

**UniFE – Leadership Retreat**  
**“Universities and the future of Europe”**  
22-23 May 2023,  
European University Institute,  
Florence, Italy  
Draft programme (as of 08/05/2023)

**Description**

The [UniFE Leadership Retreat](#) is an exclusive event bringing together a small group of up to 20 university leaders and managers from across Europe to take a step back from their daily routine and strategically think about the future of universities and European cooperation. The two-half day retreat will take place on 22-23 May (from lunch to lunch) at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence.

In highly interactive facilitated sessions inspired by foresight methodologies, participants will explore signals of change, dive into scenarios of possible and preferred futures, reflect on the preparedness of their universities and jointly develop ideas about what universities would wish and need from Europe and future European cooperation. Two days in Fiesole - on top of the hills over Florence, away from the daily hustle and bustle - will allow participants to get new insights and inspiration from peers and look at their daily challenges with fresh eyes and energy.

The event is part of EUA's [“Universities and the future of Europe” \(UniFE\) project](#). Through various consultations and workshops with EUA members running throughout 2023, the project aims to develop concrete ideas about what Europe's universities want from future collaboration and what they need in terms of framework conditions, political structures and multilateral frameworks. The outcomes will feed into EUA's engagement around the European elections in 2024 and the organisation's overall approach to European policy making as it relates to universities.

**Day 1**

13:00-14:00: Lunch at EUI (*Lower Loggia*)

**14:00-15:00: Welcome** (*Room Emeroteca*)

- Professor Renaud Dehousse, President, EUI
- Presentation, EUI
- Introduction to the programme, Amanda Crowfoot, Secretary General, EUA
- Icebreaking exercise: future four-square game

**15:00-16:00: Look back to look forward**

Participants are asked to identify 3-4 major things that changed in their university over the past decade that they would not have imagined 10 years ago. What are these changes? What do they tell us about the future? What can we learn from them for the future? These questions will be addressed in a structured process alternating discussions in small groups and in plenary.

The goal of the exercise is to unstick participants' minds and raise their level of awareness about what is possible.

**16:00-16:30: Coffee break** (*Cloister*)

**16:30-18:00: The present: at your university, where are you now?**

Participants will conduct a SWOT analysis on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats they perceive for their university. This will be done in two parts in a structured process alternating individual reflection, discussions in small groups and sharing in plenary. The first part will focus on strengths and weaknesses internal to the university and the second part will focus on opportunities and threats in the external environment.

The goal of the exercise is for participants to get a clear picture of the present situation of their institution.

**18:00-20:00: Free time**

**20:00-22:00: Dinner at EUI** (*Sala Buonsanti or Upper Loggia (still TBC according to the weather)*)

**Day 2:** (*Room Emeroteca*)

**08:45-9:15 Getting into the spirit of Plato's Academy**

For at least 2400 years, since Plato founded his celebrated school outside the walls of Athens, the art of dialogue has remained at the heart of the "academic" project. But what does dialogue require? And more importantly for this retreat, how can we bring it alive right now, so that it may inform the rest of our future-building workshop? In this practical session, we will attempt to connect with our own inner wisdom, and with the extraordinary human ability to truly listen and build on the ideas of others.

The session will be led by Eduardo Jáuregui. He is a Spanish social psychologist with degrees from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), the University of Oxford and the European University Institute, with a doctoral thesis on the psychology of humour. A specialist in positive psychology, he has lectured at Saint Louis University (Madrid Campus) and currently teaches in several master's programmes in Spain. In 2004 he founded the training consultancy Humor Positivo, fostering innovation, wellbeing, leadership, teamwork and communications skills in hundreds of organisations. His 15+ books have been translated into 20 languages.

**09:00-10:30: What if? Forecasts and scenarios for the future of transnational university cooperation in Europe**

In this session participants will be presented with four different future forecasts and related scenarios for transnational university cooperation. These will look into growth, constraints, collapse and transformation and what this would mean for universities. Imaginary future artefacts (like newspaper articles, emails, policy documents) will help participants to connect with possible futures to listen, sense and feel the scenarios and then discuss what it would mean for their universities.

The goal of the session is to identify the advantages and disadvantages, opportunities and risks of possible futures for universities and get a sense of what it would mean concretely for participants in their specific contexts.

**10:30-11:00: Coffee break** (*Cloister*)

**11:00-11:45: Your preferred future(s): how do you want to shape it?**

Based on the outcomes of the previous session, participants will discuss what their preferred future(s) would look like and what this would mean for their universities.

The aim is to envision a future for universities that is both desirable and possible.

**11:45-12:45: How to get there (backcasting)**

This session takes the form of a moderated plenary discussion. Based on the preferred future(s) discussed in the previous session, participants will identify what their institutions would need to attain this vision(s), what they can concretely do to contribute it, where framework conditions would need to change and in which areas and forms European cooperation would help.

The aim of this backcasting exercise is to develop concrete ideas and proposals for action, both at institutional as well as policy level.

**12:45-13:00: Wrap-up**

**13:00-14:00: Lunch at EUI (*Lower Loggia*)**