University of Strasbourg

Strategic Policy Document

University of Strasbourg 2030

At the end of 2018, the University of Strasbourg decided to draft a strategic policy document in order to define its vision and main priorities for **2030**. While this type of approach is still rare in France, it is relatively common in the academic world in Europe and beyond. Ten years after the university's creation, it is important for us to prepare our future proactively in order to be masters of our own destiny, in a context in which French universities are often obliged to react quickly to external calls for projects or to new national or European policies. It is also particularly important to do so collectively, because the strategy of a university is only of relevance if it is based on an open discussion involving the whole community.

This strategic policy document was drafted as part of a decidedly participatory process, first with focus groups and then via a broad consultation of our entire community.[1] This consultation helped to promote discussion and debate within our university, and was therefore an important moment of participatory democracy. **The university authorities** were involved in the main stages of this consultation and in the drafting of this document, which was adopted in Congress on 28 January 2020.[2]

This policy document is intended to be a **"living strategy"** and should serve as a reference text in the life of our university. **Its implementation will involve our entire community**, whether in the context of major institutional projects or of the numerous initiatives launched within the academic departments, research units and support services. It will also involve the academic, institutional, socio-economic and cultural partners of the university and its alumni network. The projects that are in accordance with its objectives will be able to request support from **the strategic development field represented by the University of Strasbourg's Excellence Initiative** (IdEx), in conjunction with its partners and in accordance with its own procedures. Finally, the aim of this policy document is to serve as a set of guidelines in the development of the next five-year contract with the ministry, to be updated regularly by an on-going dialogue between the university community and its authorities.

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[1] Our community is composed of all of the students, teacher-researchers, teachers and library, engineering, administrative, technical, social and health (BIATSS) staff of the university, irrespective of their status, as well as all of its alumni. It also includes the researchers, engineers, technicians and administrative staff (ITA) attached to the research units supervised or co-supervised by the university and a research body.

[2] The University Congress is composed of the members of the Board of Governors, the Academic Board and the University Technical Committee.

A vision for the University of Strasbourg

The development of our community over the next 10 years must first and foremost be based on a shared vision of the university that we aspire to become. This vision is based on the values that define us and on the strengths that distinguish us. Its aim is to direct our efforts to improve the conditions in which the University of Strasbourg carries out its **missions** in research, teaching, innovation and community involvement. It must also enrich the very life of our community, on its campuses and in its interactions with our partners.

An international university. Located in the heart of Europe, the University of Strasbourg today boasts over 750 international partnerships, nearly 20% foreign students and staff from more than 80 different nationalities. With the EPICUR alliance of European universities and the EUCOR[3] European campus, these assets are an **essential driver of its scientific prestige, of student learning and of its staff development**. Our university must go even further and **offer each of its members genuine opportunities to forge international links**, through collaboration and mobility, of course, but also through campus life shared between students and staff of multiple nationalities.

A creative university. Our university has always distinguished itself with its pioneering spirit and its ability to innovate in research, in teaching and in its relationship with society. It must establish itself as **a space for creativity for our entire community**. Supporting this creativity means giving each individual **the means to take initiatives and to engage collectively**. As part of the scientific approach, this creativity must also be expressed in our courses and our teaching practices. It must be at the heart of our campus to foster a culture of commitment and of social innovation. Finally, it must be reflected in the agility of our organisation and in its ability to invent simpler and more collaborative modes of operation, particularly through the use of digital technology.

An open university. The University of Strasbourg is a key player in its region, with campuses in the heart of the city and a leading role in Alsace, in the *Grand Est* region and in its cross-border area. It must be in touch with the socio-economic world and assert itself as an essential partner **in terms of technological innovation, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning**. It must also stand out for its ability to **disseminate knowledge to inform public debate** and maintain the critical thinking necessary both for innovation in organisations and for democratic life. This openness is a prerequisite for helping to meet the great societal, economic and environmental challenges of our time.

An inclusive university. Our community is rich above all in the diversity of its members, and it must endeavour to make this an asset for the benefit of all, thus condemning all forms of racism and discrimination. It has a major role to play **to promote diversity**, particularly in terms of gender equality, social diversity, interculturality, but also disability awareness. This diversity helps to develop a spirit of openness and a sense of community. It must be a source of improvement for all, for example, in terms of innovation in our projects, mutual aid, shared campus life, and relations with our partners and alumni.

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[3] The University of Strasbourg is a founder member of the EPICUR alliance of European universities, composed of the universities of Amsterdam, Freiburg, Karlsruhe, Mulhouse, Poznań, Thessaloniki and Vienna. It is also a member of the EUCOR European campus with 4 other universities of the Upper-Rhine region (Basel, Freiburg, Karlsruhe and Mulhouse).

Strategic directions to the benefit of our missions

To achieve this vision, our university must build both on large-scale projects and on the many initiatives launched on an on-going basis within our academic departments, our research units and our support services. The work involved in drafting this strategic policy document has made it possible to develop strategic directions **to the benefit of the missions** that are at the heart of our university.

Teaching Mission. The University of Strasbourg aims to prepare its students to meet the challenges of the future by offering them an experience that is adapted to their ambitions, stimulating their creativity and encouraging their openness to the world. The quality of this student experience will be based on 3 main development themes:

- **Internationalisation of the student experience**. Our university has a duty to offer a truly international experience to all of its students, with teaching of and in foreign languages, movement opportunities within a dense network of partnerships (particularly within EPICUR), a first-rate quality of care (with the *Bienvenue en France*, "Welcome to France" label) and communication between different cultures, which is a feature of our campus life.

- **Personalisation of courses**. Our undergraduate and further education course offering must enable each student to construct an academic career that is adapted to their talents and aspirations. The University of Strasbourg will support its students in their learning and their choice of specialisation to enable them to acquire the knowledge, subject-specific and cross-disciplinary skills essential for their future plans and particularly their entry into the working world. With project Noria[4], we will also work to help high-school students with their transition to higher education.

- **Pedagogical Innovation.** The University of Strasbourg will support its academic staff in the development of their teaching practices, particularly by implementing active learning and digital technology to meet the needs of its students in all their diversity.

Research Mission. The University of Strasbourg intends to provide a world-class research environment and a space for creativity enabling its academic staff to tackle the unknown in order to meet the great scientific challenges of the future. An original and ambitious partnership with research organisations will be one of the keys to this construction. The quality of our research environment will be based on 3 main development themes:

- **(Inter-)disciplinary structuration**. Our university will seek to maintain its disciplines at the highest level while intensifying the development of major interdisciplinary themes to respond in the most relevant way to the great societal challenges of tomorrow. In particular, it will strengthen the dynamic that has been underway for many years with initiatives promoting cross-functional collaboration. The Interdisciplinary Thematic Institutes in particular will make it possible to support high-impact research and to consolidate the link between research and teaching at all levels of the academic cycle.

- **Platforms and scientific data.** The University of Strasbourg will continue to invest in the development of state-of-the-art scientific and technological platforms. To help the university community to prepare the future, it will, in particular, set up an efficient organisation for data

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[4] Project Noria was submitted by the University of Strasbourg and in 2019 won the national call for projects entitled "Territorial measures for guidance towards higher education".

processing and storage, and ensure its support for activities in the crosscutting area of artificial intelligence.

- **Internationalisation of research.** Our university will offer practical support to its teacher-researchers and researchers to help them to join international networks, drawing not only on EPICUR and EUCOR, but also on all of our partnerships with foreign universities[5]. Specific support will also be given to newcomers, particularly those coming from abroad, to provide them with the ideal conditions in which to begin their activities.

Innovation and Societal Impact Mission. The University of Strasbourg intends to establish itself as a key partner in the fields of technological and social innovation, entrepreneurship, lifelong learning, and the dissemination of knowledge in the public arena. The strengthening of our economic and societal impact will be based on three fields of development:

- **Increased support for innovation.** In conjunction with local support structures (SATT Conectus, the SEMIA incubator, competitiveness centres etc.), our university will help its teacher-researchers and researchers to promote and publicise their research and will bolster its ability to respond to the demand from businesses for expertise and skill. It will also step up its support of the creation of start-ups, of student entrepreneurship and of the incubation of projects with high innovation potential.

- **An open campus in a heartland of innovation.** Our university will also develop spaces for the exchange of ideas and for experimentation on its campuses combining practices and sciences/technologies, enabling businesses to be as close as possible to the research units. Our students and staff will have privileged access to these spaces to further their training and make them places of pedagogical innovation. In order to achieve this ambition, our university will have to develop greater autonomy in the management of its real-estate assets.

- **Open science and dissemination of knowledge.** The University of Strasbourg must be a public space for debate and reflection in the heart of its region and in close collaboration with its various stakeholders. Ethics and integrity will always be an integral part of the development and assessment of all of its research, teaching and innovation activities. It will strive to make its results and data available to the public, and to involve citizens as often as possible with the implementation of its research programmes to facilitate their appropriation. Finally, in a context in which the very legitimacy of information is often questioned, it will actively contribute to enlightening public debate and helping its students to become free, critical and responsible citizens.

Four fields of transversal transformation

In support of these areas of development focused on our missions, our university also intends, in the long term, to work in 4 fields of transversal transformation:

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[5] In addition to EPICUR and EUCOR, the University of Strasbourg has a dense network of partnerships in Europe (Germany, United Kingdom, etc.) and throughout the world (Australia, Azerbaijan, Canada, China, United States, India, Japan, etc.).

Involvement and participation. The University of Strasbourg wishes to develop a culture of participation by promoting a more collaborative way of functioning and the involvement of its members in the life of the university and beyond. This culture will help to strengthen the bonds that unite us and will be crucial in our ability to build the future together. In this respect, the consultation organised in 2019 was a landmark for our university in terms of participatory democracy. We now need to broaden and diversify this dynamic in order to make it an integral feature of our community.

- **Inventing new means of participation** to enable all of its members to express themselves regularly, in all their diversity, with, for example, regular discussions on the quality of working and student life, open consultations on future university plans or collaborative working groups to formulate operational and targeted action plans.

- **Implementing measures to promote community initiatives** (hackathons, participatory budgeting, etc.) around issues that are particularly close to its heart, such as sustainable development, quality of life at work and in studies, equality of opportunity and solidarity.

Development of talents. The development and the reputation of the University of Strasbourg are dependent on all of its academic, administrative and technical staff and, of course, on its students. It must therefore provide a work and study environment that enables each individual to develop their talents and creativity. The *HR Excellence in Research* European label, acquired in 2017, is proof of our commitment in this area.

- **Helping our staff to build their own career paths** based on their talents and aspirations, in particular by highlighting even better their pedagogical and administrative commitment and by offering each individual opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills (expertise, management, languages, teaching practices, etc.). Particular attention in this context will be paid to the questions of gender equality, disability and social diversity among staff and students.

- **Promoting personal fulfilment and well-being** and a work-life balance, in particular, with management that listens to suggestions and is sensitive to difficulties, support of commitment and participation (consultations, working groups, etc.) and cultural, sporting and health facilities that promote inclusion and will make our campuses living spaces as well as working spaces.

- **Attracting the best talents for our** missions, both in our support services and in our courses, by improving our recruitment processes (working conditions, national and international communications, etc.).

Sustainable development. There is no longer any time for prevarication on the issue of sustainable development, and especially the protection of the environment. As a stakeholder in the area, The University of Strasbourg must take concrete measures, in research, teaching and innovation and in its own running and campus life. The need for sustainable development must inform all the activities carried out by and within our university. To do so, we must act decisively and in close collaboration with our partners:

- **Supporting the initiatives and commitment of students and staff** to limit the carbon footprint of our university whether by recycling and reducing waste (especially from research), or the development of soft mobility.

- **Systematically reducing the environmental impact of our operating practices**: reducing the number of emails, waste paper, local and international travel, energy efficiency of our buildings, etc.

Institutional agility. Finally, in order to improve the working conditions of its members and to address the numerous challenges that await it, our university must become more agile and reactive. This is all the more important because the creation of the EPICUR alliance of European universities will open the way to inter-university projects and activities shared between its 8 partners.

- **Simplifying and optimising operating practices** in a process of continuous improvement, with a major focus on the dematerialisation of our processes, and dedicated support to assist our staff in this transition.

- **Rethinking and simplifying communication between the central level and academic and research departments** by working, in particular, on reforming our internal organisation and improving its management.

- **Consolidating its financial autonomy**, by taking full advantage of the Horizon Europe programme, of the University of Strasbourg Foundation and possibly the devolution of our real-estate assets.