



First Draft European Approach – Implementation Status

Milestone 8

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1. Purpose and context

This document contributes as “milestone 8” to the activities of work package (WP) 3 and aims to advance joint programme policy alignment across the Ulysseus European University Alliance.

In line with the Grant Agreement, this first draft provides an initial assessment of the **European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes** and its implementation status across Ulysseus member institutions and their respective national contexts.

Joint programmes operate within different national regulatory, accreditation and quality assurance frameworks. The applicability of the European Approach, as well as the procedures required to establish, to approve and to accredit joint programmes, may therefore differ across partner institutions and member states.

Scope and terminology. For the purpose of this Milestone, “joint programmes” refers primarily to integrated degree-level programmes jointly designed and delivered by two or more Ulysseus partner institutions. These are distinguished from individual joint modules, standalone courses and joint online courses, which represent different levels of academic integration and are addressed through other WP3 activities where applicable.

The purpose of this first draft is to illustrate the emerging Ulysseus experience, and to provide a basis for continued joint-programme policy alignment. Subsequent programme development and implementation experience provide additional evidence of how these dimensions are being addressed in practice.

2. European Approach:

Relevance for Ulysseus

The European Approach provides a common reference framework for the external quality assurance of joint programmes. For Ulysseus, it is particularly relevant because the development and implementation of **integrated joint degree programmes** require participating institutions to coordinate requirements and responsibilities that remain partly embedded within national and institutional systems.

Key areas include:

- national accreditation and regulatory requirements;
- institutional quality assurance systems and external QA arrangements;
- programme approval and governance procedures;
- recognition, degree-awarding and diploma arrangements;
- roles and responsibilities of participating institutions within the joint programme structure; and
- joint admission, mobility, assessment and student-support procedures.
- joint curriculum development, learning outcomes and integrated programme delivery.

The European Approach therefore provides a common reference point for Ulysseus while recognizing that implementation requires coordination across regulatory, quality assurance, governance and academic dimensions.

3. European Approach – Implementation Status Framework

The implementation status of the European Approach across Ulysseus can be considered through **seven interrelated dimensions**, reflecting both national and institutional conditions.

This assessment builds on earlier Ulysseus mapping of the regulatory and quality assurance conditions for joint programmes. The [Ulysseus Framework for Accreditation of Joint Programmes and Awarding Joint Degrees \(2022\)](#) examined national accreditation frameworks, relevant quality assurance agencies, cross-border quality assurance, the applicability of the European Approach, and conditions for awarding joint degrees across participating countries. This provides an initial regulatory baseline for assessing subsequent implementation under Milestone 8.

Dimension	Implementation consideration	Policy-alignment relevance
National regulatory frameworks	Joint programmes operate under different national legal and higher-education requirements, including national provisions for accreditation and awarding joint degrees.	Identify where national requirements permit, condition or constrain common joint-programme approaches.
Accreditation	Accreditation procedures, quality assurance bodies and applicable timelines differ between national systems.	Identify feasible pathways for coordinated accreditation and areas requiring institution- or country-specific approaches.
European Approach	The availability and conditions for applying the European Approach vary across national and institutional contexts.	Clarify when and how the European Approach may be applied and where additional national requirements or procedures remain relevant.
Institutional QA	Partners maintain their own internal QA procedures and responsibilities, which must interact with joint-programme and external QA requirements.	Support interoperable QA coordination while respecting institutional and national responsibilities.
Recognition & degree awarding responsibilities	Recognition, degree-awarding responsibilities and the roles of participating institutions vary according to programme structure and applicable national requirements.	Clarify recognition mechanisms, degree-awarding responsibilities and the involvement of participating institutions within joint programme structures.
Programme design & jointness	Integrated joint programmes require participating institutions to co-create learning outcomes, curriculum structures, mobility arrangements, assessment processes and student-support mechanisms while coordinating institutional academic requirements.	Identify the academic and operational conditions required to support genuinely integrated programme design and delivery across participating institutions.

Dimension	Implementation consideration	Policy-alignment relevance
Governance, coordination and funding	Programme development and approval require coordination between participating faculties, institutional authorities and relevant administrative functions.	Clarify partner roles, joint and local responsibilities, decision-making pathways and institutional coordination requirements regarding admission and enrollment of students, program coordination and funding for tuition, local in inter-university management..

These dimensions provide a framework through which Ulysseus can assess both, existing implementation experience and areas requiring further policy alignment. The earlier regulatory mapping provides the **starting conditions**, while subsequent joint-programme development and accreditation experience provide evidence of how these conditions are being addressed in practice.

4. European Approach

Implementation in Practice:

Ulysseus Joint Degrees

Subsequent accreditation and programme-development experience illustrates how the European Approach interacts with institutional responsibilities, national requirements and integrated programme design.

The cases below distinguish between the status documented around the June 2024 milestone reference point and subsequent developments. Later evidence is therefore presented as implementation progress rather than retrospectively as part of the original milestone output.

Programme	Level of jointness & partner involvement	Recognition / degree arrangement	June 2024 status
Ulysseus CitiesMD	Integrated Joint Master Degree involving multiple Ulysseus partner institutions in programme delivery and mobility.	Joint programme arrangements include academic recognition, mobility and coordinated institutional responsibilities.	First accredited Ulysseus pilot joint degree, with programme implementation scheduled to begin in 2024.
UlysseusAI – AI for Business Transformation	Integrated Joint Master Degree involving multiple Ulysseus partners, including participating degree-awarding institutions.	Degree-awarding and recognition arrangements are coordinated between participating institutions within the joint programme structure.	In preparation / accreditation process at the June 2024 reference point.
Ulysseus SMILE – Sustainable Management in Life Sciences & Engineering	Integrated Joint Master Degree developed collaboratively across participating Ulysseus institutions.	Recognition and degree-awarding arrangements form part of the programme's joint design and accreditation framework.	Joint Master Degree programme in preparation.
Ulysseus EMFORT-M	Joint Master Degree developed within the Ulysseus joint-programme portfolio.	Specific recognition and degree-awarding arrangements should be reflected according to the final programme structure and participating institutions.	Joint Master Degree programme in preparation.

Taken together, these first Ulysseus cases illustrate different stages of implementation and provide practical experience of coordinating accreditation, quality assurance, governance, recognition, mobility and degree-awarding responsibilities across participating institutions.

At the same time, the cases underline that the level and mechanisms of jointness are not necessarily identical across programmes. Partner participation, degree-awarding responsibilities and recognition arrangements depend on the structure of each programme and the applicable institutional and national frameworks.

5. Implementation Status – Key

Findings

The initial mapping and subsequent Ulysseus experience indicate that the European Approach provides an important common reference for joint programme development, while its practical implementation remains dependent on institutional and national contexts.

The principal areas identified include:

- Differences in national accreditation frameworks, competent authorities and procedural requirements;
- The need to coordinate institutional QA responsibilities with joint programme QA arrangements;
- The importance of clarifying consortium roles, degree-awarding responsibilities and institutional participation at an early stage;
- The need to coordinate recognition, admission, mobility, academic calendars and other programme-delivery requirements;
- The importance of integrated curriculum development and co-creation in establishing meaningful programme-level jointness;
- Administrative, legal, financial and sustainability considerations that extend beyond accreditation itself. Accreditation is not an operating model. A programme can satisfy academic and legal requirements while its recurrent administrative and financial responsibilities remain unresolved.

The emerging Ulysseus experience indicates that the European Approach provides a common framework for joint programme quality assurance, while its practical implementation is shaped by national regulatory conditions, institutional governance and QA responsibilities, programme design, partner roles and operational requirements. Experience from programme development and accreditation therefore reinforces the need for interoperability in curriculum management and program coordination.

6. Subsequent WP3

Development and Consolidation

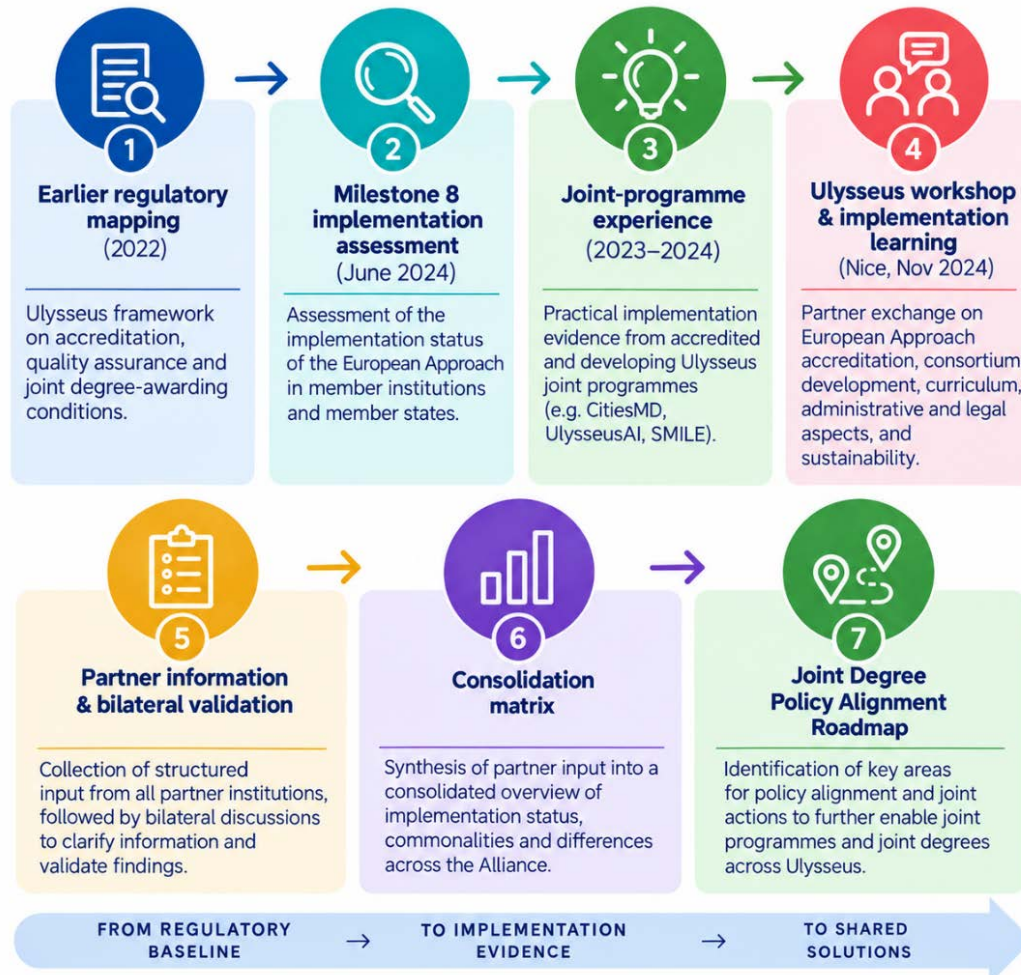
Following the June 2024 Milestone 8 reference point, WP3 continued to develop and validate the initial assessment through practical joint-programme and accreditation experience, partner exchange, institutional questionnaires, bilateral discussions and consolidation of partner-level information.

The **European Approach in Joint Degree Preparation Workshop**, held during the Ulysseus Summit in Nice on **14 November 2024**, provided an opportunity to consolidate implementation learning. Partners exchanged experience from accrediting and developing joint programmes. They shared experiences on European Approach accreditation, consortium development, curriculum co-creation, administrative and legal requirements, as well as financial sustainability questions. The workshop highlighted how the regulatory and institutional considerations translate into practical programme management.

The development pathway from the initial regulatory baseline toward the current policy-alignment work is illustrated in the graph below.

From Evidence to Impact

The development pathway towards the Joint Degree Policy Alignment Roadmap.



The combined evidence from programme-level implementation, partner input and bilateral validation has subsequently been consolidated to support a more systematic understanding of governance, accreditation, quality assurance, recognition, partner responsibilities, administrative requirements and other implementation conditions across Ulysseus.

The consolidation matrix brings these findings together, helping to identify commonalities, differences, transferable practices and areas where further policy alignment is required.

This process represents a continuation and deepening of the documented in milestone 8: from establishing the implementation status of the European Approach, through practical implementation learning and institutional validation, toward identifying shared approaches that can support joint programme development across different national and institutional contexts.

The consolidated findings will provide the evidence base for the first draft of the WP3 Joint Degree Policy Alignment Roadmap, translating the implementation experience and identified policy gaps into structured areas for continued alignment and action.

7. From Implementation Status to Policy Alignment

The regulatory baseline and subsequent programme-level experience identify several areas where continued policy alignment can facilitate joint programme development within a framework of diverse institutional and national systems.

The following areas have emerged as particularly relevant:

Integrated Programme Design:

Support coordination of curriculum, mobility, recognition and other academic arrangements that underpin programme-level jointness.

Regulatory and Accreditation Interoperability:

Facilitate compatibility across systems while recognising differences in national requirements and institutional responsibilities.

Quality Assurance Coordination:

Clarify how institutional QA systems, national requirements and the European Approach can interact in the development and operation of joint programmes, including appropriate mechanisms for joint internal QA coordination.

Governance and Decision-Making:

Map institutional governance pathways and clarify responsibilities between joint programme governance bodies, local institutional authorities and relevant approval structures. Aim for a sustainable program funding strategy that also covers international coordination efforts.

Guidance and Implementation Support:

Develop practical guidance and resources to support programme initiators in navigating governance, accreditation, quality assurance and policy-alignment requirements, while facilitating the exchange of funding and implementation experiences and transferable practices across partners.

8. Continued Development

The consolidated findings from Joint Programme provision are currently informing the first draft of the WP3 Joint Degree Policy Alignment Roadmap. The roadmap will be circulated among Ulysseus partners for review and validation before progressing toward implementation planning.

This will support clearer comparison across the Ulysseus Alliance while recognising differences in institutional responsibilities, national regulatory frameworks and individual programme structures.

References and supporting public material

[Ulysseus, "Shaping future Ulysseus Joint Degrees – One Campus, 16 joint Degree programs", 26 June 2024.](#)

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[Ulysseus Framework for Accreditation of Joint Programmes and Awarding Joint Degrees \(2022\)](#)

[Mäkelä, M. & Walch, S. \(2024\). *The European Approach in Joint Degree Preparation*. Workshop, Ulysseus Summit, Nice, 14 November 2024.](#)



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