

14-15th September 2023

II FORUM of European Universities Alliances

THEMATIC SESSION V

Friday 15th September 9:30h-11:00h

The external dimension of European partnerships: collaboration with Higher Education Institutions in third countries

INTRODUCTION

Universities are international institutions by nature and they have been so since their creation in the Middle Ages. How does this translate in the context of the implementation of the European Universities Initiative? Does the deepening of cooperation among European higher education institutions goes hand in hand with consolidating their global dimension? What are the expectations of European policymakers and European Universities Alliances in this regard?

In the Council conclusions on a European strategy empowering higher education institutions for the future of Europe (April 2022), Ministers from the EU 27 explicitly recommend the use of existing European programmes, such as Erasmus+, the Union's external action instruments and Horizon Europe, to support the European Universities Alliances in developing joint internationalisation activities and strategies across higher education, research and innovation, adding that this would help the Alliances to project themselves internationally, build networks with key partners around the world, strengthen the capacities of partners in third countries and bolster the international (inward and outward) mobility of students, researchers, academics and staff.

In its European Strategy for Universities (January 2022) the Commission emphasizes that universities are part of Europe's soft power, by exchanging talents from all over the world, building strong bridges with partner countries across the globe, and promoting academic and European values. The Commission calls to strengthen and build on this reputation and level up these strengths across Member States, as this will in turn make Europe more attractive not only as a study destination but also as a homogenous cooperation partner for education, research and innovation.

PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

European Universities Alliances have been following very diverse goals and models of development and their global rollout is no exception. Some Alliances have adopted ambitious plans for internationalisation, signed strategic partnership agreements with non-EU higher education institutions and even started piloting joint activities with them. Others are rather in the stage of designing their internationalisation strategies and identifying potential future non-EU partners, after a first phase dedicated to establishing the Alliance itself. Some others are still considering whether or not opening their Alliance to any global collaboration in the short- and mid-term.

This session will tackle different internationalisation models that are emerging among Alliances. The discussions will address the challenges and opportunities around these issues, exploring the potential and limitations of existing policies and programmes from the perspective of the EU, Alliances, and actors from the wider higher education sector.

The session aims to put forward responses and recommendations for the implementation and further development of the external dimension of European Universities Alliances.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

This session will address key issues of the External dimension of European Universities Alliances, such as:

- How can we further increase the global engagement of European Universities alliances?
- With the last call for proposals, the European Universities Initiative has expanded eastwards and further into the Balkans. Furthermore, higher education institutions from any of the 49 countries attached to the Bologna Process and European Higher Education Area are now eligible to be considered as 'associate members', which means they can join an Alliance but without receiving any EU funding. Is this satisfactory from the viewpoint of higher education institutions and students based in the EU and in other EHEA countries?
- What about the inclusion of partners from other regions in the world, where unquestionably, the European Universities Initiative has been raising a lot of interest? Are the existing EU instruments (Erasmus+ and notably its International Credit Mobility and Erasmus Mundus actions; Horizon Europe; etc.) fit for purpose and flexible enough to allow for a mutually benefitting participation of non-EU partners in the European Universities Alliances?
- Which type of EU support would be needed to allow the European Universities alliances to fully develop in the international arena? Is there a need to adapt some existing actions of the current Erasmus+ programme and how? Which other improvement should be considered by policy-makers when designing the next generation of programmes post-2027 in this regard?

SESSION OUTCOMES

This session addressed topics relevant to the European University Alliances, as demonstrated by the lively conversations and the topic needs more discussion space. The main conclusions were:

- **A lot is already happening** when we talk about international cooperation of European alliances. Alliances do not start from scratch. Much knowledge was shared and there were examples of many actions that are already being carried out. Sharing this information could be useful for those Alliances that are now beginning to work in their external dimension.
- It was demonstrated that there is a **consensus on the principles and values** that should guide and prevail when the Alliances of European Universities cooperate with the rest of the world: mutually beneficial partnerships, win-win cooperation, sustainable cooperation beyond specific and short-term projects.
- The cooperation of the Alliances of European Universities should **not be restricted to education**. It should cover all the missions that the Alliances are pursuing, including research.
- The **current instruments of the Erasmus+ Program** (such as International credit mobility or Jean Monet Actions) are very useful for Alliances to promote their internationalization. But two aspects were detected that needed improvement. On the one hand, the need to expand the flexibility of the rules and execution requirements of some of the programs in order to adapt them to the needs of internationalization. And on the other hand, more funds were requested. The reality is that if funds from the Erasmus+ program that were being used for those same actions are used, but with other objectives now, projects that were previously financed will now run out of funds.
- There is **no single geographical priority**, applicable to all Alliances of European Universities. Depending on the composition of the alliance and its interests, geographical priorities will be different. Experiences of actions already carried out with Africa, the Mediterranean, Latin America and even China and the rest of Asia were shared.

PARTICIPANTS

MODERATOR

Mrs. Emmanuelle Gardan. Director. Coimbra Group of Universities.

Emmanuelle Gardan is the Director of the Brussels Office of the Coimbra Group, an association of 40 long-established European multi-disciplinary universities committed to promoting universities' internationalisation, academic collaboration, excellence in learning and research, and service to society, as well as to influencing European educational and research policy. Emmanuelle has more than 20 years' experience in international academic cooperation built through leading positions in the public, private and non-profit sectors. She previously worked as Head of Sector for Higher Education and Research at the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), an inter-governmental organization fostering regional integration and cooperation between 42 Mediterranean countries (2013-2019). She also contributed to strengthen university-business cooperation in an innovative way during her years at Groupe AEF (2011-2013).



The first decade of her career was spent at the French Erasmus+ National Agency where she was successively in charge of policy support, programme management, international cooperation and foresight. She notably served as national contact point for the Erasmus Mundus programme. She holds a Master's degree in European Studies from the University of Strasbourg Political Science Institute and has since then upgraded her skills in science diplomacy.

PARTICIPANTS

PANELISTS

Julio Cañero, Representative. EUGLOH Alliance.

Julio Cañero Serrano holds the position of Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Alcalá, where he served until 2019 as Director at the University Institute for Research in North American Studies "Benjamin Franklin". Since 2019, he has held the position of Vice Rector for International Relations.

His research primarily focuses on the examination of American culture, politics, and society, with a particular emphasis on the literary and linguistic traditions of the Latino population in the United States. In the realm of knowledge dissemination, he has made notable contributions as a specialist in North American Studies through various media outlets.

Furthermore, he serves as the director of the Benjamin Franklin Collection, established in 2013, and is also responsible for the academic journal *REDEN*, initiated in 2019, both affiliated with the Franklin Institute. Additionally, Julio Cañero Serrano is an active member of the executive board of the HispaUSA association and previously held the role of treasurer within the network of European centers specializing in North American Studies, known as the American Studies Network (ASN). As of 2023, he holds a position on the Steering Committee of UNICA, which is the institutional network of universities located in European capital cities.



PARTICIPANTS

Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+. 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.

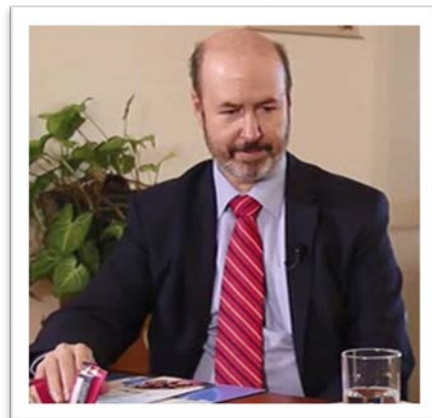
She has previously held various positions within the European Commission in the field of strategy and investment in education, employment policy, European Semester, European cohesion funds, cultural policy and business statistics. She studied economics, business, political science and EU affairs in Sweden,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



PARTICIPANTS

Felix Garcia Laussin, Director. Ibero-American Space of Knowledge.

Felix Garcia Laussin is a Telecommunication Engineer with a master's degree, from the Polytechnic University of Madrid (UPM). During his time at UPM he was part of various governing bodies, as President of the Student Union. After a postgraduate grant of the Government of France at the *Institut National de Recherche en Informatique et en Automatique* (INRIA), he entered the Doctoral Program in Mathematics and Computer Science at Jaume I University (UJI), where he was professor in Applied Mathematics. As part of the rector team of UJI, he served as Technical Director for Student Affairs.



With the creation of the Directorate-General for Universities and Research of the Community of Madrid, in 1994, he joined it as advisor to the director General. In 1995 he was appointed Secretary General of the Conference of Rectors of The Spanish Universities (CRUE), the first Secretary General of this institution.

In 2004 he joined the Cabinet of the Presidency of the Government, a position he held until he was appointed, in 2006, Secretary General of the University Coordination Council. In 2009 he re-entered the Office of the President.

Since 2012 he has been Commissioner-Coordinator of the Ibero-American Knowledge Area (EIC), a position he holds as an official of the Ibero-American General Secretariat, an international body based in Madrid. The EIC is in charge of the cooperation agreed by the Ibero-American Summits of Heads of State and Government on education, science, technology, innovation and digital ecosystem.

He also currently holds the positions of Secretary General of the Ibero-American University Council (CUIB) and Executive Secretary of the CELAC-EU University Council.

PARTICIPANTS

François Heinderyckx, Advisor to the Rector of ULB for the European University. CIVIS Alliance.

François Heinderyckx is professor at Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) where he teaches media sociology and political communication. He is currently Advisor to the Rector of ULB for the European University Alliance CIVIS.

His research interests include journalism and news media, political communication, audience studies and media literacy. He has extensive experience in conducting and analyzing public opinion surveys.

He is a member of Academia Europaea and a Fellow of the International Communication Association. He was the Dean of the Faculty of Letters, Translation and Communication at ULB (2015-2019), a visiting scholar at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism (2019-2020) and a Chang-Jiang Scholar Professor at Communication University of China, Beijing (2013-2018). He was among the founding members of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) in 2005 and was the President of ECREA from its creation until 2012. He was also the 2013-2014 President of the International Communication Association (ICA). He is the Series Editor of the Wiley Blackwell – ICA International Encyclopedias of Communication and a member of the Advisory or Editorial boards of a dozen international academic journals.

More details available on my personal web pages: fheinderyckx.ulb.be

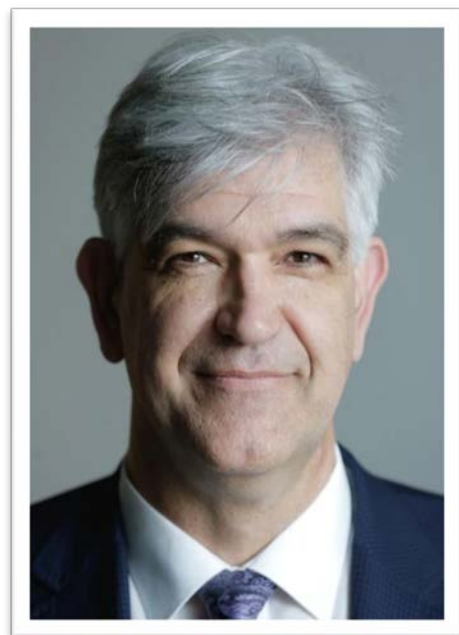


PARTICIPANTS

Peter Lievens, Member of the Board of Directors.
Una Europa Alliance.

Peter Lievens is Professor of Experimental Physics at the Department of Physics and Astronomy, Faculty of Science, KU Leuven, Belgium. After his PhD at KU Leuven in nuclear physics (1991) he was Fellow at CERN, Geneva, Switzerland before returning to Belgium in 1993 to switch research topics towards nanoscience and experimental quantum physics as Postdoctoral Researcher of the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO). He obtained tenure in 2001 as Research Professor and is Full Professor at KU Leuven since 2007.

The focus of his work is on investigations of physical and chemical properties of atomic clusters and nanoparticles. In 2008 he became Vice Dean for Education of the Faculty of Science, where he got elected as Dean, taking office from 2009 until 2017. Since August 2017 he is Vice Rector at KU Leuven, currently responsible for International Policy, Interculturality and Alumni Policy.



PARTICIPANTS

Anne-Laurence Pastorini, Project manager and Research and networking activities at UNIMED

Anne-Laurence Pastorini holds a Master degree in International public law and International administration from Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, and gained experience of international cooperation within different structures such as the French Embassy in Algeria and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the World Bank regional office in Dakar, and Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University with a strong focus on university cooperation and the Maghreb region. She joined UNIMED in 2017 as a project manager, where she mainly coordinates projects and initiatives related to governance, student empowerment, mobility and intercultural dialogue. She also contributes to UNIMED research activities, particularly in the field of internationalization of Higher Education Institutions.

UNIMED is currently a network of 162 universities from 27 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region and beyond, with 14 SubNetworks involving more than 400 researchers, around 40 funded projects, 20 staff people and 15 institutional partnerships with important international organizations. Nowadays, UNIMED is a permanent stakeholder of the European Commission and the Union for the Mediterranean.

