

2023 EUA Annual Conference

We need to talk about impact

19-21 April 2023, Gdańsk University of Technology, Poland

Universities have a profound impact on individuals and societies, as well as the policies that govern both. But what do we really mean when we talk about impact? The European University Association's 2023 Annual Conference, hosted by Gdańsk University of Technology, will tackle this heterogeneous concept by looking into how universities impact different communities and shape critical public policies at a time of great change and, in many cases, crisis.

Through a mix of traditional and interactive sessions, participants will explore the various facets of universities' impact. This event will shine a light on issues as diverse as rankings, excellence and the quest for quality, universities' contributions to greening and sustainability, their pivotal role in innovation and their proven track record in supporting endangered scholars and higher education systems. Finally, we will investigate the role of university leadership in delivering on these various forms of impact. Discussions will go beyond narrow definitions of economic impact, rather viewing impact as a measure of a university's responsibility to its own community and the world that surrounds it.

Moreover, with this year's conference EUA also intends to foster wider awareness and debate surrounding universities' different forms of impact and myriad roles within society. The conference will be of interest to institutional leaders (rectors, vice-rectors and heads of administration), higher education researchers and analysts, and representatives of other organisations active in the fields of higher education and research.

Draft programme

All times are CEST (Central European Summer Time).

Wednesday 19 April (pre-conference meetings)

- 10.00-12.30 **EUA Board Meeting**
- 12.30-13.30 Lunch for EUA Board, Council and Secretaries General
- 13.30-16.00 **EUA Council Meeting**
- 16.00-16.30 Coffee for EUA Board, Council and Secretaries General
- 16.30-18.30 **Leadership Roundtable**
Universities of the future: from vision to impact
- 16.30-18.30 **Secretaries General Meeting**
- 18.30-19.30 **Leadership Meet & Greet**

Thursday 20 April

08.30-09.30 Registration for General Assembly

08.30-17.45 Registration for Annual Conference

09.00-10.00 Welcome coffee

09.45-12.15 **General Assembly**

12.15-13.30 Lunch

13.30-13.45 **Conference Opening**

- Michael Murphy, EUA President
- Krzysztof Wilde, Rector, Gdańsk University of Technology, Poland

13.45-14.45 **Plenary Session 1**

Can rankings support universities' quest for excellence?

The session will present an analytical view on international university rankings, discussing whether and how they could be used as performance indicators for higher education institutions. This exchange will critically reflect on rankings' various rationales, approaches, benefits and limitations - factors for university leaders to keep in mind when engaging with such products. The session will also consider changing attitudes towards rankings and their future.

- Elizabeth Gadd, Research Policy Manager, Loughborough University, UK
- Joan Guàrdia Olmos, Rector, University of Barcelona, Spain
- Phil Baty, Chief Global Affairs Officer, Times Higher Education (video message)
- Gero Federkeil, Head of International Rankings, CHE Centre for Higher Education (video message)
- Chaired by Michael Murphy, EUA President

14.45-15.15 Coffee break

15.15-16.30 **Parallel Sessions 1**

• ***Digital transformation: how to keep universities in the driving seat***

This session will explore the role of universities as both drivers and beneficiaries of the digital transformation of our communities and societies, the accelerated integration of digital tools in learning and teaching, and the digitalisation of universities' administrative processes. Through a guided, highly interactive exercise, participants will consider and compare the broad trajectory of transformation for their institutions and further discuss the potential for developments within the sector to influence transformation at a societal level.

• ***Supporting universities in Ukraine: opportunities for enhanced interinstitutional collaboration***

With the war in Ukraine now in its second year, which support measures in higher education have been helpful, and what still needs to be enhanced or added? Beyond fellowship for academics and placements for students outside of Ukraine,

what can be done to support the country's higher education institutions, for example through the provision of online education? During this session, colleagues from Ukraine and across Europe will share their experiences and perspectives on physical and virtual exchange and collaboration, as well as additional, novel measures.

- ***How to make the most of your EUA membership***

This session will feature an introduction to EUA's work and activities. Members old and new will be invited to reflect on how they can best draw on EUA's services to support them in their various missions.

16.30-16.45 Return to plenary room

16.45-17.45 **Plenary Session 2**

From transactional to transformational: rethinking innovation in times of crisis

Drawing on the recently published EUA Innovation Agenda 2026 as well as the panellists' own experiences, this session will showcase a broad concept of innovation integrating the needs of both developers and users and leading to impact through value creation and social transformation. Emphasising universities' role as honest brokers between different sectors and communities, the session will explore ways to generate more holistic solutions to societal challenges through enhanced support for interdisciplinarity, entrepreneurship and intersectoral collaboration.

- Annick Castiaux, Rector, University of Namur, Belgium
- Karine Samuel, Vice-President, Grenoble Alpes University, France
- Chaired by Marcin Pałys, EUA Board member

19.30-22.00 Networking Reception and Dinner

Friday 21 April

09.30-10.45 **Parallel Sessions 2**

- ***Will reforming career assessment strengthen universities' impact?***

Current career assessment practices do not acknowledge the wide and diverse range of academic achievement. But beyond the drawbacks for individual academics, what is the impact on the institution? This interactive session will tackle the issue in two parallel groups, starting with a scene-setting case study, followed by a discussion in a 'fishbowl' round during which participants will be invited to actively contribute their questions, experiences, and ideas.

- ***Delivering an impactful greening strategy beyond the crisis***

This session will showcase universities' impact on sustainability and the green agenda, particularly in the post-pandemic and current inflation/energy costs context. Participants will discuss strategic institutional approaches and how these interact with activities developed across and beyond the university; covering the research and education missions, as well as environmental sustainability and campus greening - including resource management and

procurement. This panel discussion will feature institutional leadership and student perspectives.

10.45-11.15 Coffee break

11.15-12.15 **Plenary Session 3**

The role of university leadership in delivering impact

This session will showcase the importance of institutional leadership and its development to achieving universities' many goals, whether in learning and teaching, research and innovation or the societal mission. It will specifically examine the effects of major system reform and structural changes on how leaders steer their institutions and deliver impact. Additionally, this plenary session will reflect on leadership development programmes as a means to address external and internal challenges and drive institutional changes such as the green and digital transitions and new formats of international collaboration.

- Hans Adolfsson, Vice-Chancellor, Umeå University, Sweden
- Bogumiła Kaniewska, Rector, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland
- Chaired by Josep M. Garrell, EUA Board member

12.15-13.00 **Closing Speech & Conclusion of Conference**

- Roberta Metsola, President, European Parliament (video message)
- Michael Murphy, EUA President

13.00-14.00 Lunch