

STRATEGY 2022–2025

Ag tacú le meitheal na h'ollscoile



OUR VISION

Ireland's future as a flourishing small nation, and committed member of the European Union, is underpinned by the talent and creativity of its people. Our universities have a unique role in fostering and supporting a **shared vision for a fair, vibrant, culturally rich society based on democratic values, that is underpinned by a thriving, sustainable economy.**

OUR MISSION

The Irish Universities Association is **the representative voice of Ireland's research-intensive, enterprise-engaged, public universities.** We advocate for our member universities and support them to nurture the nation's talent and to create, disseminate and apply knowledge and innovation throughout all regions of the country and to build thriving partnerships across the globe. Their unique role as partners in securing the sustainable future of our nation and society is at the heart of what we do.



OUR PURPOSE

IUA provides a network for our member universities that seeks to maximise their **positive impact on the social and economic well-being of Ireland and, through students and graduates, on knowledge creation and dissemination, research and innovation.**

Our universities are autonomous institutions, each with its own distinctive profile and purpose, but share many common objectives and goals.

As a representative body:

- > We represent the interests of our members through evidence-based advocacy that is grounded in the role of our members as comprehensive, public universities.
- > We are dedicated to providing a collaborative network or meitheal for our member universities to share good practice, know-how and ideas and to demonstrate public leadership in addressing major societal challenges.
- > We promote shared standards of governance and accountability with a commitment to openness and transparency.
- > We seek to make a positive contribution to the development of national and European policy on higher education and research through engagement with government and other key public, private and community stakeholders.
- > We work with partners at national and international level and, through our membership of the European University Association, advance the interests of our universities in Europe and beyond.
- > We seek to harness the collective strength of our member universities, through shared initiatives and to coordinate projects and ideas that support and maximise the student and staff experience.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Our work is guided by a **set of values that is shared with those of our member universities.**

As the representative voice of our member universities, we are committed to:

1.

Creativity and excellence in our work.

2.

A culture of openness and respect.

3.

The promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the university network.

4.

Fair play and equality of opportunity especially in relation to promotion of equal participation in higher education.

5.

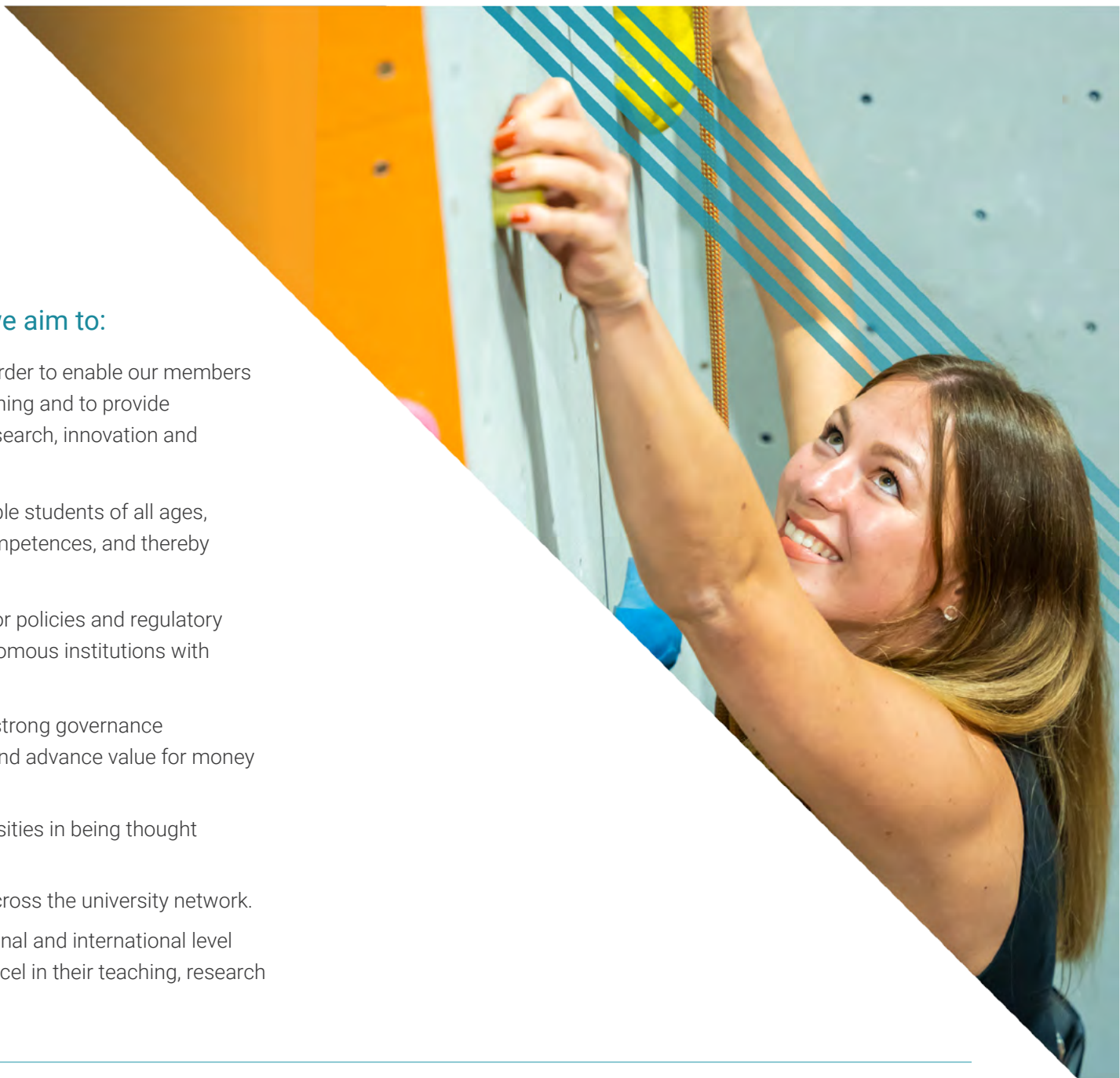
Innovation and dynamism in our work on behalf of our members.



OUR GOALS

Working on behalf of our member universities, we aim to:

- > Ensure that the university system is **adequately resourced** in order to enable our members to provide a globally competitive standard of teaching and learning and to provide solutions to major societal challenges through cutting-edge research, innovation and entrepreneurship.
- > Widen **access and participation** in third level education to enable students of all ages, background or means to further their knowledge, skills and competences, and thereby enhance their lives and livelihoods.
- > Support the **agility** of our member universities by advocating for policies and regulatory procedures that enable them to flourish and innovate as autonomous institutions with diverse missions.
- > Enhance **trust** in our member universities by further fostering strong governance procedures within a transparent and accountable framework and advance value for money initiatives on a shared basis where feasible.
- > Advocate for policies and programmes that support our universities in being thought leaders and champions of **sustainability**.
- > Advance the progression of **equality, diversity and inclusion** across the university network.
- > Develop and enhance **networks and alliances** at regional, national and international level that support the work of our universities and enable them to excel in their teaching, research and engagement activities.



OUR KEY PRIORITIES 2022–2025

Our universities are institutions rooted in knowledge and creativity.

Through their research activities, they create and apply new nodes of knowledge that address real-life problems in the context of a sustainable economic and societal model.

Their teaching activity disseminates knowledge to our students who are at the heart of the university mission. It provides them with the personal and professional skills and competences to contribute to the innovation and creativity of our society and to meet the high skills needs of our economy.

The IUA is dedicated to supporting the mission of our universities. We prioritise advocacy for policies and programmes that enable them to provide the highest standard of education to our students and to deliver world-class research to underpin a sustainable future for all.



OUR KEY PRIORITIES 2022–2025

Our priorities are based on **two cross-cutting enabling measures** and **five key pillars** that are supported through our collaborative network and our advocacy and sectoral representative work.

Capacity

Advocating for the financial and human resources to provide a top-quality education for students and a cutting-edge research capability within a sustainable third-level model



Talent

Striving for policies and funding that support the capacity of our skilled staff to maintain and enhance the output of high-skills graduates by our universities to positively contribute to society and the economy



Research

Campaigning for policy and funding decisions to underpin our world-class research and innovation capacity to address major societal challenges and foster creativity and entrepreneurship



Access

Promoting the continued widening of access and participation in third-level including an expansion of part-time and flexible lifelong learning



Quality

Sustaining the excellence and quality of our universities in the context of student expansion and blended learning to ensure that graduates will flourish in the future world of work



Connection

Extending the global reach of our members through effective partnerships and promotion of Ireland as a recognised leader in education and research

Agility

Advocating for effective but flexible governance and regulatory and recruitment processes to enable universities deliver on their potential

5 KEY PILLARS



1. TALENT AND SKILLS



2. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION



3. ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION



4. SUSTAINING QUALITY



5. CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT AT HOME AND ABROAD



5 KEY PILLARS

1. TALENT AND SKILLS

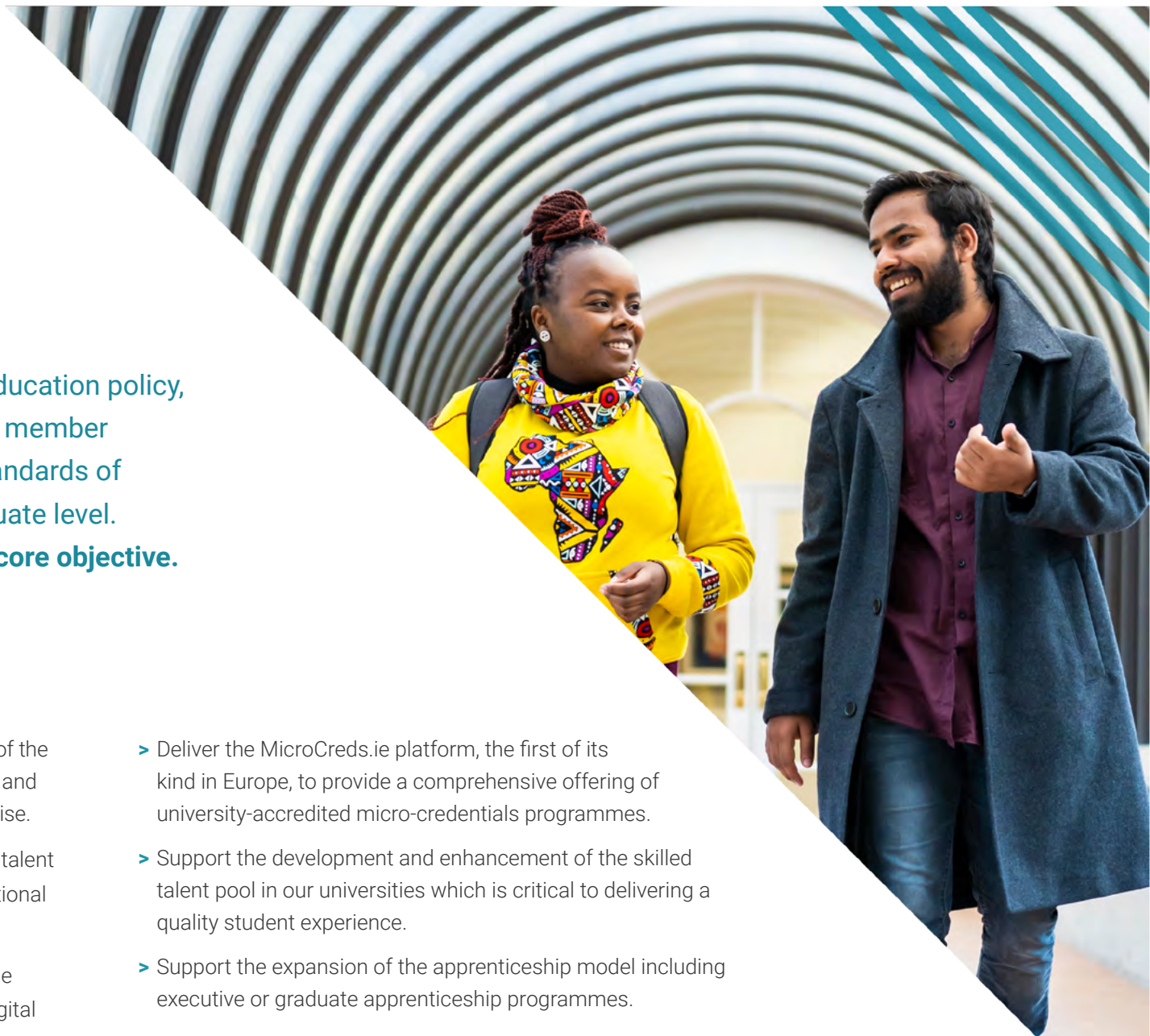


We work to achieve changes to national higher education policy, practice and funding regimes that will enable our member universities to continue to provide the highest standards of education to students at graduate and post-graduate level.

Fostering a world-class student experience is a core objective.

The IUA will:

- > Facilitate our members' response to the high-skills talent needs of the country through ongoing advocacy and engagement with public and private stakeholders across government, semi-State and enterprise.
- > Contribute to the development and implementation of national talent development and skills policies through participation in the National Skills Council and other key fora.
- > Lead the sector's response to the growing need for more flexible lifelong learning programmes including the enhanced use of digital opportunities, supported by adapted public funding mechanisms.
- > Deliver the MicroCreds.ie platform, the first of its kind in Europe, to provide a comprehensive offering of university-accredited micro-credentials programmes.
- > Support the development and enhancement of the skilled talent pool in our universities which is critical to delivering a quality student experience.
- > Support the expansion of the apprenticeship model including executive or graduate apprenticeship programmes.



5 KEY PILLARS

2. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION



We will continually build the case for policy and funding decisions and for the structural change needed to ensure that the ambitions of Impact 2030, the national R&I strategy, are matched by the requisite investment and policy framework. We will strive to **ensure that the capacity of our universities to carry out world-class research and innovation is supported and enhanced.**

We will work with Government and key stakeholders to **ensure that the establishment of the new research structures is carried out through a well-managed process and that the necessary supports are put in place as a priority.**

The IUA will:

- Seek to shape and influence national policy on research and innovation using an evidence-based approach.
- Enhance the capacity of our researcher network through the implementation of the Researcher Career Development and Employment Framework.
- Campaign to secure the appropriate mix of funding for fundamental and mission-driven research.
- Provide supports and assistance for international researchers to work in Ireland through the EURAXESS scheme and otherwise.
- Support our universities capacity to access funds from national and international sources including Horizon Europe, and other key funding sources.
- Assist our universities to enhance their capacity and to demonstrate their impact on addressing societal challenges, with a particular focus on evidence for public policy.



5 KEY PILLARS

3. ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION



We will seek to secure the systemic changes and the necessary resources to **widen access to third-level, especially for socially disadvantaged students and those with disabilities.**

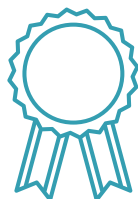
The IUA will:

- > Support our universities in increasing access for students with disabilities and from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.
- > Continue to manage the operation of the DARE and HEAR schemes and work to continually improve criteria and mechanisms to target those that are most disadvantaged.
- > Contribute to policy change to provide for increased emphasis on part-time and flexible lifelong learning opportunities.
- > Support and enhance progression for FET award-holders into university programmes and facilitate improved pathways within a unified system.
- > Work with government and the HEA to ensure that appropriate funding mechanisms are in place to support access and participation.



5 KEY PILLARS

4. SUSTAINING QUALITY



It is **imperative that the high-quality standards in Irish universities are maintained** in the face of an increase in student numbers arising from the demographic bulge.

The shift towards blended learning and the increase in short-form courses equally demands an underpinning of quality standards.

The IUA will:

- > Provide a platform for sharing of best practice and continuous improvement of quality standards amongst our member universities.
- > Represent our members collectively to QQI as part of the ongoing development of quality and standards and the institutional review process.
- > Ensure that quality standards and processes remain appropriate to support ongoing expansion of blended and digitally enhanced lifelong learning.
- > Support our members in ensuring an excellent student experience across all aspects of the university student lifecycle.



5 KEY PILLARS

5. CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT AT HOME AND ABROAD

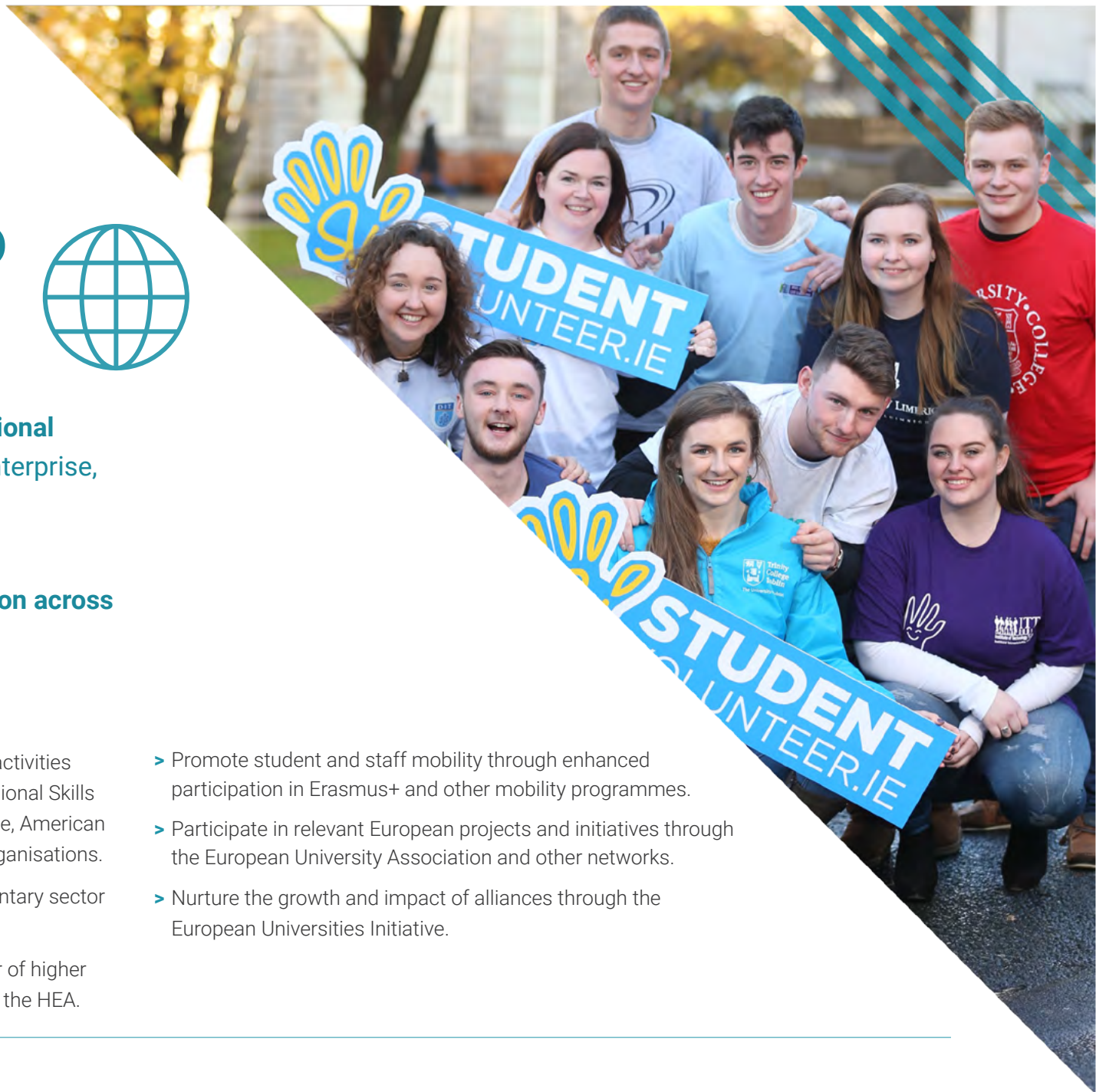


Our universities play a **key role in supporting regional development** and have deep connections with enterprise, the community and voluntary sector.

As globally competitive institutions, they seek to **continue to deepen partnerships and collaboration across Europe and the world.**

The IUA will:

- > Seek to strengthen links with enterprise through collaborative activities and engagement with IDA, Enterprise Ireland, National and Regional Skills fora, Skillnet Ireland, Ibec, British Ireland Chamber of Commerce, American Chamber of Commerce Ireland, and other key agencies and organisations.
- > Build our sectoral collaboration with communities and the voluntary sector through Campus Engage and StudentVolunteer.ie.
- > Strive to build the reputation of Ireland as an attractive provider of higher education and research in liaison with Education in Ireland and the HEA.
- > Promote student and staff mobility through enhanced participation in Erasmus+ and other mobility programmes.
- > Participate in relevant European projects and initiatives through the European University Association and other networks.
- > Nurture the growth and impact of alliances through the European Universities Initiative.



ENABLING MEASURES BUILDING CAPACITY

Irish higher education is a success story. **Participation rates are amongst the highest in the world and the high standards of our universities are recognised internationally.** This must be protected. The supply of highly educated graduates is a major element of Ireland's ongoing economic development.

The system is, however, facing capacity constraints as the pressure on student admissions is set to continue through the 2020s in the face of a large demographic bulge. **The IUA seeks to support its members in meeting those capacity constraints in the years ahead in order to secure the future sustainability of the sector.**

The IUA will:

- Prioritise the need to secure the required resources to cater for a growing population of both full-time and part-time lifelong learners, including significantly improved student/staff ratios.
- Seek to secure the required investment in capital expenditure for both physical and digital infrastructure to cater for the known growth in student numbers.
- Advocate strongly for the full implementation of Funding the Future to address the gap in funding acknowledged by government and underpin recurring expenditure in member universities.
- Push for the growth in annual research investment needed to bring Ireland up to comparable levels of funding with key European competitors.



ENABLING MEASURES

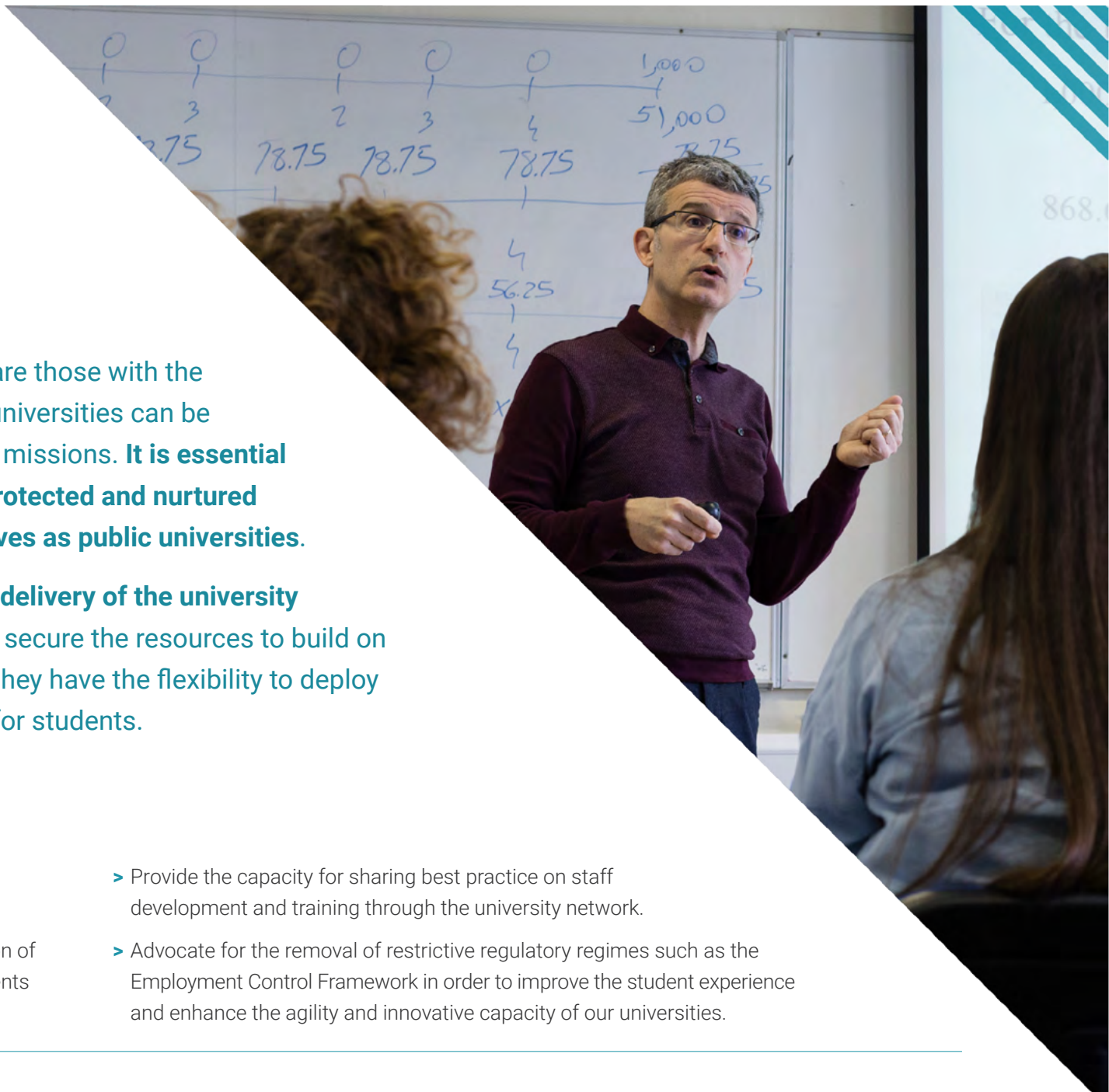
MAINTAINING AGILITY

Internationally, the most successful universities are those with the greatest autonomy. Much of the success of our universities can be attributed to their distinct individual features and missions. **It is essential that their agility as autonomous institutions is protected and nurtured while they actively contribute to national objectives as public universities.**

Highly skilled staff are central to the successful delivery of the university mission. It is critically important that universities secure the resources to build on the existing strong base of skilled staff and that they have the flexibility to deploy those staff in an agile manner that best delivers for students.

The IUA will:

- > Actively promote best-practice governance and accountability standards through its collaborative network.
- > Represent members' interests in the design and implementation of governance mechanisms such as Annual Governance Statements and Oversight Agreements under the new HEA Bill 2022.
- > Provide the capacity for sharing best practice on staff development and training through the university network.
- > Advocate for the removal of restrictive regulatory regimes such as the Employment Control Framework in order to improve the student experience and enhance the agility and innovative capacity of our universities.



THE VOICE OF IRISH UNIVERSITIES