



UNICA DAYS

BRUSSELS

28 FEB - 1 MAR 2024

Navigating the Future: Strengthening
Democracy through Education and Research

BIOGRAPHIES OF SPEAKERS & CHAIRS

29 February | Opening Session

Sorin Costreie | UNICA President (Overall Chair)



Prof. Sorin Costreie was elected to the position of UNICA President in June 2023. He was previously Vice-Rector for Public Relations and University Networks (2019-2024) and Vice-Rector for International Relations of the University of Bucharest (2017-2019), as well as former Vice-Dean of the UB Faculty of Philosophy (2016-2017). He is a member of the University Senate since 2011. In between, in 2016, he was Adviser to the Minister and State Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research. He was also in the period 2020-2023 State Advisor to the Prime-Minister for Education and Research.

He is Associate Professor at the Department of Theoretical Philosophy, University of Bucharest. He holds a PhD in Philosophy (University of Bucharest, 2007), with a thesis in philosophy of mathematics, and pursued further doctoral studies in philosophy of language at the University of Western Ontario, Canada between 2000 and 2008. He has published articles, books and edited volumes with Routledge, Springer, Oxford University Press, Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, Humanitas, University of Bucharest Press, etc.

He was awarded several scholarships and fellowships to study for extended periods in Canada, United States, Germany, Spain, and Italy. His area of interest has lately focused on mathematical cognition and critical thinking. He is member of various professional associations, and since 2014 he is member of the Steering Committee of the European Society of Analytic Philosophy.

Iliana Ivanova | Commissioner Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth (Video address)



Iliana Ivanova serves as European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth since 2023. Her responsibility include ensuring the efficient implementation on the Horizon Europe programme, continuing to build a true European Research Area in cooperation with Member States, and implementing the Erasmus+ programme.

Ivanova was previously a member of the European Court of Auditors between 2013 and 2023. She has been a rapporteur for 27 audit assignments, including on topics such as: regional development and cohesion; the Youth Unemployment Initiative and the Youth Guarantee; and the European digital agenda, innovation, digital skills and education. Prior to that, she was a Member of the European Parliament, elected in 2009. As a member of the European People's Party (EPP) Group, she sat on the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection and the Committee on Budgetary Control, on the latter of which she served as vice-chair. She also took an active part in the work of the Special Committee on the Financial, Economic and Social Crisis, where she was vice-chair. Born in 1975, Ivanova studied international economic relations at the University of Economics in Varna (Bulgaria) and holds a Master's degree in international economic relations from the same institution. She was a coordinator for international financial institutions at the Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture and Food from 1999 to 2002 and was an investment and business analyst in various financial and banking institutions in the US from 2004 to 2006. She also holds an MBA in Global Management from Thunderbird School of Global Management (Arizona State University, US).

Ligia Deca | Minister of Education of Romania (Keynote Speaker)



Ligia Deca is the Minister of Education of Romania. Before ascending to this role in 2022, she served as Presidential Adviser for Education and Research. She is also a member of the Fulbright Commission Board of Directors in Romania. Ligia co-led 'Action Track 3: Teachers, Teaching and the Teaching Profession' within the framework of the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit and since June 2023 was co-opted by the UN Secretary General as a member of the High-level Panel on the Teaching Profession. Between 2010-2012, she was head of the Bologna Secretariat, supporting the Bologna Follow-Up Group within the frame of the European Higher Education Area. Ligia has worked as an expert for the Council

of Europe, European Commission, EQAR, DAAD and others and in 2014 she was invited to be a member of the 'Science in Education' Expert Group set-up by the European Commission. From 2008 to 2010, she was the President of the European Students' Union. Ligia holds a PhD in Political Science, awarded by the University of Luxembourg in 2016 for her research focusing on the internationalisation of higher education.

Igor Papič | Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Slovenia
(Speaker)



Dr Igor Papič was born on 24 May 1966 in Ljubljana. He is a Professor at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering of the University of Ljubljana. From 2011 to 2013, he was the Vice Dean for the field of pedagogical work, from 2013 to 2017 the Dean of the Faculty, and from 2017 to 2021 the Rector of the University of Ljubljana.

He holds bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, University of Ljubljana. In the 1990s, he was a trainee at the Siemens Power Transmission and Distribution Department in Erlangen, Germany. In 2001 he was a visiting professor at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. He has

led numerous national and international research and development projects. In 2009, together with his partners, he founded one of the first spin-off companies of the University of Ljubljana. He has been invited to lecture at the University of Manitoba, the University of Manchester, the University of Alberta, Sichuan University and elsewhere.

From 2006 to 2017, he was Chair of the Programme Council of the Smart Grid Technology Platform. He is President of the Electrotechnical Association of Slovenia. He was one of the initiators and the first President of the Rectors' Forum of the Universities of South-Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, and in 2020 he was the first President of the EUTOPIA European University Alliance.

He is committed to a knowledge-based society and to accelerating the transfer of knowledge from academia to everyday life, which is a prerequisite for the successful development of Slovenia in the coming decades.

29 February | Session 1 | The democratic mission of universities ahead of the EU Parliament elections 2024

Julio Cañero Serrano | Vice Rector for International Relations, University of Alcalá and Member of the UNICA Steering Committee (Chair)



Julio Cañero Serrano is Vice Rector for International Relations and an Associate Professor at the University of Alcalá. His research focuses on the study of the culture, politics, and society of the United States of America, with an emphasis on the literary and linguistic traditions of the Latino population in that country. He is the director of the Benjamin Franklin Collection (2013) and the academic journal REDEN (2019), both belonging to the Research Institute in American Studies "Benjamin Franklin." In the field of knowledge transfer, he has participated in various media as a specialist in North American Studies.

Maria Walsh | Member of the European Parliament (Video Message)



Maria Walsh was elected as a Member of the European Parliament for the Midlands–North-West constituency at the 2019 European Parliament elections. She is the youngest Irish MEP in the European Parliament. Maria was born in Boston, USA, but the village of Shrile, Co. Mayo has been home for her since 1994. She graduated from Griffith College Dublin with a B.A. in Journalism and Visual Media in 2009 and went on to a career in television production and creative management, working in Dublin, New York and Philadelphia.

In the European Parliament, Maria is a full member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), and the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT). She is also a substitute member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE). She is also the only Irish EPP representative on the Delegation for relations with the United States and the Delegation for relations with the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States. Furthermore, Maria is Vice-Chair of the LGBTI Rights Intergroup in the European Parliament, which advocates for equality in the EU and monitors Member States' legislative initiatives. She consistently advocates for equality, inclusion and diversity within her policy and legislation work. As a Co-Chair on both the Mental Health Alliance and the Coalition of Mental Health and Wellbeing Intergroups in the Parliament, Maria is dedicated to raising the cross-sectional impacts of mental health throughout her policy work. With her work on these two Mental Health Intergroups, Maria is leading the call for an EU Year of Good Mental Health to ensure that we are prepared for the oncoming mental health crisis which will follow the pandemic.

In 2014, Maria was crowned the International Rose of Tralee, at the festival of the same name that celebrates young women of Irish heritage. As the first openly gay Rose of Tralee in 2014, she used her platform to advocate for a positive vote in the Marriage Equality referendum in 2015. Up until July 2019, Maria served as a member of the Irish Reserve Defence Force in the First Armoured Cavalry Squadron, based in the Curragh Co. Kildare.

Alexandra Duarte | UNICA Project and Communications Officer (Presentation)



Alexandra Duarte joined UNICA in October 2020, after a previous traineeship of almost one year in 2019.

She is mainly responsible for UNICA's communication. She has a background in Communication, to which she allies an experience in International Higher Education after working in the area of International Relations at NOVA University Lisbon. In the previous years, she also worked at the Communications Office of the same University.

Rita Dias | President of the Erasmus Student Network (Speaker)



Rita is 27 and comes from the coast of Portugal. She has a bachelor's in Political Science and International Relations and a Master's in Public Policy. Rita did her Erasmus in Leuven, Belgium, and worked at the United States Embassy in Lisbon in 2018 and in the Political Observatory in the Association for Political Studies and Scientific Research in 2020. She joined ESN in 2018 when she moved to Lisbon to start her master's. She held several positions in the network, such as President of Portugal and Liaison Officer for Inclusive Mobility. As president, she is responsible for the general coordination of the organisation, external relations, policy, and advocacy. Her main priorities include increasing participation in learning mobility and fostering civic engagement and participation of young people through Erasmus.

Zygmunt Lalak | Vice Rector for Research, University of Warsaw (Speaker)



Prof. Zygmunt Lalak graduated from the Department of Technical Physics and Applied Mathematics of the Warsaw University of Technology (M.Sc. in 1985). His scientific career has been associated with the Department of Physics of the University of Warsaw, where he received his doctoral degree (1990) and habilitation (Dr Sc. 1999). In 2008, he obtained the state-awarded title of the professor. As of 2003, Prof. Zygmunt Lalak is an associate professor and as of 2013 full professor of the University of Warsaw. In years 2016-2020, he was the Vice-Dean for Research and Development at the Faculty of Physics at the University of Warsaw.

Prof. Zygmunt Lalak had been working for many years in the leading research institutions in the area of elementary particle physics: in the laboratory CERN (Switzerland), at the University of Oxford (UK), at the University of Pennsylvania (USA), at the Technical University in Munich and the University of Bonn (both in Germany). He authored more than 120 scientific papers published in the leading international journals and supervised 8 completed PhD degree procedures. He chairs the Scientific Council of the Discipline Physical Sciences. Prof. Zygmunt Lalak is a member of the Coordination Committee of the Priority Research Area POB 2 "Beyond Micro and Macro Worlds" as part of the "Initiative of Excellence – Research University" programme at the University of Warsaw.

Horia Onița | President of the European Students' Union (Speaker)



Horia Onița serves as the President of the European Students' Union, working on overarching political priorities (such as the Bologna Process, European elections), quality assurance of education, learning and teaching policies, digitalisation and social dimension of higher education. He represents ESU in positions such as co-chair of the Drafting Committee of 2024 Tirana Communiqué, co-chair of the Bologna Follow-Up group on Social Dimension and member of European Quality Assurance Register Board and BFUG Board. He also follows EU developments on education funding and the European Semester and has been representing ESU in the Steering Committee on Education of Council of Europe. Horia holds a Bachelor of Law as valedictorian and a LL.M. of Public Procurement from the University of Bucharest.

Florian Trauner | Dean of the Brussels School of Governance at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Speaker)



Florian Trauner is the Dean of the Brussels School of Governance (BSoG) at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Situated in the heart of Europe, the BSoG strives to be a hub for interdisciplinary teaching and cutting-edge research. Its purpose is to understand and help tackle key societal dynamics and challenges such as migration, the digital transformation of society and climate change. Research-wise, Florian Trauner has been interested in the EU's institutions and decision-making as well as policy outcomes in the fields of asylum, migration, border controls and policing. He is a regular Visiting Professor at the College of Europe (Natolin

Campus) and has held permanent or visiting positions at the University of Vienna, Renmin University of China (in Beijing), Sciences Po Paris and the EU Institute for Security Studies. He also acted as an external expert for different EU institutions and UN organisations.

Henrik C. Wegener | Rector, University of Copenhagen (Speaker)



Henrik C. Wegener was appointed as Rector of the University of Copenhagen on March 1, 2017. He holds a MSc in Food Science (1988), a PhD in Microbiology (1992, The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University), a Master of Public Administration (2007, Copenhagen Business School).

Previously, he worked as research assistant, researcher, centre director, research professor and head of research at the National Veterinary Serum Laboratory and the Danish Institute for Food and Veterinary Research in the period 1988-2007.

He was the Director of The National Food Institute at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) between 2007 and 2011, and Provost, Executive Vice President of DTU between 2011 and 2017. He was a Seconded National Expert for the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1999-2000, and the Chairman of the Scientific Advice Mechanism of the European Commission (EC SAM) in 2015-2017.

29 February | Session 2 | The developments in transnational cooperation on education in Europe

Romiță Iucu | Coordinator of the UNICA EduLAB, Co-Chair of the FOREU Subgroup on the European degree, Ambassador of the Magna Charta Observatory, and former Member of the EUA Learning and Teaching Steering Committee Initiative (Chair)



Professor Romita IUCU is the President of the Board of Trustees, of the renowned higher education institution in Romania's Capital City, the University of Bucharest and professor at the Department of Educational Sciences. He has been appointed as Steering Committee Member of the EUA – European University Association, Teaching and Learning Initiative. Professor Iucu held several professional and management positions (former Acting Rector of the University of Bucharest 2016-2017, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, for more than 16 years) on designing,

managing and validating higher education and adult education policies, at international and national level. He was, since 2010 to 2015, the ENTEP Coordinator (European Network on Teacher Education Policies) and between 2016-2017 country representative in The BFUG - Bologna Follow-up Group. In the field of Policy analysis and development: Vice-President National Council for Educational Reform, EU - member of Cluster Teachers and trainers, EU - member of the Expert Group on Improving the Education of teachers and trainers, in 2015-2016, he was the Coordinator of QUALITAS - Barometer of Higher Education (National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), MoFE Ministry of Education and Research (deputy general director, designed and implemented the National Strategy for Adult Education), Consultant for Teacher Training Policies, National Socrates Agency / EURIDYCE – consultant for lifelong learning policies and country expert in the Modernization of Higher Education in Europe -Academic Staff - 2017, UNICEF - Coordinator for National Project – Strategy for Preschool Teacher Training, World Bank expert for rural Romanian Education. Since 2011 he has been inducted as a member of the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame. He was working for ECORYS as country expert dealing with NRP, Themes of the Ad-Hoc requests, country updates. As a relevant experience to this assignment, Prof. Iucu was selected as senior expert in the Project: “Development of the capacity of the Ministry of National Education to monitor and forecast the evolution of higher education in relation to the labour market - SIPOCA 3”, coordinated by the Romanian Academy of Sciences.

Milan Zver | Member of the European Parliament (Video Message)



Born in 1962. Ljubljana. Graduated from the political science department of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, 1987. M.Sc. in 1990 and PhD at the University of Ljubljana, 1998. A member of Slovenian Democratic Party. Dr Zver served as advisor to the deputy prime minister Jože Pučnik and later to the minister of defence Janez Janša. Municipal Councillor in Ljubljana. Member of several executive bodies and twice Vice-President of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS). He was elected to be a member of the Slovenian National Council and National Assembly. Minister for Education and Sports, 2004-2008. During the

Slovene presidency of EU in 2008 serving as President of the Council of European Union for Education, Youth and Culture and in 2009 was elected to the European Parliament. He was a Member of Prague's Platform of European Memory and Conscience and a member of the Central Committee of Berlin's forum Dialog-Kultur-Europa. Actively involved in many activities of KAS and IRI. Author of several books. MEP since 2009.

Marcos Ros Sempere | Member of the European Parliament (Video Message)



Marcos Ros is a Spanish Member of the European Parliament, in the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats. and full member of the Committee on Culture and Education. He is professor on leave of absence in urban planning at the Cartagena School of Architecture. He has been the shadow rapporteur for the European Parliament report on the European Education Area, and is a very active member in matters relating to education, universities and Erasmus+.

Marie-Anne Persoons | Advisor International Policy at the Department of Education and Training of the Flemish Community of Belgium (Keynote Speaker)



Dr Marie-Anne Persoons is Advisor International Policy at the Department of Education and Training of the Flemish Community of Belgium. She graduated in Oriental Languages and History (section of Indo-Iranian studies) from the Catholic University of Leuven in 1984. In 1984-1985 she continued studying Chinese language at the National Taiwan Normal University. Further studies in Leuven include a postgraduate degree in Philosophy (1988) and a Ph.D. in Oriental studies (1995). More recently she obtained a Master degree in Public Management from the University of Antwerp (2008).

Apart from sworn interpretation from/to Chinese at the Court of Antwerp, her first professional experience was connected to teaching and research at the Catholic University of Leuven and the Antwerp Royal Academy of Fine Arts, as well as the Antwerp Institute of Art History. With the latter she still remains affiliated. In 1996 she joined the Flemish Department of Education and Training and has been working in international education policy ever since, initially mostly in relation to the EU Education Committee and the Bologna Follow-up Group, chairing both bodies in 2001. From 2007 to 2009 she was general coordinator of the Benelux Bologna Secretariat before joining the European Commission as national expert (2009-2011). Since 2012 she has coordinated her department's multilateral and bilateral dossiers and participated in several UNESCO, OECD, COE and BENELUX policy forums, such as the UN's SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee (2016-2021) and as Chair of the OECD's Education Policy Committee (2018-2021). Since 2021 she serves as vice-chair of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Education, which administrates a work programme with focus on education for human rights, democracy and rule of law. Scientific publications include articles related to the field of Asian culture and to international (higher) education policy, as well as course materials connected to her teaching experience.

Vanessa Debiais-Sainton | Head of Unit Higher Education, Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) (Keynote Speaker)



Vanessa Debiais-Sainton is Head of the Unit in charge of European Higher Education policies and programme at the European Commission's Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. The unit is the lead service for the development and implementation of the European Education Area's higher education dimension, including the European Strategy for Universities presented in January 2022. This includes the development and implementation of flagship initiatives such as: 'European Universities' alliances, a joint European degree, the European student card initiative, a European Approach to Micro-credentials, the

automatic recognition of higher education qualifications, tracking graduates and the higher education strand of Erasmus+. In previous posts in the European Commission, Vanessa has worked in DG Research and Innovation. Before moving to the European Commission in 2006, Vanessa spent eight years working for several chemical companies.

Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik | Deputy Director for Policy Coordination & Foresight, European University Association (EUA) (Speaker)



In her position as Deputy Director of Policy Co-ordination, Anna-Lena contributes to ensuring coherent policies for universities as well as overall policy development and managing cross-cutting issues with policy relevance.

Between 2011 and 2016 Anna-Lena worked on project management and policy development in the area of university funding and governance. Prior to joining EUA, Anna-Lena worked at the European Commission's Directorate General for Education & Culture in the Unit for Higher Education and the Erasmus Programme.

Anna-Lena holds a Master's degree in European Political and Administrative

Studies from the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium as well as a Magister degree in Communication Science, Political Science and Philosophy from the University of Münster, Germany. During her studies she also spent one year at the Institute of Political Sciences of Bordeaux/France.

Elisa Gambardella | President, Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL) (Speaker)



Elisa Gambardella was elected President of the Lifelong Learning Platform in 2023, after two years contributing to the work of the Steering Committee of the LLLP and representing it in the Board of Civil Society Europe. Her home organisation is SOLIDAR Foundation, where she is Education and Lifelong Learning Coordinator since 2020, and that she originally joined as Political Adviser in 2018. Elisa has represented SOLIDAR also as a member of the CSOs Convention for the CoFoE and as a member of the plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Before moving to Brussels, she worked for the Cabinet of the Italian Minister of Labour,

where she specialised in active labour market policies for youth employment. Overall, she has 10 years' experience in public authorities, think tanks and EU CSOs. She holds a master's degree in European Studies from Roma Tre University.

Marie-Hélène Jobin | Vice Rector for Partnerships and International Relations, University of Luxembourg (Speaker)



As Vice-Rector for Partnerships and International Relations of the University of Luxembourg, I support the development and consolidation of the University's third mission which consists in contributing to social, cultural and economic development of the society. I oversee the development of our agreements with the public and private sectors, the research transfer in collaboration with industry partners and the develop our industrial chairs.

The third mission also includes incubation and acceleration programmes. We are striving to develop an entrepreneurial mindset within the University of

Luxembourg community. With the support of my teams, I also oversee the development of the University's intellectual property, the support of researchers in their invention process and the spin-off of companies resulting from the creativity and know-how of our researchers.

Internationally, my team and I manage relations with other institutions and inter-university alliances. International mobility is compulsory at the University of Luxembourg, and international students represent over 60% of the student body, coming from more than 130 countries. The University of Luxembourg is ranked among the best universities in the world for its international character. The University of Luxembourg is also proud to play a role in capacity building in university networks in developing countries.

Finally, the Vice-Rectorate for which I am responsible also supports the University's commitment to society through public engagement, outreach initiatives and a citizen science approach. Before joining the University of Luxembourg in 2023, I had a rich academic career in Canada, notably at HEC Montréal. I am a full professor of operations and logistics management and an experienced higher education officer. I define myself as a pedagogue at heart, with a particular commitment to continuing education. I taught mainly at MBA and EMBA level in my carrier, focusing on topics such as innovation, process improvement and strategy. Over the course of my career, I've been responsible for managing of a teaching department, pedagogical development (including the management of the HEC Montréal Case Centre and the editorial management of the RICG), programme management and in charge of the complete M.Sc. portfolio at HEC Montréal. In recent years, I have focused my career on international relations with other institutions and on building partnerships. During my career, I have also built and developed a research transfer hub, Pôle santé, dedicated to training, research and coaching in healthcare management. I'm still an active researcher in this field.

Stéphane Lauwick | European Quality Assurance Register (Speaker)



Stéphane Lauwick joined the University Le Havre Normandy (France) in 1994 and became the head of the Electrical Engineering Department of its University Institute of Technology (IUT) in 2001. He was elected Director of the Life Long Learning Centre and Apprenticeship Training Centre of the University in 2007. In that function he was in charge of relations with industrial stakeholders, micro-credentials, recognition of prior learning and apprenticeships, all of which he actively promoted in European circles. He became the director of IUT Le Havre in 2010 and served several terms as vice-president in charge of international relations

for the Assembly of Directors of IUTs, which represents all 108 French IUTs, 9500 academics and 180,000 students. As such, he joined the board of EURASHE, eventually becoming the president of EURASHE after the 2015 Yerevan conference. He actively promoted the role of Professional Higher Education in Europe as a provider of knowledge and competences for a diverse student body and stressed its relevance to present-time issues. He was elected president of EQAR in May 2023 and indicated that one of his priorities would be to advance on the road to true automatic recognition by facilitating the cross-border operation of EQAR registered agencies and the application of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

Liviu Matei | Head of the King's School of Education, Communication & Society (Speaker)



Liviu Matei is a Professor of Higher Education and Public Policy, and Head of the School of Education, Communication and Society at King's College London. He served as Provost of Central European University (CEU), including during the time when this university was forced out of Hungary and relocated to Austria. Liviu Matei taught at universities from Europe, the U.S. and Asia, consulted extensively in higher education policy and conducted research and policy projects for the World Bank, UNESCO, OSCE, Council of Europe, European Commission, Nordic Council of Ministers, other intergovernmental and international non-governmental

organisations, national authorities and universities from Europe and Asia. He was a founding Vice-Chancellor of Open Society University Network and a founding member of the Steering Committee of CIVICA- the European University of Social Sciences. He is a Trustee of American University of Central Asia and a member of the Governing Council of Magna Charta Universitatum. He serves on the editorial boards of Internationalisation of Higher Education Journal: Policy and Practice and the European Journal of Higher Education. Currently, he leads the team developing a proposal for a monitoring mechanism for the fundamental values of higher education in the European Higher Education Area.

1 March | Opening Session

Anastas Gerdjikov | Former Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and member of the UNICA Steering Committee (Chair)



Prof. Dr. Anastas Gerdjikov is the former Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", the oldest and largest University of Bulgaria. Previously he has been Member of the Academic Council, Vice-Rector responsible for Accreditation and Research and Vice-Rector responsible for PhD education of Sofia University, as well as member of the board (2015–2022) and Chairman (2020– 2022) of the Bulgarian Rectors' Conference.

He graduated with a master's degree in Classical Philology from Humboldt University, Berlin and since 1991 is Professor in Latin language, Ancient and Medieval literature at Sofia University. He is member of the editorial board of several scientific journals. Along with research publications and monographs in the field of classical philology, he is author of a book and a number of articles on Bulgarian education

Prof. Gerdjikov has been Vice-Minister of Education and Science, responsible for higher education (2001–2003) and Chief executive of the Bulgarian Science Foundation (2008–2009). As Vice-Minister and later as expert at the Education and Science Parliamentary Committee to the National Assembly of Bulgaria he has participated in the preparation of analyses, laws and regulations in the field of education and science, in particular in the preparation of the chapter on accreditation in Bulgarian Higher Education Law. He has also developed policies and strategies in the field of higher education and scientific research.

Delphine Colard | Head of Spokesperson's Unit and Deputy Spokesperson, European Parliament
(Keynote Speaker)



Delphine Colard is Head of the Spokesperson's Unit and Deputy Spokesperson for the European Parliament.

She leads a unit responsible for answering questions from media on the Parliament's non-legislative affairs. The unit also dealing with the fight against disinformation about the Parliament, taking approaches from prevention to detection and reaction.

Before that, Ms Colard was press officer for institutional affairs following the AFCO committee in the Press Unit. She joined the European Parliament's Secretariat in 2010 after serving in the Belgian diplomacy as Deputy Spokesperson of the Belgian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Spokesperson of the Belgian Permanent Representation to the EU.

1 March | Session 3 | Visions for a new European research & innovation strategy

Marius Gilbert | Vice Rector Research and Valorisation, Université libre de Bruxelles (Chair)



Marius Gilbert is FNRS Research Director and heads the Spatial Epidemiology Lab (SpELL). He spent 2 years at Oxford University as a visiting researcher in the Department of Zoology, before defending his thesis at ULB in 2001. He has carried out his research and teaching activities in the Faculty of Science, first in the Biological Control and Space Ecology Laboratory (LUBIES, Ecole interfacultaire de Bioingénieurs) and then in the Spatial Epidemiology Lab, which he founded in 2016 and has directed ever since. His research in human and animal epidemiology has led him to closely follow the development of the Sars-cov-2 pandemic, to

comment on it in the media and to participate in various expert committees involved in its management (GEES, CELEVAL).

Maria da Graça Carvalho | Member of the European Parliament (Video message)



Maria da Graça Carvalho is currently a member of the European Parliament. She was a senior advisor of Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos Moedas, from November 2014 to December 2015. Previously, she was a member of the European Parliament, between July 2009 and May 2014. In that capacity, she was one of the rapporteurs of Horizon 2020. She was also Principal Adviser to President Barroso in the fields of Science, Higher Education, Innovation, Research Policy, Energy, Environment and Climate Change from 2006 to 2009. She served as a Minister of Science and Higher Education of the XV Constitutional Government

of Portugal and Minister of Science, Innovation and Higher Education of the XVI Constitutional Government. She is a Full Professor at Instituto Superior Técnico (University of Lisbon).

Dan Andréé | Brussels Representative of the Stockholm Trio University Alliance (Speaker)



Dan Andree is a Senior Advisor at Karolinska Institutet and represents the Stockholm Trio Alliance (Karolinska Institutet, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, and Stockholm University) in Brussels. He has worked with and within the European Institutions for the last 24 years (Senior Advisor to the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research and to the Innovation Agency Vinnova as well as the European Commission). He chaired the Council Research Group during the Swedish Presidency 2001 and 2009. He was the Chair of EUs Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC). He is a member of the think tank, High Level

Group on Innovation. Earlier in his career he was a researcher at the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm in Optimisation and Systems Theory. He has been director of two governmental agencies and worked for industry in Soviet Union, India and Israel. He has been Science Counsellor at the Swedish Embassy in London.

Adrien Braem | Senior Policy Officer, Science Europe (Speaker)



Adrien Braem is the Senior Policy Officer at Science Europe, in charge of dossiers related to the European Research Area and Science Europe's activities related legal matters and to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

As a law graduate specialising in EU law and policy with 9 years of experience in advocacy and member-based organisations, his main focus is designing, coordinating and implementing advocacy activities on a variety of issues, including research policy, public health, international co-operation, and human rights.

Claude Catala | President of the Academic Senate of PSL University (Speaker)



Holder of a PhD in Astrophysics and Astronomy, Claude Catala was President of the Observatoire de Paris - PSL from 2011 to 2020. Previously, he served as President of the French National Stellar Physics Program at INSU/CNRS from 1999-2003, then from 2005 to 2011, as Scientific Advisor for Astronomy and Space research with the French Ministry of Research and Higher Education. Involved in large-scale international space projects since 1993, Claude Catala participated in the French-led CoRoT mission for the detection and characterization of exoplanets and the study of the internal structure of stars, and was the Principal Investigator

of the ESA PLATO space mission from 2007 to 2012. In 2008, his research was awarded the Deslandres Prize of the French Academy of Sciences. He was elected President of the Academic Senate of the Paris Sciences et Lettres University in January 2021.

Helen Roche | Vice President for Research, Innovation and Impact, University College Dublin (Speaker)



Professor Helen Roche trained initially in Human Nutrition and Dietetics, then in Molecular Medicine at TCD. She was a Wellcome Fellow in Clinical Biochemistry at the University of Cambridge (UK) and returned to Ireland in 2001 to take up a Wellcome Trust Fellowship at TCD. In 2023, Helen was appointed Interim Vice President of Research, Innovation and Impact. In 2021, she became the Director of UCD Conway Institute.

As of 2017, she is a Full Professor of Nutrigenomics (Nutrition & Omics) at the UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy, and Sports Science. In 2018, she was nominated as a Visiting Professor of Nutrition at Queens University Belfast.

Ariadni Terzopoulou | Team Leader for Developing and Managing the new Governance of the European Research Area (Speaker)

1 March | Session 4 | Networking in Brussels. Meeting the Liaison Officers

Dimitrios Karadimas | former Vice Rector, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Member of the UNICA Steering Committee (Chair)



Karadimas P. Dimitrios was born in Greece, and was educated in Greece and Sweden. He completed his B.A. studies in Classics at the University of Athens getting a distinction, and he pursued his postgraduate and doctoral studies at the University of Lund (Sweden) in Ancient Greek Language and Literature. He got his Ph.D. from Lund University in 1996.

Karadimas' scholarly interests centre on ancient Greek language and literature and especially on classical rhetoric and the relation between philosophy and rhetoric in Antiquity. He has published monographs (in Greece and abroad) and many articles in collective volumes and international journals. Dimitrios Karadimas has a rather long teaching experience. He taught at some Universities abroad, before taking a position in Greece as a Professor of Greek (Ancient Greek Language and Literature) at the Department of Classics of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He has been a member of various scientific, educational and cultural associations and societies. Moreover, he has been chairman of the Department of Classics at the NKUA (2018-2019), President of the Association of the Faculty Members of the School of Philosophy at the NKUA (2017-2019), and Secretary of the same Association (2015-2017). Karadimas was the Vice Rector for Academic and Student Affairs at National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and a Member of the CIVIS European University Alliance Steering Committee until 2023.

Massimo Busuoli | Director of NTNU Brussels Office and Chair of the UnLiON Secretariat
(Speaker)



Massimo Busuoli is Head of NTNU Brussels office since January 2016. He has a University Degree in Physics from the University of Bologna. He has previously held position of Head of European Union and International Bodies Unit in ENEA (The Italian National Agency for New Technologies, the Energy and the Sustainable Economic Development) acting, since 2006, also as Director of ENEA Liaison office in Brussels. From 2008 to 2015 he has been member of the Secretariat of the European Energy Research Alliance (EERA) which he coordinated from 2013.

From 2013 to 2015 he has also been member of the secretariat of IGLO (Informal Group of RTD Liaison Office) which chaired from July 2013 until June 2014. He founded in 2011 the GIURI – Infomal group of Italian liaison offices in Brussels of which he has been chair until 2013. From 2005 until 2011 he has been also member of the board of Directors of CUP2000, an Italian e-care company. Project evaluator and reviewer for the European Commission, he has managed several European projects in the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th Framework programmes. In 2014 he also coordinated the organisational secretariat of the SET PLAN conference held during the Italian Semester of Presidency in Rome.

Brandusa Bitel | Representative in Brussels and Deputy Director of the R&D Department, Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy (Speaker)



Dr Brandusa Bitel is a graduate of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy 'Carol Davila' and currently Deputy Director of the Research, Development and Innovation Department of the same University.

Since March 2023 she is the University's representative in Brussels with the role of increasing the number of European and international partnerships. She has 20 years of experience in biotech research management - with a specialization in clinical trials - in both commercial and entrepreneurial areas as well as academia, in EU and US. Currently the focus of her professional development is the management of research infrastructures - an area in which she started a PhD - thus making an important contribution to the development of the institutional research strategy.

Orsolya Lugmayer | Liaison Officer, Eötvös Loránd University & Corvinus University of Budapest
(Speaker)



Brussels based Liaison officer at Eötvös Loránd University and Corvinus University of Budapest. More than 10 years of experience in the field of research and innovation. Working in Brussels since 2019, acting as a bridge between university researchers and EU organizations, Brussels based representatives, offices, and contributing to numerous events organised with other Brussels Offices. Secretariat member in UnLiON (Universities Informal Liaison Offices Network) since 2022. Previously worked as a legal advisor at the National Research, Innovation and Development Office in Hungary.

Markos Papadopoulos | Coordinator of the Brussels Office, European Office of Cyprus (Speaker)



Markos Papadopoulos is the funding advisor and coordinator of the Brussels office at the European Office of Cyprus. He provides intelligence for EU research funding opportunities and research and innovation policies. The European Office of Cyprus (EOC) is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation based in Nicosia, with representation offices in Brussels and in Athens. Mr Papadopoulos studied law at the University of Manchester and Newcastle University, with a specialisation in Environmental Regulation and Sustainable Development.

Ignasi Salvadó-Estivill | Director, Alianza 4 Universidades (Speaker)



Graduated in Chemical Engineering by the University Rovira i Virgili in 2000, he initiated his career managing European Projects at the same university. At the end of 2003, moved to the UK where obtained, in 2007, his PhD in Chemical – Environmental Engineering by the University of Nottingham. He was awarded with different grants and prizes to develop his PhD. He worked as Innovation Manager at Ransomwood Estates Ltd from 2007 in a company – university collaborative project. In 2008, he moved back to Spain to work as R&D Projects Manager at Air Products Inc. In 2010, he took the position at the University Rovira i Virgili, as head of the R&D&i area. In April 2023, he initiated a new adventure in Brussels, as head of the European Office of the association of 4 top research Spanish universities (2 located in Barcelona and 2 in Madrid). He is also HRS4R expert for the European Commission and he is trying to learn and share how Equality, Diversity and Inclusion can help Research Support Office to do a better job. Since the PhD, Ignasi has dedicated his career on R&D Management and looking for ways of enhancing and measuring its impact, efficiency and outputs. He is got special interest in European R&D projects and international collaboration to boost the quality of the research results.

Eduardo Raul Sánchez Custodio | European Research and Innovation Projects Officer for the EU Brussels Office, Rey Juan Carlos University and University of Alcalá (Speaker)



Eduardo Sanchez has been the Liaison Officer at the University of Alcala and the University Rey Juan Carlos, since November 2022. He holds a double degree in Business Administration and Management - Tourism from the URJC, after a period of study at Sciences Po Lille. He has previously worked as Project Manager for Consultancy and Innovation services in the private sector (ACCIONA Engineering). He currently acts as an interlocutor between universities and European institutions in research policies, giving support to researchers promoting their research results and improving their participation in European and international calls for projects.



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Birgitte Wederking | Director, Greater Copenhagen EU Office (Speaker)



Birgitte Wederking is the Director of the Greater Copenhagen EU Office in Brussels, serving as the joint EU representation of the University of Copenhagen, the Technical University of Denmark, Copenhagen Business School, Roskilde University, Region Hovedstaden, Region Zealand, and 46 municipalities in the two regions. Its primary role involves providing guidance to members and companies in Eastern Denmark on EU funds, fostering European networks, and influencing EU policies. With extensive executive leadership experience with EU affairs and international relations, Birgitte leads a team of 20 professionals specializes in advocacy, partnership relations, project development and communication. Her experience spans change management, strategical development, mergers, board reporting, and financial planning. A Danish national residing in Brussels, Birgitte holds a master's degree in economics and agricultural sciences from the University of Copenhagen, complemented by comprehensive leadership training.