

Best Value for Money - Proposal for the Renewal of Metreeca's Contract in the EC2U Project

Dear Dr Enrico Brighi
information systems area manager
University of Pavia

I am Prof Antonella Forlino, prorector for Internationalization at the University of Pavia and Executive Board Member of the European University Network Coimbra Group. I am strongly supporting the participation of our University to the European Alliance EC2U and, as Italian academic coordinator of the EC2U project, I am conscious of the enormous impact our activity will have in the higher education framework in the near future. I am aware of the great role that digital infrastructures will play. I am writing to advocate for the renewal of Metreeca's consultancy contract within the EC2U Inter-University Alliance. This document underscores Metreeca's pivotal contributions and strategic importance in our collaborative effort with seven European universities, all part of the Coimbra Group focusing on project management, student and staff mobility, teaching, and research.

Strategic Contributions and Technical Expertise

The digital platform of the EC2U Inter-University Alliance was conceived during the application phase at the European Commission, in collaboration with Metreeca. To devise a competitive proposal, it was essential to move beyond merely aggregating commercial digital tools and to develop a prototype digital environment tailored to the needs of seven distinct European universities in project management, student and staff mobility, teaching, and research, an incredible challenge need.

Metreeca was chosen for the project owing to its comprehensive knowledge of both technical aspects and European and national academic policies.

A primary challenge for the EC2U Alliance was creating a tool for unequivocally identifying members of the seven universities, encompassing students and teaching and administrative staff. Metreeca, after reviewing existing initiatives at the European Commission, pinpointed the European Student Card as the ideal starting point for innovative development. The EC2U card, unique in its use of the European identification standard for university students and its extension to other academic personnel, was developed in partnership with the **EDUGain consortium**. Additionally, Metreeca was invited to join the consortium's supporting board and **now represents the EC2U Alliance in the University Inter-Alliances Forum focused on digital development**, a strategic position for the University of Pavia in the international stage. His and Metreeca's exclusion from the EC2U project would signify a significant loss of representation for the Alliance in European institutions influencing digital development policies in academia.

Innovations in Digital Infrastructure

Metreeca also significantly contributed to the development of the Erasmus Without Paper platform across each partner university. The EWP standard was expanded and adapted to meet the specific needs of the Alliance, thanks to Metreeca expertise in European Commission projects and the digital environment. Both the EC2U card and the EWP integration protocol, developed specifically for EC2U, are regarded as pioneering extensions. The EU Commission has shown interest in showcasing these as successful implementations for other University Alliances and the University

of Pavia has been selected by the European Commission as a good practice in the digitization of the Erasmus program and awarded the title of Erasmus Without Papers Champion (EWP Champion).

Metreeca played a vital role in designing and developing the Knowledge Hub, an information and database ecosystem supporting many alliance activities. This system, based on semantic networks (knowledge graphs), represents an approach not typically employed in university-designed services. The ongoing project plans to use this technology for a prototype of textual analysis of multilingual documents, laying the groundwork for a unified policy across the alliance in research, innovation, mobility management, inclusion and outreach, and innovative teaching and research ethics.

Furthermore, Metreeca has been actively involved in analysing ongoing digitalisation projects at European universities, liaising directly with the Commission on behalf of the EC2U Alliance and coordinating with digitalisation managers from other Alliances on technical decisions. They have also served as the internal technical coordinator for the entire project.

Ongoing Management and Future Prospects

The expertise and network developed by Metreeca within this project and across the EC2U Alliance universities, all of which belonging to the Coimbra Group, render their collaboration irreplaceable. Engaging any other external provider would jeopardise the project's continuity and the smooth progression from its pilot to consolidation phase, which commenced in November 2023 and is anticipated to continue for six more years, four of which are already funded by the European Commission.

Uniqueness in the Market

Metreeca has been working on the Project since the kickoff meeting and has played an important role not just in boosting and supporting all the technical activities but also **in coordinating the jobs of the local allies**. Metreeca has established itself as a strategic partner for the Alliance, providing invaluable expertise in the design, development, and implementation of complex IT infrastructure solutions.

Metreeca stands distinguished in the IT landscape for their combination of strategic insight and technical expertise. Their proven track record in boosting technical activities, coordinating jobs of local allies, and acting as internal technical coordinators are unparalleled.

Conclusion

Given their strategic role, technical competences, and unique market position, Metreeca is indisputably the most suitable candidate for our project. Their expertise ensures the successful implementation of a modern, efficient, and scalable infrastructure, supporting our Alliance's growth and innovation.

We strongly recommend the renewal of Metreeca's contract to continue benefiting from their invaluable expertise and experience.

Sincerely,

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