

# **Integrated Campus of Multiple Universities how to match Vision and Reality?**

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Thank you for the honor of participating in the 50th anniversary of University of Maribor

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~ 210.000 students  
~ 20.000 employees  
~ 1B€ yearly turnover

# European challenges

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## The future of European competitiveness

Part A | A competitiveness strategy for Europe

SEPTEMBER 2024

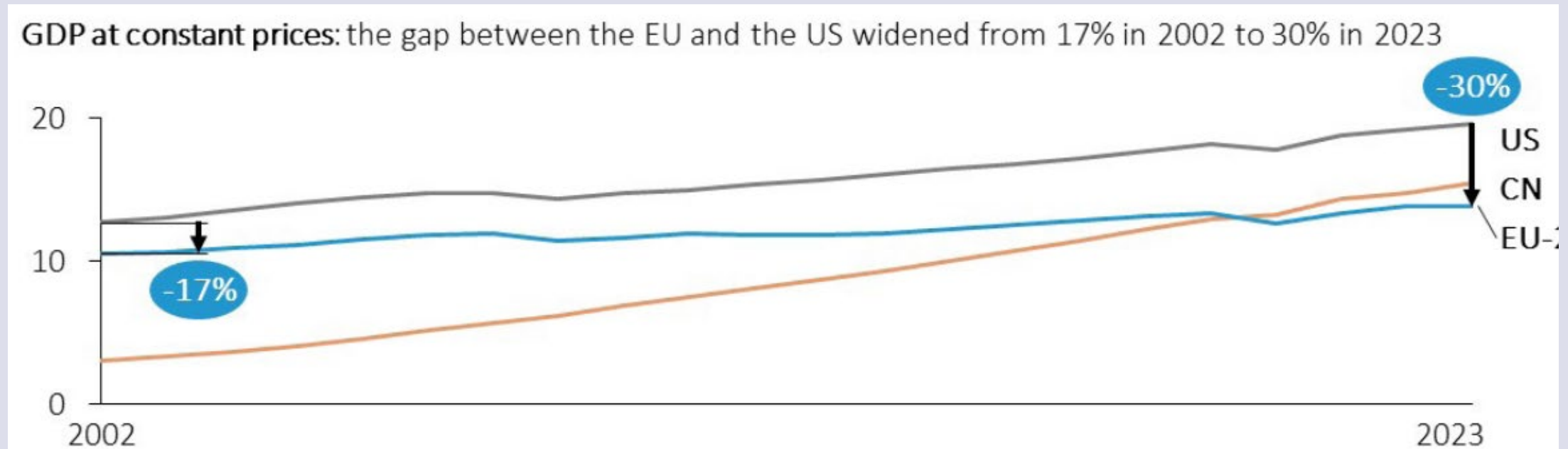
Draghi report, Sept 2024



High level conference, Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 2025

# European challenges

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Only 4 of the top50 global companies are located in Europe



# Essentials from Draghi report

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- Urgent Investment Needs
- **Closing the Innovation Gap**
- **Green Transition Aligned with Competitiveness**
- **Strategic Autonomy & Reducing Dependencies**
- Regulatory Reform & Governance Improvements
- Strengthening the Single Market
- **Policies for Startups, Scale-ups and Risk Capital**
- **Skills, Workforce and Demographics**
- Industrial Policy & Sectoral Focus
- New Financing Mechanisms & Common European Resources



**Relevant Fields for  
European Universities  
and their Alliances**

# The Letta report

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## MUCH MORE THAN A MARKET

**SPEED, SECURITY, SOLIDARITY**

Empowering the Single Market to deliver a sustainable future and prosperity for all EU Citizens



← Enrico Letta report (2024)



# Letta's report and a „fifth freedom“

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## The Single Market must evolve with a “Fifth Freedom”

Existing freedoms (goods, services, capital, and people) no longer sufficient.

Proposition of a “Fifth Freedom” centered on research, innovation, data, education, skills and knowledge as core driver of EU development

**At the root of  
Europ. Alliances**

## Mobilise Investment through a Savings & Investments Union

Channel private savings into productive EU investments (green, digital, industrial).

## Reform State Aid & Rules for Public Support

Harmonising subsidies and prevent fragmentation from national subsidy races.

## Reduce Barriers and Burdens in the Single Market

Simplify regulation, harmonise rules, cut bureaucracy, especially for SMEs.

## Strengthen the Social & Cohesion Dimension

Ensure fair access, balanced regional development, worker protections, and reduce inequalities.

**Aim: a Single Market that feels beneficial for *all citizens*, not just firms.**



# The European University Alliances

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Study team (PPMI):  
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# Europ. Univ. Alliances – outcomes

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**65 alliances**, involving **570 higher education institutions** from 35 countries

## **Joint education & mobility**

600+ joint programmes & courses

160 joint degrees, 430+ micro-credentials

## **Transnational governance**

Shared structures, student involvement

## **Skills & curriculum innovation**

Digital, green, entrepreneurial, intercultural skills

## **Impact on systems & policy**

Labs for innovation, push for European Degree

## **Local/regional engagement**

2,200+ associated partners (business, society, regions)

# EUAI – challenges

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- Limited **reach** (not all students/staff benefit yet)
- **Research & innovation** dimension less developed
- Sustainable **funding** still uncertain
- Administrative and **regulatory barriers** persist
- Uneven **visibility** across alliances

# EUAI – policy directions

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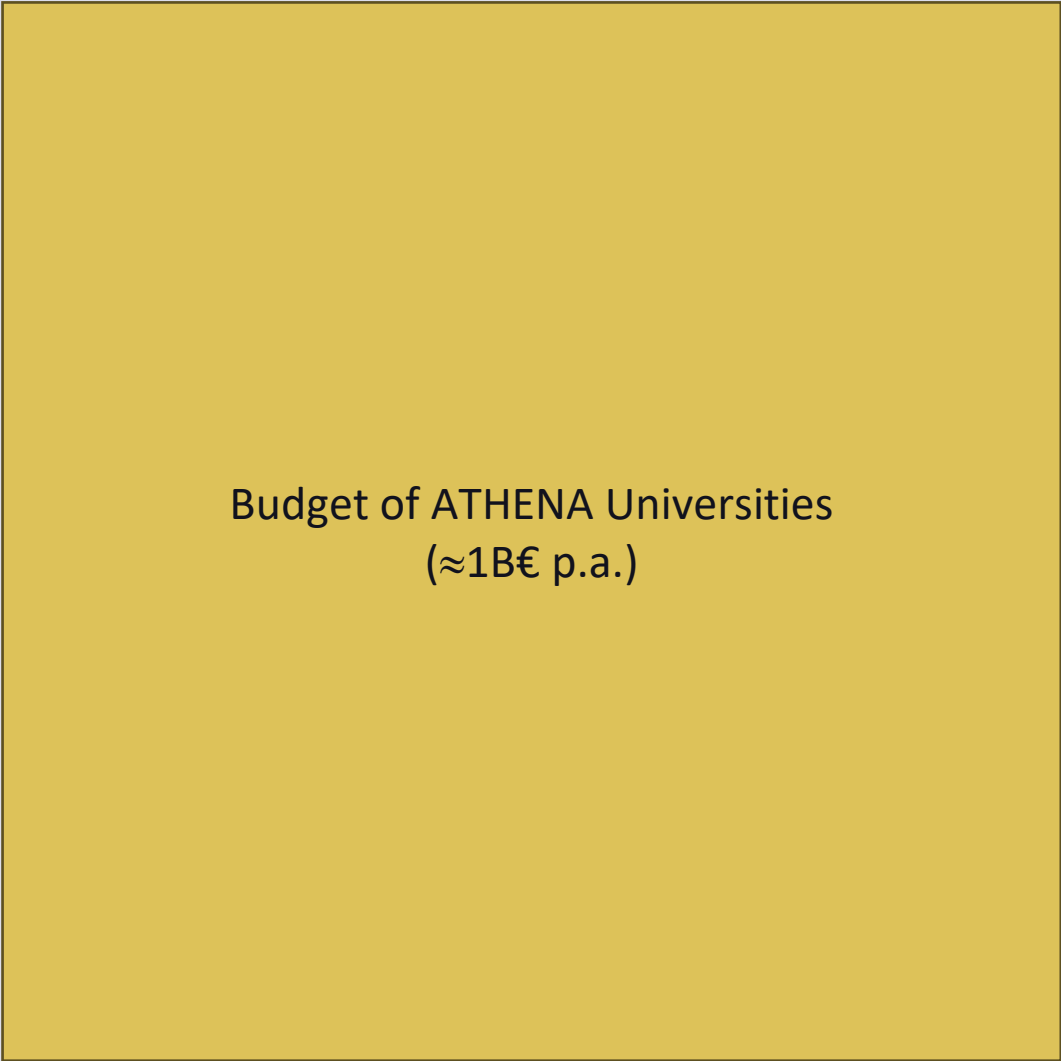


- **Investment:** sustainable EU/national/regional funding mix
- **Monitoring:** stronger evaluation framework
- **Scaling up:** more students, more disciplines, deeper missions
- **Regulation:** smoother cross-border recognition, less admin
- **Societal link:** partnerships with business, regions, society


👉 *In short:* The European University Alliances Initiative is **transformative** but needs **scaling, sustainable funding, and regulatory alignment** to deliver its full potential.

# Scale vs Expectations

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Budget of ATHENA Universities  
( $\approx 1\text{B€}$  p.a.)



EC Funding per Alliance  
( $\approx 3,5\text{M€}$  p.a.)



# Coherent interests

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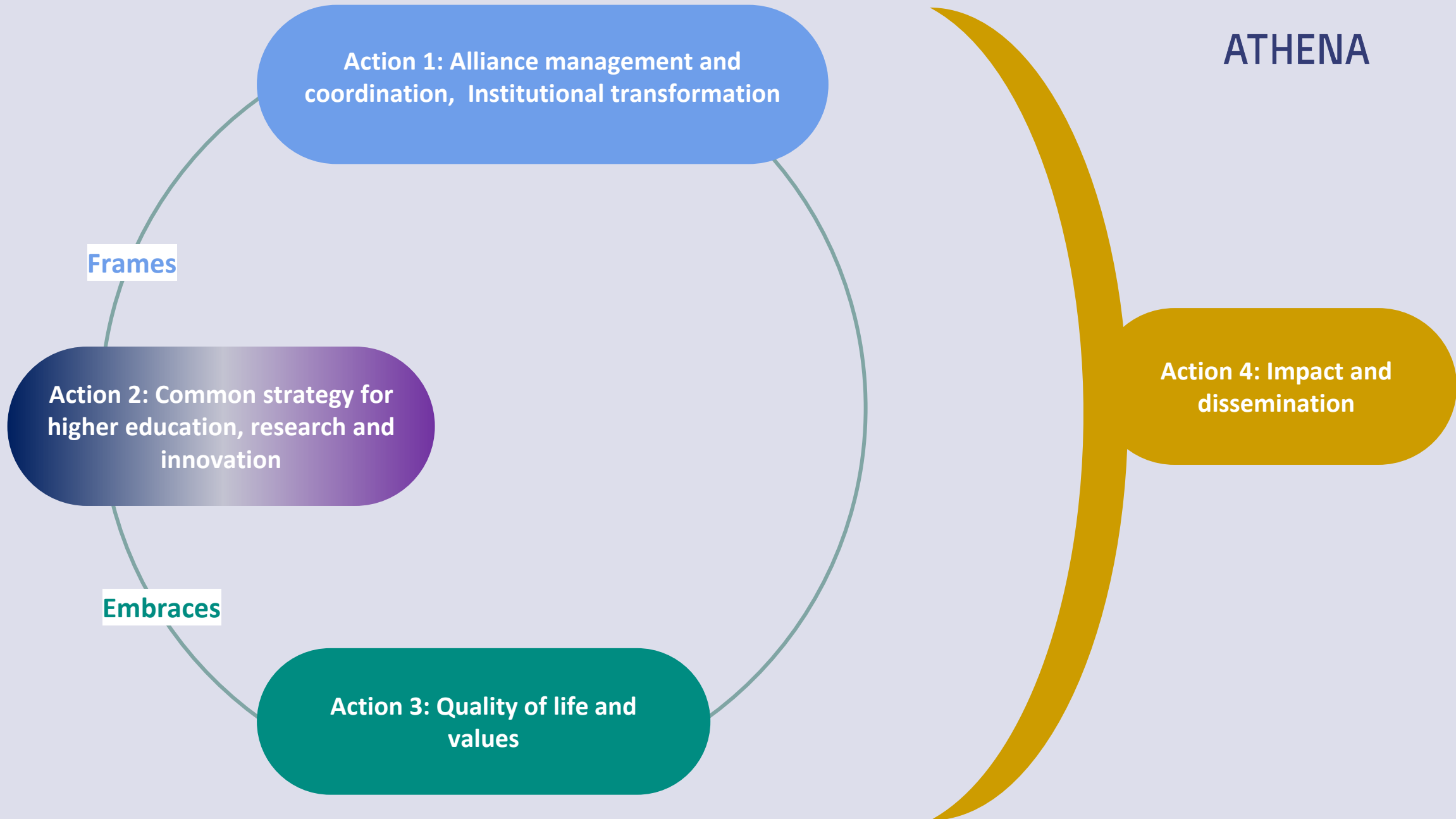
Ensuring the convergence of EC, institutional and individual's interests is a *sine qua non* requirement to fulfill expectations

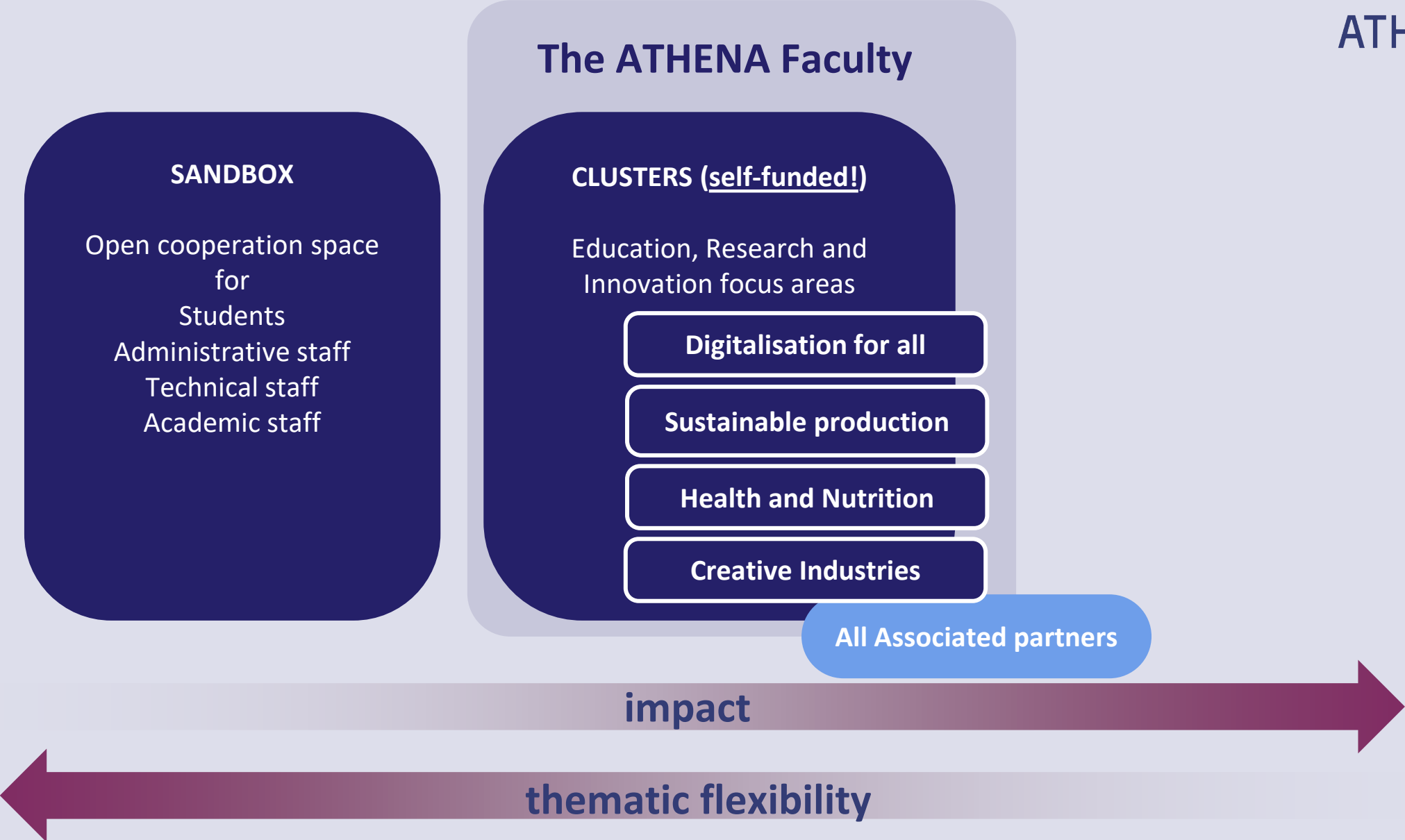


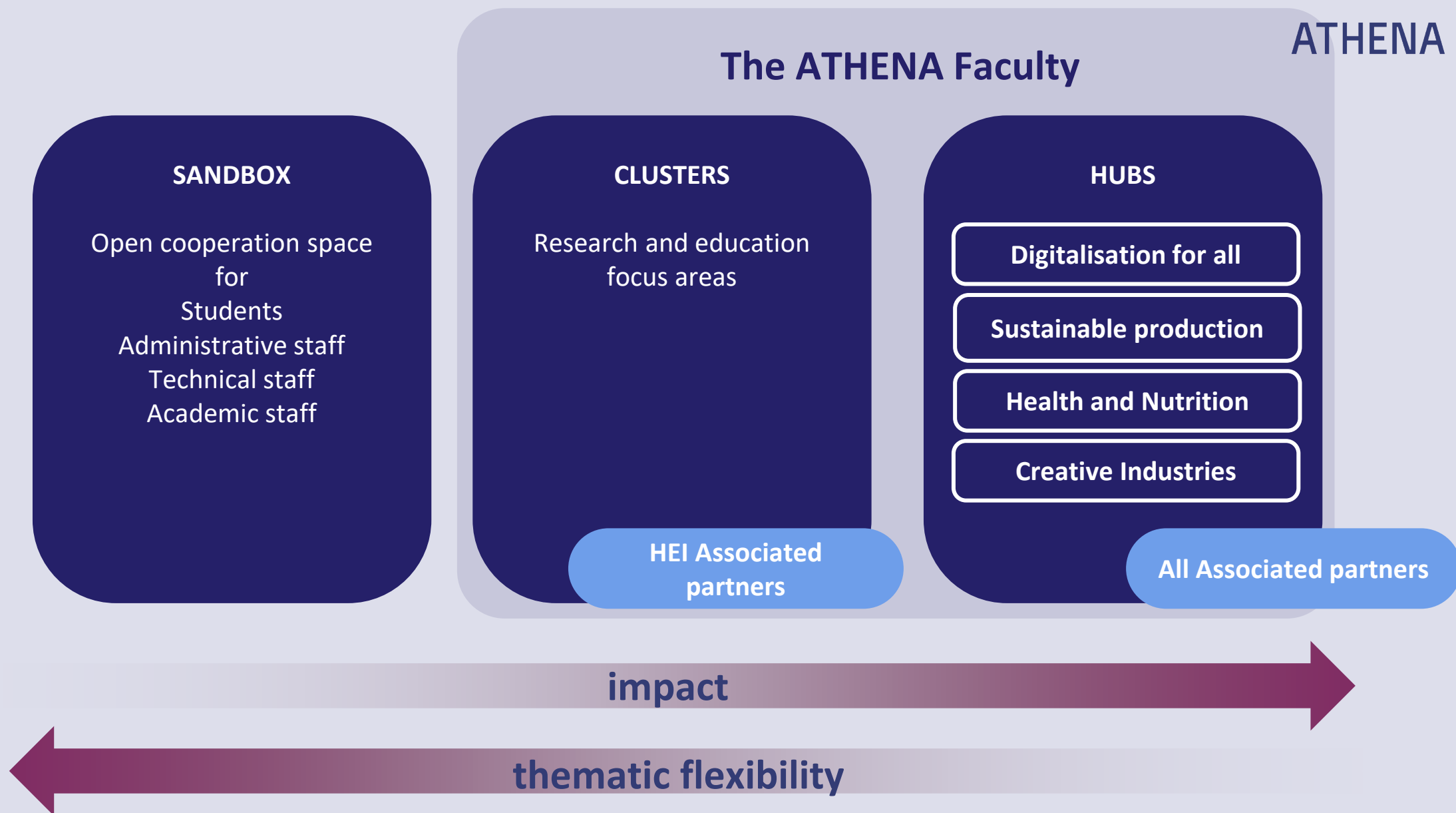
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# Alliances as engines of competitiveness, inclusion, and sovereignty

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## 1. Single European Knowledge Market

Enable **free movement of learners, researchers, and innovation staff** across Europe.  
Support a **European Degree framework** to scale transnational study and credentials.

## 2. Sustainable Investment in Education, Research & Innovation

Mix EU, national, and regional resources to build a **knowledge infrastructure backbone**.

## 3. Digital, Green & Deep Tech Transformation

Realize Draghi's **AI/semiconductors/deep tech push**.  
Make alliances testbeds for **climate-neutral campuses** and **digital-first education & research ecosystems**.

## 4. Governance & Autonomy for Alliances

Grant alliances **legal recognition and autonomy** to manage joint degrees, budgets, and cross-border partnerships.  
Reduce administrative barriers and build an EU-wide framework for **institutional cooperation**.

## 5. Societal & Industrial Integration

Strengthen alliances' **2,200+ partner networks** with businesses, cities, and civic actors.  
Position alliances as **regional innovation hubs**, anchoring competitiveness *and* inclusion.

## 6. Global Attractiveness & Strategic Autonomy

Use alliances as **flagships of European higher education** to attract global talent.  
Ensure **technological sovereignty** while remaining a global knowledge partner.

# Conclusions

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- Challenges in Europe need **impactful university alliances**
- Investment needs to be **sufficient and sustainable** to ensure operation
- Scaling up to deeper interaction and more students is a persistent challenge
- Less administrative burden, e.g. smoother cross-border recognition, requirement
- Partnerships with business and society is predominantly local
- Athena follows a thematically focused synergetic E&R&I approach to motivate (self-funded) participation