



Advice by the Advisory Committee on Third Party Collaborations

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Contact person	Secretary to the Committee

I. Overview of the advice request

a. Project description

A number of Hungarian universities (26) have been excluded from participation in the Erasmus+ and the Horizon Europe programme due to European sanctions, issued in late 2022 (Council Implementing Decision EU 2022/2506). This means that student mobility as well as research collaboration between Dutch universities and the sanctioned institutions cannot be facilitated under these programmes. The sanctions do not apply to all Hungarian universities. The European Commission elaborated on the decisions as follows: “This measure aims to protect the Union budget from possible conflicts of interest and to ensure the transparent use of EU support by public interest trusts.” The Netherlands Higher Education representative office in Brussels, Neth-ER, indicated that the institutions, which have been transformed into such ‘trusts’, are often not subject to the rules of EU directives when it comes to public procurement. Hungarian universities are effectively managed by public foundations whose supervisory boards are members of politicians in Orbán’s Fidesz party. This creates problems with conflicts of interest and transparency. Neth-ER describes these measures as protecting the EU budget from breaches of the rule of law. In addition, the decision to stop Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe funding is said to be relevant for protecting academic freedom in Hungary.

Some Hungarian institutions approached Dutch institutions and faculties (including UvA faculties) to enter into a bilateral agreement, the Pannónia Scholarship or to participate in research projects funded by the Horizon Europe funding scheme. According to RVO, the Pannonia Scholarship seems specifically set up to evade the EC sanctions.

b. Type of request

- Existing collaboration - Changes in geopolitical situation
- Existing collaboration - Changes in partner profile
- Existing collaboration - Other



c. Reason for reassessment

In recent years, a number of UvA faculties have been approached by Hungarian institutions with requests to cooperate in the context of the Pannónia Scholarship scheme. In addition, a number of Dutch research universities reported that the Hungarian ambassador to the Netherlands conducted visits to their campus promoting collaboration opportunities in the context of the HU-rizon scheme. In December 2024, the Steering Group of Presidents of universities of the Netherlands Universities Association discussed this matter and decided to adopt a joint position. For this reason, the International Strategy Department of Academic Affairs proposed to seek the Committee's advice on whether or not to adopt and deploy the UNL joint position within the UvA, with a view to mitigating risks for UvA students and researchers who may be invited to participate in unilaterally funded activities in contexts where the rule of law may not be upheld.. Should the Committee advise to adhere to the UNL joint position, the Department of Academic Affairs shall inform all UvA faculties and instruct them to decline any future proposals in the context of the Pannónia Scholarship scheme and HU-rizon.



II. Process

a. UvA policy framework

In accordance with the UvA internal policy and guidelines stipulated by the Policy Framework for Collaboration with Third Parties and draft Assessment Guidelines, the Executive Board undertook an internal reflection and reassessment on the existing collaboration in the context of the student exchange agreement. The outcome of the internal reflection resulted in the submission of a request for advice to the UvA Advisory Committee for Collaboration with Third Parties. The Committee received the advice request and undertook the assessment on the basis of the draft assessment guidelines. The committee will inform the Executive Board on the outcome of its advice.

b. Grant type and legal framework

The Hungarian Government's higher education scholarship programme, Pannónia, and the HU-rizon, a research funding programme funded by the Hungarian government (which also provides funding for top 100 research institutions from other countries).

d. Assessment process by the Committee

The committee reviewed the following documents:

- Council Implementing Decision EU 2022/2506
- EU list of sanctioned institutions, dated 2 July 2024

The committee discussed the findings during its meetings of 12 & 13 February 2025.



III. Reassessment

a. Key considerations

The Committee acknowledges the value of student exchanges. Such programmes provide a valuable experience for students. Student exchanges help students broaden their horizons, gain intercultural competence, enhance their interest in global issues, and thus prepare them in the best possible way for a successful career in a dynamic, changing global society and labour market.

The Committee also acknowledges the value of research interactions across borders. For knowledge to increase collaboration among scholars and the freedom to interact with whom they so choose is pivotal.

b. Developments in the geopolitical context in which (a) collaboration partner(s) operates

On 14 May 2024, the Hungarian Agency for Research, Development and Innovation (NRDI) announced a new HUF 8 billion grant scheme: HU-rizon. This grant scheme is intended for international research projects led by Hungarian research teams, which focus on solving social and economic challenges. Some Hungarian institutions can no longer receive funding from the Framework Programme, although they are allowed to participate in Horizon Europe with their own funding. Collaboration is not prohibited in this sense, but they will not receive funding.

UNL therefore strongly suspects that this HU-rizon call, like Pannónia, was intended to circumvent European measures. In the press release announcing the scheme, this was stated almost literally by the Hungarian Secretary of State for Innovation, Higher Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education: *“Our new international research excellence call shows that if they try to close us down, we will open up to the world. That is why we have initiated our international student exchange scheme, the Pannonia Programme that is still open, and launch now the HU-rizon Programme to support international cooperation with Hungarian researchers. Facing the European Commission’s unfair and discriminatory decision, which seriously harms the competitiveness of Hungary and Europe, we believe in the importance of international research cooperation. Through the launch of the HU-rizon Programme we will fund research in the areas of interest of Hungarian society and economy, and cover the costs of the best foreign universities participating.”*

Because, just like with Pannónia, there is reason to assume that EU sanctions are being circumvented, in December 2024 the meeting of Presidents of the Dutch universities has been asked to advise the UNL Board not to sign agreements for possible future rounds of HU-rizon and to inform researchers from Dutch universities that they should not participate in HU-rizon projects for the time being. The UNL Board adopted this advice and decided accordingly.

c. Changes in the profile/status of (a) collaboration partner(s)

N/A, the focus of the advice lies on unilateral funding schemes, not on individual institutions.



IV. Conclusion and advice

a. Considerations by the Committee

The Committee has taken note of the UNL Joint Position on adhering to the EU sanctions, as well as the advices provided by both RVO and Neth-ER. Furthermore, considering, that Pannónia and HU-rizon seem to have been deliberately set up to circumvent sanctions imposed by the European Commission, issued due to serious concerns about breaches of the rule of law by a substantive number of Higher Education and Research institutions based in Hungary, the Committee regards the risks to students and researchers to be negatively affected should they be invited to participate in unilaterally funded collaborations via these schemes, too high.

b. Advice

Based on the information available to the Committee at the time of discussion and upon deliberation on the aforementioned considerations, the Committee, in consensus, has come to the following conclusion:

- The Committee does not have objections against continuation of the collaboration.
- The Committee does not have objections against the continuation of the collaboration, however, it advises the mitigation strategies under section IV. c.
- The Committee advises negatively about the continuation of the collaboration. If the mitigations strategies under section IV. c. are implemented, the Committee is willing to reconsider.
- The Committee advises negatively about the continuation of the collaboration.

c. Mitigation strategies

Upon a request of a relevant UvA stakeholder, the Committee may reconsider the advice, providing that there are significant changes in the situation with regard HU-rizon and Pannónia as sketched above.

If and when, the European Commission should decide to lift the sanctions, collaboration with Hungarian institutions currently included in the list may be reconsidered. That said, the Committee would prefer any of such future collaborations to receive funding from joint EU managed funding schemes, such as Erasmus or HEurope, as the funding guidelines provide sufficient safeguards for research integrity and other relevant regulations.

In addition, even if sanctions will be lifted in the future, the Committee advises all Deans of the Faculties to request advice of the Advisory Committee on External Collaborations for every proposed HU-rizon or Pannónia funded application.