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Executive Summary

Over the past nine years (2016–2025), the Leibniz ScienceCampus *Eastern Europe – Global Area* (EEGA) has established itself as an important network in interdisciplinary research on Eastern European developments past and present. Phase II of EEGA was on the one hand a continuation of the intellectual programme, but saw on the other hand a new generation of postdocs and young professors taking leading roles and shaping the research agendas in the newly formed Research Areas (RAs). Despite the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (2020–2022), new formats were established, including a regular online colloquium, the initiation of postdoctoral fellowships, and the pursuit of multiple publication projects. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine represented a turning point, requiring EEGA to integrate these developments immediately and constructively into its work programme, collaborations, and approaches. In this way, EEGA continued to develop innovative methods for academic teaching, knowledge transfer, and international networking. EEGA has successfully strengthened international and transregional research in Eastern Europe and beyond. Its overarching objectives — consolidation of cross-institutional cooperation, promotion of early-career researchers, and international positioning — have been largely achieved. Governance structures, including the Steering Committee and Scientific Advisory Board, ensured effective coordination and quality assurance, while research ethics, peer review, and open access standards were systematically implemented. Key scientific outputs include several internationally visible and peer-reviewed publications (see section 4), reinforcing EEGA's thematic profile and global outreach. Doctoral and postdoctoral projects progressed according to schedule, supported by structured mentoring, network integration, and tailored career development measures. Postdoctoral support remains a strategic priority, bridging the gap between PhD completion and permanent academic positions, and fostering both academic and non-academic career pathways. EEGA's institutional and international partnerships, including collaborations with ZOIS, DGO, BASEES, and RSA, were maintained and intensified. Affiliate researcher positions strengthened internal networking, facilitating joint research projects and publications. Annual conferences, workshops, and international panels promoted scientific exchange despite COVID-19 restrictions. External challenges, such as the pandemic and geopolitical developments, were addressed flexibly, ensuring continuity of activities and alignment with strategic goals. The Leibniz ScienceCampus contributed directly to the strategic objectives of the Leibniz ScienceCampus programme by consolidating institutional structures, increasing international visibility, and fostering sustainable local and international research networks. Equal opportunity and diversity measures were systematically implemented, leveraging existing institutional frameworks to promote gender equality, family–career compatibility, and internationalisation in recruitment and career development. Postdocs and PhD researchers benefited from mentoring, targeted workshops, publication support, and integration into international networks. EEGA has undoubtedly left a strong footprint in the Central German research landscape which is worth continuing. It has been therefore discussed with the participating institutions to integrate EEGA into the joint *Forum for the Study of the Global Condition*, providing a platform for future cooperation across the region between Leipzig, Halle and Jena, to continue international collaboration, consolidate transregional networks, and support early-career researchers. Further joint research projects, including proposals for DFG Research Training Groups and DFG Networks, are in preparation. These initiatives will enhance the long-

term sustainability of research structures, reinforce international visibility, and strengthen EEGA's position as a leading partner in Eastern European and global studies.

1. Contribution to strategic goals of the funding programme

Through its combination of strengthening structured and sustainable cooperation between Leibniz institutes and university partners at the local level, enhancing international visibility and promotion of young researchers, EEGA directly advanced the core strategic objectives of the Leibniz ScienceCampus programme. The institutionalised collaboration between university and non-university partners (including a Fraunhofer and a Max Planck Institute) has created a durable research network that consolidates complementary expertise and develops a shared thematic profile. In line with the programme's objective of international positioning, the project has increased the global visibility of Eastern European studies through strategic partnerships, international conferences, and high-impact publications, embedding local research strengths in transregional and global debates and fostering long-term cooperation. A further key contribution lies in the structured promotion of early-career researchers, particularly postdoctoral scholars, through fellowship schemes, mentoring formats, and integration into international networks, strengthening career pathways and institutional competitiveness. Moreover, the project has reinforced third-party funding capacity and contributed to sustainable research structures beyond the funding period, while successfully translating research into material for advanced study programmes and public debate.

2. Achievement of objectives and milestones

The core objectives and milestones were implemented to a large extent as planned. These included the consolidation and international positioning of the research network, the strengthening of cooperation between universities and Leibniz institutes, the advancement of transregional research perspectives, the implementation of annual conferences and colloquia, the awarding of fellowships, and the publication of joint research outputs. All central academic formats – including conferences, board meetings, fellowship programmes and major publication projects – were carried out successfully and contributed significantly to the visibility and international connectedness of the network. Similarly to phase I, EEGA set one to two milestones per year to achieve the general objectives defined in the renewal application, including, most importantly, the coordinating and signing by EEGA and its partners of a Cooperation Agreement for phase II by September 2020. EEGA's engagement with the international academic community remained strong, with active participation in major conferences such as the BASEES Annual Conference (2022) and the ICCEES World Congress (2024). In phase II, a new generation of postdoctoral researchers assumed leadership roles within EEGA. The COVID-19 pandemic required adjustments, leading to the development of digital formats, while research evolved towards integrating Eastern Europe into broader globalisation studies. A key achievement was the publication of the EEGA textbook *Globalizing Eastern Europe* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2025). Significant progress was made in internationalisation, strategic partnerships, and the structured support of postdoctoral researchers. Several major edited volumes and collaborative publications were completed or initiated during the funding period, further strengthening the thematic profile and global outreach of the project (see table section 4). Major conferences were organised in cooperation with partners such as BASEES and the Regional Studies Association (RSA), including the Final Results Conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia (2024). Some objectives were only partially achieved. A cross-RA edited volume could not be realised due to coordination challenges, and the planned DFG Research Training Group was revised in response to geopolitical developments following Russia's war against Ukraine. This initiative will be further developed under adjusted premises. Financially, the project remained within its planned budget. Minor deviations from the original financial plan resulted from additional staffing for the preparation of the source collection *Russia's War on Ukraine and the Crisis of World Order* (CEU Press,

forthcoming April 2026), and a cost-neutral extension of twelve months in order to complete ongoing publication projects and collaborative activities.

3. Activities and obstacles

During the reporting period, all project partners actively contributed to the implementation of the planned research, networking and transfer activities. The university partners were primarily responsible for the conceptual development of thematic clusters, the organisation of academic events, and the supervision and integration of early-career researchers. The Leibniz institute and other non-university partners contributed institutional infrastructure, international networking capacities and coordination expertise, and played a central role in publication projects and strategic positioning efforts. Jointly, the partners organised annual conferences and colloquia, implemented fellowship schemes, and advanced collaborative publication initiatives. The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges, particularly with regard to international networking, mobility and in-person collaboration. Planned workshops and networking formats had to be postponed, converted into digital formats, or implemented in hybrid form. While digital formats ensured continuity of academic exchange, they could not fully substitute for informal networking and trust-building processes that are essential for sustainable cooperation. As a consequence, some collaborative initiatives developed more slowly than originally anticipated. However, the partners responded flexibly by adapting formats, extending timelines where necessary and maintaining core activities without compromising overall project objectives. In addition, major geopolitical developments – most notably Russia's war against Ukraine – had a substantial impact on the research field. These developments required conceptual adjustments, particularly in projects dealing with transregional entanglements and global positioning. At the same time, they increased the societal and academic relevance of the project's thematic focus and opened new avenues for international cooperation and public engagement. EEGA was able to respond productively to these shifts by initiating new publication projects (e.g. the edited volume *Russia's War on Ukraine and the Crisis of World Order*, CEU Press, forthcoming 2026) and strengthening its global analytical perspective.

4. Results and successes

In funding phase II EEGA generated substantial results in both research and transfer (for results of funding phase I, see the final report from 2021). Key achievements include internationally visible edited volumes and peer-reviewed articles (36 publications between 2021 and 2026), which strengthened the thematic profile and global outreach of the network. At the same time, EEGA developed an analytical perspective that foregrounds the interconnections between global dynamics and the CEE region while avoiding its treatment as a homogeneous entity. Major book projects with leading international publishers consolidated the focus on transregional entanglements, global perspectives on Eastern Europe, and the geopolitical implications of Russia's war against Ukraine, most notably the EEGA textbook *Globalizing Eastern Europe* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2025) and the above-mentioned source collection (CEU Press, forthcoming 2026). In addition, the project contributed to academic qualification and career development through the supervision of doctoral and postdoctoral research projects and the successful implementation of fellowship schemes. A total of 44 theses were supervised by researchers working within EEGA partner institutions, including 11 dissertations, four of which were partially supported by project funds. Moreover, EEGA supported the stay of 72 fellows (of which 32 men and 40 women). The ScienceCampus further strengthened its competitive position by actively supporting the development of third-party funding proposals and by systematically expanding its international research partnerships. Scientific exchange was promoted through workshops, colloquia, and invited lectures, with 75 events organised in phase II. The annual conferences, held in cooperation with BASEES (2021), the RSA (2022, 2024), and ReCentGlobe (2023), provided key platforms for international exchange. Transfer activities included public lectures, policy-oriented

discussions, contributions to cultural and artistic formats, and participation in science communication events. The 13 activities (see 4.5 in the table) increased societal visibility and ensured that research findings were disseminated beyond the academic community. The Science Lounges attracted considerable interest with topics such as the war on Ukraine in the media and visual cultures of war. The further exploitation of project results will focus on consolidating publication projects currently in preparation, strengthening international strategic partnerships, pursuing additional third-party funding initiatives, and sustaining structured support for early-career researchers. Particular emphasis will be placed on embedding the established research structures into long-term institutional strategies to ensure durability beyond the funding period. All relevant key data are documented in the accompanying Excel template.

5. Equal opportunities, career development and internationalisation

EEGA placed a particular strategic emphasis on postdoctoral career development. In response to structural changes in the German academic system, it addressed the critical transition phase between the completion of the PhD and the attainment of a permanent academic position or alternative long-term career pathway, thereby filling a widely diagnosed structural gap. Its central objective was to provide comprehensive and individualised support for postdoctoral researchers, both within and beyond academia, while embedding equal opportunities, internationalisation and staff development within this overarching focus. The ScienceCampus was fully committed to the structural and personnel equality standards of the Leibniz Association and its nine partner institutions. Rather than duplicating existing frameworks, EEGA systematically integrated established gender equality and diversity management instruments, addressing researchers at all qualification stages and across dimensions such as gender, age, nationality, and social background. Through its institutional embedding, equal opportunity principles were structurally anchored rather than project-based add-ons. The structured promotion of early-career researchers was a core commitment. Particular emphasis was placed on postdoctoral researchers, who benefited from tailored mentoring, strategic career counselling, integration into international publication projects, and support in building independent research profiles. They were encouraged to develop networks, submit third-party funding proposals, and increase their international visibility. Doctoral researchers were integrated into thematic clusters and supported through supervision, research colloquia, and feedback formats, ensuring steady progress and successful completion. Internationalisation was a central pillar of EEGA's strategy. Despite the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ScienceCampus maintained a strong international presence through panels and presentations at major conferences (e.g. BASEES Annual Conference, European Congress on World and Global History, Aleksanteri Conference) and sustained cooperation with strategic partners. Membership in BASEES and collaboration with the RSA enhanced networking and visibility, while the recruitment of international fellows and the use of English as a working language further strengthened global connectedness.

6. Structures and collaboration

During the reporting period, EEGA maintained a structured and well-coordinated collaboration across all partner institutions led by IfL and UL. No formal changes to the collaboration agreement were required. Core governance mechanisms, including regular board meetings and general assemblies, ensured effective communication and joint decision-making. The introduction of "Affiliate Researchers" further strengthened internal networking and cross-institutional cooperation, facilitating joint research, publications, and shared methodological and conceptual approaches. External collaborations with partners in the wider field of Eastern European studies, including ZOIS and DGO (both Berlin), were continued and intensified. These partnerships proved scientifically beneficial by pooling expertise, enabling broader research questions, and enhancing the transfer of results to academic and policy audiences.

The Advisory Board for Media and Knowledge Transfer played a key role in strengthening the link between research and public communication by supporting the professionalisation of transfer activities, identifying relevant topics, and facilitating connections to major media actors. The COVID-19 pandemic required a shift to virtual and hybrid formats and meetings, while geopolitical developments, particularly Russia's war against Ukraine, led to adjustments in planned activities. Despite these challenges, the governance structure remained resilient, ensuring continuity and effective coordination.

7. Quality assurance

Overarching independent quality assurance within EEGA was carried out by the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). Concrete quality assurance primarily concerned the selection procedure for fellows and the allocation of funds for scientific work, which was ensured through open discussion and decision-making within the Steering Committee (SC). Further quality assurance was provided by the respective boards, departments, and committees of EEGA partner institutions, including thesis committees at the Research Academy of the University of Leipzig and the ombudspersons of the partner institutions. A joint initiative on research ethics, involving multiple EEGA partner institutions, has been developed to ensure compliance with the principles of good scientific practice. Particular attention was paid to publications and the cooperation with the e-journal *connections*: all contributions underwent external peer-review, and the majority of EEGA publications are available open access to ensure broad availability of research results. Overall, quality assurance measures were systematically embedded at both the cross-institutional and local levels, ensuring the integrity, transparency, and accessibility of all research activities. No animal testing has been conducted within the framework of the project.

8. Outlook

The highly successful work of the Leibniz ScienceCampus since 2016 is now leading to the application for a DFG Research Training Group, which will become part and will further strengthen the Graduate School Global and Area Studies at UL. This follows the reinforcement of the Graduate School with the International Research Training Group "*Belongings. Jewish Material Cultures*" in 2024. Further proposals for Research Training Groups and similar funding schemes are being finalised for submission in 2025/26. With several Emmy Noether groups and a Heisenberg professorship at UL, generational renewal in the research community is accelerating. Future research will increasingly address key questions concerning the role of Central and Eastern Europe in emerging geopolitical and geoeconomic constellations, including access to strategic resources and the development of border regimes and securitization dynamics across different spatial scales. The networks and institutional partnerships developed through EEGA are a major asset that will be reinvested into new initiatives. In particular, EEGA will be integrated into the *Forum for the Study of the Global Condition*, providing a platform to continue international collaboration, consolidate transregional research networks, and support early-career researchers. Initial discussions on this matter have already taken place and are now being pursued in greater depth. These activities will also enhance the long-term sustainability of research structures, strengthen international visibility, and provide a framework for future interdisciplinary and cross-regional projects. Particular attention will be paid to the role of Eastern Europe in the currently emerging new world order and to the position of Eastern European countries within Europe's development as a global actor. Concrete measures to ensure continuity include the preparation of joint third-party funding proposals, the continuation of collaborative publication projects, and the maintenance of established formats such as workshops, conferences, and international panels. Furthermore, the established international partnerships and affiliate researcher structures will be maintained and strategically expanded. In this way, the long-term visibility and sustainability of the research network are secured beyond the initial Leibniz funding period.