

14-15th September 2023

II FORUM of European Universities Alliances

PLENARY SESSION II

Bringing the European
Universities Initiative closer to
European society

INTRODUCTION

As stated in the European Strategy for Universities, our society needs more than ever the contribution of its universities. The challenges Europe needs to address in the fields of climate protection, digitalization, democracy, migration and other big issues require higher education institutions closely connected with their local and regional ecosystems, as well as to the societies they serve.

The European Universities Initiative has incorporated this connection to the society from the very first moment. The challenge-based approach university alliances use, the role of external associate partners and the diverse bottom-up networks that are included in the Initiative have enabled the ongoing creation of university alliances that are connected with the society. The fact that almost 1700 associate partners do collaborate with the existing 50 alliances is a clear evidence.

Nevertheless, European Universities alliances need to be closer to the European society. As mentioned in the 2021 Council Conclusion on the European Universities Initiative-Bridging higher education, research, innovation and society: Paving the way for a new dimension in Higher Education, the European Commission and Member States are invited to strengthen the competitiveness of 'European Universities' in the international context and to enable them to connect with local and regional ecosystems. Indeed, if knowledge needs to be turned into skills, and competences, innovation and higher education institutions are central actors for the knowledge square (education, research, innovation and service to society), cooperation with the surrounding ecosystems has to be a cornerstone of the alliances and embrace civil society, business, local and regional authorities, industrial and many other partners.

Bringing the European Universities Initiative closer to the European society **requires appropriate communication tools and strategies** of the whole Initiative and the existing alliances. But **a real connection with a diverse society** demands also **governance-mechanisms, working methods and activities** that grant not only societal impact, but also a **two-direction relation** between the alliances and the European society.

PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

The session will analyse different ways of bringing the European Universities Initiative and the existing alliances closer to European society. On one hand, it will tackle **the tools to better communicate** the Initiative and the existence of the alliances (both individually and as a whole) to the general public. Taking the existing webpages and communication tools as starting points, it will discuss **how to improve these tools** to share the activities and achievements of the alliances with the general public, the European Commission, the Member States and among the alliances themselves.

The session will also share **concrete examples of how some alliances have incorporated external stakeholders** such as local and regional authorities in their activities and how this collaboration has enabled **mutual benefits** for both, alliances and external partners. The experience of some alliances will also illustrate how a close connection with the society requires **proper governance structures and activities**, as well as taking into account **special needs of a diverse society**.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Bringing the European Universities Initiative and the existing alliances closer to European society is a strategic objective that embraces different components. However, the first question to be discussed is the bidirectional dimension of this objective: it is not only a question of dissemination and societal impact, but also about co-creation and active involvement of external players and associate partners in the activities of the alliances. Alliance's representatives are invited to share concrete experiences regarding this two-way connection with their surrounding ecosystems and to point out the benefits, but also challenges of it.

Challenge-based approaches and activities require a close connection with social needs and environments. Participants will share how they have build and improved this connection and to which extent new structures or platforms have been created to ensure a permanent relation with external stakeholder. The session will also tackle the benefits of this relationship both for the alliances and the external stakeholders.

Working for and with the society requires proper activities that go far beyond traditional research, learning and dissemination methods. Alliance's representatives will share during the session innovative activities and experiences related to citizen science and science communication that illustrate this effort.

The European dimension of the alliances rises also the need to bring them closer to the European society, which is diverse and also global. Upscaling from a regional or national dimension to the European society may be a huge step for the alliances. The session will showcase some challenges and good practices of bringing the alliances closer to a global and diverse society.

Bringing the Initiative and the existing alliances closer to the European society requires also adequate communication tools. The session will tackle whether the existing ones need to be further developed to share more widely the achievements of the existing alliances not only among themselves, but also with the Member States and higher education institutions that are not involved in the European Universities Initiative.

PARTICIPANTS

MODERATOR

Markus González Beilfuss

Markus González Beilfuss is Undersecretary of the Ministry of Universities. Vice-Rector for International Policy of the University of Barcelona (2021). General Director for Immigration, Government of Spain (2010-2011). Legal adviser to the Spanish Constitutional Court (2005-2010). Professor of Constitutional Law from the University of Barcelona (since 2001).

Main lines of research and teaching: Immigration, Trafficking of Human Beings, Constitutional Justice and Territorial Organization of Power. Author of numerous publications in these fields. "Francisco Tomás y Valiente" Award (1999) for research related to constitutional jurisdiction, given by the Spanish Constitutional Court and the Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies of the Spanish government. Experience as an international expert of the United Nations Development Program and the Council of Europe.



PARTICIPANTS

PANELISTS

Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot (European Commission)

She is Director for *Youth, Education and Erasmus+* at the [European Commission's Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture](#). She is in charge of European cooperation on higher education, schools and youth policy, managing Europe's flagship programme for education, training, youth and sport [Erasmus+](#) with a budget over EUR 26 billion 2021-2027. She launched and manages the [European Solidarity Corps](#), an EU youth volunteering programme, and coordinated the 2022 European Year of Youth. She launched flagship actions under the European Education Area and the EU Youth Strategy, such as European Universities, Teacher Academies and DiscoverEU.

She has previously held various positions within the European Commission in the field of strategy and investment in education, employment policy, European Semester, European cohesion funds, cultural policy and business statistics. She studied economics, business, political science and EU affairs in Sweden, France and Belgium, including an Erasmus student exchange. She is an [Eisenhower Fellow](#). Twitter: [@sophiabrussels](#)



PARTICIPANTS

Petter Olsen Bertthenssen, Technology Advisor.
Bodø Municipality, Norway (SEA-EU)

Born and raised in northern Norway in a City called Bodø, north of the Arctic Circle. Graduated Electrical Power Engineer from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and have an MBA in Technology Management from Nord University. I have mainly worked globally in the maritime sector, but switched to aviation a few years ago. Now I work as a technology advisor in Bodø municipality. Within business development and project management within sustainable aviation, the maritime industry and with sustainable energy carriers.



PARTICIPANTS

Joana Gouveia Loureiro, Head of the Office of Institutional and International Affairs. Municipality of Coimbra, Portugal (EC2U)

Joana Gouveia Loureiro is Head of Office of Institutional and International Affairs of the Municipality of Coimbra, responsible for promoting the municipality's international relations through the implementation of an international cooperation programme. She was Press Attaché at the Portuguese Embassy in London – Ministry of Foreign Affairs - between 2015 and 2018. Joana completed the Master in European Studies "The Process of European Construction", coordinated by the University of Siena with teaching and research work at this University, as well as at the Robert Schuman University of Strasbourg (*Institut des Hautes Études Européennes*) and the University of Coimbra. Joana is a Community Affairs trainer/teacher at the Jacques Delors European Information Centre and recently completed the Course of Studies and Training for Senior Local Government Administrators.



PARTICIPANTS

Carsten Schneider, Member of the steering committee. CIVICAAlliance

Schneider is Professor of Political Science and Pro-Rector for External Relations at Central European University (CEU). In his role as Pro-Rector he is responsible for all externally-facing units and for strategic partnerships. Within CIVICA, he is member of the steering committee, co-chair of the academic lead body called permanent design team, and leader of the work package on research. In his academic work, Schneider focusses on the challenges to democracy from a comparative perspective. In his work on social science research methods, Schneider specializes on set-theoretic methods, in particular Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). His research has appeared in major publishing houses and in leading social science journals, and is widely referenced by scholars from across the social sciences. Since almost two decades, upon invitation Schneider regularly teaches workshops and short courses at institutions and methods schools in Europe and beyond. Schneider holds a PhD from the European University Institute (EUI). He was an elected member of the German Academy of Young Scientists, a Kennedy Fellow at the Center for European Studies at Harvard University, and visiting scholar at University of California at Berkeley and at the New School in New York.



PARTICIPANTS

Hannes Raffaseder, President. EURASHE and Lead Coordinator E³UDRES² Alliance

Hannes Raffaseder is CEO/President of the St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences and co-initiator and lead coordinator of E³UDRES², the Engaged and Entrepreneurial European University as Driver for European Smart and Sustainable Regions. In June 2023 he was elected President of EURASHE. He was founding director of the Institute for Creative\Media\Technologies and academic director of a master's program in digital media technology.

As an experienced manager in higher education, Hannes promotes opportunity-driven, challenge-based and mission-oriented approaches and in particular a multi-directional knowledge exchange with society and business as third and fourth mission of universities. Thus, he has successfully co-complemented concepts for engaged and entrepreneurial universities as open platforms for collaborative innovation.

As a professor of media technology, Hannes has many years of teaching experience and managed several research and innovation projects. In the contexts of audio design, media music and sonic interaction, he has published several scientific publications and presented at international conferences.

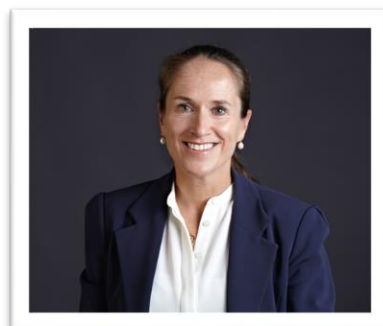
In addition to his academic work, Hannes is an internationally active, award-winning composer and media artist whose music has been performed in renowned concert halls and art festivals.



PARTICIPANTS

Mrs. Beatrix Busse, Chief Development Officer. EUniWell Alliance

Beatrix Busse is Professor of English Linguistics and Vice-Rector for Teaching and Studies at the University of Cologne. As the Chief Development Officer of the European University for Well-Being, she leads a European Universities Initiative alliance that unifies eleven universities across Europe. Most recently, she was elected to be Vice Chair of the Executive Board of the Coimbra Group.



Beatrix Busse studied English and History at the universities of Osnabrück and Keele (GB). She received her doctorate in English linguistics from the University of Münster in 2004, and obtained her Habilitation at the University of Bern (CH) in 2010. In 2011, she was appointed to a full professorship for English linguistics at Heidelberg University. Among others, there she was Vice-Rector for Studies and Teaching for six years before moving to Cologne in October 2019.

Beatrix Busse's research interests include Corpus Linguistics, the History of the English Language, (Historical) Sociopragmatics, Transfer Linguistics, and Language in Urban Space. She leads a DFG-funded project (*heidelGram*), as well as other projects on Speech, Writing, and Thought Presentation in the History of English, and Discursive Place-making in Brooklyn, New York. She is a British Academy Visiting Fellow, Co-Founder of the Heidelberg School of Education, founding member of the Heidelberg-based DFG-funded research training group "Authority and Trust in American Culture, Society, History and Politics." She is the editor of the *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* and a member of the *Advances in Stylistics* editorial board.