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The Sunrise Alliance Newsletter

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UNIVPM (Università Politecnica delle Marche)

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SUNRISE Alliance Meeting at UNIVPM

Two Days of Innovation and shared progress



On February 17–18, the Università Politecnica delle Marche in Ancona hosted the second coordination meeting and the third SUNRISE workshop — two vibrant days dedicated to collaboration, innovation, and shared progress.



On 17 and 18 February, professors, researchers, PhD candidates, students and staff from the nine partner universities of the Sunrise project gathered at the Università Politecnica delle Marche, in the Aula Magna in Ancona, for the 2nd SUNRISE Coordination Meeting: Progress monitoring, planning, control and for the workshop “Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda (SRIA): How to Move from Writing to Implementation”, with a focus on WP4 “Research – Map, integrate, synergize and commonly upgrade high-quality collaborative research capacity and research-based education to address societal challenges with a focus on regional needs.”

In addition, on Monday, 16 February, in the beautiful setting of the Faculty of Economics, the day was dedicated to WP5 with working groups focusing on the relationship with industry and the public sector to ensure the best possible impact of research on society. Each partner contributed their strengths and expertise to improve the connection between academia, industry, and the public sector, and to provide

students and professionals with essential skills and competencies at the interregional level. Initiatives are currently being evaluated to involve territorial stakeholders, ensuring that research becomes increasingly connected to socio-economic ecosystems. A strong emphasis is being placed on developing projects that are valuable for the regions while also representing a challenge for students, researchers, and all those involved in the project.

On Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18 February, activities moved to the Faculty of Engineering, again in the Aula Magna. These were days of presentations and discussions aimed at bringing research increasingly closer to the territories, following the practice-oriented learning principle that is central to the SUNRISE alliance.

Significant attention was dedicated to discussing the SRIA, its methodology, reference framework, and potential decision-support tools for long-term policies and programmes.

During the WP4 workshops, topics included:

KPI & Strategic Assessment, Platform, Future Priority Actions based on the SRIA, Plenary Synthesis, Consolidation and Action Planning, as well as the role of Doctoral Schools and Programmes, and the SRIA synergies among WP3, WP4 and WP5.



- The SUNRISE RIA aligns EU priorities, regional strategies, and partner capabilities across five thematic areas: Digitalisation & Industry 4.0, Green Transition & Circular Economy, Health & Digital Health, Agro-food & Bioeconomy, and Sustainable Mobility & Blue Economy.
- Regions expect alliances to act as innovation engines, supporting S3 strategy design, evidence-based policymaking, and mission-oriented cooperation.
- Challenges identified include talent retention, infrastructure access, and bridging the gap between research and territorial needs.
- PhD presentations showcased research excellence across multiple domains and emphasized the need for shared labs, interdisciplinary networks, co-supervision, and mobility support.
- Thematic group work initiated the intention to create a PhD Community and generated proposals to be incorporated into 2026 action plans.

The second SUNRISE Coordination Meeting in Ancona

brought together senior researchers, early-stage researchers, PhD candidates, regional authorities, European Commission representatives, and innovation intermediaries. The event focused on strengthening SUNRISE’s role as a research-intensive European University Alliance and on advancing its Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda (SRIA).

Key messages

- European University Alliances are strategic political instruments designed to integrate education, research, innovation, and societal engagement.
- SUNRISE must position itself as a stable European research ecosystem, demonstrating implementation research capacity through joint research, integrated doctoral pathways, shared infrastructures, talent attraction, and territorial impact.

SUNRISE emerges as a key platform connecting excellence, territorial impact, and European policy alignment.



Watch the full video of the event held on the 17th on the Univpm YouTube channel.



Photo Gallery





The SUNRISE SRIA

A Strategic Roadmap for Our Regions' Future

We want to support the new regional innovation strategies. From 2028, for the next seven years, we will have a new strategy. This is our methodology and our idea is to adapt this methodology to the new need.



Francesco Fatone | UNIVPM Italy



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The **SUNRISE Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA)** is essentially the "strategic foundation" for our alliance of nine European universities. More than just a document, it serves as a shared platform that coordinates research and innovation efforts across diverse regions—from the Mediterranean to the Baltic—to ensure we are moving in the same direction over the next 5 to 10 years. The alliance aims to serve as a **knowledge broker**, bridging the gap between academic expertise and **socio-economic growth** within regional ecosystems.

What is its purpose?

The main goal of the SRIA is to bridge the gap between high-level European strategies and the specific needs of our local communities. By mapping out the main evidence-based strengths of each university, the SRIA identifies exactly where we can achieve the most impact by working together.

We have identified **five key priorities** where our regions converge:

SUNRISE: 5 Interregional Priorities for a Sustainable Future

The SUNRISE alliance aligns university research with regional "Smart Specialisation Strategies" (S3), outlining five interregional priorities to drive economic growth and territorial resilience across Europe.

Driving Industrial & Ecological Transformation
Integrating AI, IoT, and robotics to accelerate the digital transformation of regional SMEs.

Digitalisation & Industry 4.0
Integrating AI, IoT, and robotics to accelerate the digital transformation of regional SMEs.

Green Transition & Circular Economy
Embedding circular practices and renewable energy to foster low-carbon, resource-efficient regional economies.

Enhancing Life & Connectivity
Advancing telemedicine and biomedical innovation to support ageing populations and remote communities.

Health & Digital Health
Advancing telemedicine and biomedical innovation to support ageing populations and remote communities.

Agro-Food & Bioeconomy
Promoting sustainable food systems through precision farming, waste valorisation, and nutrition innovation.

Sustainable Mobility & Blue Economy
Developing low-emission transport corridors, port digitalisation, and maritime innovation.

How will it be used?

The SRIA is a "living process" that will be updated every year to stay relevant. It will be used to conceptualized and structure **joint research projects**, allow scientists to share **high-tech laboratories**, and create **Community of Research and Practice** where researchers and research users can test new technologies before they are widely released. Ultimately, the SRIA ensures that the scientific excellence of our universities directly supports the economic resilience and quality of life in our SUNRISE regions.

WP5 Building the SUNRISE innovation ecosystem



The recent WP5 meeting in Ancona marked an important step forward in shaping the alliance's approach to societal impact, innovation, and collaboration with external stakeholders. Over two intensive working days, partners aligned their vision, priorities, and operational plans for the coming years.

At the core of the discussion was the definition of key outputs and deliverables for Tasks 5.1–5.3, with a particular focus on the development of the SUNRISE Societal Impact Hub and the One-Stop-Shop platform for companies. These initiatives aim to create a structured interface between universities, industry, and society, simplifying access to expertise, research, and innovation opportunities across the alliance.

A major milestone will be the creation of a Community of Practice, designed to connect researchers, practitioners, and external stakeholders in a dynamic European network. This will support knowledge exchange, co-creation activities, and the identification of shared priorities.



Participants also explored concrete tools to strengthen innovation ecosystems, including support for entrepreneurship, collaboration with industry, and the development of demonstrators such as the SUNRISE Smart Factory. In parallel, the establishment of a “Smart Room” will enable distributed, challenge-based student projects, contributing directly to the prototyping of the One-Stop-Shop platform.

A strong emphasis was placed on co-production and impact measurement. Partners agreed to jointly develop guidelines, define a shared glossary, and identify common indicators to assess results and ensure alignment with project objectives.



The meeting also provided space for interactive group work, peer feedback, and cross-task coordination, ensuring coherence between WP5 activities and other work packages, particularly in relation to research, education, and industry engagement.

Looking ahead, the next steps include collecting best practices from partners, drafting the co-production framework, launching student-driven pilot projects, and defining monitoring systems for start-ups and industrial collaborations.

Overall, WP5 is laying the foundations for a collaborative and impact-driven innovation ecosystem, reinforcing the role of SUNRISE as a bridge between academia, industry, and society at the European level.

From Cooperation to Research and Territorial Impact

Round table on the first day



The roundtable brings together European Commission policy makers, former JRC experts, regional representatives of Marche Region, innovation agencies, macroregional networks, and other alliance members. Key topics include policy alignment, long-term funding, innovation ecosystems, territorial transformation, and mechanisms to strengthen the science–policy interface.

From a policy perspective, the discussion confirmed that the next EU programming period (FP10) is expected to reinforce support for alliances, while maintaining the principle that EU funding acts as a catalytic contribution rather than a structural one. Long-term sustainability will therefore depend on effective alignment between EU, national, and regional strategies, as well as on increased co-funding and institutional embedding. Alliances are expected to position themselves as systemic actors within national and regional ecosystems, contributing to policy implementation and dissemination of results.

A central element is the **added value of alliances as transnational structures capable of integrating resources, competences, and infrastructures across multiple territories**. This **multi-level and cross-regional dimension** enables a more **coordinated contribution to regional innovation strategies, including Smart Specialisation (S3), and supports the development of joint approaches to shared challenges and research**. Alliances can act as platforms for interregional cooperation, facilitating knowledge circulation and reinforcing connections between innovation ecosystems beyond national borders.

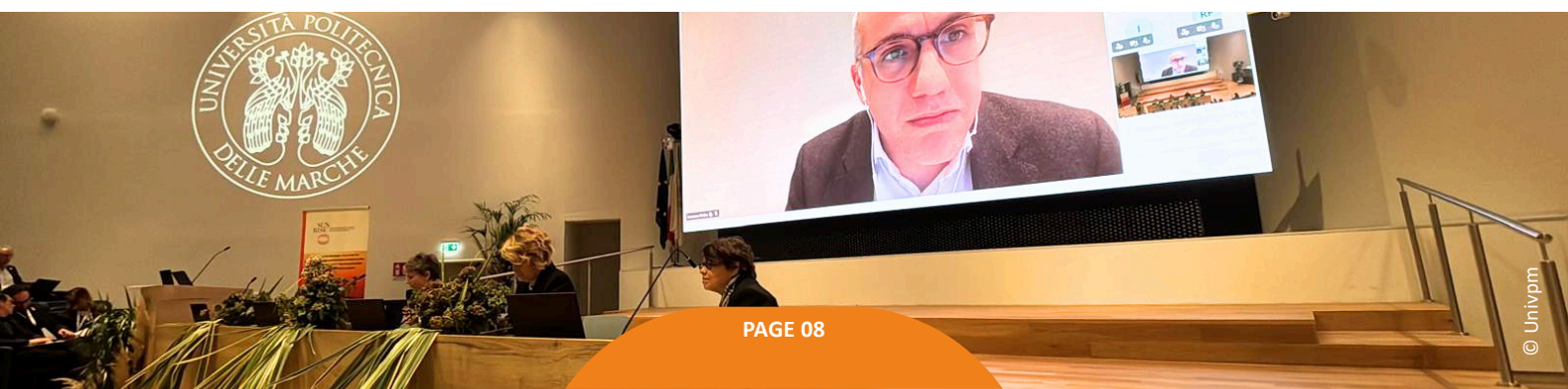
Universities' role in the entrepreneurial discovery process is enhanced by alliances, which support knowledge transfer and coordination among innovation actors, good practises and fostering the scaling up of research results.

Alliances also contribute to shaping regional innovation capacities through skills development and human capital strategies. By pooling educational and research activities, they can support the identification of future skills needs, **promote talent circulation, and enhance the attractiveness of non-metropolitan regions**. In addition, new mediating roles and structures are needed to connect academia, policy and innovation ecosystems more effectively. Alliances can act as: “regional innovation engines, catalyzing transformation through proximity to industrial districts, communities and local government.”

Finally, the discussion underlined the importance of accountability and impact orientation. Alliances are required to define clear milestones, monitor progress, and demonstrate measurable contributions to both policy objectives and territorial development, ensuring coherence between strategic vision and operational delivery.

Conclusion

The roundtable highlights the need for SUNRISE to evolve into a **strategic platform for territorial transformation, integrating research excellence with policy alignment, stakeholder engagement and measurable impact on regional territories**.





SUNRISE PhD and Research Workshop

PhDs Presentations, Research Walk, Doctoral Schools

Each university presented its own doctoral programmes, highlighting the diverse academic offers and areas of expertise within the alliance.

Poster Showcase & PhD Lightning Pitches. Partners present PhD projects via posters and brief pitches, highlighting **SRIA alignment**, regional relevance, and synergies. This session also connects to the Doctoral Schools' presentations, showcasing ongoing PhD activities across institutions. Each partner operates within its own structured national framework, which may differ in aspects such as programme duration or specific regulations. The presentations and mutual comparison of these doctoral programmes, however, have provided a solid foundation for collaboration, highlighting common goals, complementary strengths, and opportunities for joint initiatives across the alliance.



Collaboration also extends to advanced training, with shared courses on transversal skills such as research methods, project management, innovation, and European proposal writing. Access to laboratories, infrastructures, and technology centres, together with industrial PhDs and partnerships with SMEs, further enhances the impact and employability of doctoral graduates.



A central focus is the development of structured international mobility, with PhD candidates encouraged to spend their months of international mobility abroad within the SUNRISE network. In this context, the alliance can facilitate exchanges among partner institutions, fostering talent circulation and deeper integration into European research and innovation ecosystems.



Additional opportunities include co-supervision of theses, participation in evaluation committees, and the contribution of external reviewers. The co-design of joint doctoral programmes and the exchange of good practices will further strengthen cooperation.

Overall, the initiative points towards a more collaborative, impact-oriented, and globally competitive model of doctoral education.





The meeting in Ancona was an important moment for discussion and reflection. The many participants highlighted the importance of ongoing, multidisciplinary exchanges, including in-person meetings.

Several speakers emphasized the need to build bridges between research and society, as well as among the different partner institutions of the Sunrise Alliance.

Sharing experiences, knowledge, projects, and even equipment, helps optimize results within a framework of maximum collaboration, ensuring the greatest possible impact on all stakeholders.

Working together leads to exponentially better outcomes, allowing efforts and discoveries to be enhanced and fully leveraged by everyone involved in the project.

Students, researchers, professors, and technical staff during interviews held at the event how essential continuous dialogue is, and how significant the positive outcomes are from being part of an Alliance like Sunrise.

The main themes emerging from participants:

- European collaboration and networking among universities, staff, and students
- Knowledge sharing and exchange of expertise across countries and disciplines
- Strengthening research and innovation to address global and regional challenges
- Mobility opportunities for students, researchers, and academic staff
- Integration of teaching, research, and third mission (societal impact)
- Support for small and regional universities to increase visibility and impact
- Interdisciplinary and intercultural cooperation, including multilingualism
- Connection between academia and real-world needs, including industry and policy
- Professional development and lifelong learning for academic and administrative staff
- Building a long-term, sustainable alliance (Sunrise) based on trust and shared goals





SUNRISE Voices



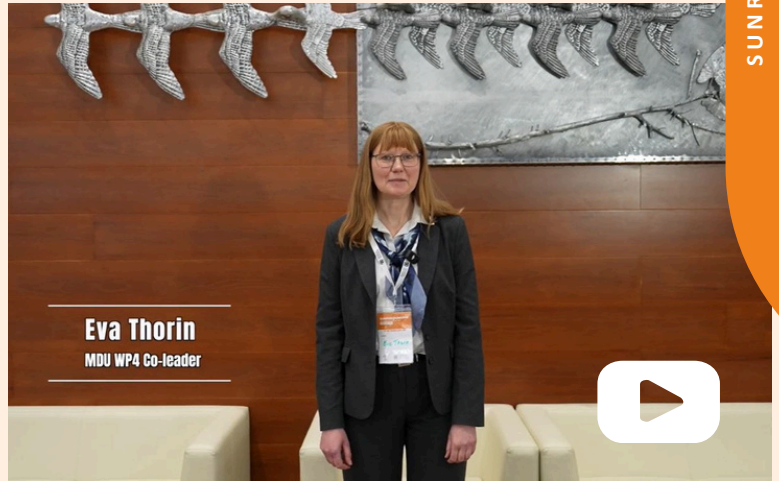
And it is really impressive how the things are developing. It is our second coordination meeting we held today here in Ancona. And it is always impressive to see what has been already achieved from our goals and to see what has been achieved, what we never intended to achieve.



Thomas Mirow | TUIL



We are working a lot on enhancing the collaboration between the Sunrise Alliance universities in research to get more collaborations and projects and more exchange of researchers and PhD students.



Eva Thorin
MDU WP4 Co-leader

Eva Thorin | MDU





SUNRISE Voices



Johann Gamper
UNIBZ academic staff

We already started a mapping of the research competences, so trying to map all the research competences of all partner universities. And this allows us to find consortia for new project proposals. So that might be a big advantage, especially for young professors, for young researchers, to enter in a European Union project.



Johann Gamper | UNIBZ



SUNRISE VOICES

As a previous ERASMUS student, I know how important this collaboration can be and how much it benefits me as a student before and in other terms of different projects and here where it comes actually this importance of the Sunrise project where the different collaboration between the different labs and university can benefit not only us as students but our projects as well in terms of like knowledge transfer and even work ethics and how it may benefit our projects in different kind of ways, not only scientific, but also sharing our experience and work, basically.



Ralf Hannouch
UTC PhD researcher

Ralf Hannouch | UTC





Official motto of the SUNRISE Alliance

SUNRISE: EMPOWERING REGIONS INSPIRING EUROPE

We are proud to share a significant milestone in our journey together. As our Alliance grows and our impact deepens, we felt the need for a signature that truly encapsulates our mission and our promise to the future.

Why this motto?

This tagline was carefully crafted to reflect the two core pillars of our strategic vision:

Empowering Regions: We believe that true innovation starts at the local level. Our Alliance is dedicated to providing the tools, knowledge, and networks necessary to unlock the unique potential of every partner region. We are here to turn local challenges into global opportunities.

Inspiring Europe: Our ambition goes beyond our borders. By building a successful model of regional cooperation, we aim to serve as a beacon of inspiration for the entire European Higher Education and Research Area. What we achieve together today will set the standard for a more cohesive and innovative Europe tomorrow.



Discover what is happening across all partner universities and explore upcoming opportunities together



NEWS

The SUNRISE WP3 Plenary Meeting took place from 30 March to 1 April 2026 at the European University Cyprus in Nicosia. The event brought together partner universities to strengthen collaboration on mobility frameworks, programme development, and employability initiatives. Over three days, participants joined task meetings, an education fair, plenary discussions, and cultural activities celebrating the rich heritage of Cyprus.

UPCOMING

The EUC Startup Academy & Competition will take place from 6 to 10 July 2026 in Nicosia. Hosted by the European University Cyprus, this five-day summer school will welcome over 50 SUNRISE students for an immersive programme on entrepreneurship, innovation, and startup creation, featuring workshops, mentoring sessions, and a final competition.



NEWS

The Polytechnic University of Viana do Castelo organised two Blended Intensive Programmes under the SUNRISE Alliance, bringing together students and academic teams from across Europe in an international and interdisciplinary learning environment. [More information](#)

UPCOMING

Several more Blended Intensive Programmes are planned until July, further strengthening collaboration and shared learning among SUNRISE partner and non-partner institutions. [More information](#)



NEWS

MDU is known for its strong co-creation and collaboration with the region. A new strategic partnership was signed with SCANIA and the strategic partnership with Alstom was renewed. Please read more about collaborating with MDU. [More information](#)

UPCOMING

On May 19-21 MDU is the organiser of the SUNRISE Summit and Global Impact Forum. Mälardalen University invites you to a vibrant meeting place where global challenges are explored through dialogue, collaboration and innovative co-creation across disciplines, sectors and perspectives. [More information](#)



Discover what is happening across all partner universities and explore upcoming opportunities together



NEWS

TU Ilmenau started 2026 with a musical opening – the traditional New Year's Concert. Besides standing ovations for the academic orchestra the universities president, Prof. Sattler, provided a recap of 2025 incl. the SUNRISE opening event at TU Ilmenau. [More information](#)

UPCOMING

From April 20-24, TUIL will host the "Research Supporters going SUNRISE" Staff BIP. Participants from all SUNRISE partners will learn from each other, develop perspectives and tools for future cooperation and discuss the strategic dimension in supporting common SUNRISE research activities.



NEWS

Over 50 students joined the Student Sprint 2026, including 12 from SUNRISE partner universities, working in teams to solve real company challenges using the Google Design Sprint method. The event strengthened SUNRISE's international collaboration and connected motivated students from across Europe.

UPCOMING

Unibz has a new President: Federico Giudiceandrea wants to deepen Unibz local roots and widen its international reach "A university as an antenna: bringing the world's knowledge to South Tyrol" / Free University of Bozen-Bolzano.



NEWS

In the first two weeks of February UTC hosted students from the International Winter School of Food Science including participants from SUNRISE to design innovative and healthy food products, combining creativity, science, and sustainability.

UPCOMING

On 4 June, UTC will host SUNRISE partner universities iPVC, TUIL and UNMO for a session focused on Health & Well-Being, as part of UTC's week-long event.



NEWS

During the 49th University Anniversary, held from 9 to 14 February, we hosted a dedicated session on international projects that highlighted our strategic partnership within the SUNRISE Alliance.

UPCOMING

Organizing an Erasmus+ Info Day to promote international cooperation and project opportunities.

Discover what is happening across all partner universities and explore upcoming opportunities together



NEWS

From 16 to 18 February, SUNRISE partners met at Università Politecnica delle Marche for coordination meetings and a SRIA implementation workshop focused on WP4. Activities also included WP5 working groups to strengthen collaboration with industry and the public sector, and to explore initiatives that better connect research with regional socio-economic needs.

UPCOMING

UNIVPM's Department of Science and Engineering of Materials (SIMAU) will launch a new Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme (BIP), coordinated by UNIVPM with the participation of IPVC.

[More information](#)

NEWS

On 9 March 2026, UITM contributed to the SUNRISE Alliance initiative "Feminist Approach to Research" – an open methodological workshop for researchers and doctoral students, focused on inclusive research practices, critical perspectives, and the exchange of interdisciplinary experiences within the international academic community.

UPCOMING

From 18 to 20 April 2026, UITM, with the support of the SUNRISE Alliance, is organizing HackCarpathia 2026 – the largest hackathon in the Podkarpackie region – bringing together participants from across Europe to collaborate in interdisciplinary teams on real-world technological challenges, supported by mentors and industry experts, and culminating in a final presentation of the most promising solutions. [More information](#)

News - Upcoming Events



Stay connected with the latest news and upcoming opportunities from Sunrise Alliance: where ideas grow, collaborations take shape, and every update brings us one step closer to a brighter future.



[Sunrise-alliance - Upcoming](#)





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U MOSTARU



Instituto Politécnico
de Viana do Castelo

SUN RISE

SMALLER (STRATEGIC) UNIVERSITIES
NETWORK FOR REGIONAL INNOVATIVE
AND SUSTAINABLE EVOLUTION



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