European University Alliance FORTHEM to expand its network

PRESS INVITATION / University presidents and rectors, mayors, and chamber of industry and commerce representatives from nine European countries will be joining in Mainz

The European Commission has been funding the FORTHEM European University Alliance, coordinated by Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU) in Germany, since fall 2019. The FORTHEM Alliance, which includes JGU, the University of Burgundy in France, the University of Opole in Poland, and the University of València in Spain – all long-standing partners in European cooperation – as well as the University of Palermo in Italy, the University of Latvia, and Jyväskylä University in Finland, aims to breathe new life into cooperation within the European Higher Education Area.

Over the past two years, the alliance members have been working on a joint Transnational Higher Education Strategy, which will merge the partner universities’ various mobility agreements, research activities, and double and multiple degree programs by 2022. The resulting strategy is then to be subsequently rolled out across the alliance by 2025. Under the aegis of the European Universities Initiative (EUI), the EU is financing the FORTHEM Alliance with up to EUR 5 million until 2022. Another project, entitled FIT FORTHEM, has received some EUR 2 million in European funding to develop cross-alliance strategies for research and innovation to address various open science policies and to draw up a common research agenda for all FORTHEM partners, which will enable the alliance to pursue its ambitious goals over the long term. The objective of FORTHEM, short for “Fostering Outreach within European Regions, Transnational Higher Education and Mobility”, is to transform the alliance into a true European University, promoted by the exchange, cooperation, and mobility of students, teaching staff, researchers, and academic support staff within the European Union.

With the upcoming network meeting in Mainz, Germany, on September 22 and 23, 2021, the university alliance is entering an important phase: FORTHEM is welcoming two new European partner universities to its ranks, while, at the same time, it is also inviting mayors and representatives of the chambers of industry and commerce from the cities of all partner universities to Mainz. In the coming week, JGU is expecting around 100 guests from all four corners of Europe whose intention is to collaborate on the development and bolstering of the European Higher Education Area.

Representatives of the media are cordially invited to the
Launch of the 2021 FORTHEM network meeting
on Wednesday, September 22, 2021, beginning at 3:00 p.m. [German time / UTC+2]
on-campus or via the live streaming of the event
as well as the
Presentation of the new FORTHEM partner universities on Thursday, September 23, 2021, beginning at 2:30 p.m. [German time/UTC+2] on-campus.

On Wednesday, September 22, the program starting at 3:00 p.m. will be as follows:
- Welcome address by the President of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Professor Georg Krausch
- Welcome address by Heike Raab, State Secretary and Representative of the Land of Rhineland-Palatinate to the German Federal Government, with responsibility for Europe, the Media and Digital Affairs
- Keynote address on the European Universities Initiative by Vanessa Debiais-Sainton, Head of the Higher Education Unit of the European Commission
- “FORTHEM Alliance in a nutshell” – Presentation by the JGU Vice President for Learning and Teaching and spokesperson of the FORTHEM Alliance, Professor Stephan Jolie
- FORTHEM Labs targeting European and regional challenges: towards sustainable multi-stakeholder collaboration – Presentation by Tamás Szabó of Jyväskylä University, spokesperson of the FORTHEM Lab Mission Board
- FORTHEM Poster presentation – presented by leading FORTHEM researchers

At around 5:15 p.m., the panel discussion “FORTHEM – Our vision for Europe” with representatives from the FORTHEM universities, cities, and chambers of industry and commerce will start.

At around 6:15 p.m., the university presidents and rectors of the FORTHEM universities as well as the mayors and the representatives of the chambers of industry and commerce of the partner cities will sign a new FORTHEM statement detailing the strategy for the enhancement and development of the alliance over the coming years.

At the end of the event, the European guests of JGU will sign the Golden Book of Mainz University.

On Thursday, September 22, from 2:30 p.m., the FORTHEM Alliance will be presenting its two new partner universities and sign a letter of intent on their future cooperation in the European University alliance.

*** We would be delighted by your attendance at this event either on-campus or via live stream. Please register by sending an email to presse@uni-mainz.de by September 21, 2021. ***

The President of JGU, Professor Georg Krausch, and the JGU Vice-President for Learning and Teaching, Professor Stephan Jolie, will be available in the run-up to the event to talk about the FORTHEM Alliance.

The European Universities Initiative (EUI)
The European Universities idea goes back to the Initiative for Europe keynote speech of the French President Emmanuel Macron on September 26, 2017, at the Sorbonne University in Paris. In that speech, he proposed establishing a European University network by 2024. In the initial pilot phase, 54 different networks throughout Europe applied for funding. Of these, by fall 2019, 17 alliances had begun receiving some EUR 85 million in funding. Three of these networks are being coordinated by German universities. The aim of the EU Commission is to help establish a European Higher Education Area by 2025 in which it will be clearly evident that learning, studying, and research are aspects that transcend national borders.

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The FORTHEM network meeting on September 22 and 23, 2021, is being funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).
Related links:
- https://www.forthem-alliance.eu/ – The FORTHEM Alliance;

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Read more:
- https://www.uni-mainz.de/presse/aktuell/12841_ENG.HTML.php – press release “European University Alliance FORTHEM launches new FIT FORTHEM project“ (18 Dec. 2020);
- https://www.uni-mainz.de/presse/aktuell/10335_ENG.HTML.php – press release "FORTHEM Alliance of Mainz University and European partners visits the European Universities Initiative kick-off event in Brussels" (7 Nov. 2019);
- https://www.uni-mainz.de/presse/aktuell/8956_ENG.HTML.php – press release “A beacon in the European Education Area: The European Commission funds JGU and partners for their vision of a European University“ (26 June 2019);
The FORTHEM Alliance