

ELLS STRATEGY 2020-2022

Strategic objectives and ELLS mission

ELLS activities in 2020-2022 will be implemented under the Presidency of the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU). The strategy presents the long-term strategic objectives approved by ELLS bodies. ELLS bodies in the annual ELLS Operational plan also define and approve concrete short-term goals for a particular year. Both strategic and operational objectives are important for strengthening ELLS vision to be the network of leading universities in the fields of Natural Resource Management, Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, Life Sciences, Animal Sciences, Food Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Rural Development, incl. Agricultural Economics or Rural Sociology. The mission of ELLS is to enhance the position and capability of all member institutions through the sharing of expertise and resources as part of the development and implementation of their teaching, learning, research, outreach and value creation. The focus of ELLS has been on joint teaching and learning, student and staff mobility, quality assurance, policy development, strategy and internationalisation since the foundation of ELLS. New dimensions of ELLS activities reflect contemporary challenges and echo ELLS development. To foster the ELLS mission we shall focus on these following strategic objectives during the period 2020-2022:

1. To increase benefits for ELLS members and partners through supporting joint teaching, learning and research

This objective addresses the synergies resulting from ELLS joint activities in education and research. Sharing capacities and infrastructure in education for joint programmes, scientific student conferences, summer schools, teacher and student exchanges, cooperation at Ph.D. level, development of soft skills and entrepreneurship among students or digitalisation of education has been the main focus of ELLS. These successful activities will be continued. Additionally, under the current strategy, development of new initiatives especially around collaborative projects at the Ph.D. level and linkages between teaching, learning and research will be encouraged and prioritised.

2. To further develop ELLS as a European and global example of best practice in the network of cooperating universities

This objective utilises and develops the well-established cooperation among member and partner universities. Reflecting on the activities and governance of ELLS, the network might be considered as a precursor to the European Universities initiative coined by the European Commission. Already ongoing ELLS activities, like the collaboration with international partners outside EU, exchange of ideas and information among member universities through annual fora (conferences), collaboration in education and internationalization, sharing of experiences and joint learning infrastructure across member universities (e.g. research support, quality assurance, IT and IRO support groups, etc.) have already proved to be highly useful. New focus areas added in this strategy are (1) the support of closer linkage between ELLS and EU bodies, (2) increased emphasis on ELLS societal outreach to face the global challenges of the 21st century. All activities will enhance ELLS visibility internally (within member and partner universities) and externally.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN - ELLS STRATEGY 2020-2022

1. To increase benefits for ELLS members and partners through supporting joint teaching, learning and research

Item	Operational objective / description	Frames of implementation
1.1 ELLS Summer schools	Continuing support for the ELLS summer schools, as an example of mixed exchange programmes, maintaining their number and number of participating students. Interdisciplinary summer schools will be prioritised to take advantage of topical synergies and to attract a broader group of students.	The ELLS Fund for Incentives will co-fund ELLS summer schools. The ELLS Task Force announces each year a call for applications to the fund. Applications can be submitted by teachers, staff and students at member and international partner universities through an ELLS Subject Area, Support Team or ELSA. ELLS Support Teams and ELSA will assist summer school organisers to deliver the best product for the students.
1.2 ELLS joint programmes	Qualitative development of ELLS joint programmes (including new ways of information about these programmes). If possible, new joint programmes will be offered (especially those in challenging areas like bioeconomy).	ELLS fund for incentives will co-fund innovations in already existing ELLS joint programmes. The programme directors and universities involved will search for funding under the Erasmus programme in its new programming period: the programmes will be regularly presented during ELLS conferences. ELLS IROs will inform about ELLS joint programmes as the possibility for student exchange programmes. ELLS support teams will assist ELLS joint programmes to be at the frontiers of European education.
1.3 ELLS joint education in soft skills and entrepreneurship	Soft skills development and entrepreneurship education will be part of ELLS education activities (incl. joint programmes and summer schools, case studies).	The summer school organisers, Subject Areas and joint programme directors will search for the possibilities of how to strengthen the education towards soft skills development in the activities they organise (with the support of ELLS Fund for incentives). A possibility is to set-up an ad-hoc support team for soft skills education and entrepreneurial education.
1.4 ELLS Students case study competition	The support of Case Study Competitions (CSCs) to provide ELLS students with an opportunity to utilise their knowledge in practical issues related to real-life problems within the field of life sciences and related disciplines with an	Subject Areas in cooperation with ELSA are encouraged to organise CSCs every second year, at least. In order to support an interdisciplinary approach, the coordination of at least two Subject Areas is advised.

	interdisciplinary approach in an international context.	
1.5 Students and teachers exchange	<p>Exchange of students at bachelor, master and Ph.D. level will be highly targeted in ELLS activities.</p> <p>Ph.D. student exchanges will be focused on short intensive courses and internships in ELLS universities (e.g. internships in the unique laboratories of ELLS members).</p>	<p>IROs will encourage bachelor, master and Ph.D. degree students to pursue their study exchange (and research in the case of Ph.D. students) at ELLS universities (incl. the development of curricula facilitating student exchanges).</p> <p>Staff members of Subject Areas will be encouraged by ELLS universities to participate in exchange programmes among ELLS universities.</p>
1.6 ELLS Scientific student conference	<p>Annual scientific student conferences will continually be supported as one of the flagship activities of ELLS.</p> <p>Ten years of experience (in 2019) with ELLS student conferences will be used to reflect the future development of this activity.</p>	<p>Apart from the annual organisation of the conference, new ways of its development will be investigated as a joint activity of ELLS IROs, Task Force, Subject Areas and Support Teams to present the ELLS student conference as an updated unique product of ELLS for its members (students and teachers).</p>
1.7 ELLS cooperation in Ph.D. education and joint Ph.D. supervision	<p>Cooperation within Ph.D. studies under ELLS universities will be prioritised reflecting the research challenges (big data, artificial intelligence and low carbon emission transitions, generic skills for Ph.D. students, etc.).</p> <p>Joint supervising or shared supervision of Ph.D. students by ELLS supervisors will be supported based on guidelines for such supervision.</p>	<p>For the cooperation in the Ph.D. level, the common (joint) topics across subject areas will be used (e.g. topics addressing artificial intelligence, digital education, generic skills needed for Ph.D. work /academic writing, proposal writing, etc.).</p> <p>ELLS Subject Areas will support Ph.D. intensive courses through the Fund for Incentives.</p>
1.8 ELLS Research support	<p>Strengthening research support cooperation among ELLS universities with the links to the activities of subject areas; Research support offices and Research support Task Force will play a central role in this process.</p>	<p>Subject Areas will be encouraged to combine the education activities already provided by them with the research activities the members of Subject Areas implement. Ph.D. students will be incorporated into these activities. The task force of the Research Support group will inform Subject Areas about the appropriate research possibilities and funding possibilities.</p>

2. To further develop ELLS as a European and global example of best practice in the network of cooperating universities

item	Operational objective / description	Frames of implementation
2.1 ELLS partners	Utilising the experience in cooperation with non-EU ELLS partners to support global knowledge and experience exchange.	The experience of cooperation with ELLS partners will be used to develop the framework of how ELLS will operate in the global context.
2.2 ELLS as a forum for experience exchange	Supporting the exchange experience among ELLS member universities	Annual ELLS conferences will be a forum for the exchange of experiences and practices among ELLS universities in the area of education, research and societal outreach. ELLS will regularly consider the possibilities of its enlargement to bring new ideas into the network.
2.3 Fostering ELLS governance	The joint activities aiming at strengthening the governance within ELLS universities will contribute to the benefits of ELLS membership which will demonstrate ELLS as the network already operating in line with the principles of European Universities initiative.	Various joint activities of ELLS (e.g. workshops training the staff of ELLS universities in the issues highlighted by ELLS Board as being of high importance for the member universities). The contribution and engagement of all ELLS bodies (Board, Task Force, Support Groups, Subject Areas and ELSA student organisation) are essential in the process of ELLS governance.
2.4 ELLS-EU interface	Working on a new interface between ELLS and EU bodies bringing mutual benefits to both parties.	ELLS Task Force in cooperation with ELLS Board will elaborate measures on how to develop the communication between ELLS and EU to present ELLS to EU bodies as a network that is already implementing principles of the European Universities initiative (e.g. through addressing European Green Deal). Cooperation with other networks in the field is essential.
2.5 ELLS societal outreach and enhancing ELLS visibility	Developing ELLS as a network skilled in the provision of answers for social challenges of the 21 st century through sharing the human resources and infrastructure. Improving visibility of ELLS.	Supporting visibility of ELLS demonstrating the societal impacts of such networking.