

MCO CONNECT

news from the Magna Charta Observatory

MCO Anniversary 2022



In September, over 170 participants from 48 countries gathered in Bologna for the first in-person Anniversary Conference for two years. The theme of the event was 'Universities engaging with society in turbulent times'.

The main plenary conference event heard **Chris Brink** introduce the thinking behind the MCO's decision to adopt 'responsiveness' and 'responsibility' as the keywords for its research initiative (see below for more details). He concluded by inviting participants, when returning to their universities, to ask two questions: 'Have we made it clear what we consider our responsibilities to be?' and 'Do we have an active program for exercising our responsibilities?' What universities were good for was a more challenging question than what universities were good at, but it was a fundamentally important question if universities are to best serve society.

Ronald J. Daniels, President of Johns Hopkins University, focused on the university and liberal democracy. He pointed out four ways in which universities can contribute to democracy; by allowing social mobility; educating students about values and history, which are important components of civic education; stewarding facts and cultivating expertise that can be used to inform public policymaking and, finally, by contributing to social justice and fostering pluralism, which is essential for democracy. University environments brought people together from different backgrounds and taught them how to

engage collaboratively. He concluded his speech by asking the universities to step up and renew their commitment to democracy.

These speakers were followed by two powerful examples of universities serving society in turbulent times. **Sibongile Muthwa**, Vice-Chancellor, and Principal of Nelson Mandela University, talked about universities in Africa, especially in South Africa, and presented her university as a case study. Following her talk, Roman Gryniuk, Rector of Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University, discussed the situation of Ukrainian universities in the context of war.

Sibongile Muthwa suggested that universities should be understood as global communities, which are constantly reflecting on their role and are in tune with global changes. She affirmed the need for universities to engage in a collaborative relationships and develop interdisciplinarity, which was seen as the only way to promote a more just society. Moreover, the universities should engage in intergenerational conversation and be courageous to engage community knowledge in the university. Sibongile Muthwa illustrated her talk with examples of what had been learned from the #Feesmustfall movement and the COVID pandemic.

Roman Gryniuk spoke of how Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University had responded following two evacuations; one by the Nazis during the second world war and the second in 2014, which was forced by the Russian invasion. He described how, in turbulent times, university represents, even more than usual, a special place that offers support and shelter to its students and staff. Long before the pandemic, the university started introducing online classes and activities, using cloud technology to save important documents, etc. He stressed the role of the university and its responsibility not only towards the students but the academic staff and the community in general.

He also spoke of the importance of universities joining forces for the social good and serving society, promoting joint scientific research according to the actual necessities and contexts and of international support. Specific responses included the creation of programs related to conflict and emergencies, such as digital business diplomacy, rehabilitation psychology in an emergency, ecological and chemical safety, and social entrepreneurship.

The Secretary-General, **David Lock**, reported on the activities of the MCO and, in the afternoon, 15 world café tables facilitated engaged discussion on a range of topics relevant to the conference theme. Reports of the World Café sessions are being edited and will be placed on the MCO website.

On the previous day, there had been a pre-conference program featuring the MCO's media partner, University World News, and speakers from the University and City of Bologna.

Details of the 2023 Anniversary will be announced shortly.

A report of the conference, a recording of the plenary sessions, a recording of the pre-conference programme, a recording of the signing ceremony, the report of the Secretary General can be viewed clicking below:

[Read more...](#)

58 universities sign the MCU 2020

At a grand but solemn ceremony on 16 September in Bologna, the rectors (or their senior representatives) of fifty-eight more universities from 32 countries signed the Magna Charta Universitatum 2020. A list of those universities is visible on the website of the MCU Anniversary. These Universities are all most warmly welcomed into the Magna Charta community.

Their action in signing shows the strong support for the new Magna Charta and its relevance in the environment in which universities now work.

There is no charge for signing and doing so gives universities access to the Living Values project of the MCO and to its research



program. For details on how to apply to sign MCU 2020, please click in the link below.

[Apply to sign MCU 2020](#)

Upcoming Webinar - Living your values for the common good



4 November 2022 from 14:00 – 15:15 CET.

You are invited to take part in the MCO's next webinar!

The webinar will take the form of a conversation with Pamela Gillies, CBE, FRSE, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University.

Glasgow Caledonian University has the motto 'for the Common Good'. It is shaping society, influencing governments and transforming people's lives around the world. The university signed the MCU in 2009 and was one of the first to sign the MCU 2020.

Pamela Gillies, has been Principal and Vice-Chancellor since 2006 and stands down from that position at the end of this year. Glasgow Caledonian University has played a significant role in the development of the Observatory's Living Values project which is now used by more universities around the globe.

The aim of the webinar is to learn from Pamela Gillies' 16 years as Principal and Vice-Chancellor; in particular to understand the way in which a focus on values has enabled the university to achieve its successes.

Patrick Deane, President of the MCO Governing Council, will engage in conversation with Pamela Gillies after which there will be an opportunity for questions and discussion.

There is no charge to participate in the webinar but prior registration is necessary.

[Free registration here](#)

New Members of Governing Council welcomed



Liviu Matei

Liviu Matei is professor of higher education and public policy, and head of the School of Education, Communication, and Society at King's College London. He was most recently Provost at the Central European University and has taught at universities in Europe and the U.S, consulted extensively in the area of higher education policy, and conducted applied policy research projects for the World Bank, UNESCO, OSCE, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, other international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations; for national authorities and universities from Europe and Asia.

He serves on the editorial boards of the Internationalisation of Higher Education: Policy and Practice, and the European Journal of Higher Education. His primary areas of expertise include university governance, funding, internationalization of higher education, academic freedom and university autonomy, and quality assurance. He is the founder of the Global Observatory on Academic Freedom. He has spoken at MCO events and supported its Living Values project.



Martina Darmanin

Martina Darmanin held the office of President of the European Students Union (ESU) between 2021-2022, Vice-President in 2020, and Human Rights Coordinator between 2019 - 2020. Her portfolio at ESU focused on equitable access to education, academic freedom, student agency in education governance, and international cooperation on education.

She is currently the Vice-President of the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLP) and has represented the international youth and student constituency in the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) between 2020-2022. She has been active as an elected student leader on the local level through the Malta Health Students' Association, as well as at the national level through Malta's University Student Council prior to her European engagement. Martina's academic background is in the field of Health Sciences and holds a Master of Science degree in Food Studies and Environmental Health from the University of Malta. Her M.Sc. research was conducted in partnership with the Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Engineering and Bio-economy e.V. (ATB) in Potsdam, Germany.

We welcome both new members and look forward to them applying their experience to take the work of the MCO forward.



MCO NEWS UPDATE

MCO's Research Direction Agreed

After some months of preparation and an extended workshop of the Research Committee in Tbilisi, by the kind invitation of Ilia State University, the Magna Charta Observatory will shortly launch its academic research project on 'The Responsive and Responsible University'.



The MCO is observing that many universities worldwide are subscribing to the principle of 'responsibility to society' but are finding it difficult to put it into practice in their teaching, learning, and research strategies and activities. Hence, we want to study successes and failures to learn from practical experience, particularly the lessons learned by colleagues.

We think that such peer learning will be particularly helpful if it is based on solid research into relevant cases and the mechanisms that defined their success or failure. The research that we are seeking to undertake will be reflexive, analytical, and (self)critical to be transferable to other universities in other contexts.

Details will be circulated in a letter to all signatories soon. Our aim to involve signatories in the research is a manifestation of our objective to work more closely with them.

The Magna Charta Observatory itself will provide leadership and support by means of its research committee and some facilities for supporting desk research can be made available where this is needed.

Like the Living Values project, we hope that this will enable signatories to be even more effective in the way that they put the principles, values, and responsibilities set out in MCU 2020 into practice.

If you would like more detailed information to be sent to you in due course, please contact the Administrator at magnacharta@unibo.it.

MCU 2020 - now available in Ukrainian

The MCO was very pleased to receive a Ukrainian translation of MCU 2020.



The translation follows the presentation by Rector Roman Gryniuk of Vasyl` Stus Donetsk National University, Ukraine to the MCO's Anniversary conference.

In a letter to the MCO, Rector Gryniuk says "All obstacles and hardships made us stronger and more motivated to improve our educational performance, create public goods, defend academic values and freedoms and serve our students".

The translation is described as being prepared by 'our University family including colleagues from the Faculty of Philology, Psychology and Foreign Languages, a PhD student in Law, and a Master student in English Philology.' We thank all who were involved most warmly.

It is hoped that the translation will assist the 78 other universities in Ukraine that are signatories of the Magna Charta to understand, live by it and

communicate it more clearly. We hope that those universities which have not yet signed the MCU 2020 will apply to do so.

The [MCU2020](#) is currently available in ten languages. If you are interested in helping the MCO expand its library of translated versions, please contact us.

[Read this or the other versions of MCU2020](#)

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