

# Report midterm review strategy 2024

"Clear actions"

September 2022



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# Foreword

In the spring of 2022, the Executive Board of Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) asked a panel to carry out a midterm evaluation of the Strategy 2024. The panel tackled the task with great pleasure, carried out the evaluation and recorded its findings in this report.

EUR can be proud of the formulated strategy and what has been achieved so far, and the panel is confident that many of the objectives can be achieved.

The panel provides a number of guidelines to clarify the strategic course and to adjust it where necessary. In 2022, it is abundantly clear that universities are essential players in a society that is rapidly becoming more complex. Although Erasmus University Rotterdam, with its Erasmian Values to hand, can play its role with confidence, this does require (clear) actions.

The panel,  
Elmer Sterken (chair), Mirko Noordergraaf, Sarah Wilton, Victor van der Chijs, Annet Aris

# Introduction

In 2018, Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) reassessed its vision by means of an interdisciplinary and co-creative approach, and formulated a new strategy. There were many reasons to define a new strategy. Firstly, like other (Dutch) universities, EUR was confronted with far-reaching social and economic developments, e.g. in the areas of (social) inclusion and quality of life. Technological changes, in particular digitalisation and a changing labour market, as well as the role of education and research in these areas, also prompted a complete redesign of the strategy.

In addition, working on the new strategy, and certainly also the process of creating it, formed a means of achieving greater coherence and cooperation between the individual schools of the university. Finally, the lagging relationship with the surrounding area, the city and region of Rotterdam, and the desire to create (more) social impact in addition to research and education formed a good reason for a revised mission and new strategy.

In the so-called Strategy Design Labs and Communities of Interest, representatives of the faculties and services, the University Council, a Green Team of students and junior academic staff and various alumni contributed to the subsequently defined priorities of the strategy:

1. Fostering the societal impact identity
2. Future-oriented education
3. Excellent academic research, embedded in society
4. Taking responsibility on sustainable development
5. Investing in our people for the future
6. Stepping up professional services
7. Making the most of interdisciplinary potential

Local, national and global developments and the complex social and economic challenges have led to a reformulation of EUR's mission, in which the social challenges play a more central role.

The objectives of the strategy have been elaborated in an Implementation Plan. In accordance with the principles of modern implementation, the focus lays on ownership within the organisation. The seven pillars of the strategy were translated into portfolios, of which the internal cohesion is shown in the so-called 'Strategy roadmaps'.

During the development of the strategy, the need was felt to describe the 'DNA' of the institution in more detail. Being an 'Erasmian' translates into 5 values: the so-called Erasmian Values:

1. Engaged with society
2. World citizen
3. Connecting
4. Entrepreneurial
5. Open-minded

Being an 'Erasmian' also has a 'how': the Erasmian Way. The explicit intention is for these Erasmian Values and Erasmian Way to play a role in the further development of the university and its students and staff.

## Midterm evaluation

The aim of the midterm evaluation is formulated as follows:

'The evaluation will enable the EUR to jointly learn from the first phase of the implementation on the basis of a factual and qualitative understanding of the progress and concrete proposals for improvement for the next phase. It will allow us to make adjustments where necessary, both in terms of content and process.'

As a result of this main objective, two questions have been formulated:

1. What is the current progress on the implementation of Strategy 2024?
2. Does the implementation strategy sufficiently underpin the results to be achieved and the required support within the university?

From the start of the midterm process, it was clear to the panel that EUR has structured the design and approach of the midterm evaluation in an 'Erasmian way'. In line with the character and philosophy of Strategy 2024, the midterm required a learning and development-oriented character. EUR has deliberately chosen not to allow the midterm to be an audit. This does not mean that the panel was not provided with factual information; the examination of the financial and administrative state of affairs formed part of the panel's decision-making process. The panel did not conduct an efficiency study, but was able to form a rich overview of the culture, behaviour and development of the institution based on quantitative and qualitative data and information, by means of a desk study but mainly by conducting discussions and interviews.

## Approach and process

The midterm is divided into three phases. In the 'measuring and interpreting' phase, the panel (for the composition of the panel, see the appendix) carried out a desk study<sup>1</sup> on the basis of standard documentation on the one hand (including the Strategy 2024 itself, the Implementation Plan, project plans, financial overviews and analyses, risk analyses) and the documentation resulting from various learning sessions organised by EUR in preparation for the panel visit on the other.

These learning sessions were structured 'from the inside out', in April and May 2022, 'internal learning sessions' were organised in which the strategic project leaders discussed the progress of the strategic projects and initiatives with each other on the basis of progress and reflection reports. The result of these discussions was a 'joint narrative' and various 'feedforward questions'. In the next round, the 'external learning sessions with a broader stakeholder group', these narratives and questions were used as a starting point for a further deepening of the discussion. The comments from this second round then formed an addition to the joint narratives.

After reviewing the documentation, a discussion session with the midterm panel was organised for each of the five strategic portfolios. During these meetings, the panel spoke to delegated academic leads from the strategic initiatives.

In a follow-up session on 14 June 2022, overarching theme meetings were organised on the themes of 'Strategy 2024 for students' and 'External Cooperation' and reflections were discussed with external stakeholders (namely representatives of Codarts, the municipality of Rotterdam, the province of South Holland and

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1 The information and documentation provided by EUR was drawn up partly in English and partly in Dutch. The discussions were also conducted in Dutch, but were switched to English where desired or necessary.

Blue City). The panel also spoke to the Strategy Task Force of the University Council and was able to exchange views with a delegation from the EUR Supervisory Board during a working dinner.

In addition to the above-mentioned sessions, the chairman and secretary of the panel conducted interviews with the deans of the various schools. These open and rich discussions focused on the involvement of the relevant dean in the development of the strategy, the involvement of the faculty in the achievement of the objectives, and the prospects for what will be required in the coming years of the strategic period.

On 21 June 2022, the panel's initial findings were shared with the members of the Executive Board and the Strategy Board (consisting of the deans and members of the Executive Board). After the presentation of the findings by the chairman of the panel, the 'tips and tops' of the panel were tackled in an open discussion. The panel's findings were then elaborated to form this advisory report, which will be formally presented to the Executive Board of Erasmus University Rotterdam in November 2022 (after a hearing and cross-examination procedure).

# The first years: 2019 - 2022

## Creation and implementation of the Strategy 2024

The panel noted with approval that, in contrast to previous editions of the EUR strategy, the current strategy was developed in co-creation and with a strong bottom-up approach.

The current strategy is based on the idea of connecting and building bridges, not only between the Schools themselves but also between the Schools and Professional Services. The gathering of thoughts and new ideas went well; in the opinion of the panel the design labs achieved their goal of jointly developing the strategy. However, both within EUR and within the panel, some people felt that the follow-up to the design labs (the so-called implementation labs) was lacking in the first implementation phase of the strategy.

Subsequently, the panel found that the degree to which the Schools and Services – and their management – feel involved in or actually consider themselves part of the EUR strategy differs significantly. One School might apply the Erasmian Values when recruiting new staff, for example, while another does not. One School might (now) have numerous programmes with a focus on sustainability, while others are still at the beginning of this development. From a historical perspective, some units have an independent position and clearly need to adjust to the strong common interest of the institution, especially when it comes to making contributions to the major social themes. This is less the case with other units.

During the discussions, it also emerged that steps still need to be taken to foster further cooperation and harmonisation between the Schools and Professional Services. 'Stepping up professional services' is mentioned as a separate

priority within the strategy. The panel has understood that within the organisation, there is appreciation for the fact that Professional Services occupies this distinct place in the strategy and has also understood that this was done in order to recognise Professional Services within the university organisation. The panel is of the opinion that this recognition is justified and therefore encourages the continued recognition of the importance of good Professional Services in the future. However, the panel also feels that good Professional Services are more a part of the recalibration of the university's business operations than a separate pillar of the strategy (more about this later).

The panel welcomes the fact that a great deal of attention has been paid to the ideas and legacy of Erasmus in Strategy 2024. However, the terminology used in the Strategy 2024 is initially confusing: Erasmian Way, Erasmian Values, Being an Erasmian – particularly for an outsider, in principle it is not at all clear what is meant by the concepts and how they relate to each other. The panel also got the impression from the various discussions that the values had been added to the strategy at a later stage and that they have been 'loaded' over the past few years. In the discussions, questions were asked about the appreciation of the Erasmian Values in recent years and in general, the level of recognition and acknowledgement is high. The values create connectedness and a sense of belonging. On the other hand, it was stated that the values were also generic and could also apply to a different university. The panel also observed many differences in the perception of the Erasmian values. In some discussions, it was indicated that the Erasmian values were a reason why people wanted to work for EUR, while others only became aware of the values once they were

already employed by EUR. However, the panel clearly established that the values are endorsed by all the Schools and that, although the generic nature of the values was sometimes emphasised, the Erasmian Values contribute to an EUR sense of connectedness.

The Strategy 2024 was delivered shortly before the beginning of the global COVID pandemic (in September 2019). This pandemic (and its consequences) have naturally also had an impact on the institution and therefore on the implementation and execution of the strategy. In some cases, the urgent focus on the continuation of (online) education and the necessary attention to the well-being of lecturers and students led to a delay in the implementation or execution of projects. On the other hand, the panel felt that the COVID pandemic also offered progress in the area of digitisation and there was an increased focus on (the importance of) impact.

## Governance

The Implementation Plan already expressed the ambition to align the governance of the strategy as closely as possible with the existing organisational structure. On the one hand, there is a formal structure for the management of the strategy; on the other, a learning community has been set up with the aim of establishing connections and partnerships and feeding the formal bodies on the basis of content and working methods. As the Strategy Board, the Executive Board with the Board of Deans plays a central role in the governance.

Schools and Professional Services are expected to take the lead and remain responsible for achieving the strategic goals. In line with the strategy, in some cases it has been decided to organise EUR-wide initiatives with figureheads being the visible driving force. In order to underline the importance of Impact, a 'horizontal' body has been added: the

Impact Board. This board serves as a steering committee that complements the existing Vice Dean Meetings and Operations Board, to cover the entire portfolio. A small-scale Strategy Office supports the implementation of the strategy.

After the start of the strategic period in 2019-2020, there have been a relatively large number of changes in the composition of the Executive Board and the Board of Deans. The panel focused on this both in the interviews with the deans and in the interviews during the site visit. The panel has noticed that the EUR community greatly appreciates the current Executive Board: the members are approachable and contact can be made quickly if necessary. It is felt that the current board members support the strategy and during discussions with the board, the panel also noted that the EUR strategy had been an important motivation for the current members to join the Executive Board. The interviews with the deans also indicate a strong commitment.

Nevertheless, the changes have also caused some concern: in practice, it is sometimes hard to work out which part of the strategy is most important or is considered most important by the central management of the university. The strategy is regarded as a 'major instrument' and the differences in implementation and participation between the Schools are also highlighted by the deans and other interviewees. (Having) a primary focus and the associated direction is not sufficiently visible and felt within the organisation.

The panel took note of the fact that a dashboard is being developed that would show the progress of the strategic projects. The panel has understood that the dashboard under development was recently discussed in the Steering Committee. The discussions outlined the difficulty of configuring the dashboard properly, for example because the question of how to measure impact is still being defined.

The panel was not able to become acquainted with the dashboard during the midterm, but it believes that such a tool is essential to obtain and maintain an overview and therefore recommends that this dashboard be completed as soon as possible.

## Projects

The strategy is given its concrete form and content by means of the 'projects'. The documentation and the discussions show that in some cases the link between the projects and the Schools is already very natural ('we are already working on that'). Examples of this include Evaluating Societal Impact and the national Recognition and Appreciation programme.

The project portfolio is extensive. Dozens of projects have been set up and are at different stages of development, implementation and assessment. The panel noted that projects were not (or were barely) being completed or ceased. In response to questions from the panel as to which project could be completed, it appears to be very difficult to get an answer; on the other hand, there are plenty of ideas about new projects. The panel understands the dilemma of providing sufficient scope for initiatives on the one hand and maintaining focus and control on the other, but would like to highlight the importance of also prioritising this point.

## Convergence between EUR, Erasmus MC and Delft University of Technology

After the launch of the Strategy 2024, the Convergence between EUR, Erasmus MC and Delft University of Technology became important in addition to the existing Leiden-Delft-Erasmus (LDE) Alliance. This cooperation has been scaled up and intensified into a joint research and education strategy, divided into the following themes: (1) *Resilient Delta Initiative*, (2) *Health & Technology* and (3) *AI and data science*. The parties also cooperate in two programmes: (1) *Pandemic & Disaster Preparedness* and (2) *Healthy Start*.

The panel has understood that the Convergence does not form part of the Strategy 2024 and was in fact developed alongside the implementation of the strategy. Nevertheless, both EUR and the panel can see the great added value of the Convergence for the strategy. After all, the cooperation outlined in the Convergence is at several levels and the themes partly overlap with the strategy. The latter sometimes leads to confusion (also with external parties).

# Recommendations

The panel has noted that EUR has taken major steps in the implementation of the Strategy 2024. There is broad support within the institution as a whole for the process and the course followed. Due to the COVID pandemic, some projects have been delayed. It has also become apparent that the total project portfolio is large and contains a mix of new and mature projects (even including projects that pre-date the launch of the current strategy).

In few domains progress is lagging, sometimes prompted by a limited budget and/or personal support from key players. There is also the idea that the strategy was drawn up strongly from within at the time and that little attention was paid to international developments (inside out approach). The bottom-up process has contributed to a somewhat sweeping approach and the organisation now looks to the Executive Board for central steering and/or to set priorities in certain domains. In addition to streamlined coordination, the phasing of priorities over time also seems necessary.

Before proceeding to the recommendations, the panel would like to focus on the following positive points:

1. The main strategic course is broadly supported: the focus on generating positive social impact and the appreciation of Erasmian Values are worth mentioning.
2. The strategy is contemporary: it addresses the current social challenges.
3. There is a perceived rapprochement between the Schools themselves and also between the Schools and the Professional Services.
4. There are a number of successful initiatives. For example, the panel was able to become acquainted with Healthy Start and the Sustainable Food Lab.
5. More attention is being paid to the city and region, namely the cooperation in the Convergence, with the city of Rotterdam and in the context of Culture & Campus, as well as the NPRZ (National Programme Rotterdam South).
6. There is appreciation for the fact that the Executive Board are standing shoulder to shoulder in the implementation of the strategy.

However, it is also clear that many people perceive the strategy as complex. The description of the strategy consists of numerous lists (e.g. with regard to the focus areas of LDE, Convergence and EUR itself), old and new ambitions seem to have merged, there are a relatively high number of priorities (seven) and projects, and perhaps not quite enough support for an important priority such as sustainability. Communication about the core of the strategy also seems difficult: the panel noted a multitude of diagrams, posters and other forms of visualisation. The organisation is now looking at the Executive Board to create clarity and order and to take control of some aspects.

The panel has formulated the central considerations in a number of dilemmas, whereby it is not up to the panel but rather to EUR itself to determine the direction to be taken.

1. How can we bring the Erasmian Values to life? **implicit** in education and research processes or **explicit**: e.g. as a criterion for the selection of new staff members?
2. How do we steer strategic themes? **vertically** for each School versus **horizontally** (interdisciplinary and institution-wide); are any there incentive mechanisms?

3. How are the strategic initiatives portrayed in the organisation? As **Separate initiatives** (temporary projects) versus **Embedded** (part of existing processes)?
4. How is the strategy refined? By so-called **Flagships** with figureheads (such as Healthy Start) versus **Longtails** (with small projects)?
5. How actively is the strategy managed? **Top-down** (with a cascade of annual plans from the Executive Board to lower-level units) versus **Emergent** (bottom-up)?
6. Which 'no-regret' choices are necessary and a prerequisite for the implementation of the Strategy 2024? Do you leave matters such as timetabling, representation and communication to the **faculties**, or is **EUR-wide** action expected?

The panel was asked to come up with a number of targeted recommendations for the second half of the EUR strategic period. In addition to the comments made above, the panel has drawn up five recommendations:

### Recommendation 1: **Continue the priorities of Strategy 2024**

The panel recommends that EUR should also continue to prioritise the core elements of the strategy beyond 2024 (see also Recommendation 2). It is wise to keep the course already set despite the fact that a possible delay in implementation has occurred due to the COVID pandemic. Consistency over time is important when implementing a strategy. It is more important to provide certainty that a project will actually be implemented than to maintain the precise timing of its implementation. After the current period (2019-2024), the Executive Board must have the freedom and opportunities to make new strategic choices as it sees fit, to gradually adjust the course and to allow more time for old projects to become effective or to terminate

them. Various striking aspects in this context are the cooperation between the Schools and between the Schools and Professional Services and the cooperation in the context of the Convergence. In its new composition, the Executive Board can therefore make its own mark and deal flexibly with the timing, adjustment and enrichment of elements of the strategy.

### Recommendation 2: **Refine the strategy**

The overall strategy project is too extensive and requires choices to be made in the short term. The organisation looks towards the Executive Board to do this in the first instance, but this also applies to the Board of Deans and other parties that are directly involved. In the opinion of the panel, the current 7 strategic priorities are a conglomerate of (1) **the real ambitions**, (2) *'things a university needs to do anyhow'* and (3) preconditions for achieving the ambitions. The dividing lines between the three subcategories are naturally rather vague and the distinction should mainly be regarded as an instrument for placing accents.

With regard to the seven priorities, on the basis of the examination of the material and in particular the discussions with the various target groups, the panel has drawn up the following classification (in which the typesetting corresponds to the above three-part division):

1. **Fostering the societal impact identity**
2. *Future-oriented education*
3. *Excellent academic research, embedded in society*
4. **Taking responsibility on sustainable development**
5. Investing in our people, for the future
6. Stepping up professional services
7. *Making the most of interdisciplinary potential*

The fact that the provision of education and research have been the core activities of an academic institution for centuries is paramount. If you think about 'impact' as a third pillar, it is a good idea to always establish a link with the education and research. How the link between education and research with impact is structured then becomes a question of implementation. When thinking about impact, it is now more necessary than ever to firmly anchor cooperation between disciplines within the organisation (see also the box on page 16).

The priorities that express EUR's potentially 'distinctive' ambition are shown in bold. It could also be argued that the greatest gains can be made in these areas. The development of social impact and the focus on sustainability are targeted core ambitions that will help EUR to progress in the years ahead and can be articulated in the communication as distinguishing factors. The priorities that EUR – as a research-intensive university – should in any case pay attention to and that are less distinctive towards the outside world are shown in italics. Two important priorities that each university should regard as a precondition for its operations have been underlined.

The panel recommends that the spirit and main direction of the strategy should be maintained – based on the 7 priorities – in order to ensure consistency, but that EUR should clearly opt for the two ambitions shown in bold. In concrete terms, this means that EUR will focus on the ambition of creating positive societal impact and its mainstreaming of sustainable development. These ambitions must be translated to all parts of EUR. For example, the midterm evaluation of the education strategy already recommends that all education-related themes, including Erasmian values, can strengthen each other under the umbrella of 'creating impact'. The further modernisation of education and investment in excellent research – in short: things a

university needs to do anyway – as well as the preconditional priorities, can be incorporated into existing processes and resources. Nevertheless, a successful implementation of the focus on impact and sustainability requires the support of the other priorities, especially when it comes to the design of education and research.

### Recommendation 3: **Strengthen the governance**

When implementing the strategy, it must be clear which organisational unit is directly responsible for/the owner of a specific project/component. In a university, this can sometimes lead to a little tension. On the basis of subsidiarity, one is keen to place decision-making power at the lowest possible level, but there may be a preference for discipline-specific culture and a lower commitment to the strategy here. The EUR strategy is precisely about the institution-wide focus on impact and sustainability. On top of this, we have the extent of the current strategy with its multitude of projects and the chance of obscuring the focus of the strategy. From the organisation, there is a loud and clearly audible desire for (the application of) greater focus, and also for clear choices to be made (in particular: what will we not (or no longer) do?).

After the phase of involving the workplace in the development of the strategy, a phase with more central steering in a number of areas should now be initiated. This must include those components that relate to important inter-school/unit interactions (such as the structure of the academic year/timetabling/building management/handling of data), but also the prioritisation and scope of project implementation. The interaction between the Executive Board, the Board of Deans, and Professional Services is essential for making the necessary choices, e.g. with regard to project ownership, phasing and funding.

The Executive Board can ask the deans to clarify how the strategy of the Schools ties in with the Strategy 2024 and deans can carry out the same process within their own School; an 'apply or explain' principle could help, with the risk of 'explain' being chosen rather too often. Finally, an important part of university governance is the appointment and promotion policy: Strategy 2024 can be reflected more strongly here.

#### **Recommendation 4: Make Impact the central theme**

Although good developments are visible with regard to creating awareness about positive social impact, the panel feels that this should be strengthened in the strategy. The panel therefore recommends setting up an effective consultation structure on impact, in parallel with the consultation of the vice-deans of education and the consultation of the vice-deans of research. In view of the fact that education, research, and impact are highly intertwined, it is up to EUR to assess how the governance around impact will be organised. In addition, the panel believes it is important to think carefully about a self-critical structure ('creating one's own resistance'), as is customary in education and research reviews. The panel believes that the development of the dashboard, on which impact will be made measurable, is a positive and necessary development. Finally, the panel is keen to point out that not every impact is by definition a positive impact. A moral/ethical filter is required in order to achieve a good balance.

#### **Recommendation 5: Utilise the interdisciplinarity of EUR**

The panel has seen good examples of cooperation within EUR. The recent focus on the themes within the Convergence should certainly be mentioned here. On the other hand, the schools still function too much as separate institutions at times. The panel would therefore like to include the consideration of not setting up too many cross-school units and providing the cross-school units that are set up with visible leadership and/or a so-called figurehead with their own research, education and impact responsibility. The panel also recommends that EUR focus on three thematically driven units with a clear figurehead towards the outside world; as stated above, better alignment is required in the communication with the Convergence.

## Organisation of interdisciplinarity

EUR places the generation of positive impact at the heart of its strategy. In a university, it is 'natural' that impact cannot be seen separately from education and research. In order to implement the strategy, however, it is attractive to explicitly organise 'impact' in the administrative processes surrounding education and research. EUR has an Impact Board that could perhaps play a more important role in the decision-making. The establishment and active use of an Impact Monitor (under development) would be of great benefit. In order to stimulate the self-critical ability around impact, it is wise to have external eyes monitor the developments on a regular basis, as also happens in education and research.

The impact of education and research has both disciplinary and interdisciplinary elements. Universities tend to be accustomed to the disciplinary aspects, but find it more difficult to latch onto interdisciplinary developments. The major societal challenges, as expressed in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, require a challenge-based approach that is by definition interdisciplinary. The question is how a university can adapt the organisation to stimulate interdisciplinarity.

By definition, a university is organised along academic-disciplinary lines, which often makes interdisciplinary developments difficult. After all, funding models use the academic units as starting points.

However, there are various examples of the organisation of interdisciplinary developments at other Dutch universities, e.g. Utrecht University and the University of Groningen. Utrecht University has four themes: *Institutions for open societies*, *Pathways to sustainability*, *Life sciences* and *Dynamics of youth*. The University of Groningen has four so-called Schools: *Energy*, *Digitalisation*, *Sustainable Society*, and *Health*. In the latter case, these are network organisations that can further stimulate interdisciplinary initiatives. Both in Utrecht and in Groningen, Academic Leaders are the personal figureheads and fall directly under the Executive Board. The network organisations bring together researchers from various different fields and try to acquire external funding.

To increase the visibility of the interdisciplinary initiatives, it is also a good idea to think about innovations in the range of study programmes: for every student 'who is willing and able'. This could include a minor (semester), a summer school or a brief general module (such as an introduction to artificial intelligence for all Bachelor's students). Given the disciplinary structure of EUR, the academic adoption (e.g. in the case of an examination board) of these programmes by a single School is recommended. In order to organise education between the Schools, it is essential to have a uniform structure of the academic year and timetabling.

# Conclusions

The panel that carried out the midterm review of Strategy 2024 can look back on an extremely interesting and instructive period. First of all, Erasmus University – and in particular the Strategy Office – deserves every praise for the open approach and design of this midterm evaluation. The panel was received with open arms, had access to all documents and were able to conduct all the discussions in an open and friendly atmosphere. The diversity of stakeholders that the panel were able to speak to and the depth of the documents gave the panel a good overview of Erasmus University Rotterdam as an institution, as well as the method and implementation of the strategy and – above all – the people who work and study there. The panel was also able to note that this bottom-up approach to the midterm was perceived as extremely positive in all segments of the university.

Strategy 2024 was developed with a strong bottom-up approach and was completed just before the outbreak of the COVID pandemic. Shortly after the start of the new strategic period, many changes took place in the Executive Board and the Supervisory Board also changed. Although the support for the strategy within the Executive Board is felt within the organisation, the many changes also caused some concern, especially with regard to clear prioritisation and the delineation of what to do/ no longer do. The pandemic has caused a delay in the implementation of the strategy and the implementation of projects and programmes. The core elements of the Strategy 2024 deserve attention, even after 2024.

The midterm panel mainly recommends strengthening the focus and governance of the strategy and provides various guidelines for

doing so. The panel recommends this because, halfway through the period, there are clear positive signs of the implementation of the strategy (such as the improved cooperation between Schools), but there is a risk of ambiguity because of the large number of projects. It is now up to the Executive Board to provide strong leadership and direction.

The panel experienced a great deal of commitment on the part of the university towards its Erasmian values. The central ambition to generate a positive impact is widely embraced and much has already been achieved.

Erasmus University is ready for a bright future, not just in words, but also in actions. Clear actions, that is.

# Appendix 1:

## Composition of the panel

The panel that was asked to carry out this midterm evaluation consisted of the following people:

### Chairman

#### Prof. Elmer Sterken

Between 2011-2019, he was Rector Magnificus of the University of Groningen. He has been a board member of the Coimbra Group since 2019 and a member of the Supervisory Board of the Groninger Museum since 2021. Elmer Sterken is also Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the University of Humanistic Studies.

### Members

#### Prof. Mirko Noordergraaf

Professor of Public Management at Utrecht University's Faculty of Governance and Organisational Science and Vice-Dean of Social Impact at the Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance (REBO).

#### Drs. Sarah Wilton

Member of the Executive Board of Avans University of Applied Sciences, Former Director of Operations of the ESE Faculty of EUR, Head of International Credit Risk at ABN Amro, member of the Supervisory Board of Kennisnet and member of the Board of SPARK Makerspace.

#### Prof. Victor van der Chijs

Chairman of Deltalinqs. Former chairman of the Executive Board of the University of Twente. Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Cito, chairman of the Brabant Development Company (BOM) and chairman of the Rotterdam Port Promotion Council.

#### Prof. Annet Aris (part-time member)

Senior Affiliate Professor of Strategy at INSEAD, Member of the Supervisory Board of Rabobank, ASML NV, Randstad NV and Jungheinrich AG.

Annet Aris also chaired the panel that carried out the HEQA review of the EUR's educational vision and therefore formed the linking pin between the two committees.

### Secretary

#### Liza Kozłowska MA

Secretary of the Social Sciences and Humanities (SHH) Council. Ad interim registrar at Tilburg University. Chair of the Masters Examination Board of the Faculty of Health at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. Independent secretary for research and education evaluations.

The panel was supported by **Sanne Huesken** and **Amy Kan** from the EUR Strategy Office.

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