

ELLS STRATEGY 2020-2022

Strategic objectives

ELLS activities in 2020-2022, under the Presidency of Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU), will be framed in lowering the number of objectives compared to last period. While strategic objectives are long-term goals, the operational objectives are concrete short-term goals for a particular year as they were defined and approved by ELLS bodies in annual ELLS operation plan. ELLS strategy 2020-2022 indicates new directions for future ELLS development with maintaining already existing activities which were beneficial for ELLS. 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, Veterinary Sciences, Food Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Rural Development. 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. According to the ELLS Memorandum of Understanding and the ELLS Policy Document, the focus of ELLS is on joint teaching and learning, student and staff mobility, quality assurance, policy development, strategy and internationalization. This is reflected in this strategy together with new dimensions of ELLS activities reflecting contemporary challenges and echoing ELLS development since 2002. 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 strategic partners through supporting joint teaching, learning and research

This objective aims at exploring synergies resulting from ELLS joint activities in education and research. Sharing capacities and infrastructure in education for joint degree programmes, students scientific conferences, summer schools, teachers and students exchange, cooperation at Ph.D. level, development of soft skills and entrepreneurship among the students or digitalization of education has been a main ELLS focus and successful activities will be continued. Additionally, under the current strategy, development of new initiatives especially around collaborative projects at PhD level and linkages between teaching, learning and research will be encouraged and prioritized.

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

This objective aims at utilizing and further develop the well-established joint cooperation among member and strategic partner universities. Reflecting the activities and governance of ELLS, the network might be considered as a precursor to the European universities (European University Network) initiative coined by European Commission in 2019 and planned to be a funding mechanism within Erasmus+ for the programming period 2021-2027. Already ongoing ELLS activities, like collaboration with international partners, exchange of ideas and information among member universities through annual fora (conferences), collaboration, 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 21st century. All activities will enhance ELLS visibility internally (within member and strategic partner universities) and externally.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN - ELLS STRATEGY 2020-2022

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

Item	Operational objective / description	Frames of implementation
1.1 ELLS Summer schools	<p>Continuing support for the ELLS summer schools maintaining their number and number of participating students.</p> <p>Interdisciplinary summer schools will be prioritized to take advantage of topical synergies and to attract a broader group of students.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>ELLS Support Teams and ELSA assist summer school organizers to deliver the best product for the students.</p>
1.2 ELLS joint degree programmes	<p>Qualitative development of ELLS joint degree programmes. If possible, new joint degree programmes will be offered (especially those in challenging areas like bioeconomy).</p>	<p>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 Erasmus programme in its new programming period: the programmes will be regularly presented during ELLS conferences. ELLS IROs will inform about ELLS joint degree programmes as the possibility for the students exchange programmes. ELLS Support Teams will assist ELLS joint degree programmes to be at frontiers of European education.</p>
1.3 ELLS joint education in soft skills and entrepreneurship	<p>Soft skills development and entrepreneurship education will be part of ELLS education activities (incl. joint degrees and summer school, case studies).</p>	<p>The summer school organizers, Subject Areas and joint degree programme directors will search for the possibilities how to strengthen the education towards soft skills development in the activities they organize (with the support of ELLS Fund for Incentives). A possibility to set-up an ad-hoc Support Team for soft skills education and entrepreneurial education.</p>
1.4 ELLS Students case study competition	<p>The support of Case Study Competitions (CSC) to provide ELLS students with an opportunity to utilize their knowledge in a practical issues related to real-life problems within the field of life sciences and related disciplines with interdisciplinary approach in an international context.</p>	<p>Subject Areas in cooperation with ELSA are encouraged to organize CSC's every second year. In order to support an interdisciplinary approach the coordination of at least two Subject Areas is advised.</p>

<p>1.5 Students and teachers exchange and joint Ph.D. supervision</p>	<p>Exchange of students at bachelor, master and PhD level will be highly targeted in ELLS activities.</p> <p>Ph.D. students exchange will be focused on short intensive courses and internships in ELLS universities (e.g. internships in the unique laboratories of ELLS members).</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>IROs will encourage bachelor and master degree students to take exchange study in ELLS universities (incl. the development of curricula facilitating students exchange).</p> <p>ELLS subject areas will support PhD intensive courses through the Fund for Incentives.</p> <p>Subject Areas staff members will be encouraged by ELLS universities to participate in exchange programmes among ELLS universities.</p>
<p>1.6 ELLS Scientific Students Conference</p>	<p>Annual students conference will continually be supported as one of flagship activities of ELLS.</p> <p>Ten years of experience (in 2019) with ELLS students conferences will be used to reflect the future development of this activity.</p>	<p>Apart of annual organization of the conferences, the new ways of its development will be investigated as joint activity of ELLS IROs, Task force, Subject Areas and Support Teams to present the ELLS students conference as updated unique product of ELLS for its members (students and teachers).</p>
<p>1.7 ELLs Cooperation in Ph.D. education</p>	<p>Cooperation within Ph.D. studies under ELLS universities will be prioritized reflecting the research challenges (big data, artificial intelligence and low carbon emission transitions, generic skills for Ph.D students etc.).</p>	<p>For the cooperation in the Ph.D. level the common (joint) issues across Subject Areas will be used (e.g. the artificial intelligence, digital education, generic skills needed for Ph.D work /academic writing, proposal writing etc.).</p>
<p>1.8 ELLs Research support</p>	<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.</p>

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

Item	Operational objective / description	Frames of implementation
2.1 ELLS strategic partners	Utilizing the experience of the cooperation with non-EU ELLS strategic partners to support global knowledge and experience exchange.	The experience of already working international strategic partners will be used to develop the frames how ELLS will operate in the global context.
2.2 ELLS as a forum for experience exchange	Supporting the experience exchange among ELLS member universities.	Annual ELLS conferences will be a forum for the exchange of the experience and practices ELLS universities implement in the education, research and societal outreach.
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 Network.	Various activities of ELLS joint work (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 students organization ELSA) 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 develop the measures how to develop the communication between ELLS to present ELLS for EU bodies as a network already implementing principles of European universities initiative.
2.5 ELLS societal outreach	Developing ELLS as a network skilled in provision of answers for social challenges of 21 st century through sharing the human resources and infrastructure.	

OPERATIONAL PLAN 2020 (ELLS PLAN OF ACTIVITIES 2020)

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

1.1 ELLS SUMMER SCHOOLS: To organize ELLS summer schools by ELLS Subject Areas with a focus on interdisciplinary summer schools. To prepare an overview how ELLS students are attracted for the participation in ELLS summer schools. Continually assess the quality of ELLS summer schools and monitor their development.

Milestones:

- till end of March 2020: list of the summer schools to be promoted through ELLS channels (at least 5 summer schools are to be funded by Fund for Incentives and organized by Subject Areas);
- summer 2020: summer-schools are to be organized;
- November 2020: short assessment of summer schools during ELLS conference at BOKU, Vienna (to be sent to ELLS Secretariat by the end of October 2020)
- End of 2020: final evaluation of summer-schools including description of the ways how the students were attracted to the summer schools (cooperation of summer school organizers and Support Team Quality Assurance)

1.2 ELLS JOINT DEGREE PROGRAMMES: To support ELLS joint degree programmes as the best practices of collaborative (joint) education. ELLS Task Force in cooperation with Subjects Areas will start discussion about possible new joint degrees within ELLS

Milestones:

- Reports on joint degree programmes during ELLS conference in Vienna (November 2020)
- November 2020 (for ELLS conference in Vienna) draft paper addressing the possibility of new joint degree programmes (Task force in cooperation with Subject Areas and IROs)
- Start-Up Module EUR-Organic 2020 - Integration of Peer Teaching and Learning Techniques in a Field Course based on System Thinking funded by Fund for Incentives

1.3 ELLS JOINT EDUCATION IN SOFT-SKILLS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: University IROs will prepare brief inventory of existing capacities related to soft skills education and entrepreneurial education within ELLS universities to have a background for the discussion how to develop the ELLS cooperation in this area of education.

Milestones:

- Report on ELLS universities capacities related to soft skills education and entrepreneurship (by end of 2020)

1.4 ELLS STUDENTS CASE STUDY: Supporting the activities related to students Case study competition with significant involvement of ELSA.

Milestones:

- Students Case study competition organized by subject area Bioeconomy (funded by Fund for Incentives)

1.5 ELLS JOINT Ph.D. SUPERVISION: Preparation of the draft of guidelines concerning the joint supervision of Ph.D. students within ELLS universities.

Milestones:

- Till September 2020 TF/IRO meeting Task Force in cooperation with IRO support group will prepare a draft concerning guidelines of joint Ph.D supervision

1.6 ELLS SCIENTIFIC STUDENTS CONFERENCE: To organize annual student conference in 2020 at BOKU Vienna. The conference will be important step to reflect the experience gathered in previous years of the conferences to work on their future development

Milestones:

- ELLS Scientific Students conference: BOKU Vienna: November 20-21, 2020
- Call for conference abstracts: March 2020
- Deadline for abstract submission: June 15, 2020

1.7 COOPERATION IN Ph.D. EDUCATION: The support through the ELLS Fund for Incentives to offer short term courses for Ph.D. students aiming at enhancing the skills of Ph.D students in their research activities (i.e. academic writing, project proposal writing)

Milestones

- Organized short term courses for Ph.D. students from ELLS universities (two short term courses in subject area Plant Health and Forestry are targeted to Ph.D students and supported by Fund for Incentives)

1.8 ELLS RESEARCH SUPPORT: Developing activities for Ph.D. students aiming at improving their research skills (with the assistance of ELLS Research Support Office Support Team)

Milestones:

- Pilot programme on innovative tools for research project development designed by ELLS Support Team Research Support Offices will be offered to the Ph.D. students in 2020

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

2.1 ELLS STRATEGIC PARTNERS: Continuing cooperation with ELLS strategic partners (ongoing activity)

Milestones

- Feedback from strategic partners reflecting their membership in ELLS (opening the discussion during Task Force and IRO group meeting at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 18 - March 20, 2020)

2.2 ELLS AS A FORUM FOR EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE: Organization of ELLS conference at BOKU Vienna (November 19 - November 20, 2020)

Milestones:

- Organized ELLS conference at BOKU Vienna, November 19 – November 20, 2020. The conference will aim at sharing the experience in how ELLS universities see the impacts of life sciences on societies and what is the role of ELLS universities in this process

2.3 FOSTERING ELLS GOVERNANCE: Ongoing activities of ELLS bodies (Board, Task Force, Support Teams, Subject Areas, ELSA) will contribute to bettering the mechanisms of ELLS governance

Milestones:

- Task Force and IRO support group meeting: Hebrew University of Jerusalem: March 18 – March 20, 2020
- ELLS Board video-meeting: April 23, 9.00 Central European Time
- Task Force and IRO support group video-meeting (date and time to be confirmed: end of September 2020)
- ELSA meetings: dates and venues to be confirmed
- Board, Task force, Support groups, Subject Areas, ELSA face-to-face meetings: November 19, 2020 at BOKU Vienna
- Reports on projects funded by ELLS Fund for Incentives in 2019 are to be submitted to ELLS Secretariat: February 28, 2020
- Call for application for ELLS Fund for Incentives in 2021: March 25, 2020
- Deadline for the submission of applications for ELLS Fund for Incentives in 2021: August 31, 2020
- Preliminary reports on activities of ELLS Support Teams, Subject Areas and ELSA in 2020 are to be sent to ELLS Secretariat: November 2, 2020

2.4 ELLS-EU INTERFACE: Participation of ELLS network in the application for European Universities Network call in 2020

(if such participation is agreed by the ELLS Board)

Milestones:

- Application for the call of EU targeting European University Network under Erasmus+ project or developing ELLS position as for the participation in European University Network (to participate in the future or not)

2.5 ELLS SOCIETAL OUTREACH

No concrete activity foreseen in 2020; many of activities outlined in this plan for 2020 have their societal outreach