



**UMCS**  
UNIwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej

Raport

# Best practices in remote and hybrid learning

Lublin, October 2023

# Working Together for a **Green**, **Competitive** and Inclusive Europe.

Iceland   
Liechtenstein  
Norway grants

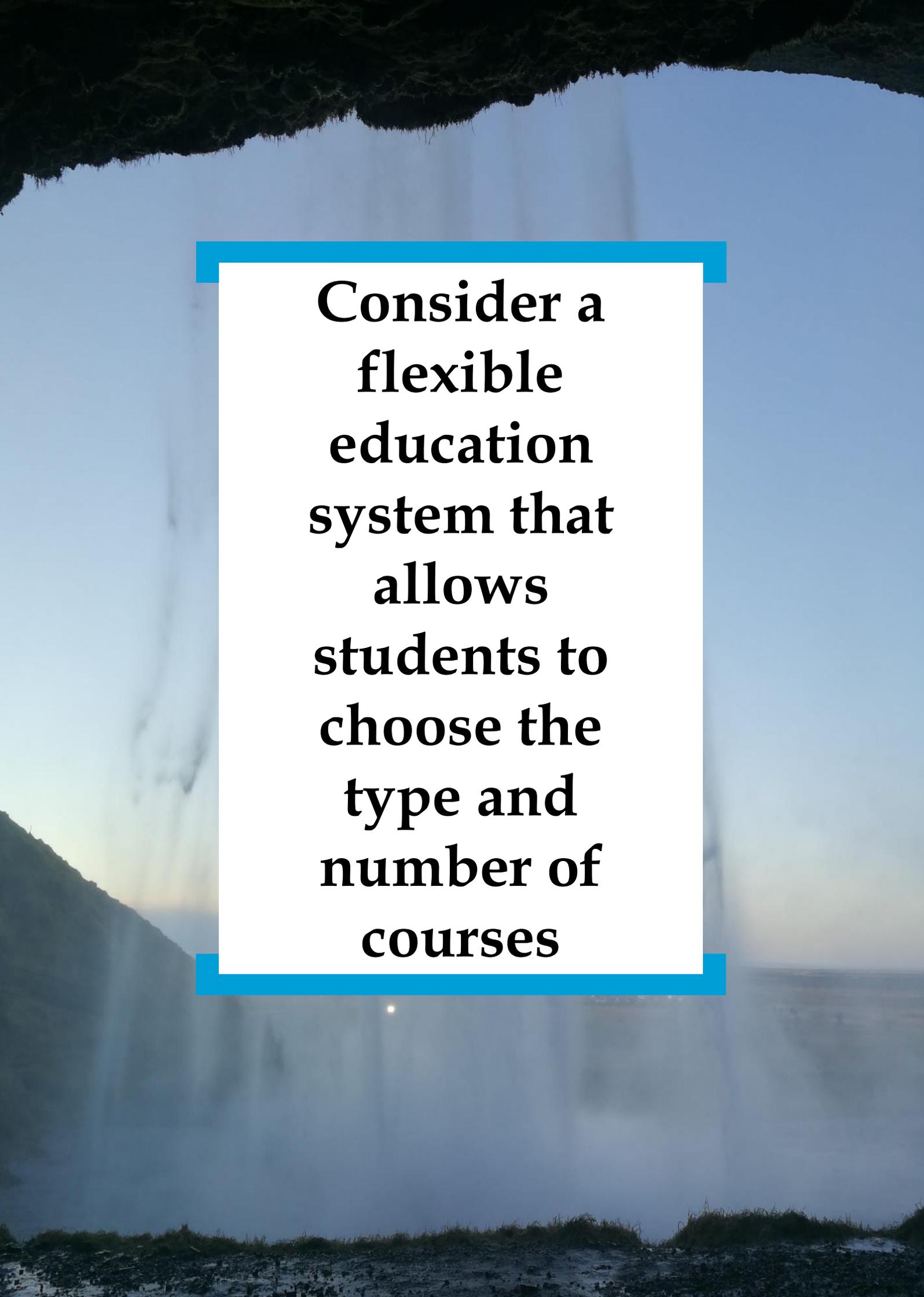
## FOREWORD

In the period from April 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023, the University-wide project Student and Staff Mobility was implemented under the Mobility in Higher Education Activity of the Education Program. Project No. EOG/21/K2/W/0024 under the Education Program benefits from a grant of EUR 41,280.00 received from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway under the EEA Funds. The aim of the project is to raise the level of education and improve administrative services for students, as well as to exchange experience in the methodology of teaching, with particular emphasis on distant learning. The project is under the patronage of the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Republic of Iceland, Mr. Gerard Pokruszyński, as well as the Mayor of Lublin, Dr. Krzysztof Żuk..

The main goal of the project was to raise the level of education and improve administrative services for students. A total of 23 people from both universities participated in the several-day mobility. Lecturers from Iceland and Poland gave guest lectures, expanding the knowledge of students, but also developing the competencies of the academics themselves. In addition, thanks to the workshops and trainings conducted, the project participants gained valuable information on good practices at both universities, which they would like to share in this report.

The report is a collection of insights and reflections on good practices in remote and hybrid learning. Their authors are staff members of Bifröst University and the Faculty of Economics of the University of Warsaw. For greater clarity and easier use of the report, the good practices have been grouped into three categories: Before Class, During Class, and Grading. We believe that university lecturers and others responsible for the quality of higher education will find interesting and valuable inspiration in the report that will enrich their work, to the benefit of themselves and their students.

Iceland   
Liechtenstein  
Norway grants



**Consider a  
flexible  
education  
system that  
allows  
students to  
choose the  
type and  
number of  
courses**



## **BEFORE CLASS**

The development of a quality assurance policy document, approved by the Rector of the university, is a key element, ensuring educational standards.

Better utilization of the potential of research and teaching staff could be facilitated by negotiating the scopes of their tasks. This would have the effect of establishing a percentage of working time for the implementation of teaching and research activities.

A facilitator for instructors, and at the same time a tool for improving the quality of education, is the introduction of a checklist containing activities related to classes. Such a checklist could include, among other things, checking the inclusiveness of language or gender representation in literature, ensuring that the content and statistics presented are up-to-date, as well as the information contained in the course syllabus.

A spreadsheet prepared by the university authorities may prove to be a useful tool in determining the number of ECTS credits assigned to a given activity. In such a spreadsheet, individual types of student activity are entered. The instructor only adds the number of pages to be read by the students and the number of hours spent on other types of preparation for and participation in the classes themselves. Thus, the sheet calculates the total number of hours (contact and non-contact) of student work, which facilitates the assignment of the appropriate number of ECTS credits.

It is important to develop and implement a system of activities, such as reporting inactive students and supporting educational and career counseling. By promptly catching and mobilizing students who drop out of classes and showing them the purpose of education and its impact on their position in the labor market, dropout can be more effectively countered.

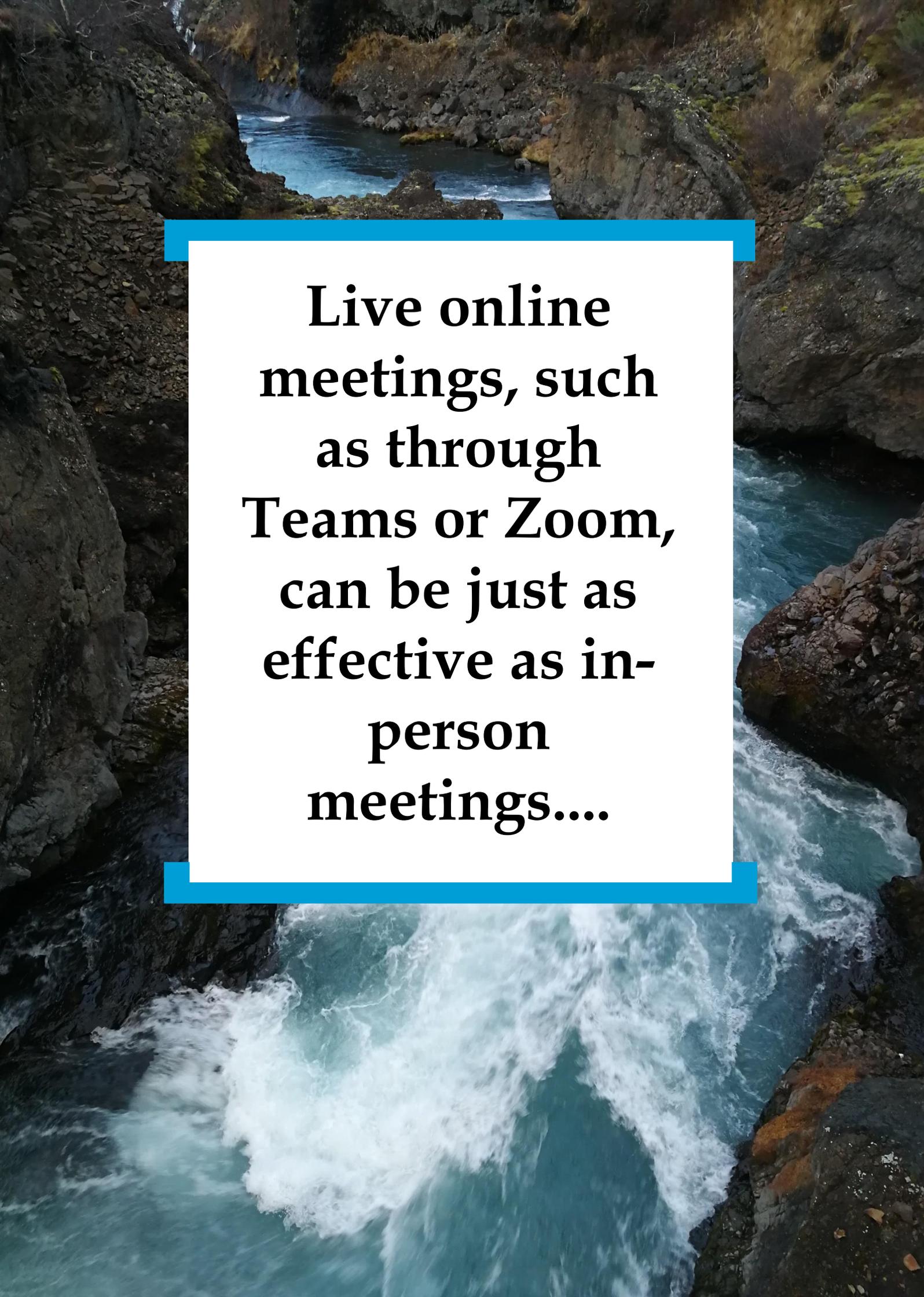
With working students in mind, it is worth considering a flexible education system that allows students to choose the type and number of courses. A flexible approach to the study program allows students to freely choose their subjects and adjust their schedules to suit their individual abilities and preferences.

When preparing an online presentation, a teacher needs to be aware of how to use different media to give students a moment of respite, a break from their strenuous concentration of attention. It is advisable to use forms that are more visual than textual, such as videos, images, graphics. Storytelling is also a good tool, as is using case studies to shed light on a concept or idea.

Providing lecturers with a professional recording studio benefits the quality of the audio and video materials prepared. This is an important tool, especially in the context of conducting remote classes. In addition, instead of recording one 45-minute lecture, it is ideal to divide the recording into several shorter ones, each lasting 5-10 minutes and covering only one specific topic. In the age of YouTube and TikTok, it is important to keep in mind the increasingly short attention spans of young people. By using shorter forms, we have a better chance of keeping students' attention.

Online teaching with pre-recorded lectures provides teachers with a platform to convey lecture material in detail in a clear and orderly manner. At the same time, it allows students to learn the lecture when they want, where they want and how they want, giving enough time, allowing them to control the pace of the lecture, pause, go back, etc. In this way, teachers can make sure that all important aspects of the lecture are emphasized, and students can assimilate the material in the best possible and detailed way.

Even before the start of a content class, it is important to familiarize students with the methodology of the class. It is good practice to explain the teaching methods used to students in a concise, concrete manner, supported by examples and research results. Students are often accustomed to traditional teaching methods and treat alternative ones with some skepticism or even distrust. Therefore, it is worth convincing them that a particular method is effective, otherwise even a good method to which students are negatively disposed may not produce the desired results.

A scenic view of a river flowing through a rocky canyon. The river is a vibrant blue-green color, and the surrounding rocks are dark and rugged. In the foreground, a large, white waterfall cascades down the rocks, creating a misty spray. The overall atmosphere is natural and powerful.

**Live online  
meetings, such  
as through  
Teams or Zoom,  
can be just as  
effective as in-  
person  
meetings....**



## **DURING CLASS**

In distance learning, regularity of online meetings with students is crucial. Not only does it help build a community of students and teachers, but it also helps minimize the distance between the students themselves and the students and teachers. The online form is more suitable for certain types of students: those shy, introverted, b-types who don't particularly want to expand their social network, but are more focused on expanding their knowledge, skills and competencies. Moreover, in our experience, the online format seems to blur the power imbalance between teachers and students.

Online classes are also a valuable tool for discussions, especially about the tasks given to students. It is a good idea to hold an online meeting the day before the deadline for handing in assignments, which allows many problems to be resolved; students have the opportunity to ask questions and get clarification on what is unclear. In addition, the online form is also widely used for oral exams and student presentations, of course, in "live" mode.

An effective complement to online lectures are face-to-face meetings where you can work with the study material in the form of in-depth discussions, exercises and assignments. This further deepens students' understanding of the material and gives them the opportunity to gain first-hand information on the subject. These sessions can be held weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. It depends on the type of course and the availability of both students and teachers.

Live online meetings, such as through Teams or Zoom, can be just as effective as in-person meetings when it comes to communication. However, they are no substitute for the benefits of networking, whether between teachers and students or between students themselves.

An example online course might include six weeks of teaching with two lectures per week and one "face-to-face" session in the middle of the course. Such a session is only marginally used to provide additional study material, better used for guest lectures, exercises and assignments. You can also then use the peer-to-peer teaching method, during which students teach other students, thus better absorbing and remembering the material themselves.

One exercise based on the peer-to-peer concept is the so-called aquarium. It involves six people sitting across from each other and discussing a topic assigned by the instructor. Anyone can make the first comment, and then the students discuss among themselves, deepening their understanding of the topic, giving their personal opinion or experience.

The format is similar to a focus group discussion, without a moderator. There are other students standing around the "aquarium" who listen, but cannot speak or influence the ongoing discussion. They can, however, pat a participant on the shoulder, who then stands up, and a new participant sits in his place and takes part in the discussion. There are rules about tapping on the shoulder: a) you cannot tap a student who is currently talking, is in direct conversation on a topic with another student, or has recently sat down in the "aquarium," b) the tapping student must take part in the conversation as soon as possible after taking a seat in the "aquarium."

Any student who starts the game outside the "aquarium" must join it at some point. A student who has left the aquarium can enter back in, but cannot replace a student who has just entered by replacing him. When the instructor feels that the discussion has exhausted the assigned topic, he can propose a new topic for discussion.

The "aquarium" method is a very fun and effective way for students to discuss among themselves and learn from each other. Of course, some students feel that they want to stay away from the "aquarium" and only hesitantly join the discussion, hoping to be turned off sooner rather than later. In most cases, however, people enjoy participating in the "aquarium" and enjoy the opportunity to be an active participant in the discussion, without discussing the class topic directly with the teacher.

Another useful tool in the classroom is the Socratic method. Rooted in the philosophical approach of Socrates, this method involves asking inquisitive questions to stimulate critical thinking, encourage students to express their thoughts and foster active engagement. This method can be particularly beneficial in legal education. Not only does it force a deeper understanding of legal concepts, but it also improves basic skills such as logical reasoning, argumentation and the ability to navigate complex legal issues.

The Socratic method also creates an interactive and dynamic environment among students where they become active participants in their own learning journey. This

enables them to explore different perspectives, challenge assumptions and develop the confidence to express their opinions more effectively. This approach fits perfectly with the needs of a multicultural classroom, where different points of view are valued and promoted.

By incorporating the Socratic method into one's teaching, one fosters a culture of critical inquiry in which students are not just passive recipients of knowledge, but active participants in the learning process. This method proves effective in increasing student motivation. In addition, it resonates well with students from different educational backgrounds, making it an invaluable tool for remote and hybrid teaching.

A major challenge, especially in remote and hybrid learning environments, is to increase student engagement and motivation. One helpful recommendation is to demonstrate the relevance of the topic under discussion in real life, i.e. to combine theory and practice. Demonstrating the practical application of a concept usually arouses students' interest and emphasizes the importance of the topic. In doing so, it is important to refer to examples close to the students. Classical examples found in textbooks and scientific texts, however useful for understanding the material, are very often not very close to students. Therefore, it is worthwhile to turn to examples from popular movies and TV series watched by students, or to pop culture, current events or their daily lives. In this way, the material that students master becomes less abstract and distant to them, and it also has a positive effect on the atmosphere in class and the building of lecturer-student relationships. Building bonds and interaction, and keeping students engaged despite the physical distance, can also be served by using digital tools and platforms for interactive discussions and activities. It is important that such interactive exercises encourage active participation and problem-solving work. Such workshops stimulate critical thinking, facilitate mutual learning and improve understanding of complex topics.

Interactive teaching methods, including workshops, group discussions and technology integration, are essential for effective remote and hybrid learning. These methods not only foster active participation, but also create an environment conducive to collaborative learning.

Using diverse, interactive teaching methods, including workshops, group discussions, and supporting students with training in teaching techniques, motivates students, increases the effectiveness of the learning process by deepening their understanding and sustaining their engagement.

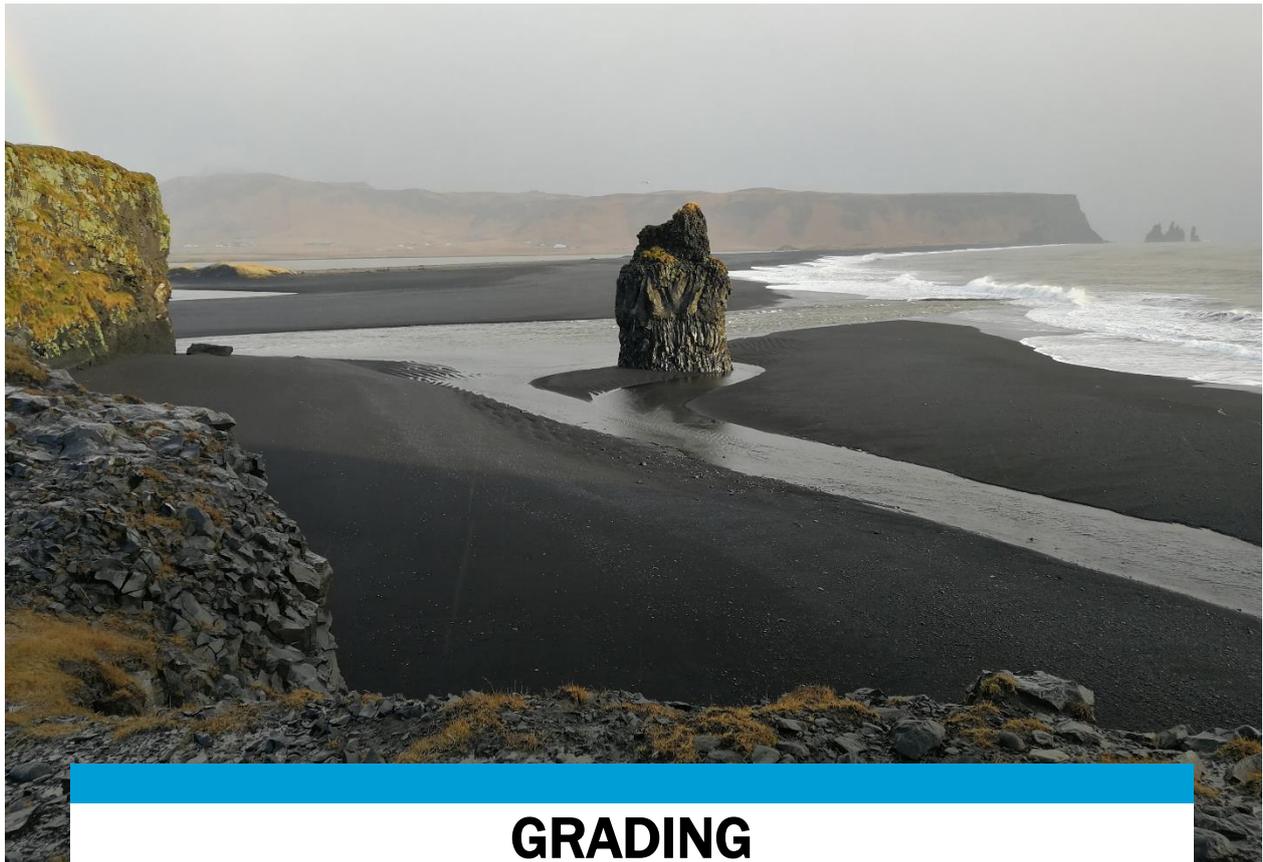
Another tool to engage students and thus increase the effectiveness of learning can be games. Games, both competitive and non-competitive, can increase the level of involvement through interactivity, increasing level of difficulty or just competitive elements. At the same time, it is important that the form does not overshadow the content and that the games pursue primarily educational, rather than primarily entertainment, goals. Moreover, the subject of the classes can be not only playing (e.g. economic games), but also creating such games by the students themselves.

During the class, it is important to create the right atmosphere, calm, respectful and trusting. A sense of humor can help with this. Humor during classes also increases long-

term memorization, improves understanding, strengthens group cohesion, and brings people together. In addition, and especially important for remote classes, humor captures students' attention, and in the long run counteracts burnout (of both students and teachers).



**Recognizing  
students' efforts  
and progress  
plays a  
significant role  
in sustaining  
their  
commitment and  
enthusiasm**



## GRADING

The implementation of mini-projects and larger final projects in exercise classes allows for partial verification of students' knowledge, often in a more practical form than tests or essays. When grading student work, it is important to communicate not only the grade or points, but also more detailed information. Information only about the grade obtained, will not make the student know what he did wrong or what he still needs to work on. This is especially important precisely in the case of project work. Then it is good to mention the grading criteria even before the students start their work. They can be, for example, factual correctness, creativity, thoroughness of execution, timeliness. When discussing with students their project, it is necessary to choose words properly. Instead of saying what the students did wrong, it will be more appropriate to talk about what they could have done better. Then it is also good to point out directions, examples of solutions that could improve their project. This extended form of feedback is not only more motivating, but also increases students' knowledge, skills and confidence. Appreciating students' efforts and progress plays a significant role in sustaining their commitment and enthusiasm. When providing feedback, it is also worth remembering that it should be timely, delivered as soon as possible after the students have completed the project.

When conducting a test exam in a lecture hall, it is important to reconcile two goals: to ensure that the exam is written independently and that the test is of the same difficulty for all students. Therefore, it is worth considering preparing one set of questions for all students, while shuffling the order of questions in each set. Within the questions, too, you

can change the order of answers. In addition, it is worth not marking groups on the test, so that students are not able to quickly find passers who have the same test.

When conducting an exam remotely, on a dedicated platform, it is worth taking advantage of the ability to construct a variety of questions. Thus, you can go beyond the pattern of ordinary test questions or true/false questions and add questions like match, drag and drop, complete from a menu, drop on a picture. If students take the remote exam unsupervised (e.g., in their homes), it is very important to determine the duration of the exam properly. For simple questions (e.g., a one-choice test), a minute per question should be completely sufficient. With more elaborate questions, the time can be slightly longer. In subsequent years, moreover, you can be guided by the time it took good students to write the exam in previous sessions. In addition, for such exams, it is worth choosing the option of random order of questions in the set, random order of answers in the questions, and no return to questions.

When teaching remotely, with a large group of students dispersed over a large area, it is worth using the idea of Local Examination Centers. The function of such centers can be performed by certification centers, local administration offices or embassies. This solution is convenient for students, allowing them to approach their credits relatively close to their place of residence, and at the same time allows full control over the course of the exams.

Good practices and suggestions from the following employees of both universities were used in the preparation of this report.

**Bifröst University:**

Sigrún Lilja Einarsdóttir  
Leifur Finnbogason  
Lydia Geirsdóttir  
Ása Sigurlaug Harðardóttir  
Diljá Helgadóttir  
Bjarni Már Magnússon  
Ragnar Már Vilhjálmsson  
Stefan Wendt

**Maria Curie-Sklodowska University:**

Bogumiła Brzuchala  
Jakub Czerniak  
Agnieszka Gryglicka  
Aneta Karasek  
Mariusz Kicia  
Beata Kozłowska  
Grzegorz Kwiatkowski  
Anna Matras-Bolibok  
Monika Nóżka  
Anna Tatarczak  
Łukasz Wiechetek

Collected and compiled: Jakub Czerniak

The EEA Funds represent the contribution of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to creating a green, competitive and inclusive Europe.

There are two overall goals: to reduce economic and social inequality in Europe and to strengthen bilateral relations between the Donor States and the 15 EU countries of Central and Southern Europe and the Baltic Sea area.

The three Donor States work closely with the EU under the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement. The Donors have provided €3.3 billion in consecutive fund programs between 1994 and 2014. The EEA funds for 2014-2021 amount to €1.55 billion.

Priorities for this period are:

- #1 innovation, research, education and competitiveness;
- #2 social inclusion, youth employment and poverty reduction;
- #3 environment, energy, climate change and low-carbon economy;
- #4 culture, civil society, good governance and fundamental rights;
- #5 justice and home affairs.

The EEA Funds are jointly funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, whose contributions are based on their GDP.

Eligibility for the funds is based on meeting criteria set by the EU Cohesion Fund, intended for member states with a gross domestic income per capita below 90% of the EU average.

