

Table 09

Universities without walls: EUA vision for 2030

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Amanda introduced EUA and the topic. EUA is the largest University Association in Europe with 850 members (800+ individual universities and 35 rectors' conferences).

Universities Without Walls (UWW) is the EUA's vision for 2030. It was developed in 2020 during the pandemic (when there was a focus on day-to-day matters). It was felt that there was a need to look forward to what universities need to do in the future taking account of COVID, the climate crisis, geo-political tensions, technological developments, labour market disruption, threats to democracy, financial instability and growing inequality.

EUA engaged in visionary thinking and broad and extensive consultation with members and external parties.

It was developing a vision: not a blueprint or a roadmap as universities and systems are different and have their own objectives and ways of getting there. EUA wanted to provide inspiration for leaders of universities when doing their own strategies.

While diversity is important, universities have shared values. There are key sectoral values and common missions including:

1. Open, transformative, transnational; communities in dialogue with society, hybrid formats, respects for different learning and research needs, showcases for peaceful international cooperation;
2. Sustainable, diverse and engaged; driven by service, balancing basic and applied research, civic role;
3. Strong and autonomous and accountable, having autonomy, but accountable to society, upholding academic freedom.

Concrete factors for success included:

- enabling frameworks to protect academic freedom, promoting OS
- adequate funding, flexible, financial autonomy
- strong leadership; engaged and open.

Priorities of action included:

- reform of academic careers (career assessment, research assessment); full range of contributions
- promoting interdisciplinarity but not to the risk of undermining the disciplines
- strengthening civic engagement

The introduction was followed by discussion at each sitting of the table.

Discussion 1:

If we have universities without walls, will students be able to make their own curriculum? The document talks about life-long learning
Una Europa alliance: covers all of the aspects of UWW.

Visions and priorities are nice. Distance learning was used more during the pandemic. Not wanting to lose the physical campus but neither the digital momentum points towards a hybrid approach. Students could be given opportunities to process the learning materials through a hybrid approach. Able to do things at their own tempo. Some things online, others on campus. To develop online well, is not cheap and funding is required. There is a need to push for the proper infrastructure and the proper funding.

Use all the facilities of the university during the energy crisis, by making them open to and providing a service to wider society – people can go to the university buildings which are heated; a regional responsibility, but also engaging in citizen science, participatory science. Laboratory on climate change; what impact does it have on local society? (Vineyards etc). Citizens can follow.

Open days, initiatives of different kinds.

Engagement part: when there is too much in-depth engagements with collaboration partners it may pose a threat to academic freedom. Gearing the focus to areas or companies which are perhaps not only interested about research may be better. Internal policies or guidelines about academic freedom? Principles more than practicalities. The contracts with companies may limit the individual researcher and a PhD student may not be able to publishing his/her results in full. There are bad examples and flagrant violations of academic freedom – but how is a balance achieved?

There are limitations to seamless mobility. Running many practical courses: problem with the digital format. It can be a big problem to find accommodation after the pandemic. Problems arise from the need to prioritize Ukrainian students for access to dorms. Increasing costs. Things are getting worse regarding inequality. Students who work. Student landscape are different from two decades ago. It is difficult to go in and out of education.

The biggest challenges face all universities.

The bureaucratic process within each university can be a huge barrier.

Discussion 2:

UWW deals with the visions and inspirational parts. This is a broad overview. How to create synergies to go further and develop some concrete projects. Are there other actions that can create synergies between members? Digital transition, teaching and learning – lots of different projects going on. A new expert group on digitalization is work in progress. Properly balance the physical and the digital. Which type of

university do we want to build up? Where do we come from – roots? Where do we want to go? COVID has had a big impact. There is a need to create networks rather than do things in isolation.

The last two years working was about the values; all colleagues and students were invited to join in. From the values – which practices do we develop? Developing an organizational structure for implementing the values. Opportunities with EUI. Students: good to invite them, helpful for them to be involved with teachers. Flexible learning paths and individualized learning. Two large groups of questions: national security most important (in Ukraine). Also international collaboration between universities.

Academic integrity, university autonomy, internal responsibility. Contest of the best practice during the pandemic. Now: during the war. We should include a greater collaboration and involvement of universities in civic society. European solidarity. Each university in Ukraine needs to develop its own policy for academic integrity and implement it. UWW an invitation to get out of the ivory tower. One university has a vice rector for society. Respond as quickly as we can to societal demands. Important debate. Can we offer ideas to society on how it should develop? A maximum of online activities, not compulsory. One university had 500 MoUs - not all were supported by activities. Funding needed to develop international cooperation. Government funding based on the number of students. 25% of the budget established from qualitative indicators.

Reinforcing academic careers is difficult; students don't want to become academics. Attractiveness of academic careers is an issue.

Virtual campuses between different countries; virtual platforms. Developing projects, concepts through digital means. After mid-career people don't go to campus. Tools to develop life-long learning. Retrain later in your career. International engagement resulting from the pandemic.

What do universities offer to get more money? How to convince the policymakers to give greater support to universities? The money is not for the universities themselves as they exist for the benefit of society.

70% increased funding at one Hungarian university - "We are expecting you to produce x students for the labour market." Virtual campuses in EUI.

Issues with micro-credentials, European degree.

Discussion 3:

The big things we are grappling with as universities?

Make the digital campus more efficient. Open Access challenges. Legislation: challenges with accreditation? Potential problems will stop the digital campus becoming a reality. We need external support from the EU commission. The pandemic became a platform but now we need to go to the next level. Different faculties do it differently. Some say "Students prefer online" – not one single way. Infectious disease doctor – the university stopped and became online, platforms and everything. More collaborative with other schools. Tried to come back – the students

wanted to come back. More difficult to bring the teachers. Mandatory to come for the teachers. Today, no online for graduation. Internal platform where the classes are. Concerns: good things that we learned. Master and PhD online, which allows for international collaboration. Inviting people to give talks at symposia. Wise enough to use the good things from both. The time the graduate students spend as students is good. Now debating whether they may work from home? What kind of job can they do from home?

A call for more flexibility. A matter of the border – how far do we push it, who makes the decision, how does it influence efficiency? On line social things for students and staff. Effectiveness of hybrid, where some people are in the room and others online, can be questioned. Blended teaching is easier? Difficulties when turning to digital. Many poor students have no access to good internet or computer resources. Depends on the resources of the country. How is the quality of internet? Is it beneficial for students to go physically to another country and experience the country - vs - virtual mobility? Summer school format?

Changing the whole mindset in the reform of research/staff assessment, a huge job. A milestone. Culture change is difficult. Practical challenge: the funding situation. Question of identity and community identity. What about universities which function more as hotels. What kind of university do we want to be?

How to ensure that all the work we have done will not be affected by the structural changes? (Change of rectors/deans etc.)

Lots of external factors that impact us – how do we tackle them?

Some values don't change. The basic rules/policies don't change. The day-by-day changes. Piece of advice: model your problems and have strategies in place to tackle them.

What are the basics we have to teach the students? Lots of research was dropped for some time. Women were very overwhelmed and didn't have time to do research. Some take-aways how to make sure that women-researchers can also be dealing with their profession. Research applications dropped in numbers.

Doing more international research. Main focus for one university is increasing the quality and how to make it more internationally recognized.

How do we equally try to grow and balance between all the faculties?

Can we collaborate between schools? Why tripling the same subject at three universities?

What can we do between the three universities? Let's sit together, do the same policies, implement and evaluate. A change of rectors at the same time – momentum.