



 **U!REKA**
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

TOOLBOX ON GOOD GOVERNANCE
U!REKA Sustainable, Human, Inclusive,
Future proof Transition

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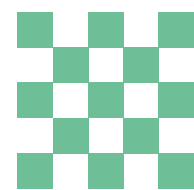


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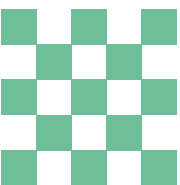
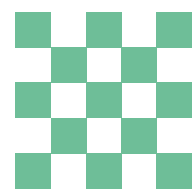
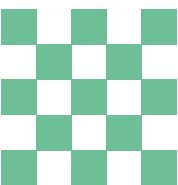


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Executive summary

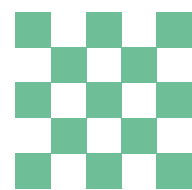
This document presents U!REKA's governance structure, roles, and decision-making processes. It is complemented by the *Good Governance Guide* (see section 7), a concise set of practical recommendations and ground rules. Together, these form the *Toolbox on Good Governance* (TGG).

The Toolbox aims to ensure that U!REKA's governance bodies adhere to high governance standards, while also serving as a model for other European Universities. It provides guidance, clear structures, and tools for applying governance practices in diverse institutional contexts.

The TGG was co-created by the U!REKA Governance Team (Work Package 2 - Task 2.1), coordinated by HOGENT, with contributions from representatives of six full partner institutions. Drawing on literature, benchmarks, surveys, and good practices, the team met bi-weekly since February 2024 to iteratively shape a framework aligned with both European standards and institutional realities.

This document combines principles, practical guidance and key monitoring actions to embed good governance in decision-making. In doing so, it promotes a culture of transparency, accountability and collaboration across the alliance.

The Toolbox will be integrated into U!REKA staff training (WP6 T6.1.) to support governance bodies and institutional leaders in applying its principles. It will also be disseminated beyond U!REKA to contribute to the broader European University landscape.



1. Introduction

1.1 What Governance means in the U!REKA context

In U!REKA, governance refers to the formal and informal structures and processes that enable decision-making, coordination, consultation, and accountability across the alliance. It ensures strategic goals are translated into action through clear roles, inclusive participation, and collaboration practice.

This includes formal bodies (see section 4), as well as informal practices such as interinstitutional dialogue and cooperation. U!REKA governance is both a framework for action and a reflection of U!REKA's core values.

1.2 Purpose

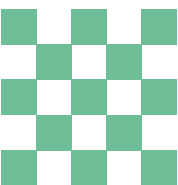
The Toolbox on Good Governance defines U!REKA's approach to fostering sustainable, inclusive, and effective governance across the alliance. Governance is positioned as a cornerstone for trust, operational efficiency, and meaningful participation among students, staff (teachers, researchers, professional services, and admin – hereafter 'staff'), and external stakeholders.

This Toolbox supports U!REKA's mission to co-create innovative solutions for urban and societal challenges by promoting shared ownership, collaborative decision-making, and bold leadership. It provides a value-based governance framework rooted in inclusion, co-creation, and boldness, aligned with European principles to ensure institutional cooperation and long-term impact. The ultimate goal is to inspire governance practices that enable transformative education and research across a diverse European landscape.

1.3 Scope

This document offers strategic and operational guidance to support effective governance throughout U!REKA. It outlines decision-making structures, stakeholder engagement processes, and conflict resolution mechanisms that reflect the alliance's core values (see section 2).

It aligns with broader European standards such as the Bologna Process and the European Green Deal, embedding principles of sustainability, equity, and harmonisation. Informed by survey data and legal validation, it presents actionable tools to implement consistent governance practices that address ecological, social, and economic challenges.



2. Governance Foundations

2.1 U!REKA's Core Values

U!REKA's governance is not only structural but also value driven. It is built on three fundamental values: inclusion, co-creation, and boldness. Values that shape our decision-making processes and influence both formal structures and informal relationships. They are not just guiding principles but define how we collaborate, innovate, and ensure sustainable, inclusive, and transparent governance across the alliance.



Inclusion

U!REKA is committed to fostering an open, diverse, and welcoming governance culture where every stakeholder—students, staff, and external stakeholders—has a voice. Governance structures ensure equitable participation across institutions, regardless of their size or background. Inclusion is seen as a continuous process of listening, learning, and growing together.



Co-Creation

At the heart of our alliance lies co-creation. It is the active engagement of all members in shaping policies and strategies. We believe governance should be built on trust, collaboration, and shared ownership, ensuring that all perspectives contribute to solutions that drive meaningful impact. Our governance model fosters interdisciplinary and cross-sector partnerships, integrating knowledge from academia, industry, government, and civil society.



Boldness

Bold governance means pushing boundaries and embracing ambitious goals. U!REKA is committed to forward-thinking and agile decision-making, allowing us to adapt to emerging challenges while upholding European values and principles. We encourage experimentation, risk-taking, and innovative solutions that reflect the changing landscape of European higher education.

Figure 1 – U! Core Values

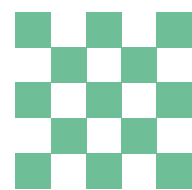
2.2 How these values shape governance

Values shape why and how governance should function, while principles (see section 3) ensure that governance remains trustworthy, effective, and legally sound. Good governance ensures that these values translate into real-world impact by shaping how leadership is structured, how stakeholders participate, and how policies evolve within the alliance.

These values are actively embedded in U!REKA's governance design:

Inclusion through governance structures

Inclusion at U!REKA is embedded in governance by ensuring balanced representation across all member institutions, regardless of size, location, or national context. Decision-making structures actively integrate diverse perspectives, including students, staff, and external stakeholders. Transparent consultation processes and equity-driven policies prevent power imbalances, fostering mutual respect and ensuring that all voices are heard.



Co-creation in decision-making and policy development

U!REKA's governance embraces participatory decision-making, where policies are shaped collectively rather than imposed. Councils, advisory boards, committees, and feedback loops ensure active stakeholder involvement, drawing insights from multidisciplinary teams and external partners. This approach enhances responsiveness and adaptability, ensuring governance evolves in line with institutional and societal needs.

Boldness in leadership and strategic adaptation

Bold governance means agile leadership, flexibility, and innovation. U!REKA enables institutions to adopt U!REKA's governance model, refine and align institutional governance practices, and respond rapidly to emerging challenges. By embracing bold exploration and challenging conventions, the alliance remains at the forefront of European higher education governance, continuously evolving to meet future demands.

2.3 Alignment with European Standards

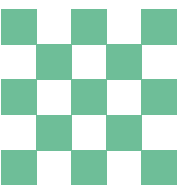
To maintain consistency with European higher education policies, our governance structures align with key EU frameworks that promote mobility, inclusiveness, sustainability, and digital transformation.

European Higher Education Standards and Quality Assurance

U!REKA governance aligns with the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) (ENQA, 2015), ensuring a commitment to transparency, stakeholder involvement, and evidence-based decision-making. These principles guide our approach to governance evaluation, making quality assurance systematic, participatory, and aligned with European best practices. Furthermore, compliance with the Bologna Process (European Commission, 1999) ensures that U!REKA governance supports mobility, degree recognition, and structured institutional cooperation within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Sustainability and the European Green Deal

Sustainability is an integral part of U!REKA's mission, vision, and governance, reflecting the European Union's Green Deal priorities (European Commission, 2019). Governance structures are designed to embed ecological, social, and economic sustainability into decision-making, aligned with EU climate and digital transition goals. This means integrating sustainability in strategic planning, institutional partnerships, and operational decision-making, supporting the transition toward climate-neutral and smart cities, the major scope on many levels of the U!REKA European University.



Inclusiveness and Fundamental Rights in Governance

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (European Union, 2000) establishes governance as an instrument to protect fairness, non-discrimination, and stakeholder inclusion. U!REKA governance reflects these principles by aiming at decision-making processes which are equitable, participatory, and representative of diverse institutional, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, our commitment to equity-driven governance aligns with EU policies that promote accessibility, gender balance, and equal participation at all levels of governance (European Commission, 2021).

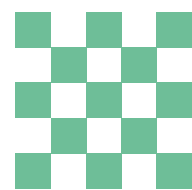
Digital Transformation in Higher Education Governance

The EU Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027) (European Commission, 2020) emphasizes the need for modernized governance structures that support digital collaboration, hybrid learning models, and data-driven decision-making. U!REKA's governance framework aligns with this by integrating digital tools for participatory decision-making, fostering knowledge-sharing across institutions, and supporting digital capacity-building, also in governance operations.

Alignment with EU values

U!REKA's governance model aligns with the core values of the European Union, as described in article 2 of the Treaty of Lisbon (2009). This defines the EU's foundational principles, including human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. The Treaty also strengthens transparency, subsidiarity, and participatory governance, emphasizing citizen involvement in decision-making (e.g. citizen engagement aims in WP5).

Reflecting these principles, U!REKA aims for inclusive, transparent, and accountable decision-making by embedding stakeholder representation, co-creation, and institutional collaboration at all levels. Inspired by the Treaty's focus on subsidiarity, U!REKA balances centralized coordination with institutional autonomy, fostering ethical leadership and equal participation.



3. Principles of Good Governance



Figure 2 – Principles of Good Governance

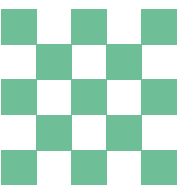
3.1 Transparency and Openness

A strong governance framework relies on transparency and openness to build trust among alliance members and external stakeholders. Decision-making processes, financial resources, and outcomes must be disclosed to all relevant stakeholders to ensure accountability and inclusivity.

Therefore, U!REKA has established a practice of reporting on monitoring activities, finances, and risks, as well as planning mitigation measures every six months to the U!REKA Steering Committee. Regular joint reporting at both governance and operational levels, as well as reporting in various governance bodies both within the alliance and partner institutions enhances credibility and fosters collective learning. Additionally, the open-access format “Let’s Share” provides a transparent communication channel accessible to all.

While upholding transparency, it is crucial to know its limits concerning the handling of personal data. The Joint Controller Agreement signed by the U!REKA partners guarantees care and rigour in dealing with and sharing personal data.

Promoting an awareness that even predefined governance structures are dynamic, not static, U!REKA aims to maintain adaptability. Governance structures should include dedicated spaces and mechanisms for reflection and continuous improvement. The ability to revise and adjust activities through the decisions and discussion in the various governance bodies in response to emerging challenges ensures resilience and acceptance. At the same time attentiveness towards shifts, flexibility in the range and quality of a reaction, and responsiveness strengthen the alliance’s ability to navigate complex environments while keeping in touch with the people forming the alliance and its governance.



3.2 Effectiveness and Efficiency

For a European University alliance to thrive, governance structures must support the effective and efficient use of resources. This includes aligning efforts with strategic objectives to maximize impact while avoiding redundancies. This holds true to both financial resources and human talent. Streamlining goals and leveraging the comparative advantages of partner institutions help optimize outcomes.

Sound and sustainable financial management is crucial, ensuring that charges do not exceed costs and that resources are allocated in a sustainable manner. A strong governance framework should incorporate cost-benefit analysis, foster capacity-building at both institutional and individual levels, and include clear planning with regular efficiency checks. These combined efforts enable the alliance operates at peak performance while maintaining long-term viability.

3.3 Equity and Respect

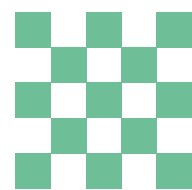
A commitment to equity and respect is fundamental for fostering a collaborative and inclusive governance culture. Governance structures must account for the diverse legal, political, cultural, and institutional contexts of alliance partners, ensuring equal access to resources and participation in decision-making processes.

The formal principle of equity among partners fosters mutual respect, not only in official matters but also in informal interactions, which are equally important and impactful. Valuing and integrating different disciplines, cultures, and languages enhances inclusivity and strengthens cooperation. Trust, patience, and mutual consideration are essential for maintaining productive partnerships.

At its core, the alliance consists of people from different backgrounds with different skill sets working together. By clearly defining roles and responsibilities and ensuring governance bodies reflect the interests of all members, alliances can create participatory decision-making processes that build trust and ensure long-term success.

3.4 Sustainability and Long-Term Perspective

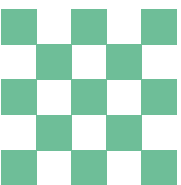
Sustainability is a cornerstone of effective governance, ensuring that the alliance remains operational beyond initial funding periods and encompasses viability for the present and the future on all its levels of action. In our understanding, sustainability comprises all three dimensions of ecological, social and economic sustainability. Long-term stability requires strategic planning that is independent of individual actors or short-term projects. A multi-level governance approach connects inclusiveness and co-creation with sustained collaboration, ensuring that governance structures remain relevant and adaptable over time. Our joint vision and values, co-created by the U!REKA partners and stakeholders, align U!REKA's goals with those of the different partner institutions. This alignment ensures that governance remains meaningful and responsive to the evolving needs of the institutions involved.



3.5 Accountability and Quality Assurance

Good governance is built on accountability and continuous quality assurance. Decisions must be made and enforced in accordance with established rules and regulations, with leadership in each university actively committed to upholding the alliance's governance principles.

Continuous evaluation mechanisms should be in place to track progress and measure effectiveness. Monitoring the completion of predefined milestones and deliverables ensures that governance objectives are met, while regular surveys and governance polls provide insights into the alliance's performance and its perception within the alliance's community. By integrating accountability into governance structures, alliances can maintain high standards and foster a culture of continuous improvement.



4. Governance Roles and Structure

U!REKA's governance relies on formal structures to ensure accountability, transparency, and institutional alignment across the alliance. These structures are designed to support both strategic coordination and operational implementation, while also enabling meaningful participation from all stakeholders. While formal bodies are central to this framework, informal collaboration and cross-institutional dialogue are equally vital to effective governance in practice.

4.1 Stakeholder Representation

Inclusive and balanced representation is foundational for U!REKA's governance. Students, staff, and external stakeholders are actively involved in shaping the alliance's strategic direction. Governance structures reflect a diversity of voices, across institutions, cultures, and disciplines.

The structured engagement model (U!REKA, 2025) is based on the STAGE-framework and informs governance representation. This ensures that participation is purpose-driven, aligned with strategic priorities and needs of different stakeholder groups.

Before diving into the governance structure and the specific governance bodies, we first introduce the key stakeholder.

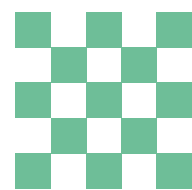
Key Stakeholder Groups represented in Governance

Students and Staff (internal stakeholders)

- Students are directly represented in governance bodies through the Student Council, with seats in the Steering Committee, Executive Committee, and relevant Work Package Teams.
- Broader input from students and staff is gathered through participatory workshops, structured surveys, and thematic consultations.
- The engagement strategy fosters a sense of belonging, promoting co-creation rather than mere consultation.

External stakeholders

- External partners - including city & region officials, industry representatives, and government agencies - contribute via the Steering Committee, Advisory Council and Work Package Teams.
- Their involvement ensures governance remains responsive to societal needs, workforce demands, and regional development.
- The STAGE framework supports strategic engagement readiness, involving stakeholders based on their relevance, potential impact, and available resources (U!REKA, 2025).



Institutional balance

- We aim for equal representation across the alliance with governance processes that balance representation between smaller and larger institutions, ensuring all members have an equitable voice in decision-making.
- The regular rotation of chairpersons, particularly in the Student Council and Steering Committee, helps maintain fairness and inclusivity.

Integration of Stakeholder Insights for engaged governance

U!REKA's governance model is continuously shaped by stakeholder engagement. By systematically collecting and integrating insights, governance structures remain responsive, adaptive, and aligned with U!REKA's core values and European higher education standards.

Survey Findings

Regular surveys among governance bodies provide valuable data on stakeholder expectations, participation levels, and perceptions of governance effectiveness. The results highlight opportunities to improve inclusivity, transparency, and co-creation, informing ongoing strategic and structural refinements.

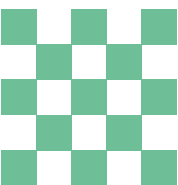
Local Meetup Insights

Feedback gathered through local institutional meetups helps identify context-specific challenges and opportunities. Integrating these insights ensures that governance remains flexible, context-sensitive, and grounded in institutional realities.

Engagement Canvas

Outlined in the U! General Engagement Strategy, the Engagement Canvas offers a structured approach for planning U!REKA activities and initiatives (U!REKA, 2025). While not a governance instrument, it supports stakeholder engagement in ways that indirectly reinforce governance quality.

- It enhances participation by making engagement efforts more accessible and strategic.
- It strengthens cross-institutional collaboration and stakeholder visibility.
- It informs alliance-wide decision-making by structuring inclusive outreach and gathering diverse perspectives.



4.2 U!REKA's Governance Structure

U!REKA's governance structure is designed to ensure transparency, accountability, and institutional collaboration across all alliance members. It consists of multiple governance bodies that facilitate strategic oversight, operational management, stakeholder engagement, and decision-making.

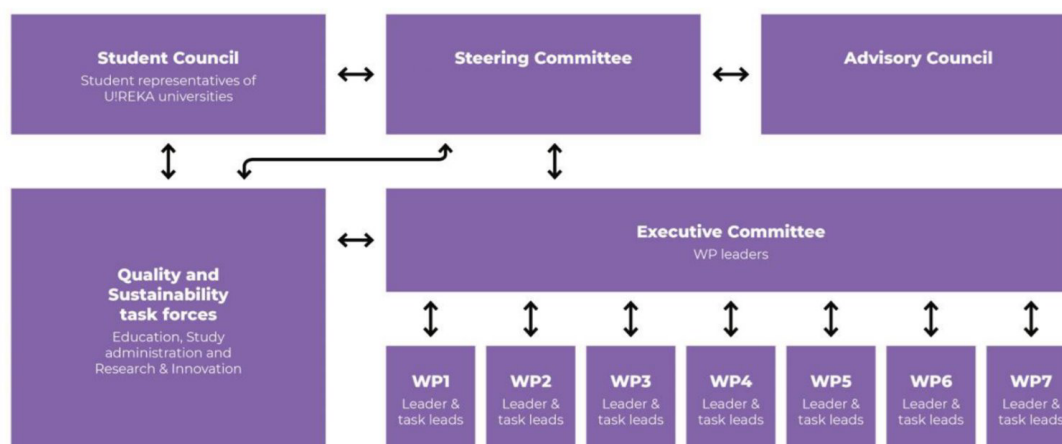


Figure 3 – U! Governance Structure

Steering Committee (SC)

Strategic Leadership and decision-making

The Steering Committee (SC) is U!REKA's highest decision-making body, ensuring strategic leadership, institutional alignment, and effective governance across the alliance. It is responsible for overseeing policy, financial planning, and consortium-wide strategic decisions while ensuring compliance with the Grant Agreement (GA) and Consortium Agreement (CA).

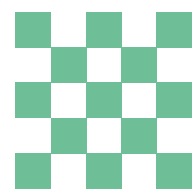
Composition & Representation

The Steering Committee shall consist of one representative (the rector/president) of each full partner institution. The deputy representative shall be the vice rector/president or executive management team member of the full partner.

In addition, the SC includes:

- Two representatives from the Student Council
- Two representatives from the Advisory Council (representing associate partners)

These representatives are rotated, to allow different local actors to get representation in the Steering Committee. Rectors from U!REKA SHIFT university Associated University Partners may participate in the Steering Committee without voting or vetoing rights on any issues.



Decision-Making Authority & Voting Rights

The SC takes strategic and financial decisions, including amendments to the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement, governance oversight, and membership changes. Decisions are taken in accordance with the established governance framework, ensuring transparency, accountability, and alignment with U!REKA's strategic objectives.

- Decisions require a 70% majority of votes cast.
- Student Council representatives participate in discussions but do not have voting rights on financial decisions, budget distribution, and grant modifications.

A quorum of two-thirds (2/3) of SC members is required for meetings. When a decision is made without a physical meeting, members have 10 days to cast their votes, with veto rights applicable within 15 days.

The SC is chaired by a rector or president from a full partner institution, elected by the SC. The chairperson rotates annually or biennially to foster shared ownership and bring fresh institutional insights while ensuring continuity in strategic development.

Key Responsibilities of the Steering Committee

The SC is responsible for:

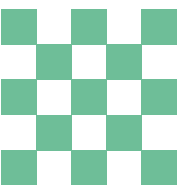
- Strategic leadership, governance oversight, and institutional collaboration.
- Policy approval and financial oversight, including fund distribution among beneficiaries.
- Admission of new members and discontinuation of existing members.
- Appointment of the Project Coordinator and, if necessary, replacement of the coordinator.
- Modifications to the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement, including financial and legal changes.
- Handling breaches of obligations and initiating corrective actions when necessary.
- Reviewing and approving proposals related to the suspension or termination of the project.

Such decisions are taken in accordance with the established governance framework, ensuring transparency, accountability, and alignment with the consortium's strategic objectives.

Executive Committee (EC)

Supervisory Body for Implementation and coordination

The Executive Committee (EC) is the supervisory body for the execution of U!REKA governance policies and strategic initiatives. It reports to and is accountable to the Steering Committee (SC), ensuring that decisions at the highest governance level are effectively translated into action.



Key Responsibilities of the Executive Committee

The EC is responsible for:

- Monitoring compliance with governance policies and strategic objectives set by the SC, reviewing project progress at least every six months;
- supporting the Project Coordinator in preparing meetings with the Granting Authority and handling project-related data and deliverables;
- overseeing Work Packages (WPs) and operational Task teams to ensure efficient execution and institutional engagement;
- ensuring financial and operational efficiency, supporting appropriate resource allocation across governance activities;
- providing recommendations to the SC on governance improvements, institutional collaboration, and stakeholder engagement;
- preparing communication materials such as press releases and consortium-wide updates, ensuring alignment with the Grant Agreement and dissemination strategy.

Composition of the Executive Committee

The EC consists of:

- The Project Coordinator (chairperson).
- Work Package Leaders (WPLs) from all full partner institutions.
- Institutional Coordinators from each full partner institution.
- Institutional coordinators from Associated University Partners may participate but do not hold membership.

The EC is chaired by the Project Coordinator and meets monthly to review progress, address challenges, and coordinate institutional efforts. Formal compliance reviews take place every six months, assessing alignment with the Consortium Plan and proposing adjustments if needed. Decision-making is consensus-based, with unresolved issues escalated to the SC for resolution.

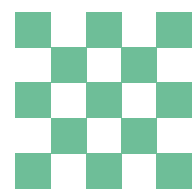
Advisory & Student Councils

External & Student Engagement in Governance

The Advisory Council & Student Council serve as key advisory bodies within the U!REKA governance structure, ensuring that external expertise (e.g. regions, cities, and municipalities) and student perspectives are actively integrated into decision-making. While operating independently, both councils advise the Steering Committee and Executive Committee, and send two representatives each to the SC. These representatives have voting rights, except on financial matters and EU fund distribution.

Student Council

The Student Council (U!SC) is the highest student representative body within U!REKA. It consists of one student representative per full partner institution, with an appointed chair. The U!SC ensures that student interests are reflected in governance discussions, particularly regarding mobility, inclusion, and



education policies. U!SC representatives also contribute structured feedback through consultations, surveys, and participation in relevant Work Packages.

Advisory Council

The Advisory Council (AC) includes representatives of cities, regions, industry, and other external stakeholders. It provides strategic input on urban challenges, education policies, and European higher education trends. The AC strengthens U!REKA's external alignment, contributes to governance adaptability, and supports quality reviews to ensure long-term impact.

By incorporating perspectives from outside academia, the AC helps to ensure that governance decisions are inclusive, forward-thinking, and aligned with real-world challenges.

Quality and Sustainability task forces **Ensuring long-term impact & excellence**

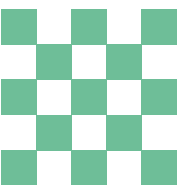
The Quality and Sustainability Task Forces play a key role in integrating U!REKA project activities and outcomes into the governance and operational structures of the alliance's partner institutions. These task forces function as supporting bodies that ensure the strategic objectives of U!REKA remain aligned with quality standards, institutional sustainability, and European higher education policies.

There are three task forces:

1. **Education Task Force** (chaired by WP6 Leader): Focuses on ensuring the quality of education, developing policies on learning outcomes, and embedding pedagogical innovation within the alliance.
2. **Study Administration Task Force** (chaired by WP4 Leader): Works on aligning administrative processes across institutions, ensuring smooth academic mobility, and harmonizing student services.
3. **Research and Innovation Task Force** (chaired by WP5 Leader): Strengthens the research dimension of U!REKA, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and ensuring that research outputs align with institutional and European priorities

Each task force consists of one expert and one director from each full partner institution, ensuring institutional representation. Experts and directors from associated partners may participate on a voluntary basis.

Although the task forces do not have decision-making authority, they provide recommendations and quality assurance input to the Steering Committee (SC) and Executive Committee (EC). They meet at least twice a year and work closely with Work Package Leaders (WPLs) to monitor progress, propose improvements, and enhance the alignment of governance activities with the long-term vision of U!REKA.



Work Package Teams

Thematic and Operational Implementation

U!REKA's governance structure includes Work Package (WP) Teams, responsible for implementing the specific objectives and tasks outlined in the Description of the Action (DoA) as part of the Grant Agreement (GA). WP Teams ensure that project activities are carried out efficiently and in alignment with U!REKA's agreed commitments, delivering results that contribute to the overall objectives of the alliance.

Each WP is focused on a defined thematic or operational area, including:

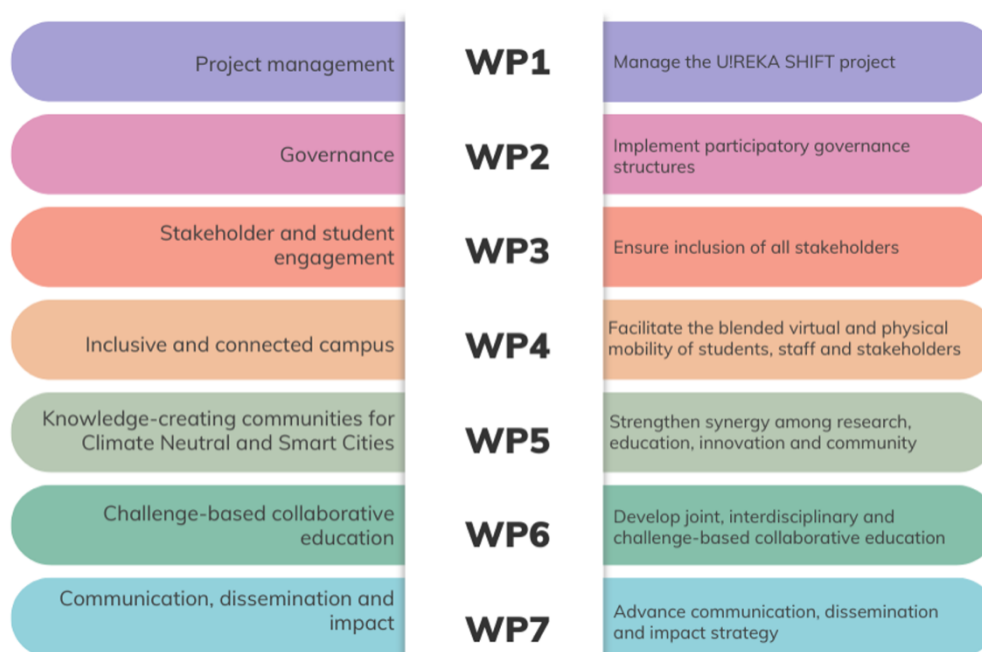


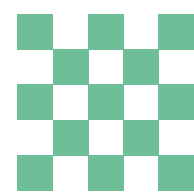
Figure 4 – Work Package Overview

WP Teams bring together academic, administrative, and external perspectives to ensure the effective implementation of tasks across all partner institutions.

Responsibilities of WP Teams

The WP-teams are responsible for:

- Executing the objectives and tasks set out in the description of the action (DoA), ensuring compliance with the Grant and Consortium Agreement;
- developing deliverables as described in the GA and ensuring their timely submission to the coordinator;
- ensuring institutional collaboration, knowledge exchange, and alignment with European higher education priorities;
- providing regular progress updates to the Executive Committee (EC) to ensure effective coordination and oversight;
- identifying challenges and proposing solutions to maintain smooth implementation.



Work Package Leadership and Responsibilities

Each WP is led by a **Work Package Leader** (WPL), who is responsible for:

- Coordinating the implementation of the WP's objectives;
- ensuring the quality and timely delivery of WP-related outputs;
- collaborating with Task Leaders (TLs) and other WPLs to ensure cross-WP coherence;
- providing updates and reporting progress to the EC and Project Coordinator.

Each WP consists of **Task Leaders** (TLs), who are responsible for:

- Implementing their assigned tasks within the WP as per the GA.
- Ensuring the high quality of deliverables related to their tasks
- Cooperating with other TLs and WPLs to maintain alignment across the WP.

Coordination and Governance Alignment

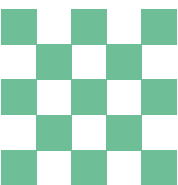
WP Teams operate with structured workflows, meeting regularly based on the needs of their tasks. They maintain operational autonomy within their scope but must ensure compliance with the GA and align with governance structures through regular reporting.

Project Coordinator (PC) **Leadership and oversight**

The Project Coordinator serves as the primary liaison between U!REKA European University and the European Commission, ensuring compliance, financial accountability, and strategic coordination. This role is essential for aligning project implementation with the Grant Agreement (GA-101124308) and EU regulations.

The project coordinator is responsible for:

Strategic leadership & compliance: the PC provides strategic leadership and ensures compliance by aligning project implementation with the Grant Agreement (GA-101124308) and EU regulations while managing grant compliance, amendment requests, and legal obligations in coordination with the European Commission.



Governance & coordination: the PC reports to the Steering Committee (SC) and chairs the Executive Committee (EC), coordinating Work Package Leaders (WPLs) and institutional representatives to facilitate cross-institutional collaboration.

Risk and conflict management: the PC oversees risk mitigation, maintains the Project Management Plan, and ensures proactive conflict resolution within governance structures.

Financial and administrative oversight: the PC manages fund allocation, cost monitoring, and financial reporting, ensuring timely distribution of EU funds and compliance with funding policies.

If a WP or partner fails to submit a deliverable on time, the coordinator may proceed with submitting the rest of the project deliverables to ensure compliance with the Grant Agreement.

4.3 Institutional Governance Structures

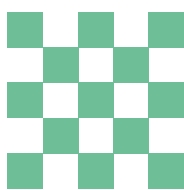
The institutional U!REKA Coordinators of every partner institution are part of the EC. As representatives and key intermediaries between the alliance-wide governance structure and their respective institutions, they are responsible for ensuring the local implementation of U!REKA governance and project activities. They ensure that U!REKA's strategic objectives and governance principles are embedded within institutional decision-making processes while also providing feedback on local challenges and opportunities.

They adhere efficient and effective institutional project monitoring and reporting, not only representing the institution in the EC and WP teams but also ensuring that the local institutions meets their goals, within given time, cost and resources.

A local institutionally embedded U!REKA governance structure is essential, as it organizes the collaboration of colleagues representing the institution in the U!REKA WPs and strengthens the connections with the institutional governance bodies, research groups, departments, schools and external stakeholders.

The integration of the local U!REKA governance structure into the institution's governance framework is not strictly defined, allowing each institution to interpret and implement it in its own way, while respecting the uniqueness and existing structure of the institution.

Two visual examples of institutionally embedded U!REKA governance structures, from HOGENT University of Applied Sciences & Arts and Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences can be found in the appendices section.



5. Governance in Practice

5.1 From Principles to Practice: Applying Good Governance

To ensure that good governance principles are actively applied, U!REKA provides governance body representatives with structured training, participatory decision-making frameworks, and conflict resolution strategies. These principles will be disseminated through the U!REKA website and reinforced through targeted workshops on ethical leadership and governance excellence, supporting both alliance-wide and institutional-level implementation.

5.2 Participatory Decision-Making Structures

Participation is embedded in U!REKA's highest decision-making body, the Steering Committee, where both the Student Council and Advisory Council have rotating representatives with voting rights. This ensures students and external stakeholders have a direct role in shaping alliance decisions.

Rectors and Presidents of associate partner institutions are welcomed to participate in Steering Committee meetings. Although the associate partner institutions do not hold voting rights, their strategic input is valued

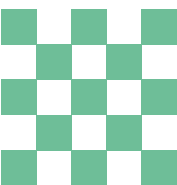
To promote openness, meeting agendas are co-developed by the Executive Committee, with all Steering Committee members able to propose items. Agendas and minutes are made accessible via the U!REKA Teams environment.

5.3 Consensus-oriented Decision-Making Processes

U!REKA strives for consensus-oriented decision-making. This means that we include all participants in discussions, mediate different interests and consider different opinions and needs extensively before making decisions. Active solicitation of input and participation of all participants in decision-making helps build trust and commitment among partners and stronger support for follow-through of the decisions made. This also reflects inclusion as one of U!REKA's key values.

The Executive Committee is the operational decision-making body of U!REKA where decision-making is based on consensus. If consensus is not reached in an Executive Committee meeting, the Project Coordinator will consult relevant experts from other governance bodies, as considered appropriate, and prepare alternative decision proposals for the following meeting. If consensus is still not reached in the Executive Committee, the Coordinator will prepare alternative decision proposals to solve the issue in line with the Grant Agreement and take them to the Steering Committee for decision.

The Steering Committee is the highest, strategic-level decision-making body in U!REKA. The Steering Committee will aim for consensus decisions, but if consensus is not reached, it will decide on the matter through voting, where a 70% majority rules. All members of the Steering Committee have full voting



rights, including the two Student Council and two Advisory Council representatives, to ensure we give voice to those for whom the U!REKA activities and related benefits are primarily targeted.

The decision-making processes, voting rules and quora of U!REKA governance bodies are described in the Consortium Agreement and Grant Agreement. These apply to two of the U!REKA governance bodies, the Executive Committee and Steering Committee, because only they are decision-making bodies. The Advisory Council, Quality and Sustainability Task Forces and the Student Council are not decision-making bodies but provide continuous advice, input and consultation.

The Steering Committee has ordinary meetings at least four times a year. To add flexibility to the meeting and decision-making processes, extraordinary meetings can be organised at any time and decisions can also be taken without a meeting if needed, by the Project Coordinator circulating a suggested decision and the decision being agreed on by 70 % of Steering Committee members.

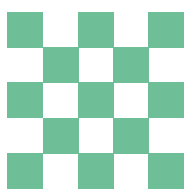
5.4 Conflict Resolution

By sharing the same goals, having clear roles, responsibilities and processes, and by fostering a culture of open communication, U!REKA aims to create a harmonious environment and prevent conflicts or disputes from arising. Through continuous observation, making use of the Plan-Do-Check-Act monitoring cycle, we strive to detect indications of potentially problematic issues early, before they develop into actual conflicts. Creating an environment where everyone feels comfortable raising concerns is essential. The Project Coordinator schedules regular check-ins with work package leaders and actively listens to the partners' feedback to receive information of any potentially problematic issues early on.

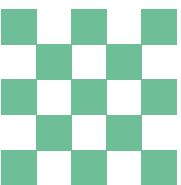
Role ambiguities could easily lead to conflicts. Therefore, the roles and responsibilities of the Project Coordinator, work package leaders, task leaders and institutional coordinators, for example, have been described in the alliance Consortium Agreement and further detailed and documented after joint discussions with colleagues who work in these roles.

When a conflict is identified, the Project Coordinator will facilitate discussions with the involved parties to ensure that parties understand the different perspectives. Options to address the concerns will be explored together to find a mutually beneficial solution or compromise. After a conflict has been resolved, the Coordinator will continue to monitor the situation through observation and discussions to ensure the effectiveness of the solution and to prevent similar issues from occurring again. If the initial solution does not lead to desired results, adjustments may be made.

In the unlikely event of a dispute which cannot be solved amicably, our Consortium Agreement states it would be settled by the courts of Brussels.



The impact of this initiative will be assessed through a series of focus groups, providing direct insights into participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceived usefulness of the governance toolbox. By engaging diverse groups of U!REKA governance bodies, we aim to capture a wide range of perspectives and gather qualitative data on how the project governance has influenced participants' knowledge, behavior, and overall satisfaction with the U!REKA governance toolbox. These focus groups will allow for in-depth discussions that reveal both the intended and unintended effects of the governance interventions, and will be held every 2 years so they can be reported in the U!REKA report on development and impact monitoring. The data gathered will be analyzed to identify patterns, draw conclusions, and guide future improvements, ensuring that the project delivers meaningful and sustainable results. This method ensures that the impact is measured not only quantitatively but also qualitatively, reflecting the true value added to the project's governance.



6. Monitoring Good Governance

6.1 How to monitor Good Governance?

The effectiveness of U!REKA's governance model is reflected in its ability to foster transparent decision-making, institutional alignment, and strategic processes. Governance monitoring ensures that the principles of good governance are embedded in decision-making processes and contribute to the achievement of U!REKA's objectives.

Governance is monitored through both ongoing oversight and a structured internal review process:

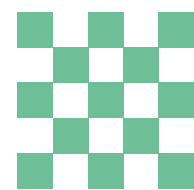
- The Executive Committee meets monthly, chaired by the Project Coordinator to review governance implementation and institutional contributions.
- A biannual internal monitoring exercise is part of U!REKA's Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle. It requires each full partner to report on project funding usage, institutional governance integration, and potential risks.
- Findings from this process provide an opportunity for governance bodies to jointly identify and discuss challenges, propose mitigation measures, and address risks from multiple perspectives to refine governance structures.

6.2 Key Monitoring Actions

To monitor the effectiveness and institutional integration of governance principles, U!REKA applies the following 3 Key Monitoring Actions (KMA):

1. Adoption and Application of the Good Governance Principles	2. Institutional integration of U!REKA governance structures	3. Governance impact on U!REKA's strategic objectives
<p>This KMA is measured by the number of governance development and leadership trainings offered and by the participation rate in the workshops and trainings.</p> <p>All governance body members must complete at least one good governance workshop.</p>	<p>Each full U!REKA partner presents how the alliance's governance model is embedded into its institutional governance structure.</p> <p>Findings are reviewed by the Steering Committee (SC) to ensure alignment between U!REKA and institutional governance frameworks.</p>	<p>The application governance principles and structures is assessed every two years, to support continuous improvement, transparency, and alignment with European values.</p> <p>Focus groups complement surveys by offering qualitative insights that inform process refinements, strengthen collaboration, and enhance accountability.</p>

Table 1 – Key Monitoring Actions



6.3 Review Mechanisms

To ensure a dynamic and participatory governance model, U!REKA integrates two complementary methodologies: the New European Bauhaus (NEB) Compass and the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. Together, they enhance governance sustainability and inclusivity.

NEB Compass

The NEB Compass fosters co-creation and multidisciplinary engagement, aligning governance with European values of participation, cultural sustainability, and environmental responsibility.

This translates into:

- Sustainable governance processes, embedding environmental and social responsibility into decision-making;
- inclusive consultation mechanisms, ensuring active involvement from students, academic staff, and external stakeholders.

PDCA cycle

The PDCA cycle ensures accountability and adaptability in governance through:

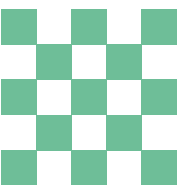
- Strategic planning aligned with institutional and European priorities;
- implementation via participatory models, keeping stakeholder engagement central;
- regular evaluation through performance reviews and feedback loops;
- corrective actions to strengthen governance effectiveness.

While the NEB Compass fosters creativity and engagement, the PDCA cycle provides a structured approach to performance-driven governance. Further details on PDCA's role in quality assurance and risk mitigation are outlined in U!REKA's Quality Management Plan, which ensures that principles of good governance are systematically applied.

6.4 Governance Capacity Building and Staff Training

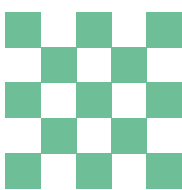
U!REKA prioritizes capacity building to enhance governance competencies across partner institutions. Governance and leadership development training, along with digital governance and innovation programs, are embedded in the Change Drivers Program (Task 6.2). This initiative strengthens staff capabilities in governance practices, strategic leadership, and institutional cooperation while incorporating emerging digital tools and technologies to support decision-making processes.

As part of WP6 (Task 6.1.), governance training is integrated into U!REKA's staff development framework, ensuring all governance body members have access to structured learning opportunities. These workshops cover good governance principles, participatory decision-making, (ethical) leadership, and conflict resolution, supporting institutional alignment across the alliance. The training



also fosters knowledge exchange and co-creation, ensuring that governance innovations remain responsive to evolving European higher education policies.

Beyond internal training, U!REKA European University will disseminate governance resources to other European University Alliances, contributing to broader capacity-building efforts in higher education governance.



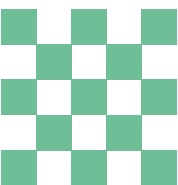
7. U!REKA's Good Governance Guide

U!REKA's Good Governance Guide is a practical companion to this governance framework, outlining clear principles, responsibilities, and best practices for effective and inclusive decision-making within the alliance. It is included in this document as Appendix 2.

Developed collaboratively by the members of the Task 2.1 governance team out of the basis document, the guide provides structured recommendations to ensure governance bodies operate transparently, equitably, and in alignment with European higher education standards. Hence, the active phrasing.

This guide is designed to support all governance actors—including institutional leaders, Work Package teams, and student representatives—in applying good governance principles in their daily practices. It promotes key aspects such as participatory decision-making, financial and operational accountability, and the integration of digital tools in governance processes.

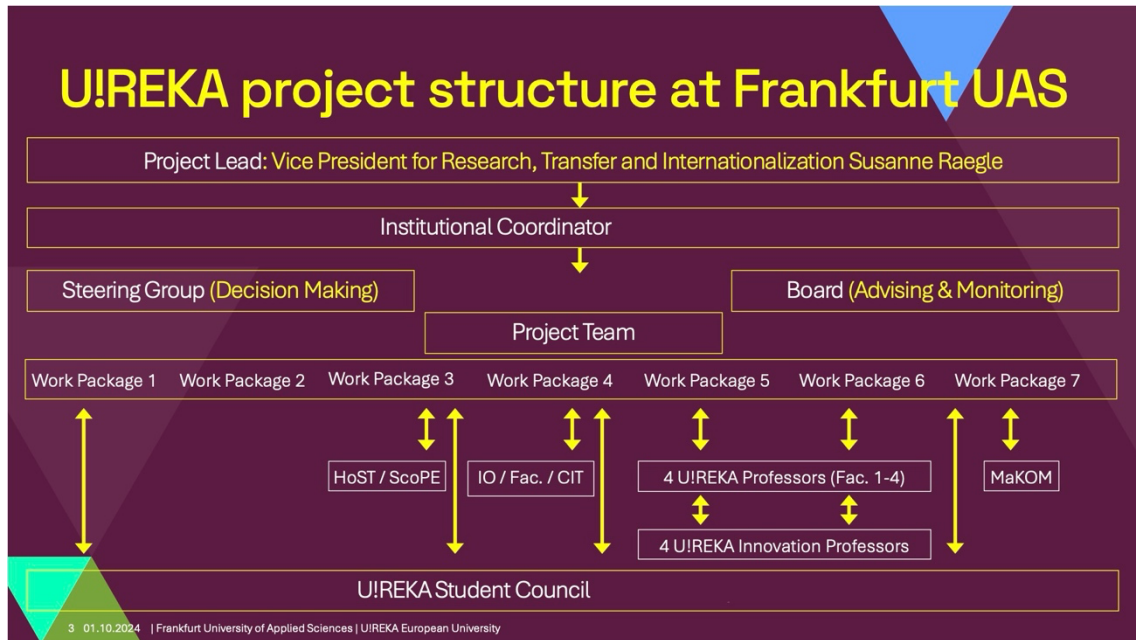
The Good Governance Guide is subject to periodic review, reflecting insights from governance evaluations and stakeholder feedback. It is included as an appendix to this document and will be disseminated across U!REKA institutions to foster a shared governance culture and provide inspiration for other European university alliances.



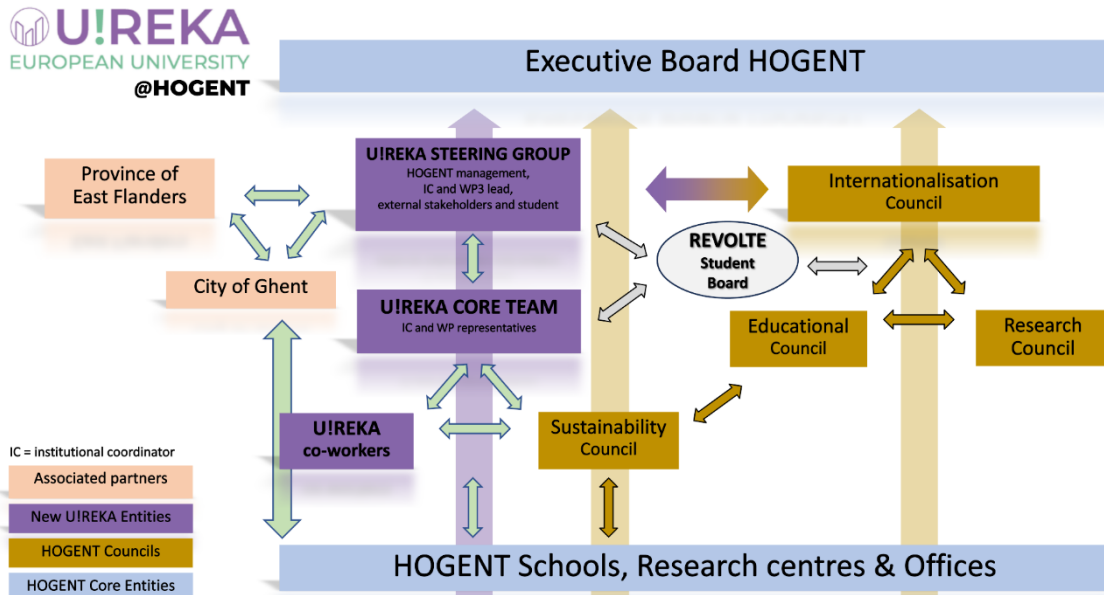
Appendices

Examples of institutional U!REKA Governance structures

Frankfurt UAS



HOGENT



U!REKA's Good Governance Guide

1. BE TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE

- > All governance decisions must be clearly documented and accessible.
- > Use standardized reporting and communication templates to ensure stakeholders can track and review decision-making processes.
- > Each institutional partner is accountable for their commitments, resource allocation, and participation in the U!REKA European University alliance's activities.
- > Each institutional partner shows integrity by clearly defining and communicating their ownership of responsibilities within Work Packages (WPs) and tasks as stated in the Grant Agreement.

2. ENSURE EQUITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

- > Every institution, regardless of size, has an equal voice in governance bodies and operational teams
- > Decision-making must reflect diverse perspectives, including students, staff, and external stakeholders.
- > Resources should be allocated as planned, and institutions should designate staff to actively participate in work packages and task teams.

3. COMMIT TO CO-CREATIVE DECISION-MAKING

- > Decisions are being made with stakeholders, not just for them.
- > Establish structured processes like focus groups, advisory boards, surveys, and working groups for meaningful participation.
- > Ensure that decisions with broader U!REKA implications are made collaboratively, fostering open dialogue and coordination to prevent isolated decision-making.

4. FOSTER CLEAR AND CONSTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATION

- > Effective governance relies on open, respectful, and solution-oriented communication. Members should focus on clear expression, active listening, and collaborative problem-solving to ensure productive discussions and informed decision-making.

5. MAINTAIN FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

- > Governance should ensure resource-sharing, cost-effectiveness, and strategic alignment in and across institutions.
- > Institutions must commit staff and funding as planned to support governance structures and operations effectively.

6. FOSTER A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- > Governance must evolve through regular self-assessment and stakeholder feedback.
- > Use the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Cycle to assess and refine governance strategies.

7. RESOLVE CONFLICTS TRANSPARENTLY AND FAIRLY

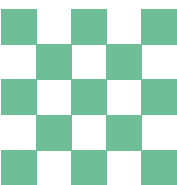
- > Follow conflict resolution protocols before disputes arise.
- > Utilize mediation and structured resolution mechanisms to prevent escalation and maintain trust.

8. EMBRACE DIGITAL GOVERNANCE AND INNOVATION

- > Digital tools should be used for transparent decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and efficient administration.
- > Governance should remain adaptable to technological advancements.

9. EMPOWER LEADERSHIP AT EVERY LEVEL

- > Governance structures must encourage proactive leadership, fostering innovation and accountability.
- > Governance is not top-down but encourages broad participation.



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