LEG-UNIGR: BLUEPRINT FOR A LEGAL ENTITY FOR CROSS-BORDER UNIVERSITY ALLIANCES

Dissemination and communication report

Leg-UniGR dissemination and communication report

Vision

To serve as a model in Europe and internationally by actively participating in the creation of a common higher education and research area in the political space of the "Greater Region".

Mission

To test the feasibility of a new legal status for the cross-border university network.

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Executive summary

The **Leg-UniGR project** is coming after 13 months[1] to an end. This following report provides a summary of the dissemination and communication activities carried out during the project period and closes officially the work package 4.

In the present deliverable, we provide a detailed description on the implementation of the dissemination strategy and plan presented in the deliverable D4.1 "Initial dissemination and communication plan". The document describes all communication and dissemination activities that have taken place since the beginning of the project and shows the impact assessment of the individual measures.

The ambition of the activities was to share the project outcomes and maximize the awareness on the project and the topic itself. Precisely, the **dissemination and communication objectives** were to:

- Transfer rapidly and transparently the results to the public.
- Share results with the other selected projects within the call.
- Engage political stakeholders in the Greater Region.
- Provide new knowledge to organisations who aim to facilitate transnational cooperation.
- Showcase the difficulties and the opportunities for the creation of a cross-border legal structure for higher education institutions.
- Contribute to European policy in higher education to propose and install a legal status of HEIs alliances.

The aim of the University of the Greater Region (UniGR) to transform itself into a European regulated legal framework is in line with its 2020 strategic vision to become a true cross-border university by 2040[2]. In this context, the 2022 Erasmus+ project call to "test the suitability of a European legal status for university alliances" was an incentive for the further realisation of this initiative. The concept was that European support would kick-start the endeavour and give the cross-border network an increased visibility, especially on the podium of the "classical" European Universities. In addition, UniGR could share its experience as a cross-border university alliance that has existed for over 15 years (8 of which as a not-for-profit association under Luxembourg law) and contribute to the discussion of why a **European legal status** is necessary for a long-term and sustainable cooperation in education, research, innovation, and service to society for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through the Knowledge square approach.

Accordingly, communication and dissemination played an essential role in the implementation of the Leg-UniGR project. The associated activities were led by the University of Luxembourg (project coordinator) in close collaboration with UniGR a.s.b.l. office and the other UniGR partner universities.

Leg-UniGR's **communication policy** aimed to convey its strategic message to networks of universities and higher education institutions, national and European administrations, policy makers, students and employees, and the society at large. Consequently, the activities targeted a broad range of individuals. All communication activities were aimed at all groups at the same level and no individual differentiation was made. Because of the technical aspects of the project, a layman's approach has been favoured to encourage support and adherence for the project.

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[1] Initially planned for 12 months, all pilot projects were extended by one month on the initiative of the European Commission.
[2] UniGR strategic plan 2020: https://www.uni-gr.eu/sites/tst-uni-gr.univ-lorraine.fr/files/users/documents/strategic_plan_unigr_2020.pdf

Internal communication

Communication within the consortium

The UniGR alliance already has a well-established communication scheme for effective collaboration between its partner universities, which is as well often used for European projects. Given the brevity of the project and the fact that it is linked to a strategic decision within the alliance, no additional committee has been set up, and the existing structure has therefore been retained and operated for the benefit of Leg-UniGR.

As coordinator of the project, the University of Luxembourg took the lead in the management of communication. In this context, a kick-off meeting was organised in May 2023 with representatives from all partner universities.

Each partner university has a "UniGR-Officer" who acts as the privileged contact person between the network and their respective university. This person was also the first point of contact during the Leg-UniGR project. During the monthly meetings of the UniGR Central Office with all UniGR-Officers the status of the project was updated, and the opportunity was given to ask outstanding questions. For further communication, everything was handled by e-mail or through ad hoc meetings.

Other principal actors were the partner universities' legal services and the Ministry of Spatial Planning in Luxembourg which actively contributed to work package 3. The first online meetings were organised in the first half of the project, with further exchanges taking place via email and ad hoc meetings.

In addition, the status of the project was presented and discussed during the Coordination Board and Council meetings of the UniGR. Key strategic decisions were taken within this context, with the formal decision of the presidents and rectors.

A dedicated folder was created in the shared platform called B'UL (running under Nextcloud & Onlyoffice) for the storage and exchange of documents during the project period. This platform was made accessible to the relevant persons to enhance documents sharing and streamline edition.

Communication with the European Commission and the other pilot projects

Due to the tight schedule and the much-anticipated results of the European Commission, it was decided that a regular exchange between the Commission and the pilot projects should take place.

Accordingly, every 2 to 3 months an online meeting between the 4 pilot projects working on a potential legal status for university alliances took place with one physical mid-term meeting in Brussels. The Commission took over the coordination and moderation of the meetings.

In addition, a Teams space was created by the Commission to share documents and communicate directly if necessary.

Further exchanges took place between projects on a totally informal basis. With no doubt, an "interest group" has been created in this context, with lively discussions and debates.

Dissemination instruments and platforms for Leg-UniGR

VISUAL IDENTITY

Due to its very specific scope and the limited added value, no dedicated visual identity was created for the Leg-UniGR project.

It was decided to use the visual identity and logos of UniGR a.s.b.l. and its partner universities and to create on this basis a Word template for reports (Figure 1) and a PowerPoint template for presentations (Figure 2).
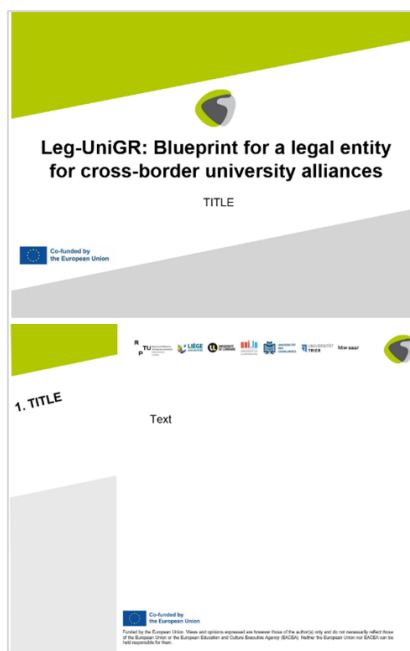

Figure 1

Figure 2

WEBSITE

The website was created in M1 and published in M2: **https://legunigr.uni.lu/**. It is a subpage of the project coordinator institution website and reunites all essential facts on the project in one place. The web content management system, WordPress, was provided by the IT department of the coordinator (University of Luxembourg). The purpose of the website is to provide recurrent information about the project and to publish consistently the ongoing results. The public project deliverables were regularly uploaded and made available for download. An example of the website layout can be found in Figure 3.

The individual sections of the webpage include:

- **HOME**
- **PROJECT:** Objectives, Work Packages, Project Partners, and Stakeholders
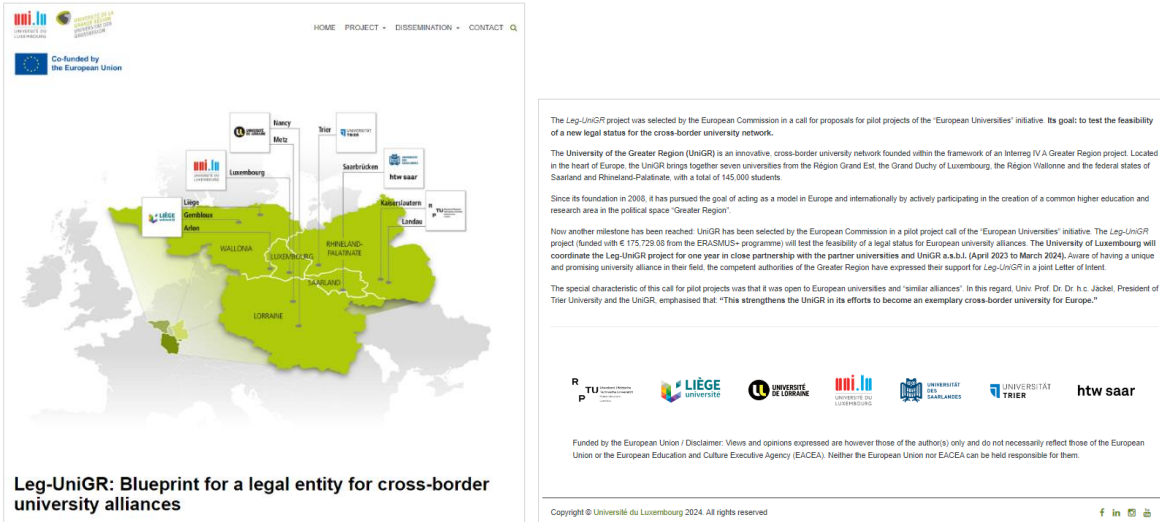- **DISSEMINATION:** Resources, Events
- **CONTACT**

Figure 3

Analytics

Leg-UniGR has used [MATOMO](#) to monitor the performance of the website. Due to a technical issue, the data from 04 May to 18 October 2023 were not registered and cannot be retrieved, unfortunately. We therefore do not have an overall view of the statistics. However, the existing extract does show a certain amount of movement, and we can assume that it probably represents the average activity on the web page.

The reference period is **19 October 2023 until 30 April 2024.** The general visits overview, visitors and behaviour were taken into consideration.
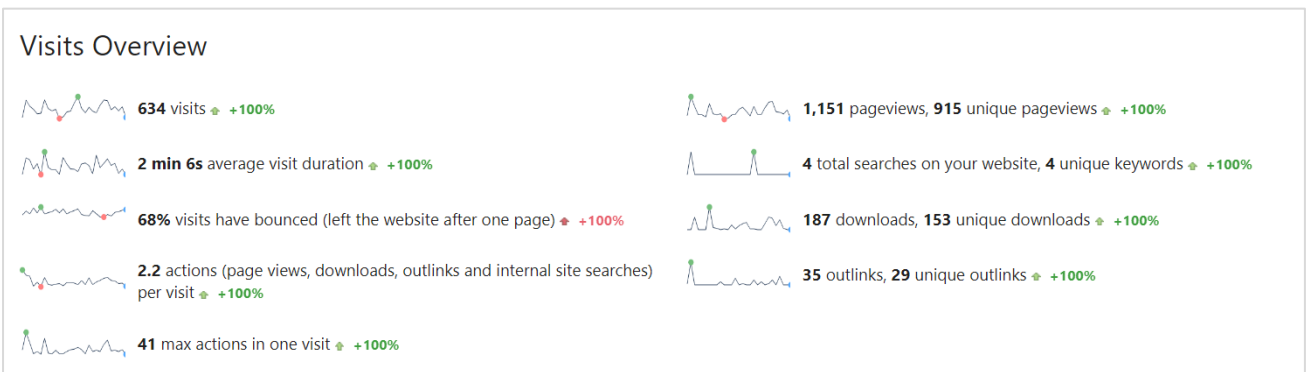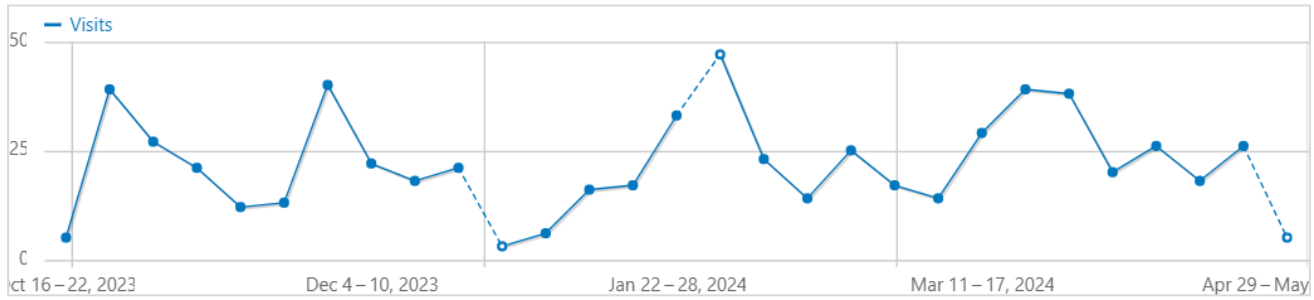

Figure 4

Figure 5

It can be observed that 634 visitors frequented the website in total (Figure 4). The variations over the course of the period are quite significant (Figure 5). The peaks in user activity coincide with the publication of LinkedIn posts or e-mail communication. The LinkedIn account appears as a catalytic driver of connection to the website.
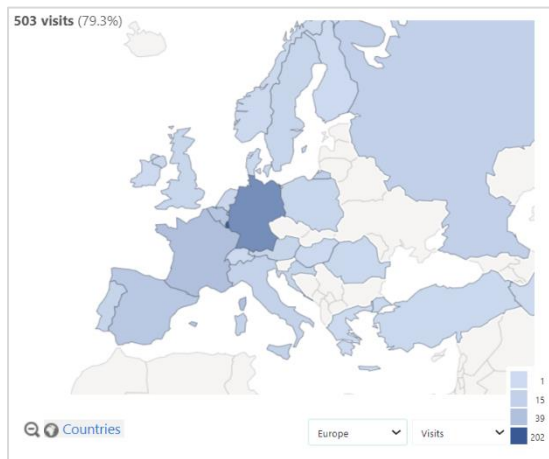

Figure 6
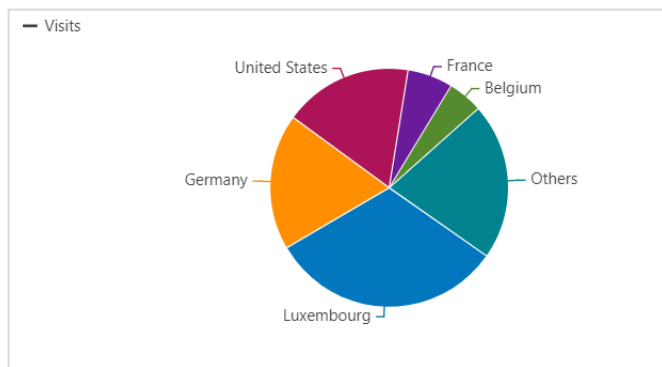
Figure 7

79,3 % of the visitors of the project website are from Europe (Figure 6). A significant percentage of the visitors are coming from France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany. Outside of Europe, the USA builds the biggest community (Figure 7). As this is a European project that mainly concerns a European topic, it is consequential that a large part of it originates from that region. The four top European countries represent the UniGR network's partner countries and reflect therefore the specific interest of these regions. In addition, a large proportion of the EU institutions and other European key players in Higher Education are in these countries.

Page titles ⓘ

PAGE TITLE	▼ UNIQUE PAGEVIEWS
Home - Leg-UniGR	440
Resources - Leg-UniGR	194
Events - Leg-UniGR	103
Objectives - Leg-UniGR	43
Work Packages - Leg-UniGR	31
Contact - Leg-UniGR	27
Dissemination - Leg-UniGR	23
Project Partners and Stakeholders - Leg-UniGR	20
Project - Leg-UniGR	18

Downloads

DOWNLOAD URL	▼ UNIQUE DOWNLOADS	DOWNLOADS
⊞ legunigr.uni.lu	142	169

Figure 8

From the analytics in Figure 8, the three most visited page are the homepage (440 views), followed by the resources page (194 views) and the events page (103 views). Overall, 169 downloads were made from which 142 are unique. This is rather reasonable, as the homepage appears first, and specific project outputs can be found on the resources and events page. Considering the total of 634 visitors, the download rate of 168 amounts about 30%, which appears as a decent score.

In addition, the official UniGR website (https://www.uni-gr.eu/en) was used to further disseminate information on the project; this is the habitual place to inform about the networks activities and therefore represented an additional communication channel (Figure 9).

Figure 9

SOCIAL MEDIA – LinkedIn

It was decided to use LinkedIn as the only social media platform for the dissemination and communication of the project, to focus on one tool. LinkedIn suits well with the projects aim, it is a business-oriented professional networking platform which is used by a broad range of Universities, Alliances and other stakeholders and experts in Higher Education. The LinkedIn account is managed by UniGR a.s.b.l. and University of Luxembourg.

The already existing UniGR account was used due to the scope of the project of 13 months. The account had already a concrete follower community, mainly within the regional higher education sector, which built a good basis: at the start of the project the page had **445 followers**. The account opened in May 2021 (Figure 10).

The aim was not to publish at regular intervals, but to communicate all project events and external events where the project was presented. In total 13 posts were published between Mai 2023 and April 2024 in the context of the project Leg-UniGR. It is apparent that only 3 articles were published in the first half of the project, compared to 10 publications in the second half. In fact, Leg-UniGR's internal events and most external presentations all took place after the summer of 2023, once the initial strategic elements had been collected and analysed, in order to put forward the first arguments on a legal status for UniGR.

Of the 41 UniGR contributions since 11 May 2023, 13 were linked to Leg-UniGR. This represents a significant impact of 32% on the content of the UniGR page. The following analytics overview refers to the period of **11 May 2023 to 30 April 2024.**

[UniGR - University of the Greater Region | LinkedIn](#)
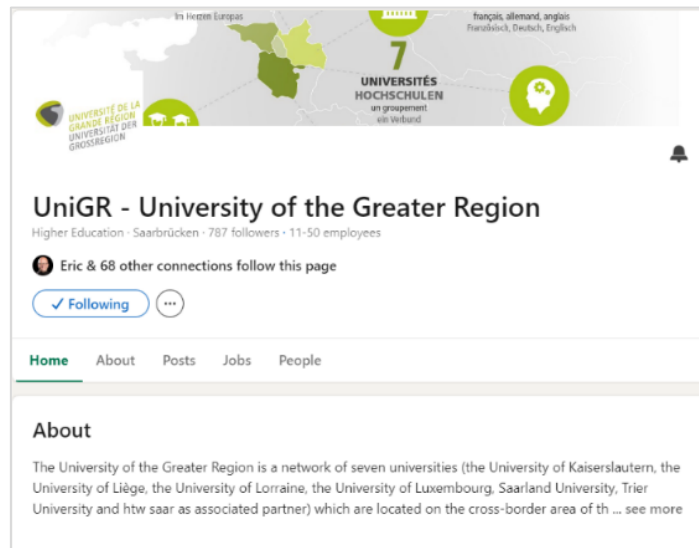
Figure 10

Followers

Since the first post of Leg-UniGR in M2 on 11 May 2023, **350** new followers joined the page which counts to date **794 followers** (Figure 11). It represents a growth of about **79 %** during the last year. This shows the impact the project has had on the growth of the UniGR community over the past year, and consequently the interest it has generated across Europe.

Follower highlights ❓

794
Total followers

350
New followers in the last 354 days

Follower metrics ❓

✅ — Sponsored   0
✅ --- Organic   350
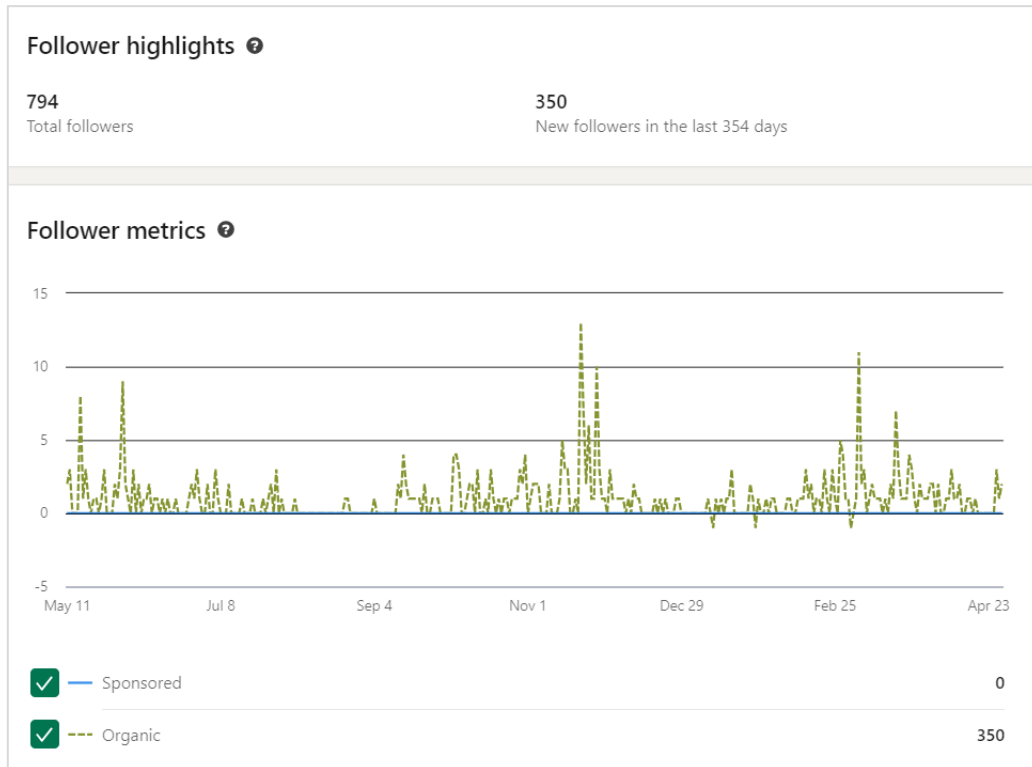
Figure 11

Visitors

The analytics shows that between May/June and October/November 2023 as well as February/March 2024 an upturn in visitor numbers can be observed. This coincides with the publication of the Leg-UniGR contributions to the 'Legal entity' discussion in Europe for alliances of universities. In total 2.052 visitors frequented the UniGR page in the reference period (Figure 12).

It must be stressed that in addition to the Leg-UniGR posts, regular network publications have also been published. It is however noticeable that high peaks were reached when Leg-UniGR project posts were published. This shows the undeniable interest of the project for the followers of UniGR LinkedIn account.

Figure 12

Content

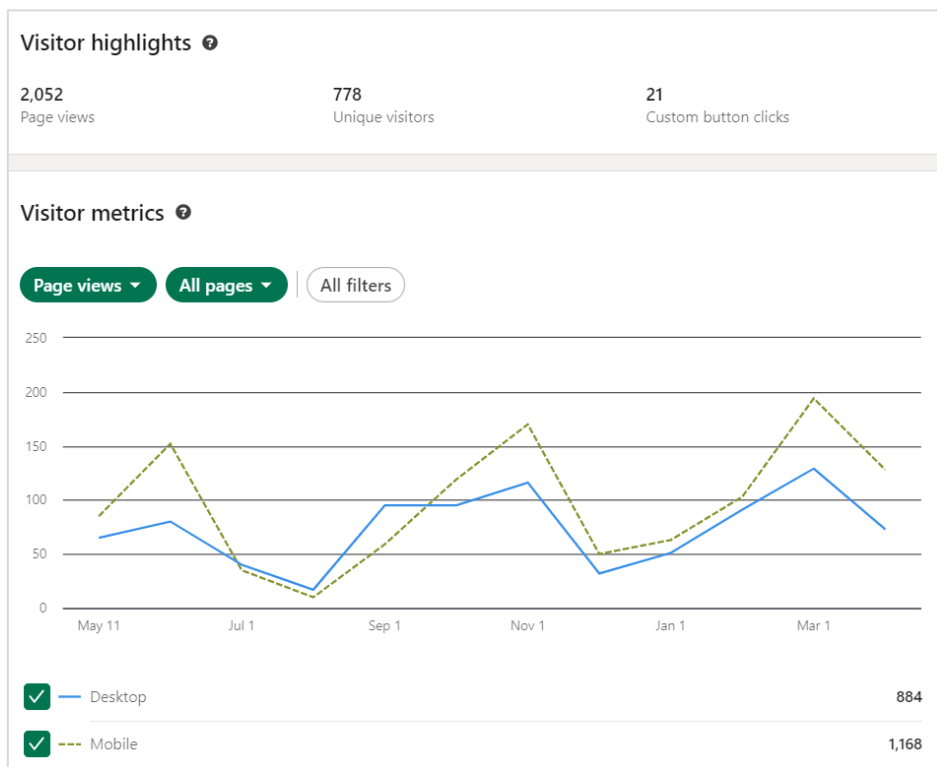The platform was mainly used to disseminate events, organised in the context of the project as well as in the context of the participation in external events. The following table gives an overview of all publications from May 2023 to April 2024:

DATE	TOPIC	PERFORMANCE[3]
11 May 2023	Leg-UniGR Kick-off meeting ONLINE	1,981 impressions
08 September 2023	2nd Forum of European Universities Alliances in Barcelona	1,942 impressions
15 September 2023	Repost UNIVERSEH at Forum in Barcelona	450 impressions
04 October 2023	Pre-event: registration for Leg-UniGR foundations event	1,477 impressions
17 October 2023	Post-event: summary of Leg-UniGR foundations event	2,175 impressions
26 October 2023	Midterm meeting of project pilots in Brussels	3,386 impressions
01 February 2024	Presentation at ACA meeting in Brussels	1,660 impressions
22 February 2024	Repost E. Tschirhart at EEA working group meeting in Brussels	no data
27 February 2024	Pre-event: registration for Leg-UniGR closing event	2,562 impressions
05 March 2024	Presentation at ESEU final event in Brussels	785 impressions
15 March 2024	Presentation at EGAI final event(s) in Chambery & online	606 impressions
20 March 2024	Post-event: summary of Leg-UniGR closing event	3,754 impressions
16 April 2024	Pre-event: online registration for joint final event in Brussels	1,079 impressions
30 April 2024	Post-event: summary of joint final event in Brussels	postponed*

Status: 30 April 2024

Although, numbers are still fluctuating, an overall growth of the performance can be observed over the last year. While the first Leg-UniGR post resulted in 1.981 impressions, one of the last posts presents 3.754 impressions and forms the most seen publication.

*It was decided to publish the last LinkedIn post on the joint closing event in Brussels (29 April 2024) on 2 May 2024 in order to avoid an overabundance of communications on this topic the day after. The figures can therefore not be included in this document.

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[3] The performance is indicated through "impressions". Definition: total number of views of the content.

DISSEMINATION EVENTS & PRESENTATIONS

During the project period **two (2) dissemination events** were organised with the objective to share the outcomes of Leg-UniGR with the public and to increase the project visibility. The maximum number of registrations for physical participation was reached for the two events. In both events, representatives of regional stakeholder groups from the higher education sector took part.

An additional event was initiated by the European Commission during the year to hold a **joint closing event** on 29 April 2024. It was jointly organised by all pilot projects and the Commission.

The project coordinator and its partners were also invited to **take part in various events and present the Leg-UniGR project**, which further strengthened the project's network and visibility.

Events

1) Event "UniGR foundations and progress towards a new legal entity"

Venue: Maison de la Grande Région in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

Event date: 16 October 2023, 9:30 – 15:00

Aim: Present the development of UniGR as a non-profit organisation under Luxembourgish law

Participants: 22 in presence and 30 online

The outline of the systemic, structural, and sustainable institutional cooperation between the UniGR partner universities was crucial to show that UniGR has been playing a pioneering role in Europe, with a regional, national, and European recognition, as an experienced and sustainable cross-border European university alliance.

Impressions of the first Leg-UniGR event.

Poster of the first Leg-UniGR event.

2) Event "European alliances and their legal status - a proposal"

Venue: University Luxembourg, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

Event date: 19 March 2024, 9:30 – 13:00

Aim: Present the outputs of the project to the academic and administrative community

Participants: 46 in presence and 15 online

The participation of relevant stakeholders from the academic and political scene of the Greater Region showed the interest and relevance of the topic for the Greater Region as well as the support for the transition of UniGR a.s.b.l. into a truly European framework. It further emphasizes the relevance of the strategic plan of UniGR. During the discussions, it became clear that although the proposed European legal status has its limits and may need to be optimised, it is an important next step towards taking the cross-border network to a new level and reinforce links between partner universities.

Impressions of the final Leg-UniGR event.

Poster of the final Leg-UniGR event.

3) Joint Final Event

Venue: Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium

Event date: 29 April 2024, 9:00 – 17:00

Aim: Showcase the outcomes of ten Erasmus+ pilot projects, which have explored the delivery of a joint European degree label and the establishment of a possible European legal status for alliances of higher education institutions.

Participants: approx. 300 in presence and 1000 online

Higher Education Institutions have stressed during the event the need for strong coordination between Member States, legislative changes, and sufficient funding at European, national, and regional level for what promises to reshape the landscape of higher education across the continent.

Impressions of the joint final event.
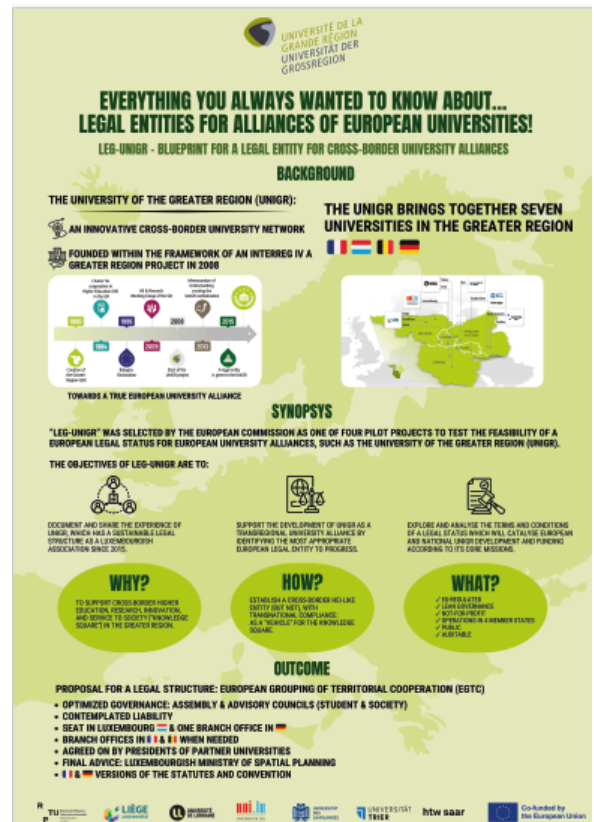
Leg-UniGR poster for the joint final event.

Presentations

DATE	EVENT
14 & 15 September 2023	2nd Forum of European Universities Alliances in Barcelona
16 November 2023	Rector's meeting of EUt+ - European University of Technology, ONLINE
29 & 30 November 2023	DAAD Meeting of the International Offices of German universities in Bonn
25 & 26 January 2024	ACA Academic Cooperation Association Meeting in Brussels
14 February 2024	Meeting with France Universités, ONLINE
21 February 2024	Meeting of the EEA Strategic Framework Working Group on Higher Education in Brussels
21 & 22 February 2024	Transform4Europe Conference in Brussels
28 February 2024	ESEU-project final event in Brussels
7 & 8 March 2024	EGAI-project final event in Chambery
18 March 2024	EGAI - UNITA Spring School in Timisoara
15 July 2024	GECT Eurorégion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra "Cross-border summer school in Bayonne"
3 & 4 October 2024	EUA Funding Forum	sense & sustainability: future paths for university finances

In addition, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) featured Leg-UniGR in its 2023 cooperation brochure as an example of a project on the possible legal status for European university alliances: https://www.daad.de/kataloge/epaper-kooperationsbroschuere-2023/#16.

Press releases and news articles

UniGR a.s.b.l. published a press release in French and German among its partners and stakeholders (https://www.uni-gr.eu/fr/node/3478) when the project was validated by the European Commission in February 2023. Another press release is planned for after the project period to officially acknowledge its completion.

In the run-up to the project, **virgule.lu**, the French-language news website of the Mediahuis Luxembourg Group, published an article in which the project coordinator was interviewed. On this basis, another article was published in October 2023 after the first dissemination event, reporting on the progress of the project.

The cross-border news website **voisin-nachbarn.eu** published as well prior to the start of the project an article on the endeavours of the alliance to test the feasibility of a European legal status for alliances of higher education institutions. During another publication in 2024, the current president of UniGR was interviewed mentioning the pilot project Leg-UniGR and its closing event in March.

In October 2023, the regional German newspaper "**Saarbrücker Zeitung**", which covered the 20th anniversary of the University of Luxembourg, mentioned the UniGR alliance with Leg-UniGR as a current project.

- **Voisin-nachbarn.eu, 08/02/2023** https://www.voisins-nachbarn.eu/de/forschung/unigr-universite-europee145000-studierende-zu-beginn-des-jahres-gab-es-fur-die-unigr-einen-weiteren-grundnne-copie-1493.html
- **Virgule.lu, 17/02/2023** https://www.virgule.lu/luxembourg/une-base-legale-pour-l-universite-de-la-grande-region/1066263.html
- **Virgule.lu, 25/10/2023** https://www.virgule.lu/luxembourg/luniversite-de-la-grande-region-ambitionne-de-faciliter-les-echanges-entre-ses-etudiants/4459776.html
- **Saarbrücker Zeitung, 25/10/2023** https://www.saarbruecker-zeitung.de/saarland/blickzumnachbarn/subdir/neuer-campus-in-belval-gehoert-zu-geschichte-der-universitaet-luxemburg_aid-99681549
- **Voisin-nachbarn.eu, 07/02/2024** https://www.voisins-nachbarn.eu/fr/rechercher/helene-boulanger-presidente-de-l-universite-de-lorraine.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=linkedin

The publication in the regional and local newspapers shows the regional importance of UniGR and of its organization. Secondly, it also demonstrates the interest of the whole society to UniGR.

Final report with statutes

The roadmap for the dissemination plan (see D4.1) had been divided into three groups of actions: website & social networks (to ensure immediate transparency), events calendar (to publicly present and discuss project outputs), and the final report with statutes (immediate expectation: the production of a directly usable set of statutes for the transformation of UniGR). The first two points were elaborated in the previous sections.

The draft statutes for a new legal entity were drawn up with all partners and the Ministry of Spatial Planning in Luxembourg and approved by the UniGR Council in November 2023. The final statutes were expected to be finalised at the end of the project. Currently, pending strategic decisions within the alliance are delaying the finalisation, which is therefore planned after the project. In particular, the discussion on welcoming new higher education institutions from the Greater Region to the UniGR must take place, and this can only be done by taking into account the inclusion criteria, regardless of the legal status currently envisaged.

In presentations at external events, University of Luxembourg and UniGR's experiences and recommendations on legal transformation have been disseminated and discussed with other university alliances. Knowledge transfer will continue in the follow-up phase as we assist other alliances or groups of higher education institutions in their legal transition. We believe that knowledge transfer is a key factor in enabling other groups of higher education institutions to benefit from UniGR's experience in designing a new institutionalised cooperation instrument.

Conclusion

This deliverable presented the description of the dissemination and communication activities carried out in the context of the Leg-UniGR project. Following the analysis of the different activities, it can be summarized that the selected measures were effective and successful.

In terms of activities to ensure immediate visibility, the website and social media can be considered a suitable choice. The website provided a good overview of the general project structure, and visitors could directly access the public results. The figures in terms of views and downloads confirm the usefulness of the website. Regarding LinkedIn, it can be considered a success. The substantial increase in followers allowed for a higher visibility of the UniGR network inside and outside of the Greater Region, which will certainly be beneficial for other activities of the network.

The dissemination events for the public presentation and discussion of the project results can also be characterised as a success. They were well-attended and included relevant stakeholders from the regional higher education sector. The associated news articles additionally mark their significance.

The UniGR network was able to benefit from increased visibility at European level and raise awareness of university alliances like European Universities. The inclusion in the discussions on the European Higher Education Area and bilateral meetings with the DG EAC also gave the network the opportunity to share its extensive experience, despite not being a 'European University' *per se*.

In addition, the numerous opportunities to present the project and the UniGR network reflect the general interest in the topic within the European higher education sector. UniGR was able to disseminate its experience and share knowledge as a longstanding cross-border and transnational university alliance.

Although the network is already well established at regional level, the project also helped to improve visibility and raise awareness of the issue of legal status among national ministries and stakeholders in the higher education sector.

Overall, the interest shown by all parties underlined the need for a genuine European legal status to enable sustainable cooperation in education, research, innovation, and service to society for higher education institutions in the context of the strategic implementation of the so-called "knowledge square". In this respect, communication and dissemination activities have been decisive for the successful implementation of Leg-UniGR.