

# FORTHEM

NEWSLETTER #1

*in this issue*



**forthem.**

Fostering Outreach  
within European Regions,  
Transnational Higher Education  
and Mobility

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## FORTHEM Annual Meeting

FORTHEM has already celebrated its first-year anniversary, and almost two years of intensive cooperation and one year of challenging, exciting and moving teamwork in FORTHEM alliance are now over. The objective of the FORTHEM annual meeting was to evaluate the current results, as well as to discuss and create the best solutions within the current situation.

The members of FORTHEM common structures: the Steering Committee, the Mission Boards and the Working Teams, keeping an open and active dialogue, discussed administrative harmonisation procedures, accomplished and planned mobility activities, the progress of the established FORTHEM Labs, set up and upcoming ideas for societal involvement and outreach. Further steps have been identified to move towards the FORTHEM vision.



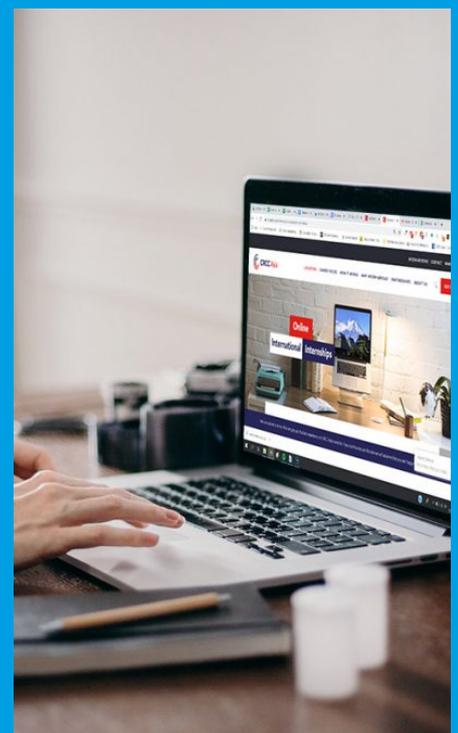
A new board – Coordination and Communication Board – has been established to ensure efficient implementation of WP1 (overall management of the project), WP2 (development of common structures) and WP7 (dissemination and sustainability) tasks.

Mobility Mission Board reviewed the progress of WP3 (digital academy) and WP4 (innovative mobility structures), as well as discussed the functional needs of developing the Digital Strategy and the proposed position paper “FORTHUM Digital Strategy” as the basis for further joint IT solutions. In addition, Short Term Mobility proposals were evaluated and 17 new activities for the academic year 2020/2021 were selected.

A crucial discussion point was the platform of the Digital Academy and how to achieve the highest level of interactivity between students, staff, and academic staff of the universities of the alliance. Furthermore, the focus was on the recognition of the Digital Academy’s courses as well as the right format for the 7 language courses of the alliance.

Lab Mission Board paid attention to the progress of seven Labs and planned outputs, e.g. summer and winter schools, workshops, exhibitions, publications, courses for the Digital Academy, joint supervision, etc. Based on feedback from Lab contributors, the discussions emphasized the need to introduce a new incentive system in order to attract more students and early career researchers, to increase dissemination of the Labs activities and outputs to internal and external stakeholders. A proposal for the budget reallocation which provides more resources for coordination and incentives was approved by the Steering Committee.

Outreach Mission Board discussed the progress of already launched company internships, the call for civic engagement projects as well as the current situation regarding the organisation of summer schools for teachers, with special emphasis on the necessity of communication between the partner universities and broader dissemination of the already launched activities. FORTHUM Steering Committee discussed the progress of all WPs and the next steps with all Mission Boards, paying attention to budget reallocation within several WPs. Special attention was paid to the digital dimension, taking into account the proposed position paper “Digital Strategy”. The SC unanimously adopted the “FORTHUM Mobility Charter”: a list of strategic measures to be taken in the short- and mid-term in order to remove specific mobility obstacles for students and staff in FORTHUM universities, which had been identified in the “FORTHUM Barriers to Mobility” report published in January 2020. The SC members agreed on the signature ceremony for the FORTHUM Statute; in addition, the SC also deliberated on advancing decision making procedures.



# FORTHEM Activities

## Short Term Mobilities

Mobility Mission Board has selected 16 new collective short term mobility activities which will take place between March 2021 and February 2022.

In the first round the students enrolled at any of the FORTHEM partner universities will be able to candidate for the proposed projects that will take place between March 2021 and end of August 2021. In addition to collective programs, we will also fund individual mobilities for students with specific projects (MA thesis research, laboratory research... in one of the partner universities). Currently last details of the application procedure are being coordinated before the call for student applications opens in late October.

Second round of student applications for the project taking place between September 2021 and February 2022 will open in spring 2021.

Last year 13 collective short term mobility programs were selected. Due to COVID-19 three had to be cancelled, four were already or will shortly be organised virtually and six were postponed to next year (spring 2021).

## Civic Engagement projects

The Call for Civic Engagement projects of the FORTHEM alliance is open. FORTHEM has decided to extend the deadline for 4 more weeks. Therefore, the new deadline is the 8th of November 2020 at 23.59 CET.

This affects, of course, also to the implementation date of the Civic Engagement projects which is also moved 4 weeks and will now start on 13th of December 2020 and end on 11th of June 2021. Suggestion:

The ideation of project proposals has nicely started in our FORTHEM Alliance partner universities. We noticed that the formulation of the projects needs a little bit more time. So we decided to extend the deadline for 4

weeks! To make project proposal process easier, we collected the information in a nutshell. On our Website you may find:

1. A tool to communicate your project proposal in order to find collaborative parties from FORTHEM Alliance – universities.
2. You may see a list of project proposals seeking for collaboration from our website.
3. We also offer you the list of student associations in FORTHEM Alliance universities.
4. In order to submit your collaborative project, please fill in the submission form for Civic Engagement Projects.

## Company Internships

The Call for Company Internships within the FORTHEM alliance is open! This is one of the Outreach activities planned by FORTHEM, open to all FORTHEM students and with the purpose to promote internships abroad.

Up to 70 internship places are offered to students, giving them a chance to get an insight into organisations from our partner countries. Each university of our alliance provides up to 10 places. The successful candidates will not only work at companies located in the surroundings of our seven universities, but, furthermore, they will be pioneers in a new company network, which is likely to develop after this first Company Internships call. Funding for the internships will be based on the ERASMUS Traineeship program.

COVID-19 pandemic has been taken into account and so far, some virtual internships are being offered. Pandemic also may affect student mobility; when applying internships, students need to follow the guidelines given by the sending university in order to ensure funding possibilities, and possibilities to gain ECTS credits from their internship period.

The application for 2020 is open until the 31st December 2020 and the traineeship might start in January 2021. Please note that the companies may have their own deadlines.

# News from partner universities

## University of Opole

### "New reality and hybrid forms of learning"

New reality – this sums up our nowadays perfectly. After more than half a year of lockdown and fully distant learning, the University of Opole welcomes the students in the safest of ways. UO starts the new academic year through hybrid forms of learning – around 2/3 of our courses are carried out online, while other courses are performed in a traditional way in compliance with the sanitary regime. We want to make our students feel secure no matter what.



Rector of the University of Opole greeted students in the Inaugural Letter to Students. The students of the University of Opole were invited to the first online Inauguration in the history of the Opole University. A live broadcast took place on October 6 at 11 a.m.

As the University of Opole does not close down to student and their passions, we are happy to inform there was held an upcycling workshop prepared by Oziona Uzodinma, a student from the University of Burgundy in Dijon. Participants of the workshop learned how to transform old clothing to shopping bags and backpacks. Sustainable fashion is very important nowadays so we are glad such initiatives are present under our patron.

We would like to invite everyone to check out our Hello Blog. You can find many fascinating as well as inspiring posts which consist of travel reports, interviews and helpful information there. Get to know the stories of our students!

## University of Palermo

### Start of the Academic Year 2020/2021

For the first semester of the Academic Year 2020/2021 the University of Palermo is planning a gradual restart of face-to-face lessons. The capacity of the classrooms will be recalculated according to the regulation and with a reorganization and redistribution plan of the seats.

In particular, the lessons of 94 study courses, mainly Master's, of the 134 total courses will be held in presence, for a percentage of about 70% (the same lessons will in any case also be available online to facilitate the attendance of foreign and off-site students). The lessons of the other study courses will continue in remote mode and the students will carry out the exercises and laboratory activities in presence, divided into groups.

For digital teaching the University, through ministerial funds, has provided 3 thousand tablets with a 20 gig per month SIM card to students enrolled in the first year of three-year and single-cycle master's degree courses. For the new academic year UNIPA focuses on innovative degree courses, including international ones. There are five newly activated degree courses: "Architecture and design in the built"; "Neuroscience" (in English), "Landscape architecture", "Food science and human nutrition" and "Migrations, rights, integration" (in English).

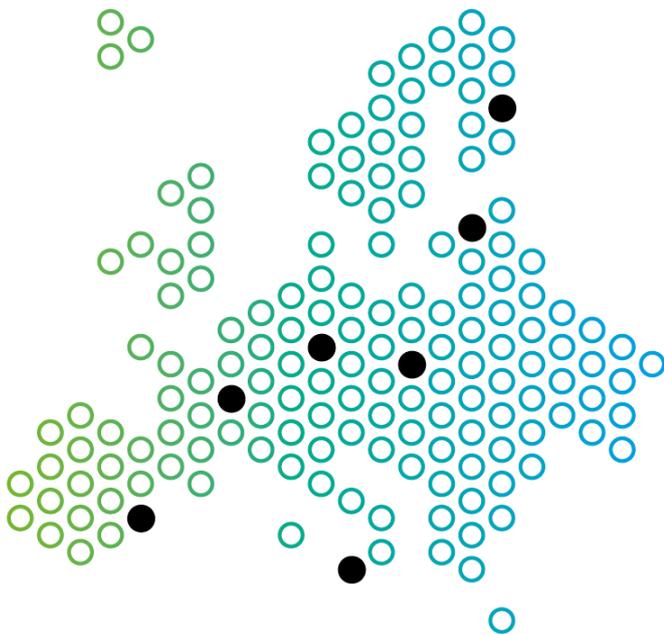
# News from partner universities

## University of Burgundy Prompt adaptation to the situation

At the University of Burgundy, Covid-19 impacted the second half of the second semester. Teachers, students and administrative staff adapted quickly to this new situation. uB supplied IT equipment to staff and students where necessary, to allow them to continue courses remotely. Online teaching was rapidly organised and most exams took place online. The digital pedagogy service at uB enabled the whole university to adapt to online solutions, based on Teams, almost overnight.

A few figures from the lockdown period (March-June): more than 2 million connections, more than 600 000 hours of videoconference and more than 7000 hours of teaching have been recorded.

For the first semester of this academic year 2020-2021, the decision was made to organize almost all of the courses on-site. In the programs where the number of students is too high, courses continue to be organized online.



## University of Mainz Positively busy

Usually, life of University on the campus of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU) is positively busy. Being one of the largest universities in the country and entertaining close to 33.000 students and 9242 staff members, the JGU is the only one of its size to unite its departments and significant partnering institutes on one ample area close to the city's centre. But Germany's nationwide lockdown in Spring also brought campus life to a halt – even the JGU's auditoriums, laboratories and concert halls had to remain empty for weeks. But behind the scenes the wheels were turning: spearheaded by the university's own Corona Task Force every department of the JGU outlined specific concepts to allow a speedy and safe return to research and teaching. Many of this summer's improvised digital formats have stood the test of time; others have brought valuable insights and sparked innovation in the upcoming semester's approach. Regarding the legal framework, the JGU has modified its statutes to help students to make up for lost time.



With the concepts growing more elaborate and the digital resources amped up, the JGU is headed towards a „hybrid“ winter's semester, combining as many in-person-activities as necessary and as many digital components as possible. Staff and students are well on their way to master the challenges together, displaying a heightened appreciation for communication, outreach and exchange – on the academic as well as the human level.

# News from partner universities

## University of Latvia

### The UL celebrates its 101st birthday

For the second year in a row, the University of Latvia (UL) Academic Center Science House hosted an ambitious event of new discoveries, emotions and inspiration “UL New Technologies and Innovations Day” at the beginning of the new study semester. It was also held in honor of the 101st birthday celebrations of the University of Latvia and at the same time gathered several graduates of the University of Latvia.



The main theme of the event was a "smart university". The event provided an opportunity for students, researchers and graduates to demonstrate their achievements during the year, as well as a number of new innovative ideas were generated.

During the event, students and all interested parties were involved in a real brainstorm – the Idea Lab, where participants tried to develop a detailed description of the future university idea throughout the day, including its importance, target audience, implementation steps, sustainability and cost. All events took place in accordance with the epidemiological regulations in the country.

## The first European Universities Breakfast in Latvia

First European Universities Breakfast in Latvia, involving the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science and four selected Latvian higher education institutions, took place on October 9th, 2020.



The purpose of this meeting was to share experience, ideas and views on the major managerial matters related to the implementation process of the European Universities initiative. Additionally, representatives of the four Latvian higher education institutions explored possibilities for further cooperation in exchange of good practices and dissemination of the information.

The University of Latvia team: Professor Ina Druviete, Vice-Rector and Aļīne Gržibovska, Sintija Maculeviča and Sintija Ķestere have shared their experience and several key takeaways from the first year of the implementing the project FORTHEM.

# News from partner universities

## University of Jyväskylä Seminaarinmäki in Jyväskylä first in Finland to seek the European Heritage Label

Based on a proposal by the Finnish Heritage Agency, the Ministry of Education and Culture has selected Seminaarinmäki campus area in Jyväskylä as the first European Heritage Label applicant from Finland. The site, proposed by the University of Jyväskylä, highlights the significance of the educational system in Finland and Europe as the basis for an equal and democratic society.

Seminaarinmäki on the University of Jyväskylä grounds is a protected built cultural environment of national importance with buildings dating from the 19th century to the present day. Architects such Constantin Kiseleff, Alvar Aalto, Arto Sipinen and Lahdelma & Mahlamäki Oy contributed to the design of the area. This milieu is the birthplace of the globally distinguished Finnish educational system.



## FORTHEM Multilingualism Lab in action - citizen science pilot kicks off

The pupils of 7th and 9th grades of a local school in Jyväskylä, together with JYU students, will conduct a research on multilingualism in October 2020. This research is a pilot for a European citizen science research which will be realized later. The aim of this collaboration is to raise pupils' awareness of the scientific process and their knowledge about the (language) minorities in schools. The project is also very valuable for the Teacher Education students of JYU, as they will have the possibility to work together with the pupils already in the beginning of their studies. There are three FORTHEM partner universities taking part in this output: University of Jyväskylä (Finland), Uniwersytet Opolski (Poland) and Universitat de València (Spain).



## University of Valencia UV response to the current health crisis at the beginning of the 2020- 2021 academic year

In the course of a meeting held between the Regional Minister responsible for universities and the Principals of the Valencian public universities, it was agreed that the 2020-2021 academic year would begin in a semi-attendance mode. The course would start on 14th September, except for first-year students, who would start on 25th September. The objective has been to guarantee the maximum safety of the Valencian university community at the beginning of the academic year. In any case, this modification of the calendar for new students will not affect the end date of the course, which will remain as planned. The objective is to recover the normal presence of

# News from partner universities

the teaching modality of the university degrees that are taught in the Valencian Community.

To achieve semi-attendance, a hybrid teaching model has been introduced. Thus, broadly speaking, most of the theoretical classes will be given in a non-attendance mode, while, as regards practices, UV will try to achieve the maximum possible attendance, in safe conditions. A specific Public Health protocol that regulates attendance will be applied. The documents on teaching adaptation and the general prevention and protection guidelines are available on UV website.



With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



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