciplines that lack intrinsic correlation. Anticipating that the new phase of EC2U would expand to Education Sciences, particularly emphasising Digital Pedagogies, the decision to partition the Virtual Institute aims to focus and address the distinct exigencies and subtleties inherent to these topics.

- **Virtual Institute on Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change:**

The existence of prior research infrastructures in this area has been underscored by all partners beforehand. This Virtual Institute will focus its attention on environmental and climate change research issues. Such a determination harmonises effortlessly with the conclusions drawn from both the previous survey conducted among partner universities' academic communities and the mapping of Research and Innovation infrastructures.

- **Virtual Institute on Materials and Methods for a Sustainable Future:**

The proposed Virtual Institute would concentrate its efforts on exploring materials and methods crucial for shaping a sustainable future. Its overarching goal is to bolster the Alliance's capacity to effectively tackle pressing societal issues.

A deliberate decision was made not to incorporate the term "Technology" into the Virtual Institute's name. This choice underscores the Virtual Institute's holistic, interdisciplinary approach and underscores its dedication to advancing fundamental scientific research for the betterment of sustainability, in alignment with the objectives outlined in SDGs.

This includes ensuring adequate representation of all fields from basic research which are pivotal for comprehensive scientific inquiry and innovation.



In essence, the proposal outlines a robust framework for the Virtual Institute, emphasising collaborative efforts across disciplines and a shared commitment to addressing societal challenges through advancements in basic scientific research.

Originally, a deliberate decision was made not to assign any specific SDG to this Virtual Institute. At the decision-making level, it was deemed more important to build consensus around the necessity of including this entity in the portfolio. The spirit accompanying its inclusion and creation is inherently transdisciplinary and cross-cutting, intersecting with various areas covered by multiple SDGs.

## V. Decision-making process

### A. Connection with the Sustainable Development Goals

In previous reports, the scientific legitimacy of topics selected by partner universities to address the consolidation phase of EC2U has already been detailed. This was primarily based on the analysis (see Deliverable 2.3) of the "Wheel of Science - Elsevier" in its 2023 update, as well as the recent SDG-related analysis conducted by Sirislab (2023) on the mapping of research strengths of European university Alliances.

The reflection on scientific legitimacy lay at the core of the conception of the EC2U Alliance proposal to the European Commission to further develop the model of the Virtual Institutes and their activities until 2027. This proposal involves maintaining the existing research structures while adding four entirely new Virtual Institutes through the RI4C2 project. As a result, the Alliance will guide its research activities through a total of seven Virtual Institutes during the period 2023-2027, as illustrated in the graph below:

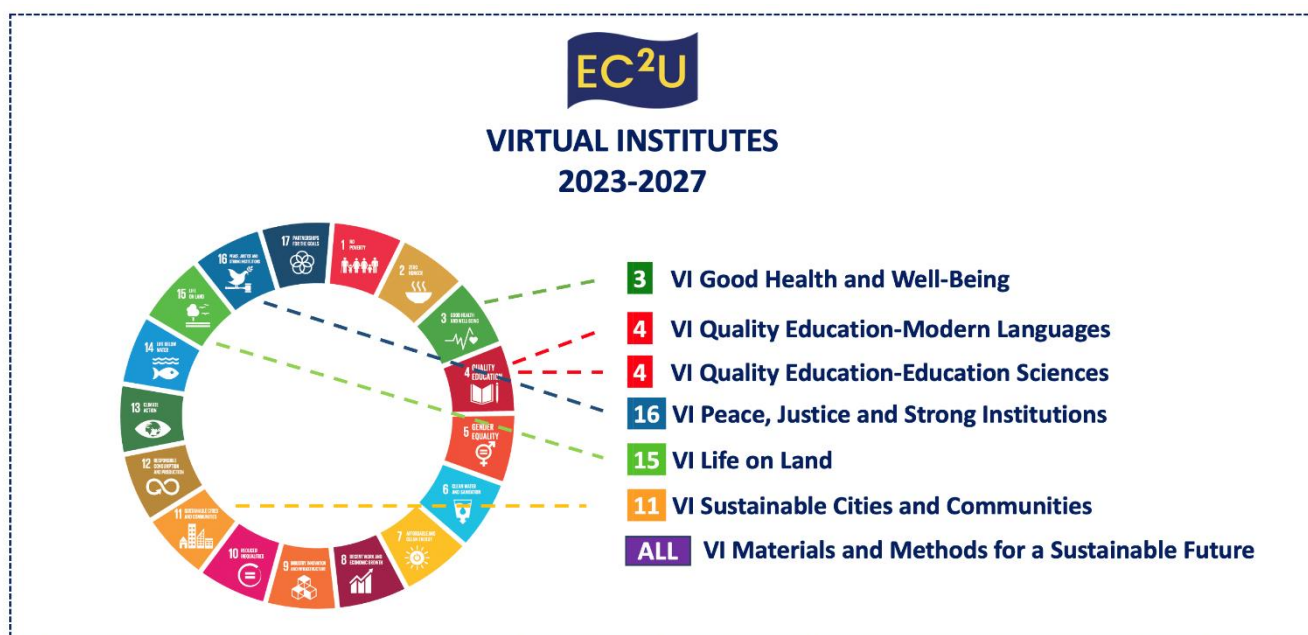


Figure 4: SDGs connected with the seven final Virtual Institutes

## **B. Adoption of the EC2U common R&I Agenda**

The adoption of the EC2U common R&I Agenda signifies a pivotal step towards aligning research and innovation efforts within the EC2U Alliance. The consensus serves not only as a comprehensive blueprint but also consolidates the collective research and innovation priorities of member institutions. The EC2U R&I agenda will be implemented at the operational level through the Virtual Institutes, with the establishment of their leadership, associated funding, and collaborative research support structures.

This underscores the crucial role of assigning research groups to newly established Virtual Institutes. These VIs will play a significant role in advancing interdisciplinary and collaborative research among Alliance members, translating it into tangible societal benefits through innovation and alignment with the overarching objectives outlined in the Grant Agreement. The impact of the EC2U community will be reached through the practical application of common research findings, leading to relevant outcomes.

It should be indicated that the signature of related agreements has experienced some delay, considering that up to three universities (Iasi, Jena and Salamanca) have been engaged in electoral processes with significant implications for the formation of new governing teams within this time frame. However, it is worth acknowledging that stability and institutional responsibility across all institutions have facilitated the establishment of a solid consensus that remains unchanged.

## **C. Reaching consensus**

Despite initial challenge associated to the sizable task of implementing a joint R&I Agenda through the creation of seven Virtual Institutes and overcoming the associated potential barriers, we must commend all partners on the unanimous agreement and collaboration within the EC2U consortium. It has been recognised that themes or areas for Virtual Institutes can be derived from various sources, including research needs, institutional strengths, and emerging opportunities. However, the common belief is that if these themes are all focused on fostering interdisciplinary research collaboration, bridges can indeed be built.



Deliberations over the past months have predominantly revolved around budgetary considerations, quality of project proposals, and research support structures aimed at optimising the sustainability of the Virtual Institutes. There has been a special emphasis on thoroughly reviewing research proposal applications with a higher potential for success. Ultimately, this strategic framework has been meticulously crafted to amplify the effectiveness and impact of the proposed initiatives by the newly formed entities.

EC2U partners have openly prioritised their commitment to a common design and the enhancement of the EC2U strategic Alliance over their potential individual interests. This collective commitment has been facilitated through a bottom-up approach, fostering consensus to ensure that decisions are inclusive and representative of all partners' needs and interests.

## VI. Identification of VIs' leaders and co-leaders

### A. Report on the RI4C2 Annual Meeting 2024

The University of Salamanca hosted the RI4C2 Annual Meeting 2024 on March 12th and 13th. This event included the second closed-door meeting with the Vice-Rectors for Research, following up on the one held during the EC2U Meeting in Poitiers in October 2023. The purpose of this meeting was to decide on the leadership roles within the Virtual Institutes, both existing and new ones. Representatives from the University of Linz, as the eighth partner of the EC2U Alliance, also attended the meeting. Additionally, RI4C2 Local Coordinators were present as observers.

Of particular relevance for this report, it is pertinent to highlight the following two aspects:

- It has been decided that it is natural for universities that already led Virtual Institutes in the pilot phase, such as the University of Coimbra, the University of Iasi and the University of Salamanca, to continue in their leadership roles during the consolidation phase of EC2U.
- When establishing the leadership of each new Virtual Institute and considering that several universities possess significant strengths in the selected thematic areas, it was proposed to expand the concept of co-leadership to all Virtual Institutes, both old and new. This approach is analogous to what has been implemented with the EC2U consolidation phase Work Packages.

During the meeting, expressions of interest were collected from the Vice-Rectors for Research regarding their preference to lead or co-lead the different new entities. These preferences were later confirmed and reassessed through individual interactions.

### B. Leadership and co-leadership

The proposed leadership and co-leadership structure reflects a widespread consensus among all partners, organising the Virtual Institutes with two main roles:

1. **Principal Leadership:** A university takes on the primary role of leading the Virtual Institute. This university is responsible for overall coordination, strategic decision-making, and representing the Virtual Institute within the EC2U Alliance and other relevant entities.

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2. **Co-Leadership:** Another university collaborates as a co-leader of the Virtual Institute. This role involves sharing responsibilities with the principal leader, contributing specific expertise, resources, and collaboration in strategic direction and implementation of the Virtual Institute's activities.

The leadership structure of the Virtual Institutes, both existing and completely new ones, is reflected in the following graphics:



Figure 5: Leadership and co-leadership structure of the existing and new VIs

## VII. Administrative formalities

### A. Supplement to the EC2U Consortium Agreement (Consolidation phase)

The first Supplement to the EC2U consolidation phase Consortium Agreement, which details the renewal of existing VIs and the establishment of new VIs, signifies the “de facto” recognition by all EC2U Rectors and research Vice-Rectors of the partner universities involved. This Supplement serves as the only administrative formality required (see the Annex).

Various pathways exist for the establishment of VIs:

- For existing Virtual Institutes, their scope will be maintained, and their activities will be supported by Erasmus+ grant during the consolidation phase.
- For the new VIs:
  - the Virtual Institute focusing on SDG#16 “Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions” will see its activities supported by the Erasmus+ grant during the consolidation phase (as part of WP7). The Virtual Institute on "Education Sciences" will develop its first activities in the context of the WP3 of the EC2U consolidation phase.
  - the Virtual Institutes based on SDG#15 “Life on Land” and “Materials and Methods for a Sustainable Future” do not have specific budget lines in the Erasmus+ grant of the consolidation phase. Priority should then be ascribed in finding financing means.

### B. Financing lines

In response to requests from Vice-Rectors and research support offices, the Global Coordination Team prepared a memorandum entitled “Work Plan and Financing Lines of the EC2U Virtual Institutes in the Consolidation Phase of the EC2U Alliance (2023-2027)”. The document provided a comprehensive overview of the available Erasmus+ funding mechanisms activities of five out of seven Virtual Institutes during the consolidation phase of the EC2U Alliance. It also offered preliminary guidelines aimed at identifying new funding opportunities for the two newly established Virtual Institutes. Currently, the Virtual Institute on SDG#15 “Life on Land”, and Virtual Institute on “Materials and Methods for a Sustainable Future” lack funding through EC2U.

This underscores the imperative need to secure funding through alternative projects and explore additional funding opportunities. The leadership of such VIs requires the support of the Alliance research support offices to find substantial financial support to ensure the sustainability of the Virtual Institutes. The memorandum offers preliminary guidelines aimed at identifying new funding opportunities for the two newly established Virtual Institutes.

### C. Identifying leaders and co-leaders

It is now the responsibility of the leading university of the new VI to identify the leadership capable of delineating the scope and strategy of research activities for the new Virtual Institutes (VIs). The establishment and management of Virtual Institutes require a careful consideration of their governance. Member participation and resource management are integral components that extend beyond the leadership of the overseeing university and will require contributions from all EC2U governance bodies.

The objective thus far has been to draft a cohesive EC2U R&I strategy that reflects the collective input and expertise of the partners. This inclusive approach ensures that the R&I strategy is well-informed, aligned with the needs of the EC2U Alliance, and effectively addresses the challenges and opportunities in research and innovation.

The detailed aspects concerning the research structure will be addressed in forthcoming reports, which will focus on the assignment of relevant researchers to the activities of the new Virtual Institutes.

### D. Creation of the 8th Virtual Institute

Although the initial RI4C2 proposal in 2021 envisioned the creation of only 7 Virtual Institutes – mirroring the seven partner universities – the growth of the EC2U Alliance and inclusion of the 8<sup>th</sup> partner (Johannes Kepler University Linz) opened the possibility of establishing an eighth Virtual Institute. In fact, during the conversations leading to the unanimous agreement described above, all partners were aware that a Virtual Institute focusing on medical technology or healthcare technologies would capture substantial research potential within the EC2U community. The creation of such an 8<sup>th</sup> Virtual Institute will be studied in the months ahead.



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## VIII. Annex

**SUPPLEMENT N°1 TO EC2U CONSORTIUM AGREEMENT:**  
**CONTINUATION OF THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**  
**AND**  
**THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION – MODERN LANGUAGES**  
**AND**  
**THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES**  
**AND**  
**CREATION OF THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**  
**AND**  
**THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION – EDUCATION SCIENCES**  
**AND**  
**THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR LIFE ON LAND**  
**AND**  
**THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR MATERIALS AND METHODS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

between

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**represented by Prof. Virginie Laval, President,**  
hereinafter referred to as **Contractor**

and

**the Universities involved in the *European Campus of City-Universities (EC2U) Alliance,***  
hereinafter referred to as **Partners** (in alphabetical order of the cities)

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**Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași**  
(Bd. Carol I nr 11, 500706, Iasi, Romania)  
**represented by Prof. Dr. Liviu Maha, Rector**

**The University of Jena**  
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In addition to the sections described in the main part of the EC2U Consortium Agreement, entered into force on 01/11/2023, the Contractor and the Partners agree on the following:

### **Section 1: Scope**

The Supplement N°1 to the EC2U Consortium Agreement is related to the continuation of the EC2U Virtual Institute (VI) for Good Health and Well-being (GLADE), VI-GLADE, Quality Education – Modern Languages (QE-ML), VIQE-ML, and Sustainable Cities and Communities (SCC), VI-SCC, as defined in the EC2U project proposal and foreseen in Section 3 (Responsibilities of the Parties) of the Consortium Agreement. It defines the objectives, governance, tasks and operational conditions of the VI-GLADE, VIQE-ML and VI-SCC.

This Supplement N°1 to the EC2U Consortium Agreement is moreover related to the creation of four additional EC2U VIs, including VI for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (VI-PJSI), as defined in the EC2U project proposal and foreseen in Section 3 (Responsibilities of the Parties) of the Consortium Agreement. It defines the objectives, governance, tasks and operational conditions of the VI-PJSI.

Three other EC2U Virtual Institutes (VIs) are created: the VI for Quality Education – Education Sciences (VIQE-ES), the VI for Life on Land (VI-LL) and the VI for Materials and Methods for a Sustainable Future (VI-MMSF), as defined in the H2020 RI4C2 (Research & Innovation for Cities & Citizens) SwafS project's deliverable 2.6 'Creation of four new Virtual Institutes'. This Supplement defines the objectives, governance, tasks and operational conditions of the VIQE-ES, VI-LL and VI-MMSF.

### **Section 2: Entry into force, duration and termination**

The present Supplement N°1 to the EC2U Consortium Agreement shall have effect from the Month 7 of the EC2U project, 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2024, even if signed by all Parties after this date, and it will be in force until complete fulfilment of all obligations undertaken by the Parties under the Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement and its Supplement N°1 as well as the RI4C2 project Grant Agreement. This Supplement N°1 or the participation of one or more Partners may be terminated under the same conditions as described in the EC2U Consortium Agreement.

### **Section 3: Responsibilities of the Parties**

#### **General principles**

Each Party undertakes to take part in the efficient implementation of the seven Virtual Institutes (VI-GLADE, VIQE-ML, VI-SCC, VI-PJSI, VIQE-ES, VI-LL and VI-MMSF), and to cooperate, perform and fulfil, promptly and on time, all of its obligations under the EC2U project proposal, the Grant Agreement, the RI4C2 deliverables 2.3

EC2U R&I Agenda and 2.6 Creation of four new Virtual Institutes as well as this Supplement N°1 to the Consortium Agreement in a manner of good faith.

As stipulated in the EC2U project proposal and RI4C2 deliverables 2.3 and 2.6, the EC2U coordinator and partners are committed to develop Virtual Institutes that will foster a new interdisciplinary approach to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) by embedding education, research and innovation, and focusing on the following UNSDG: Good Health & Well-being, Quality Education, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and Life on Land. The EC2U Coordinator and partners will commit to VI-MMSF to follow a similar structure despite not focusing on a single UNSDG.

Each Party undertakes to notify promptly, in accordance with the governance structure of the EC2U Project (as described in the Consortium Agreement), any significant information, fact, problem or delay likely to affect each of the seven above-mentioned Virtual Institutes.

#### **Section 4: Liability towards each other**

Conditions related to limitations of contractual liability and *force majeure* are described in the Consortium Agreement.

#### **Section 5: Generalities associated with the continuation of VI-GLADE, VIQE-ML and VI-SCC**

##### **5.1 General concept and objectives**

The VIs are joint Institutes “without physical walls” hosting international inter-disciplinary teams of students, teachers, researchers and innovators from the eight universities composing the EC2U Alliance. This concept aims at fostering the rapid integration of research results and/or innovation into education via the new challenge-based curricula and a diversity of short-term trainings, such as internships, summer/winter schools, etc. These knowledge-creating teams will deliver innovative solutions to local, national, European and global challenges. In the pilot phase of the EC2U project (2020-2023), the “good health and well-being”, “quality education” and “sustainable cities and communities” UNSDGs have been selected in view of their particular relevance with respect to the EC2U Alliance Mission Statement and have been the core of the pilot VIs. These VIs are prototypes of a “mission-oriented approach”, which will be soon promoted by the Horizon Europe ninth Framework Programme: pillar 2 “global challenges” (e.g. clusters on “health”, “inclusive and secure society”, etc.). This way, the EC2U project will prepare its teams to respond to this new way of performing research, linking it to education and innovation.

VIs will also foster a completely new way of approaching and solving a given challenge, in a community that is still dominated by disciplinary habits and where education, research and innovation too often appear as isolated silos. Building upon, but extending the concept of “Living Labs”, the VIs will significantly modify the landscape of the EC2U universities. They will guide the creation of teams involving students, teachers, researchers and innovators from all partner universities and will foster the inter-disciplinary profile of these teams, mixing actors from Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM), Natural Sciences (NS), Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

Additionally, in the context of the H2020 SwafS project RI4C2 (Research & Innovation for Cities & Citizens), three first pilot Living Labs were created in the three pilot Virtual Institutes. A Living Lab (in this context) is a type of research and innovation (R&I) facility that allows for the study and testing of new technologies, products and services in a real-world setting. It typically involves collaboration between research organisations, industry partners and citizens, with the goal of creating solutions that are responsive to the needs and preferences of the community.

The Living Lab concept is a key part of the European Commission's current funding programme Horizon Europe (2021-2027), as well as the key notion of Citizen Science. Within this framework, the three pilot Living Labs were created with the goal of conducting Citizen Science activities. The aim is to implement specific and/or complementary activities to the field of activity related to each VI. The relevant topics for each Living Lab were defined by the Knowledge ecosystem actors identified through RI4C2 (see sections 6.3, 7.3 and 8.3). The Living Labs were officially launched in February 2024 and project applications were developed to pursue the activities, within the scope of the RI4C2 project. Future project applications will be considered to continue the activities of the Living Labs for Citizen Science during the EC2U consolidation phase.

## 5.2 Governance

The following governance modalities are defined for the upcoming four years of existence of the VIs, in relation to the duration of the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement.

Each VI will be managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator (e.g., a Vice-Rector), a Scientific Coordinator (the related WP Leader during the upcoming four years or another key person nominated by the WP leader) and an Administrative Coordinator from the leading institution, a Policy Co-Coordinator (e.g., Vice-Rector) and a Scientific Co-Leader from the co-leading institution. These teams will be appointed for the upcoming four years by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council.

For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables), the VI management team will regularly consult and report to the relevant EC2U WP Board (composed of representatives from all the partner universities) that will also act as a Scientific Council to the related VI.

For activities and decisions having a potential impact on the EC2U project and/or on the partners' strategies/policies, the VI management team and VI Scientific Council will consult the Executive Committee: the ExeCo will take final decisions, after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council.

## 5.3 Communication policy

Irrespective of local communication activities that a VI may formulate, all communication activities of the VIs will be incorporated in the global Communication Plan of the EC2U Alliance and will comply with obligations undertaken by the Parties under the Grant Agreement and section 7 "Visibility and Promotion" of the Consortium Agreement.

## 5.4 Data protection, Ownership and property rights

Data protection, Ownership and property rights are defined by sections 8 and 9 of the Consortium Agreement.

## Section 6: Specificities associated with the continuation of the VI-GLADE

### 6.1 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 5.2. In the specific case of the VI-GLADE, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator (the WP4 Leader during the upcoming four years) and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from *Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi*, as leading Partner for WP4, during the upcoming four years. VI-GLADE will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *University of Coimbra*, as co-leading Partner for WP4, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables listed in section 6.2), the VI-GLADE management team will regularly consult and report to the EC2U WP4 Board that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VI-GLADE.

### 6.2 Activities

The activities of VI-GLADE will include (but not be limited to) the participation and/or realisation of the following deliverables, defined in the EC2U proposal and recalled in the Grant Agreement:

- D4.2 GLADE PhD network
- D4.4 GLADE Virtual Institute: research and service to society

In addition, the activities of VI-GLADE will include (but not be limited to) the project developed within the Living Lab “Healthy (Home) Office Habits”, as defined in deliverable 6.5 of the H2020 RI4C2 SwafS project:

- IN MOTION (coordinated by the University of Poitiers)

Further activities may be developed within the Living Lab via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## Section 7: Specificities associated with the continuation of the VIQE-ML

### 7.1 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 5.2. In the specific case of the VIQE-ML, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator (the WP5 Leader during the upcoming four years) and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *University of Salamanca*, as leading Partner for WP5, during the upcoming four years. VIQE-ML will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi*, as co-leading Partner for WP5, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables listed in section 7.2), the VIQE-ML management team will regularly consult and report to the EC2U WP5 Board that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VIQE-ML.

## 7.2 Activities

The activities of VIQE-ML will include (but not be limited to) the participation and/or realisation of the following deliverables, defined in the EC2U proposal and recalled in the Grant Agreement:

- D5.2 VIQE PhD network
- D5.4 Activities of the VIQE

In addition, the activities of VIQE-ML will include (but not be limited to) the activities and projects developed within the Living Lab “Teaching Languages in Communities and Approaching Cultural Biases from Multiple Perspectives”, as defined in deliverable 6.5 of the H2020 RI4C2 SwafS project. Further activities may be developed within the Living Lab via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## Section 8: Specificities associated with the continuation of the VI-SCC

### 8.1 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 5.2. In the specific case of the VI-SCC, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator (the WP6 Leader during the upcoming four years) and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *University of Coimbra*, as leading Partner for WP6, during the upcoming four years. VI-SCC will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *Friedrich Schiller University of Jena*, as co-leading Partner for WP6, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables listed in section 8.2), the VI-SCC management team will regularly consult and report to the EC2U WP6 Board that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VI-SCC.

### 8.2 Activities

The activities of VI-SCC will include (but not be limited to) the participation and/or realisation of the following deliverables, defined in the EC2U proposal and recalled in the Grant Agreement:

- D6.2 SCC PhD network
- D6.3 Launch of EC2U Sustainable Campus Network
- D6.5 Activities of the SCC Virtual Institute
- D6.6 EC2U Sustainable Campus Network and the EC2U Covenant of Mayors

In addition, the activities of VI-SCC will include (but not be limited to) the projects developed within the Living Lab “Perception of Building Environment – Indoor Environment and Quality of Air”, as defined in deliverable 6.5 of the H2020 RI4C2 SwafS project.

Further activities may be developed within the Living Lab via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## **Section 9: Generalities associated with the creation of the VI-PJSI, VIQE-ES, VI-LL and VI-MMSF**

### **9.1 General concept and objectives**

The generalities and concepts described in section 5 are applicable for the creation of the new VIs. In the new consolidation phase of the EC2U project, the “Peace Justice and Strong Institutions” UNSDG has been selected in view of its particular relevance with respect to the EC2U Alliance Mission Statement. Additionally, the VI on “Quality Education” will be divided in two: 1) continuing the Modern Languages activities developed in the first phase of EC2U (see section 7) and 2) launching activities in Education Sciences in view of their particular relevance with new EC2U activities.

Moreover, the topics “Life on Land” and “Materials and Methods for a Sustainable Future” were selected due to their relevance among the research and innovation activities of the partner universities and in relation to the EC2U Alliance Mission Statement. These topics were identified via the RI4C2 project and these two Virtual Institutes will be further developed following their creation within the RI4C2 project. They will however be of the same structure and focus on the same objectives as all other VIs.

### **9.2 Governance**

The following governance modalities are defined for the upcoming four years of existence of the VIs, in relation with the duration of the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement.

Each VI will be managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator (e.g., a Vice-Rector), a Scientific Coordinator (the related WP Leader during the upcoming four years, when relevant. In the absence of a related WP, the Scientific Coordinator is a prominent expert from the field) and an Administrative Coordinator from the leading institution; a Policy Co-Coordinator (e.g., Vice-Rector) and a Scientific Co-Leader from the co-leading institution. These teams will be appointed for the upcoming four years by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council.

For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal for VI-PJSI and VIQE-ES (incl. deliverables), the VI management team will regularly consult and report to the relevant EC2U WP Board (composed of representatives from all the partner universities) that will also act as a Scientific Council to the related VI. The same conditions will apply for VI-LL and VI-MMSF, even though the activities are not defined in the EC2U proposal: the WP Board will be replaced by a VI Board (composed of representatives from all the partner universities).

For activities and decisions having a potential impact on the EC2U project and/or on the partners’ strategies/policies, the VI management team and VI Scientific Council will consult the Executive Committee: the ExeCo will take final decisions, after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council.

### **9.3 Communication policy**

All communication activities of the new VIs will be incorporated in the global Communication Plan of the EC2U Alliance and will comply with obligations undertaken by the Parties under the Grant Agreement and under section 7 “Visibility and Promotion” of the Consortium Agreement.

## 9.4 Data protection, Ownership and property rights

Data protection, Ownership and property rights are defined by sections 8 and 9 of the Consortium Agreement.

## Section 10: Specificities associated with the creation of the VI-PJSI

### 10.1 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 9.2. In the specific case of the VI-PJSI, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator (the WP7 Leader during the first four years) and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *Friedrich Schiller University of Jena*, as leading Partner for WP7, during the first four years. VI-PJSI will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *University of Pavia*, as co-leading Partner for WP7, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables listed in section 10.2), the VI-PJSI management team will regularly consult and report to the EC2U WP7 Board that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VI-PJSI during the first four years.

### 10.2 Activities

The activities of VI-PJSI will include (but not be limited to) the participation and/or realisation of the following deliverables, defined in the EC2U proposal and recalled in the Grant Agreement:

- D7.2 PJSI PhD Network
- D7.4 Creation of the framework and structure for the Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions Joint Virtual Institute and PhD Network

Further activities may be developed via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## Section 11: Specificities associated with the creation of the VIQE-ES

### 11.1 Rationale

The creation of the VIQE-ES follows the objectives set out within the H2020 SwafS project (RI4C2) of the EC2U Alliance, as part of the joint R&I agenda activities. Developing an R&I Agenda stands as a crucial mandate for European University Alliances, aligning with the ecosystem's inception in 2019. It serves as a key objective to promote research and innovation within Alliance-affiliated universities, connecting both the Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programmes. This initiative is in coherence with the policies of the European Research Area (ERA) and the European Higher Education Area. Within this framework, the RI4C2 project set out to create four new Virtual Institutes as part of the EC2U Alliance. This endeavour was envisioned to evolve through a gradual alignment process, guided by principles of transparency and inclusive interdisciplinarity, where innovation plays a pivotal role. Thus, a survey on R&I needs and mapping of R&I activities and Infrastructures was conducted throughout the Alliance to define the priority research areas for future activities. In consultation

with a diversity of stakeholders within the Alliance, including at the decision-making level, the topics of the new Virtual Institutes were therefore defined. Considering the activities of the VIQE and the new activities developed within EC2U, on the basis of what was set out in the project's proposal, it was agreed among the Partners to split the VIQE into the preceding topic "Modern Languages" and a new topic: Education Sciences. Thus, this new Virtual Institute – Education Sciences - is created within the scope of EC2U Work Package 3 activities.

## 11.2 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 9.2. In the specific case of the VIQE-ES, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator (the WP3 Leader during the first four years or another key person nominated by the WP3 leader) and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *University of Pavia*, as leading Partner for the VI during the first four years. VIQE-ES will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *University of Poitiers*, as co-leading Partner for the VI, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables listed in section 11.3), the VIQE-ES management team will regularly consult and report to the EC2U WP3 sub-Board on Digital Pedagogy that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VIQE-ES.

## 11.3 Activities

The activities of VIQE-ES will include (but not be limited to) the participation and/or realisation of the following deliverables, defined in the EC2U proposal and recalled in the Grant Agreement:

- D3.2 Innovative digital pedagogy database
- D3.5 Digital Education lab

Other activities will be developed similar to activities taking place within the other EC2U Virtual Institutes. This will engage the VI governance in identifying funding mechanisms to pursue such activities. Further activities may also be developed via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## Section 12: Specificities associated with the creation of the VI-LL

### 12.1 Rationale

The creation of the VI-LL follows the objectives set out within the H2020 SwafS project (RI4C2) of the EC2U Alliance, as described in section 11. In consultation with a diversity of stakeholders within the Alliance, including at the decision-making level, the topics of the new Virtual Institutes were therefore defined. This comprehensive preliminary work led to the identification of a new VI topic based on UNSDG #15 Life on Land.

## 12.2 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 9.2. In the specific case of the VI-LL, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *University of Turku*, as leading Partner for the VI during the first four years. The VI-LL will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *University of Salamanca*, as co-leading Partner for the VI, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities, the VI-LL management team will regularly consult and report to the VI Board, composed of representatives from all the other EC2U universities, who will also act as a Scientific Council to the VI-LL.

## 12.3 Activities

The activities developed within the VI-LL will be similar to the ones established within the other EC2U Virtual Institutes. However, as these activities were not included in the EC2U consolidation phase work plan, the VI governance will have to identify funding mechanisms to develop the activities of this Virtual Institute. Further activities may also be developed via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## Section 13: Specificities associated with the creation of the VI-MMSF

### 13.1 Rationale

The creation of the VI-MMSF follows the objectives set out within the H2020 SwafS project (RI4C2) of the EC2U Alliance, as described in section 11. The comprehensive preliminary work led to the identification of a new VI topic “Materials and Methods for a Sustainable Future”, a transversal topic cutting across several UNSDGs.

### 13.2 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 9.2. In the specific case of the VI-MMSF, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *University of Poitiers*, as leading Partner for the VI during the first four years. VI-MMSF will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *University of Linz*, as co-leading Partner for the VI, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities, the VI-MMSF management team will regularly consult and report to the VI Board, composed of representatives from all the other EC2U universities, that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VI-MMSF.

### 13.3 Activities

The activities developed within the VI-MMSF will be similar to the ones established within the other EC2U Virtual Institutes. However, as these activities were not included in the EC2U consolidation phase work plan, the VI governance will have to identify funding mechanisms to develop the activities of this Virtual Institute. Further activities may also be developed via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

### Section 14: Signatures

As proof of conformity with the above, the eight parties sign the present Consortium Agreement at the time and place figuring below (electronic signature is allowed):

#### For the Contractor:

<b>Prof. Virginie Laval</b>	Stamp of the University
President of the University of Poitiers	
Done at Poitiers, Date:	

#### For the Partners:

<b>Prof. Amílcar Falcão</b>	Stamp of the University
Rector of the University of Coimbra	
Done at Coimbra, Date:	

<b>Prof. Liviu Maha</b>	Stamp of the University
Rector of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași	
Done at Iași, Date:	

**Prof. Andreas Marx**

Stamp of the University

President of the University of Jena

Done at Jena, Date:

**Prof. Stefan Koch**

Stamp of the University

Rector of the Johannes Kepler University of Linz

Done at Linz, Date:

**Prof. Francesco Svelto**

Stamp of the University

Rector of the University of Pavia

Done at Pavia, Date:

**Prof. Juan Manuel Corchado**

Stamp of the University

Rector of the University of Salamanca

Done at Salamanca, Date:

**Prof. Marjo Kaartinen**

Stamp of the University

Rector of the University of Turku

Done at Turku, Date:

**SUPPLEMENT N°1 TO EC2U CONSORTIUM AGREEMENT:**  
**CONTINUATION OF THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**  
**AND**  
**THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION – MODERN LANGUAGES**  
**AND**  
**THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES**  
**AND**  
**CREATION OF THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**  
**AND**  
**THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION – EDUCATION SCIENCES**  
**AND**  
**THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR LIFE ON LAND**  
**AND**  
**THE EC2U VIRTUAL INSTITUTE FOR MATERIALS AND METHODS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

between

**The University of Poitiers**  
(15 Rue de l'Hôtel Dieu, 86973 Poitiers Cedex 9, France)  
**represented by Prof. Virginie Laval, President,**  
hereinafter referred to as **Contractor**

and

**the Universities involved in the *European Campus of City-Universities (EC2U) Alliance,***  
hereinafter referred to as **Partners** (in alphabetical order of the cities)

**The University of Coimbra**  
(Paço das Escolas, 3004-531 Coimbra, Portugal)  
**represented by Prof. Dr. Amílcar Falcão, Rector**

**Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași**  
(Bd. Carol I nr 11, 500706, Iasi, Romania)  
**represented by Prof. Dr. Liviu Maha, Rector**

**The University of Jena**  
(Universitätshauptgebäude, Fuerstengraben 1, 07743 Jena, Germany)  
**represented by Prof. Dr. Andreas Marx, President**

**Johannes Kepler University of Linz**  
(Altenberger Str. 69, 4040 Linz, Austria)  
**represented by Prof. Dr. Stefan Koch, Rector**

**The University of Pavia**  
(Corso Strada Nuova n. 65, 27100 Pavia, Italy)  
**represented by Prof. Francesco Svelto, Rector**

**The University of Salamanca**  
(Patio de Escuelas, 37008 Salamanca, Spain)  
**represented by Prof. Juan Manuel Corchado Rodríguez, Rector**

**The University of Turku**  
(FI-20014 Turun yliopisto, Finland)  
**represented by Prof. Marjo Kaartinen, Rector**

In addition to the sections described in the main part of the EC2U Consortium Agreement, entered into force on 01/11/2023, the Contractor and the Partners agree on the following:

### **Section 1: Scope**

The Supplement N°1 to the EC2U Consortium Agreement is related to the continuation of the EC2U Virtual Institute (VI) for Good Health and Well-being (GLADE), VI-GLADE, Quality Education – Modern Languages (QE-ML), VIQE-ML, and Sustainable Cities and Communities (SCC), VI-SCC, as defined in the EC2U project proposal and foreseen in Section 3 (Responsibilities of the Parties) of the Consortium Agreement. It defines the objectives, governance, tasks and operational conditions of the VI-GLADE, VIQE-ML and VI-SCC.

This Supplement N°1 to the EC2U Consortium Agreement is moreover related to the creation of four additional EC2U VIs, including VI for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (VI-PJSI), as defined in the EC2U project proposal and foreseen in Section 3 (Responsibilities of the Parties) of the Consortium Agreement. It defines the objectives, governance, tasks and operational conditions of the VI-PJSI.

Three other EC2U Virtual Institutes (VIs) are created: the VI for Quality Education – Education Sciences (VIQE-ES), the VI for Life on Land (VI-LL) and the VI for Materials and Methods for a Sustainable Future (VI-MMSF), as defined in the H2020 RI4C2 (Research & Innovation for Cities & Citizens) SwafS project's deliverable 2.6 'Creation of four new Virtual Institutes'. This Supplement defines the objectives, governance, tasks and operational conditions of the VIQE-ES, VI-LL and VI-MMSF.

### **Section 2: Entry into force, duration and termination**

The present Supplement N°1 to the EC2U Consortium Agreement shall have effect from the Month 7 of the EC2U project, 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2024, even if signed by all Parties after this date, and it will be in force until complete fulfilment of all obligations undertaken by the Parties under the Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement and its Supplement N°1 as well as the RI4C2 project Grant Agreement. This Supplement N°1 or the participation of one or more Partners may be terminated under the same conditions as described in the EC2U Consortium Agreement.

### **Section 3: Responsibilities of the Parties**

#### **General principles**

Each Party undertakes to take part in the efficient implementation of the seven Virtual Institutes (VI-GLADE, VIQE-ML, VI-SCC, VI-PJSI, VIQE-ES, VI-LL and VI-MMSF), and to cooperate, perform and fulfil, promptly and on time, all of its obligations under the EC2U project proposal, the Grant Agreement, the RI4C2 deliverables 2.3

EC2U R&I Agenda and 2.6 Creation of four new Virtual Institutes as well as this Supplement N°1 to the Consortium Agreement in a manner of good faith.

As stipulated in the EC2U project proposal and RI4C2 deliverables 2.3 and 2.6, the EC2U coordinator and partners are committed to develop Virtual Institutes that will foster a new interdisciplinary approach to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) by embedding education, research and innovation, and focusing on the following UNSDG: Good Health & Well-being, Quality Education, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and Life on Land. The EC2U Coordinator and partners will commit to VI-MMSF to follow a similar structure despite not focusing on a single UNSDG.

Each Party undertakes to notify promptly, in accordance with the governance structure of the EC2U Project (as described in the Consortium Agreement), any significant information, fact, problem or delay likely to affect each of the seven above-mentioned Virtual Institutes.

#### **Section 4: Liability towards each other**

Conditions related to limitations of contractual liability and *force majeure* are described in the Consortium Agreement.

#### **Section 5: Generalities associated with the continuation of VI-GLADE, VIQE-ML and VI-SCC**

##### **5.1 General concept and objectives**

The VIs are joint Institutes “without physical walls” hosting international inter-disciplinary teams of students, teachers, researchers and innovators from the eight universities composing the EC2U Alliance. This concept aims at fostering the rapid integration of research results and/or innovation into education via the new challenge-based curricula and a diversity of short-term trainings, such as internships, summer/winter schools, etc. These knowledge-creating teams will deliver innovative solutions to local, national, European and global challenges. In the pilot phase of the EC2U project (2020-2023), the “good health and well-being”, “quality education” and “sustainable cities and communities” UNSDGs have been selected in view of their particular relevance with respect to the EC2U Alliance Mission Statement and have been the core of the pilot VIs. These VIs are prototypes of a “mission-oriented approach”, which will be soon promoted by the Horizon Europe ninth Framework Programme: pillar 2 “global challenges” (e.g. clusters on “health”, “inclusive and secure society”, etc.). This way, the EC2U project will prepare its teams to respond to this new way of performing research, linking it to education and innovation.

VIs will also foster a completely new way of approaching and solving a given challenge, in a community that is still dominated by disciplinary habits and where education, research and innovation too often appear as isolated silos. Building upon, but extending the concept of “Living Labs”, the VIs will significantly modify the landscape of the EC2U universities. They will guide the creation of teams involving students, teachers, researchers and innovators from all partner universities and will foster the inter-disciplinary profile of these teams, mixing actors from Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM), Natural Sciences (NS), Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

Additionally, in the context of the H2020 SwafS project RI4C2 (Research & Innovation for Cities & Citizens), three first pilot Living Labs were created in the three pilot Virtual Institutes. A Living Lab (in this context) is a type of research and innovation (R&I) facility that allows for the study and testing of new technologies, products and services in a real-world setting. It typically involves collaboration between research organisations, industry partners and citizens, with the goal of creating solutions that are responsive to the needs and preferences of the community.

The Living Lab concept is a key part of the European Commission's current funding programme Horizon Europe (2021-2027), as well as the key notion of Citizen Science. Within this framework, the three pilot Living Labs were created with the goal of conducting Citizen Science activities. The aim is to implement specific and/or complementary activities to the field of activity related to each VI. The relevant topics for each Living Lab were defined by the Knowledge ecosystem actors identified through RI4C2 (see sections 6.3, 7.3 and 8.3). The Living Labs were officially launched in February 2024 and project applications were developed to pursue the activities, within the scope of the RI4C2 project. Future project applications will be considered to continue the activities of the Living Labs for Citizen Science during the EC2U consolidation phase.

## 5.2 Governance

The following governance modalities are defined for the upcoming four years of existence of the VIs, in relation to the duration of the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement.

Each VI will be managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator (e.g., a Vice-Rector), a Scientific Coordinator (the related WP Leader during the upcoming four years or another key person nominated by the WP leader) and an Administrative Coordinator from the leading institution, a Policy Co-Coordinator (e.g., Vice-Rector) and a Scientific Co-Leader from the co-leading institution. These teams will be appointed for the upcoming four years by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council.

For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables), the VI management team will regularly consult and report to the relevant EC2U WP Board (composed of representatives from all the partner universities) that will also act as a Scientific Council to the related VI.

For activities and decisions having a potential impact on the EC2U project and/or on the partners' strategies/policies, the VI management team and VI Scientific Council will consult the Executive Committee: the ExeCo will take final decisions, after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council.

## 5.3 Communication policy

Irrespective of local communication activities that a VI may formulate, all communication activities of the VIs will be incorporated in the global Communication Plan of the EC2U Alliance and will comply with obligations undertaken by the Parties under the Grant Agreement and section 7 "Visibility and Promotion" of the Consortium Agreement.

## 5.4 Data protection, Ownership and property rights

Data protection, Ownership and property rights are defined by sections 8 and 9 of the Consortium Agreement.

## Section 6: Specificities associated with the continuation of the VI-GLADE

### 6.1 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 5.2. In the specific case of the VI-GLADE, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator (the WP4 Leader during the upcoming four years) and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from *Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi*, as leading Partner for WP4, during the upcoming four years. VI-GLADE will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *University of Coimbra*, as co-leading Partner for WP4, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables listed in section 6.2), the VI-GLADE management team will regularly consult and report to the EC2U WP4 Board that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VI-GLADE.

### 6.2 Activities

The activities of VI-GLADE will include (but not be limited to) the participation and/or realisation of the following deliverables, defined in the EC2U proposal and recalled in the Grant Agreement:

- D4.2 GLADE PhD network
- D4.4 GLADE Virtual Institute: research and service to society

In addition, the activities of VI-GLADE will include (but not be limited to) the project developed within the Living Lab “Healthy (Home) Office Habits”, as defined in deliverable 6.5 of the H2020 RI4C2 SwafS project:

- IN MOTION (coordinated by the University of Poitiers)

Further activities may be developed within the Living Lab via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## Section 7: Specificities associated with the continuation of the VIQE-ML

### 7.1 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 5.2. In the specific case of the VIQE-ML, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator (the WP5 Leader during the upcoming four years) and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *University of Salamanca*, as leading Partner for WP5, during the upcoming four years. VIQE-ML will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi*, as co-leading Partner for WP5, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables listed in section 7.2), the VIQE-ML management team will regularly consult and report to the EC2U WP5 Board that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VIQE-ML.

## 7.2 Activities

The activities of VIQE-ML will include (but not be limited to) the participation and/or realisation of the following deliverables, defined in the EC2U proposal and recalled in the Grant Agreement:

- D5.2 VIQE PhD network
- D5.4 Activities of the VIQE

In addition, the activities of VIQE-ML will include (but not be limited to) the activities and projects developed within the Living Lab “Teaching Languages in Communities and Approaching Cultural Biases from Multiple Perspectives”, as defined in deliverable 6.5 of the H2020 RI4C2 SwafS project. Further activities may be developed within the Living Lab via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## Section 8: Specificities associated with the continuation of the VI-SCC

### 8.1 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 5.2. In the specific case of the VI-SCC, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator (the WP6 Leader during the upcoming four years) and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *University of Coimbra*, as leading Partner for WP6, during the upcoming four years. VI-SCC will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *Friedrich Schiller University of Jena*, as co-leading Partner for WP6, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables listed in section 8.2), the VI-SCC management team will regularly consult and report to the EC2U WP6 Board that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VI-SCC.

### 8.2 Activities

The activities of VI-SCC will include (but not be limited to) the participation and/or realisation of the following deliverables, defined in the EC2U proposal and recalled in the Grant Agreement:

- D6.2 SCC PhD network
- D6.3 Launch of EC2U Sustainable Campus Network
- D6.5 Activities of the SCC Virtual Institute
- D6.6 EC2U Sustainable Campus Network and the EC2U Covenant of Mayors

In addition, the activities of VI-SCC will include (but not be limited to) the projects developed within the Living Lab “Perception of Building Environment – Indoor Environment and Quality of Air”, as defined in deliverable 6.5 of the H2020 RI4C2 SwafS project.

Further activities may be developed within the Living Lab via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## **Section 9: Generalities associated with the creation of the VI-PJSI, VIQE-ES, VI-LL and VI-MMSF**

### **9.1 General concept and objectives**

The generalities and concepts described in section 5 are applicable for the creation of the new VIs. In the new consolidation phase of the EC2U project, the “Peace Justice and Strong Institutions” UNSDG has been selected in view of its particular relevance with respect to the EC2U Alliance Mission Statement. Additionally, the VI on “Quality Education” will be divided in two: 1) continuing the Modern Languages activities developed in the first phase of EC2U (see section 7) and 2) launching activities in Education Sciences in view of their particular relevance with new EC2U activities.

Moreover, the topics “Life on Land” and “Materials and Methods for a Sustainable Future” were selected due to their relevance among the research and innovation activities of the partner universities and in relation to the EC2U Alliance Mission Statement. These topics were identified via the RI4C2 project and these two Virtual Institutes will be further developed following their creation within the RI4C2 project. They will however be of the same structure and focus on the same objectives as all other VIs.

### **9.2 Governance**

The following governance modalities are defined for the upcoming four years of existence of the VIs, in relation with the duration of the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement.

Each VI will be managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator (e.g., a Vice-Rector), a Scientific Coordinator (the related WP Leader during the upcoming four years, when relevant. In the absence of a related WP, the Scientific Coordinator is a prominent expert from the field) and an Administrative Coordinator from the leading institution; a Policy Co-Coordinator (e.g., Vice-Rector) and a Scientific Co-Leader from the co-leading institution. These teams will be appointed for the upcoming four years by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council.

For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal for VI-PJSI and VIQE-ES (incl. deliverables), the VI management team will regularly consult and report to the relevant EC2U WP Board (composed of representatives from all the partner universities) that will also act as a Scientific Council to the related VI. The same conditions will apply for VI-LL and VI-MMSF, even though the activities are not defined in the EC2U proposal: the WP Board will be replaced by a VI Board (composed of representatives from all the partner universities).

For activities and decisions having a potential impact on the EC2U project and/or on the partners’ strategies/policies, the VI management team and VI Scientific Council will consult the Executive Committee: the ExeCo will take final decisions, after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council.

### **9.3 Communication policy**

All communication activities of the new VIs will be incorporated in the global Communication Plan of the EC2U Alliance and will comply with obligations undertaken by the Parties under the Grant Agreement and under section 7 “Visibility and Promotion” of the Consortium Agreement.

## 9.4 Data protection, Ownership and property rights

Data protection, Ownership and property rights are defined by sections 8 and 9 of the Consortium Agreement.

## Section 10: Specificities associated with the creation of the VI-PJSI

### 10.1 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 9.2. In the specific case of the VI-PJSI, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator (the WP7 Leader during the first four years) and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *Friedrich Schiller University of Jena*, as leading Partner for WP7, during the first four years. VI-PJSI will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *University of Pavia*, as co-leading Partner for WP7, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables listed in section 10.2), the VI-PJSI management team will regularly consult and report to the EC2U WP7 Board that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VI-PJSI during the first four years.

### 10.2 Activities

The activities of VI-PJSI will include (but not be limited to) the participation and/or realisation of the following deliverables, defined in the EC2U proposal and recalled in the Grant Agreement:

- D7.2 PJSI PhD Network
- D7.4 Creation of the framework and structure for the Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions Joint Virtual Institute and PhD Network

Further activities may be developed via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## Section 11: Specificities associated with the creation of the VIQE-ES

### 11.1 Rationale

The creation of the VIQE-ES follows the objectives set out within the H2020 SwafS project (RI4C2) of the EC2U Alliance, as part of the joint R&I agenda activities. Developing an R&I Agenda stands as a crucial mandate for European University Alliances, aligning with the ecosystem's inception in 2019. It serves as a key objective to promote research and innovation within Alliance-affiliated universities, connecting both the Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programmes. This initiative is in coherence with the policies of the European Research Area (ERA) and the European Higher Education Area. Within this framework, the RI4C2 project set out to create four new Virtual Institutes as part of the EC2U Alliance. This endeavour was envisioned to evolve through a gradual alignment process, guided by principles of transparency and inclusive interdisciplinarity, where innovation plays a pivotal role. Thus, a survey on R&I needs and mapping of R&I activities and Infrastructures was conducted throughout the Alliance to define the priority research areas for future activities. In consultation

with a diversity of stakeholders within the Alliance, including at the decision-making level, the topics of the new Virtual Institutes were therefore defined. Considering the activities of the VIQE and the new activities developed within EC2U, on the basis of what was set out in the project's proposal, it was agreed among the Partners to split the VIQE into the preceding topic "Modern Languages" and a new topic: Education Sciences. Thus, this new Virtual Institute – Education Sciences - is created within the scope of EC2U Work Package 3 activities.

## 11.2 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 9.2. In the specific case of the VIQE-ES, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator (the WP3 Leader during the first four years or another key person nominated by the WP3 leader) and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *University of Pavia*, as leading Partner for the VI during the first four years. VIQE-ES will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *University of Poitiers*, as co-leading Partner for the VI, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities defined in the EC2U proposal (incl. deliverables listed in section 11.3), the VIQE-ES management team will regularly consult and report to the EC2U WP3 sub-Board on Digital Pedagogy that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VIQE-ES.

## 11.3 Activities

The activities of VIQE-ES will include (but not be limited to) the participation and/or realisation of the following deliverables, defined in the EC2U proposal and recalled in the Grant Agreement:

- D3.2 Innovative digital pedagogy database
- D3.5 Digital Education lab

Other activities will be developed similar to activities taking place within the other EC2U Virtual Institutes. This will engage the VI governance in identifying funding mechanisms to pursue such activities. Further activities may also be developed via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## Section 12: Specificities associated with the creation of the VI-LL

### 12.1 Rationale

The creation of the VI-LL follows the objectives set out within the H2020 SwafS project (RI4C2) of the EC2U Alliance, as described in section 11. In consultation with a diversity of stakeholders within the Alliance, including at the decision-making level, the topics of the new Virtual Institutes were therefore defined. This comprehensive preliminary work led to the identification of a new VI topic based on UNSDG #15 Life on Land.

## 12.2 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 9.2. In the specific case of the VI-LL, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *University of Turku*, as leading Partner for the VI during the first four years. The VI-LL will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *University of Salamanca*, as co-leading Partner for the VI, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities, the VI-LL management team will regularly consult and report to the VI Board, composed of representatives from all the other EC2U universities, who will also act as a Scientific Council to the VI-LL.

## 12.3 Activities

The activities developed within the VI-LL will be similar to the ones established within the other EC2U Virtual Institutes. However, as these activities were not included in the EC2U consolidation phase work plan, the VI governance will have to identify funding mechanisms to develop the activities of this Virtual Institute. Further activities may also be developed via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

## Section 13: Specificities associated with the creation of the VI-MMSF

### 13.1 Rationale

The creation of the VI-MMSF follows the objectives set out within the H2020 SwafS project (RI4C2) of the EC2U Alliance, as described in section 11. The comprehensive preliminary work led to the identification of a new VI topic “Materials and Methods for a Sustainable Future”, a transversal topic cutting across several UNSDGs.

### 13.2 Governance

General rules for governance are defined in section 9.2. In the specific case of the VI-MMSF, the management team is composed of a Policy Coordinator, a Scientific Coordinator and an Administrative Coordinator who are personnel from the *University of Poitiers*, as leading Partner for the VI during the first four years. VI-MMSF will be co-managed by a team composed of a Policy Coordinator and a Scientific Co-Leader from the *University of Linz*, as co-leading Partner for the VI, during the upcoming four years. This team will be appointed by the Executive Committee (ExeCo) after consultation with the EC2U Closed Council. For the daily management and realisation of activities, the VI-MMSF management team will regularly consult and report to the VI Board, composed of representatives from all the other EC2U universities, that will also act as a Scientific Council to the VI-MMSF.

### 13.3 Activities

The activities developed within the VI-MMSF will be similar to the ones established within the other EC2U Virtual Institutes. However, as these activities were not included in the EC2U consolidation phase work plan, the VI governance will have to identify funding mechanisms to develop the activities of this Virtual Institute. Further activities may also be developed via additional project applications either at the regional, national or European levels.

### Section 14: Signatures

As proof of conformity with the above, the eight parties sign the present Consortium Agreement at the time and place figuring below (electronic signature is allowed):

#### For the Contractor:

<b>Prof. Virginie Laval</b>	Stamp of the University
President of the University of Poitiers	
Done at Poitiers, Date:	

#### For the Partners:

<b>Prof. Amílcar Falcão</b>	Stamp of the University
Rector of the University of Coimbra	
Done at Coimbra, Date:	

<b>Prof. Liviu Maha</b>	Stamp of the University
Rector of <i>Alexandru Ioan Cuza</i> University of Iași	
Done at Iași, Date:	

**Prof. Andreas Marx**

Stamp of the University

President of the University of Jena

Done at Jena, Date:

**Prof. Stefan Koch**

Stamp of the University

Rector of the Johannes Kepler University of Linz

Done at Linz, Date:

**Prof. Francesco Svelto**

Stamp of the University

Rector of the University of Pavia

Done at Pavia, Date:

**Prof. Juan Manuel Corchado**

Stamp of the University

Rector of the University of Salamanca

Done at Salamanca, Date:

**Prof. Marjo Kaartinen**

Stamp of the University

Rector of the University of Turku

Done at Turku, Date:



RI4C2  
Research & Innovation  
For Cities & Citizens



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101035803

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