

2026 EUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

University cooperation in changing contexts

Hosted by Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Türkiye
16-17 April 2026

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Deadline for submission: **Wednesday 11 February 2026, 23.59 CET**

Context and objectives

The Annual Conference is the European University Association's flagship event and brings together between 300-400 senior leadership representatives from higher education institutions across Europe. The 2026 conference will be dedicated to the topic of '[University cooperation in changing contexts](#)'.

Hosted by Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Türkiye, the event will shed light on how key drivers are shaping why, how and with whom universities cooperate. Such drivers include (geo)politics, technological advances, sustainable development and economic challenges.

The conference will investigate the evolution of different types of university partnerships; between institutions, with the public sector, with industry and other partners – locally, nationally and internationally, through a mix of panel and interactive discussions.

In order to showcase good practices from among [its membership](#), **EUA is now inviting contributions for practice presentations** for three breakout sessions at the 2026 Annual Conference:

Breakout session 1A 16 April, 15.00-16.15	Breakout session 1B 16 April, 15.00-16.15	Breakout session 1C 16 April, 15.00-16.15
Strength in diversity: cooperating across sectors to serve society	How tech is transforming university cooperation	Bridging sectors, boosting innovation: why cooperation matters in R&I
➤ Up to three practice presentations will be selected ➤ Submit your proposal through this link ➤ In case of questions, please send an email to helene.peterbauer@eua.eu ➤ Deadline: 11 February	➤ Up to three practice presentations will be selected ➤ Submit your proposal through this link ➤ In case of questions, please send an email to clare.phelan@eua.eu ➤ Deadline: 11 February	➤ Up to three practice presentations will be selected ➤ Submit your proposal through this link ➤ In case of questions, please send an email to kamila.kozirog@eua.eu ➤ Deadline: 11 February

What is a practice presentation?

Practice presentations share and discuss experiences with a particular practice or approach at the institutional, local, regional, national or European level in a self-reflective and critical way, or test ideas for new initiatives to receive feedback from participants. They invite participants to reflect on whether lessons learnt from a certain practice or approach can be transferred to their contexts, allowing the audience to exchange on similar experiences and on how they compare to the presented practice.

To facilitate engagement and to allow for structured discussion between presenters and with the audience, practice presentations should be concise. Contributors are encouraged to integrate interactive elements into their presentation to encourage audience engagement and lively discussion among participants. See specific session requirements below for details on timing.

General requirements for proposals

Proposals should:

- be submitted using the correct online form (see page 1 of this document) – email submissions will not be accepted;
- identify the presenter;
- include a short biography of the presenter (up to 150 words);
- be clearly and concisely written, with a maximum of 600 words;
- present a specific existing practice or approach, including a critical analysis of challenges, benefits and lessons learnt;
- include 1-2 discussion questions;
- be written in English.

Specific requirements for proposals

Breakout session 1A – Strength in diversity: cooperating across sectors to serve society

For this session, EUA seeks proposals for presentations of tried-and-tested examples of collaboration between higher education institutions and non-university actors such as city administrations, NGOs or local businesses, with the aim of serving society. Examples could cover collaborative initiatives of service learning to address community needs, challenge and project-based learning to tackle local and societal challenges, living labs, as well as joint research projects, to name only a few examples. Such cross-sector collaborations may aim to tackle environmental, societal, economic and other challenges, such as the need to preserve biodiversity or clean water, or to foster socially responsible city planning or affordable housing.

If selected, each presentation will be allocated 12-15 minutes of presentation time, followed by time for Q&A with the audience.

Session summary:

Universities increasingly need to ensure and demonstrate their positive impact on the wellbeing and development of their local, regional and national environments.

To establish relevant objectives and a targeted approach to universities' service to society, well-designed cooperation initiatives between higher education institutions and non-university actors are often the most suitable

path to take. This session will highlight notable examples from across Europe and the lessons learned by the universities that initiated them.

Breakout session 1B – How tech is transforming university cooperation

This session will showcase examples of university cooperation that push boundaries in the digital sphere. Whether aiming to strengthen cybersecurity, optimise data management or operationalise virtual campuses, practice presentations should demonstrate how digital technologies are both foundational and transformative for university partnerships. Proposals showing the importance of shared values among partners in advancing and maximising new technologies are especially welcome.

Selected contributors will be allocated a maximum of 10 minutes to present their initiative. Presentations should challenge participants to reflect on the transferability of such initiatives and consider their possible benefits in a comparable context.

Session summary:

Digitalisation is no longer merely seen as a means to speedier, more efficient workflows, but understood for its potential to transform how universities cooperate.

This session will explore how sustained investment and concerted action among academic, industry and public sector bodies can inspire new and lasting forms of cooperation in the digital space. Presentations will showcase digitally-steered initiatives that reinforce institutional capacity to initiate and manage long-term change.

Breakout session 1C – Bridging sectors, boosting innovation: why cooperation matters in R&I

This session is an opportunity to reflect on the role of universities as partners and mediators across sectors and borders. Contributions should showcase examples of developing strategic and durable partnerships with non-academic actors, including but not limited to experiences in collaborative projects funded by Horizon Europe (e.g. Pillar II or EIC Pathfinder). They should illustrate the role of universities as honest brokers, by enabling partnerships and bridging different interests and perspectives. Practice presentations focusing on partnerships with government agencies or civil society groups are especially welcome.

Selected contributors will be allocated a maximum of 10 minutes to present their initiative. They should prompt a discussion on new opportunities and ways forward. Presentations should challenge participants to reflect on the transferability of such initiatives and consider their possible benefits in a comparable context.

Session summary:

In a policy context that strongly focuses on improving Europe's economic competitiveness, universities are crucial partners via their R&I collaborations with the private sector and other actors.

This session will explore challenges and success factors for universities and reflect on what this changing context for the third mission means for their R&I collaborations with non-academic partners.

IMPORTANT: Presenters of selected practice presentations will be entitled to a reduced conference registration fee, which will be applied during the registration process. If you have submitted a proposal, please do not register for the Annual Conference until the results of the selection process have been announced. Please note that the reduced registration fee will be awarded only to one author per proposal, and only to representatives of [EUA member institutions](#).

Selection

Proposals will be assessed by members of the EUA Secretariat on the basis of the following criteria.

Each proposal should:

- match the session theme;
- be coherent, understandable and comprehensive enough to provide a clear picture of the practice;
- present a practice that is relevant for participants and contain lessons that are transferable to diverse contexts;
- have the potential to sustain a lively discussion.

No proposal for commercial purposes will be accepted. EUA will take into account the need for the conference programme to be balanced geographically in selecting practice presentations.

You will be informed in late February/early March 2026 if your proposal has been accepted. Selected proposals may receive comments on how they should be amended before the Annual Conference. Please note that no feedback can be provided on unsuccessful proposals.