

COUNTDOWN TO THE 1ST EELISA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: AN EVENT THAT AIMS TO BECOME A PIVOTAL GATHERING IN THE REALM OF HIGHER EDUCATION ACROSS EUROPE.



- The conference will take place from tomorrow, **Wednesday 4 to Friday 6 October 2023** at the National University of Science and Technology Politehnica Bucharest.
- The program of activities will offer a wide range of formats distributed across 27 sessions, including two high-level plenary discussions, exhibitions, and film screenings with over 100 international speakers.

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Bucharest, 3 October 2023

EELISA is now gearing up to deliver the event that will mark the culmination of its three-year journey and simultaneously kickstart its new phase. Over two and a half days, with an anticipated attendance of over three hundred participants, the conference will encompass a diverse program including panel discussions, high-level meetings, parallel sessions, and social activities. These elements are carefully designed to commemorate the accomplishments of the first three years of the alliance, encourage collaboration, and cultivate a collective comprehension of the context and prospects of the next four years of EELISA.

Hosted by the oldest and most prestigious engineering school in Romania, this conference takes place shortly after the expansion of the university through a merger, thus marking the establishment of a new university with a regional coverage: 'Universitatea Națională de Știință și Tehnologie Politehnica București (UNSTPB)'. "Hosting this extraordinary event has a twofold significance for our community. First, it is a celebration of achieving essential milestones in our EELISA mission. Just as important, it is the continuation of a journey in which we become more applied and much more relevant for those outside EELISA who wish to impact society for the better" emphasizes UNSTPB Rector, **Mihnea Costoiu**.

Two plenary sessions with high-level speakers.

What experiences have been gleaned from various alliances and stakeholders engaged in the European Universities initiative? What are its main objectives, and anticipated future trajectories? Furthermore, in what ways are alliances like

EELISA contributing to the evolution of national, European, and international higher education systems? These are among the questions addressed in the inaugural plenary session entitled “**EELISA’s pioneering journey and the context**

of the European Universities Initiative”, scheduled for 5 October. **Vanessa Debiais-Sainton**, Head of Higher Education Unit DG EAC, European Commission, **Ligia Deca**, Romanian Minister of Education, **Bogdan Gruia Ivan**, Romanian Minister of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, **Markus González Beilfuss** from the Spanish Ministry of Universities, **Madlen Şerban**, Secretary General, National Commission of Romania for UNESCO and representatives from alliances **EU-CONEXUS** and **EUT+** are among the speakers of this session.

The European Green Deal and the EU Mission 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities are also two pivotal topics selected for discussion in the second plenary session “**The role of European Universities Alliances in the orchestration of the systemic changes needed to tackle climate change**” (6 October). Five of the EELISA higher education institutions are in regions and cities that are part of the Cities Mission. Moreover, the ambition of developing and implementing systemic, structural, and sustainable cooperation based on interdisciplinary and knowledge-creating teams is at the core of EELISA Communities. Thus, this panel will bring together EELISA universities and city representatives with the aim of opening a space for a dialogue on experiences, opportunities, and perspectives. Among its panelists, we find **Tudor Prisecaru**, State Secretary of the Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digitalization of Romania, **Răzvan Nicolescu**, Member of the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), **Halil Hasar**, Director of Climate Change at the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change of Turkey, **François Croquette**, Director of Ecological Transition and Climate of the City of Paris and **Julio Lumbreras**, UPM professor and ex-Member of the EU Mission Board on Climate Neutral and Smart Cities. The general public will be able to follow both sessions via live streaming through the EELISA YouTube channel.

For **Alberto Garrido**, EELISA coordinator, these plenary sessions are of great importance for the alliance at this moment: "One of the key goals of this conference is to involve every individual who has played a substantial role over these three years but also to incorporate an external perspective into the alliance by featuring expert voices of members of the Governments of some of the countries represented by EELISA partner Universities and of several Embassies in Bucharest. Gathering these important and plural insights will assist us in understanding the progress we have made so far and in charting potential next steps for the years ahead."

Dynamic roundtables, abstract presentations, interactive workshops and the EELISA Diversity Award.

The [conference’s programme of activities](#) draws from the open call for contributions initiated by EELISA last April and will feature over 50 prominent researchers, academics, and staff members from EELISA institutions, in addition

to representatives from other European universities and international institutions.

Spanning various formats and structures, over 20 sessions will delve into eight key themes for EELISA, including the new European engineering model, the university of the future, innovative pedagogies, entrepreneurship and innovation, and forging sustainable cooperation. Gender equality and inclusion will also be addressed in the session "**Building Diverse and Inclusive Research and Innovation Communities.**" This panel discussion will highlight a range of best practices in diversity and inclusion, ultimately leading to the selection of the [EELISA Diversity Award](#) offered by [EELISA InnoCore](#), the Research & Innovation division of EELISA. The award announcement is scheduled to take place during the closing ceremony on 6 October.

EELISA students have also played an active role in the organisation of two main activities: a role-play discussion following the screening of the [EELISA Special Mention](#) award-winning documentary film "**The Great Green Wall**" (Directed by Jared Scott, 2022), and an interactive panel entitled "**Student Participation at all levels of the Alliance**" which will invite to reflect on the role of the EELISA Students participating in the alliance and the impact it has on both their academic -and life experience.

In the words of EELISA Executive Director, **Sofia d'Aguiar**, "It is a moment of collective effort and a celebration of milestones that are contributing to the transformation of European higher education. Therefore, anyone interested in keeping up with the transformative steps occurring in the higher education landscape is welcome".

A special meeting of the EELISA Governing Board with a focus on the new phase of EELISA.

The crowning moment of the conference will be a closing session with remarks from UNSTPB Rector, followed by **Guillermo Cisneros**, Rector of the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, who will share words aimed at inaugurating the new period of the alliance, also known as "EELISA 2.0".

One day prior to this pivotal event, the Rectors, Directors, and Presidents, along with academic, staff, and student representatives from all EELISA institutions will convene to review the accomplishments of the first phase of the alliance, assessing its key milestones. They will also deliberate on the shared objectives and goals for the launch of EELISA 2.0.

For the first time, this EELISA Governing Board meeting will serve as an opportunity for the alliance to engage in dialogue with representatives of national authorities and international organizations. The aim of such dialogue will be to discuss the impact of the European Universities initiative on both national and international levels and highlight the importance of collaborative efforts in identifying challenges, thus facilitating future cross-border cooperation.

In light of this special occasion, the meeting will be open to external guests, including distinguished speakers from the plenary sessions Vanessa Debiais-Sainton, Madlen Șerban, Markus González, and Ligia Deca, among others. They will actively contribute to the discussions, alongside other notable guests such as **Philippe Wieber**, **Micaela Ossola Revilla**, and **Özgür Kivanc Altan**, representing the French, Spanish, and Turkish Embassies in Romania respectively.

This marks a truly significant moment for EELISA, as underscored by the words of **Dale Martin**, President of the alliance: “EELISA is meant to be a transformative journey for all. It intends to transform our universities to fulfill our vision as a transformative force, contributing to the growth of inclusive, sustainable, digital societies. For this initiative to reach its potential, we must make cooperation with external stakeholders a priority and commit to bridging European engineering, together with other sciences and humanities”.

1st EELISA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

BECOMING THE **ENGINE** THAT LEADS TO A NEW **FUTURE**

Join us in celebrating the achievements of EELISA's first three years and envisioning the path to the new EELISA 2.0.

New European Engineer **Interactive workshops**
High-level Panel Discussions **Impact for Society**
Abstracts Presentations **Diversity and Inclusion**
Networking Sessions **Innovative Pedagogies** **Roundtables**
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Building Cooperation
Exhibitions **Entrepreneurship and Innovation**

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