

2020 EUA Annual Conference

Universities building a better Europe

16-17 April 2020, hosted by Gdańsk University of Technology, Poland

Breakout session abstracts

Breakout Sessions, Round I: 16 April, 15.30-16.15

Each breakout session will feature one presentation.

Higher education institutions as drivers for progressive regions and smart cities

Aula, level 3

Hannes Raffaseder and Gabriele Permoser (St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences)

Innovation is most often associated with urbanisation and globalisation. Metropolises offer appropriate education, research, infrastructure, resources and creative spaces for innovative ideas and therefore attract smart people as well as venture capital. Thus, small and medium-sized cities and their rural areas tend to lose intellectual capacity and economic power. They need to develop innovative ecosystems that promote their transformation into smart and sustainable regions. Based on two ongoing initiatives of the St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences, the Digital Makers Hub and SMARTUP, the presentation discusses the role of higher education institutions in collaborative innovation for smart regions.

Towards a European framework for community engagement in higher education

Room 211, level 2

Snježana Prijić Samaržija (University of Rijeka) and Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt (Institute for the Development of Education)

The goal of this session is to examine whether there is an opportunity to develop innovative policy tools both at the university and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) level for assessing externally and internally the community engagement of universities. Community engagement is about mutually beneficial cooperation between universities and their wider communities, which will be presented on the University of Rijeka example. The session will include: analysis of different approaches to community engagement in higher education; a mapping of challenges connected with community engagement; discussion related to new developments in relation to community engagement; and debate about a possible European framework for community engagement. There have been no initiatives yet at the EHEA level that have focused exclusively on community engagement. We will explain how a European framework for Community Engagement might fill this gap and support universities in institutionalising their cooperation with the wider community.

Learning Neighbourhoods: A model of university engagement towards a better Europe

Room 205, level 2

Séamus Ó Tuama (University College Cork)

University College Cork leads Cork Learning Neighbourhoods, which is a flagship project of Cork UNESCO Learning City. It is about collaboration and coalition building, extending networks and prioritising learning (horizontally and vertically) and among and between generations. It supports community building articulated through an approach to learning that impacts the practicalities of

living. This form of learning encapsulates human, social, identity and cultural capital. It extends to capacity building, resilience and addressing the Sustainable Development Goals. This presentation highlights the key features of the Learning Neighbourhoods project and indicates ways in which other European universities could emulate or adapt the Cork model towards building a better Europe.

Connecting research with the societal challenges – opportunities coming from the “Innovations for a Healthy and Safe Society’s” project

Room 264, level 2

Martin Bares (Masaryk University)

Current demographic trends and changing socio-economic determinants make it necessary to respond to the critical societal challenges in the EU, as well as globally, in the most comprehensive way. Masaryk University’s project “Innovations for a Healthy and Safe Society” offers the opportunity to link research with societal challenges and is devoted to finding solutions for a sustainable society in the 21st century. The aim is to tackle challenges associated with demographic, environmental and other aspects of EU citizens’ daily lives, while focusing mainly on the area of citizens’ health (using results of the information technologies’ research – like artificial intelligence applications etc.).

Breakout Sessions, Round II: 17 April, 09.30-11.00

Two out of the three breakout sessions will feature two presentations each; the third will be a workshop.

Values in practice

Aula, level 3

European universities welcoming researchers at risk, promoting academic freedom

Halina Grzymała-Moszczyńska (Jagiellonian University)

This presentation will showcase Jagiellonian University’s activities in supporting researchers at risk and in promoting academic freedom around the world. It will also demonstrate how such activities line up with the university’s institutional strategies. In particular, the presentation will highlight Jagiellonian’s participation in a 10-partner, EU-funded project called Inspireurope, which coordinates support across Europe for researchers at risk. The presenter will outline the pattern of threats facing researchers around the world today, discuss Jagiellonian University’s activities to address these, as well as efforts to support individual researchers. The presenter will issue a call to action to EUA conference participants to get involved in concrete activities across Europe in support of researchers at risk and to promote academic freedom.

Assessing the human rights impact of national and international academic partnerships: an innovative interuniversity tool

Koen Verlaeckt (Flemish Interuniversity Council)

As key societal actors, universities are bound by national and international legislation on human rights. However they should go beyond that by offering their researchers and decision-makers background information on what human rights are, how potential risks can be detected and how potential future violation of human rights can be prevented. The Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR) developed a screening and scoping tool to address this delicate issue. It is the result of a balancing act between human rights principles and the reality of strategic priorities that govern a university’s policies on research, higher education, international relations and corporate administration.

Science communication and public outreach

Room 211, level 2

Effective science communication and public engagement – findings from the CONCISE project
Małgorzata Dzimińska (University of Łódź)

The presentation will report the major findings of public consultations organised under the CONCISE project (H2020, SwafS, GA n. 824537). The consultations were held in 2019 with 500 citizens responding in five EU countries: Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, and Spain. The study aimed at understanding the role of communication in forming the perceptions and beliefs of EU citizens about science. The findings will form the basis for recommendations on successful science communication approaches that higher education institutions, as knowledge generators and co-creators, should employ for wider impact and to combat pseudoscience.

Universities of the Netherlands for public outreach

Patricia Heerekop (Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU))

The Dutch universities are committed to public outreach of scientific research and actively communicate their research to a broad public. In general, communication about science have primarily often reached those already interested in science. Therefore, the Dutch universities have collectively committed to the Foundation “Universiteit van Nederland” as a joint platform to reach a wider audience. Here, scientists can share their knowledge in an innovative and attractive way with the wider public through free catchy video lectures, recorded in night clubs and distributed through YouTube, websites, television, podcasts, and articles in newspapers. “Universiteit van Nederland” is committed to bringing science to a wide audience. This session will present the coming about of the platform, the experienced challenges and the developments of the platform, and what the future of the platform holds, like the possibility of an international platform.

Workshop: Designing university programmes to support the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals

Room 205, level 2

Douglas Halliday and Fabrice Lemoine (Durham University/Université de Lorraine)

The world is facing unprecedented challenges. Universities have a civic duty to train and prepare individuals who can develop relevant, effective and robust approaches to solve global challenges. The European Green Deal aspires for Europe to be climate-neutral by 2050. How should universities respond to the challenge of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the 2050 European Green Deal? This workshop will offer delegates an interactive opportunity to propose and develop frameworks for multidisciplinary challenge-based education and training. Delegates will formulate programme content and learning outcomes in response to a specific global challenge in a small group structured exercise.
