

Webinar

SDGs Strategies of Universities and THE Impact Rankings

Wednesday, 9 September 2020
(15:00 – 17:00 PM CEST)



Participation is free, but registration is compulsory
via [this link](#).

Most universities of the [UNICA network of universities from the Capitals of Europe](#) (53 universities in 37 Capital cities) developed strategies related to the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) to improve health and education, reduce inequality and stimulate economic growth, tackle climate change, contribute to ending poverty and other deprivations, etc.

The [Times Higher Education Impact Rankings](#) assess universities against the SDGs, making comparisons across research, outreach and stewardship.

The opinion of UNICA and other universities networks on Rankings such as [THE](#), [QS](#), [ARWU](#) has been usually rather critical but we have to admit that in the last 20 years the increased use of Rankings by Students induced universities to look more carefully at their activities and performance and improve the overall quality assurance system.

Thus, the discussion of the latest results of the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings could be an excellent opportunity for universities to evaluate their performance and improve their strategies in relationship to SDGs.

PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

(as of 4 September 2020)

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| 15:00 – 15:05 | Welcome address by Luciano Saso , UNICA President |
| 15:05 – 15:25 | Short presentation of the SDGs and the important role of Universities by Ramu Damodaran , Deputy Director for Partnerships and Public Engagement, Outreach Division, Department of Public Information of United Nations |
| 15:25 – 15:45 | Short presentation of the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings by Duncan Ross , Chief Data Officer, Times Higher Education |
| 15:45 - 16:00 | The crucial role of youth organisations in the achievement of the SDGs by Sebastian Berger , Vice President of the European Students' Union |
| 16:00 – 16:15 | Understanding the social impact of universities by Jonathan Grant , Former Vice President & Vice Principal (Service), King's College London |
| 16:15 – 16:30 | Using THE Impact Rankings to assess University involvement in the SDGs: example of PSL University , by Daniel Egret , Advisor to the President, in charge of Referencing and International Ranking, former President of Observatoire de Paris and Astronomer, University <i>Paris Sciences & Lettres</i> , France |
| 16:30 – 17:00 | Discussion & Closing |

Biographies and abstracts



Luciano Saso, President of UNICA

Prof. Luciano Saso (Faculty of Pharmacy and Medicine, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy) received his PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences from Sapienza University in 1992. He is author of more than 220 scientific articles published in peer reviewed international journals with impact factor (SASO-L in www.pubmed.com, total impact factor > 500, H-index Google Scholar 45, Scopus 37). He coordinated several research projects in the field of pharmacology and has been referee for many national and international funding agencies and international

scientific journals in the last 30 years.

Prof. Saso has extensive experience in international relations and he is currently Vice-Rector for European University Networks at Sapienza University of Rome. In the last 15 years, he participated in several projects including IMS2020, EGRACONS, IMOTION, BUCUM, UZDOC, TRAIN and has been speaker and chair at many international conferences organised by UNICA and other university networks. He coordinates the Sapienza team in the European University CIVIS (www.civis.eu).

Prof. Saso has been Member of the Steering Committee of UNICA for two mandates (2011-2015) and in November 2019 he has been re-elected President of UNICA for the second mandate (2019-2023).



Ramu Damodaran, Deputy Director for Partnerships and Public Engagement, Outreach Division, Department of Public Information of United Nations

Ramu Damodaran is Director of the United Nations Academic Impact initiative which he was tasked with creating in 2008. He is also the Secretary of the United Nations Committee on Information. Prior to his United Nations career he was a member of the Indian Foreign Service and served as Executive Assistant to the Prime Minister of India.

ABSTRACT. Revolutionary though the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (“MDGs”) were, and they were revolutionary indeed, there remained areas which were firmly outside their ken. Notable were absence of reference to resolving conflicts, ensuring human rights or, indeed, any aspiration to acquiring education beyond the primary school level. When the United Nations Academic Impact came into being ten years after the MDGs were fashioned, we had the advantage of having sensed the perception of elements that needed to be included, through continuing energetic debates the world over. Our own principles, designed in 2010, took advantage of this advantage. We spoke of higher education as a means to peace and conflict resolution, to ensuring human rights, to sustainability as a whole (and not just environmental sustainability to which the MDGs limited themselves) and, deliberately , to all levels of education including, of course, higher —this specifically for “every interested individual” so that it did not simply seem platitude or appear to diminish other perfectly valid and socially important avenues of learning and accomplishment.

Within months of our launch, the “Rio+20” process began, and with it the elaboration and summing of what were to be the Sustainable Development Goals. With the active advocacy and support from Member States, at least six of our ten principles which were not articulated in the MDGs found phrasing in the SDGs and allowed them to go beyond a charter for higher education to an impulse for nations, their governments and their peoples, in the realization that it is only the reaching (and teaching) across borders, whether of geography or academic discipline, that can unleash solutions and possibilities our times desperately demand.



Duncan Ross, Chief Data Officer, Times Higher Education

Duncan Ross has been a data miner since the mid-1990s. As Chief Data Officer at THE, he oversees a team that generates university rankings, including the Impact Rankings, and related data products. Prior to this, he led Teradata’s data science team in Europe and Asia, where he was responsible for developing analytical solutions across a number of industries, including warranty and root-cause analysis in manufacturing and social network analysis in telecommunications.

ABSTRACT. The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings were launched in 2018 to try to evaluate the important role that universities were working towards Agenda 2030 and delivering on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. With 860 universities participating in 2019 from across the world, the rankings give universities a unique opportunity to showcase their work in a way that is often not seen in more traditional assessments. Duncan will introduce the Impact Rankings, and will talk about some of the ways that universities have chosen to use the results as part of their sustainability strategy.



Sebastian Berger, Vice President of the European Students’ Union

Sebastian Berger is currently serving as Vice President of the European Students’ Union. He has been an active member of the international students’ movement for years, holding various leading positions on the local, the national and the European level. His main focus lies on internationalisation and mobility, public responsibility and financing of higher education as well as organisational development and finances within the European Students’ Union.

Sebastian has a strong work-related background in political communication and public relations as well as campaign management.

He holds a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Vienna.

ABSTRACT. Youth and students organisations have evolved to be a crucial actor when it comes to promoting sustainability and climate action over the past years. They play a significant role in our common effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This presentation highlights European best practices of student-led sustainability initiatives in the field of higher education while introducing ESU policy and relevant projects in this regard. It aims to deliver easily implementable

and practical solutions showcasing how youth/student organisations and educational institutions can join forces in fighting for the future of our planet.



Jonathan Grant, Former Vice President & Vice Principal (Service), King's College London

Jonathan Grant is a former Vice President & Vice-Principal (Service) at King's College London and Professor of Public Policy at the Policy Institute at King's. Service has been identified as one of five strategic priorities in [King's Strategic Vision 2029](#) and encapsulates King's commitment to society beyond education and research. Jonathan has been at King's for over 5 years and was Director of the Policy Institute between February 2014 and 2017. Jonathan's main research interests are on biomedical and health R&D policy, research impact assessment and the use of research and evidence in policy and decision making. Jonathan has significant international experience providing analytical support on the formulation and implementation of R&D strategies in, for example, the UK, Greece, Norway, Qatar, Oman, Australia, Canada and the USA. Prior to joining King's Jonathan was President of RAND Europe between June 2006 and October 2012, where he oversaw the doubling of the organisation's activity in Europe and the establishment of the Cambridge Centre for Health Services Research, a joint venture with the University of Cambridge. Prior to joining RAND in 2002, Jonathan was Head of Policy at the Wellcome Trust.

ABSTRACT. King's College London has a long and proud history of serving the needs and aspirations of society. In the mid-19th century King's led the UK in widening access to higher education, by providing subsidised degree-level study through evening classes. As Charles Dickens commented in 1858: *"It was an opening not only of college doors, but of doors into higher life"*. Today, more so than ever, all universities worldwide have to keep those doors open. To do this, the higher education sector needs to change with the times, including re-discovering, and re-affirming, the public purpose of universities. One way of achieving this is to focus on our social impact – the positive effect we have beyond, as well as through, our traditional missions of education and research.

A few years ago, at King's we were reflecting on what our vision should be to take us to our 200th anniversary in 2029. Through engaging with our community, we consistently heard from our students, staff and alumni how our informal motto "in the service of society" reflected our ethos as a university. We therefore decided to put Service alongside Education and Research as our core academic mission, playing out in the context of London and internationally. Since then we have been developing our commitment to Service. The journey so far has opened the doors to implement, and celebrate, a range of ideas around becoming a socially responsible institution, and to express and emphasise what we are already doing. This has included our commitment to paying the living wage for all our staff, buying all our directly procured electricity from wind farms, developing a series of undergraduate Service-led learning modules and introducing a socially responsible procurement policy. We were therefore very interested when THE announced in September 2018 that they would use the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as a framework for reporting the social impact of universities. At the time we were already exploring various projects to see how Service could be measured by universities at a global level, so this seemed a natural complement to the work we were doing. The main motive for participating was to raise the bar at King's in relation to our responsibility and ability to make a meaningful contribution to society. Seeing how we place against other global

institutions is part of fulfilling our ethos for Service, being accountable for doing so, and our commitment in keeping our doors open.



Daniel Egret, Advisor to the President, in charge of Referencing and International Ranking, former President of Observatoire de Paris and Astronomer, University *Paris Sciences & Lettres*, France

Daniel Egret is an astronomer emeritus at the Paris Observatory (PSL) and project manager at PSL University for referencing of scientific publications and university rankings. His research activity led him to work on the development of large databases and the international sharing of observation data in astronomy (CDS, University of Strasbourg). He was president of the Paris Observatory from 2003 to 2011. He is currently interested in impact measurements of scientific publication in the context of open science.

ABSTRACT. Daniel Egret will tell how the PSL University chose to get involved in the IMPACT ranking, and to take this as an opportunity for evaluating its involvement in the different SDGs. A first step was the use of bibliometric tools to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our research production in the domains covered by the SDGs. From that, we selected the six SDGs to be submitted through the ranking procedure. In the end, the exercise will have enabled us to better understand the current positioning of our University in each of the SDGs and to enrich with quantitative data and actual facts the arguments concerning several projects in progress, including the creation of a new Bachelor program in Sustainable development sciences.