

Dear Rector, President or Vice-Chancellor,

In October 2022, the Council of the European University Association (EUA) endorsed my candidacy for the position of President of the Association, following the recommendation of the EUA Nominations Committee and my nomination by the Spanish National Rectors' Conference (Crue Spanish Universities).

As a Member of Crue's Standing Committee and responsible for international strategy, I have actively participated in the EUA Council since 2016. I was elected EUA Board member in April 2019 and this position has given me the chance to gain first-hand experience of the organization and to work on some of our most recent initiatives and developments. After all these years, running for the EUA Presidency is a great honour, as well as a huge responsibility, for me.

Over the last few months, I have had the opportunity to meet with many National Rectors' Conferences (NRCs) which represent most of the EUA's individual full members. During those meetings we have shared our analyses, thoughts, concerns, and proposals about the EUA as an organization; about the European Union agenda for higher education, research and innovation; and about the wider European Higher Education Area (EHEA). I very much appreciate the time, the willingness to share and the openness of all those who have participated in these meetings. The list of proposals on my agenda for the evolution of the Association over the next four years is based mainly on the inputs received in these encounters. I invite you to consider my proposals and, if you are in agreement, I would appreciate your support in the election for EUA President in the coming General Assembly meeting in Gdańsk (Poland) on April 20th, or by proxy vote should you be unable to attend.

Context, EUA's recent developments and main approach for the next presidency

It is widely agreed that under the leadership of President Michael Murphy, the EUA has undergone a deep, positive, and highly constructive transformation. The sustained dialogue and engagement with NRCs, combined with a renewed style and pro-active approach to the Secretariat's work and the assignment of portfolios to Board members, has improved the overall running and reach of the association, as well as the feeling of belonging. Communication, openness, pro-active dialogue, and engagement are keystones in large, comprehensive and diverse organisations such as the EUA. I detected a broad consensus that the EUA needs to consolidate this transformation. It is essential to give continuity to the direction in which we are moving forward, with the necessary adjustments due to the dynamic and changing environment. This is, in fact, my main motivation for running for the presidency of the EUA.

Strategic Plan Midterm Review (the first action to promote)

The EUA's Strategic Plan, which we collectively elaborated, and which I fully advocate, defines our vision, our mission, our values, our goals, and our leading actions around four priorities, and it also delineates our "way of working" together. Regular reviews and adjustments to strategy are always positive for all institutions, and in the case of the EUA a midterm review will be particularly useful for several reasons. Firstly, to provide an assessment of current strategies and their implementation, secondly, to make any adjustments considered necessary for the proper implementation of the plan, and thirdly to strengthen the political framework in which the new Board will work. This midterm review will help us to lay the groundwork for the new strategic plan that will come into force beyond 2025 and must be drawn up during the next presidency.

Communication, Advocacy and Lobbying

The EUA defines itself as "*the voice of Europe's universities*". And because of this, we need to work to keep improving communication, advocacy, and lobbying actions at all levels. Mainly at the EU level, but also at

the national level in close cooperation with the different NRCs, and -obviously- in the wider Europe because the EUA represents the values and interests of the whole EHEA. We must aspire to sustain the EUA as the main interlocutor (and influencer) for higher education, and one of the key interlocutors for research and innovation in Europe. The ERASMUS+ and Horizon Europe, the European Strategy for Universities and the European University Alliances Initiative, to name a few, are EU flagship political initiatives in which universities need to be heard.

The Association has developed a strong portfolio of tools for impact: the “University Without Walls” vision document, the Universities and the Future of Europe (UniFE) Project, the regular Trends reports on Learning and Teaching, the CDE, the Open Science actions, all the research ethics and integrity efforts, the Autonomy Scorecard, the funding campaigns, the fight for university autonomy, university values and academic freedom, the Global University Association Forum (GUAF), the collaboration with other university associations and stakeholders, all the actions oriented to minimize the effects of Brexit on our academic communities, and our solidarity with colleagues affected by the war in Ukraine and the efforts for a future post-war recovery, etc; to name some of the different topics included in our exhaustive Annual Operational Plan. While these actions serve as flagship initiatives and help many universities to better deliver their missions as they benefit society as a whole, we should not forget that they are important tools for advocacy and lobbying purposes.

It is often said that the effectiveness of advocacy and lobbying is highly correlated with the prioritization and selection of few, clear and strong messages. In our case, the bidirectional communication and coordination between the different NRCs and the EUA is crucial, and it has proven to be especially important in the context of multilevel governance of the EU. We also need to strike the correct balance between finding consensus among the diversity of EUA’s members, and the selection of those priorities.

The EUA advocacy and lobbying actions need to go beyond our sector, and we must play our part building a better future, fighting for human rights and democratic values, promoting European solidarity and the fundamental geographical balance within Europe, meeting the SDGs, etc. It is about shaping together a fair and sustainable future for humankind.

Academic assessment

The need to reflect on academic assessment, both at individual and institutional levels, was included in the Strategic Plan and in the “University Without Walls” vision document. At the individual level -and applying the well-known approaches of some of our colleagues such as the “Room for everyone’s talent” and “Parity of Esteem”- the reform on academic assessment is still in its early stages with the reform of the research assessment and the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). At an institutional level, how a HEI should be assessed is a very relevant area of debate, which can have important effects on a university’s funding and reputation. This is highly correlated with rankings, which is why the EUA joined the “More Than Our Rank initiative”. Academic assessment has important consequences at all levels of universities, and sometimes shapes how we deliver our missions. We need to keep working together on this complex and challenging issue.

Learning & Teaching. Rethinking the first mission of universities

Universities at all levels, but also at the institutional level, need to lead a profound change in the learning and teaching mission, by means of strategies, innovation and proactive policies. Among others, some powerful signs that a transformation is needed are: the lessons learned during the Covid-19, the expectations of digital-born students, the much-needed student-centred orientation, the emergence of onsite/online/hybrid and blended models, the goal of inclusiveness, the best practices on innovation, the technological disruption, personalized learning approaches, globalization, Life-Long Learning needs, etc.

Much of that is included in the “University Without Walls” document, but the EUA must find the best way to include the first university mission in its political agenda and strategy in order to better serve society.

Added value for EUA members and membership development

The number of EUA members has been growing in recent years, reversing the previous negative balance. Naturally, this is due to a number of factors, but undoubtedly the profound institutional change which I spoke of at the beginning and the close cooperation with NRCs are key contributors to the growth of the organisation. This change has provided all member institutions with real added value, regardless of whether they are individual or collective members.


We must persevere with this goal, and the creation of added value for individual members (universities) is also a key issue in which we must deepen. The strength of the EUA lies precisely in the large number of universities it represents, and in its diversity. Only this way will the EUA continue to be considered the main representative of the European Higher Education sector. Reaching 1000 members by the end of the next presidency is an ambitious but possible goal that we must set ourselves.

I would like to propose the following actions in order to further the efforts to create more added value for all EUA members:

- Leadership development
The NEWLEAD project identified best practices in university leadership development across Europe. The project also identified key points for the successful implementation of crucial transformation areas such as greening and sustainability, or female leadership, among others. While some university systems and institutions have set up leadership development programs, many see untapped potential in their systems and a lack of provision at European level. The EUA must help members to develop leadership capacity to drive change and respond to the many new challenges. The NEWLEAD project, as well as the LOTUS project on leadership for learning and teaching, showed that EUA members embrace these opportunities. Several actions can be designed to take this to the next level and provide a sustainable and varied offer for EUA members.
- Country File
The EUA has a great deal of information about the university systems of each country. The Public Funding Observatory and the Autonomy Scorecard are just two examples. Together with NRCs, future actions could be analysed in order to increase the information we share. The creation of a “Country File” with the active political challenges of each country would enable us to work together more effectively and to increase the impact of advocacy and lobbying efforts.
- The EUA Institutional Evaluation Program (IEP) and EUA Solutions
When facing strategy, leadership and governance challenges, both programs are really useful tools for EUA members. They also constitute a powerful instrument for promoting membership because both are oriented to the creation of added value for universities. A sustainable and broader use of the two programs needs to be considered.
- EUA Annual Conference, forums and events
Although most of the participants of EUA events share the idea that these activities are excellent platforms for sharing best practices, shaping future visions and networking; we need to work on the contents, the calendar and the use of hybrid models in order to foment participation. In particular, the EUA Annual Conference must be “the go to” meeting for European rectors.

These are the agenda elements to which I am committed and will implement if successful in the electoral process in Gdańsk.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Josep M. Garrell.
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EUA presidential candidate and Board member
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Short biography



- Rector of Ramon Llull University (URL) in Barcelona (2012-2022)
- Vice-president of the Spanish Rectors Conference (2021-2022) and member of its Standing Committee (2015-2022) responsible for international strategy
- President of the SACRU Alliance (2020-2022)
- Member of the EUA's Council (2016-present)
- Member of the EUA's Board (2019-present)

Education and Academic Career

- Computer Engineer from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC) in 1992
- PhD in Electronic Engineering from Ramon Llull University (URL) in 1995
- Faculty member and researcher in the La Salle Digital Engineering School - URL since 1993
- Full Professor at URL focusing on academic and research activity in the field of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. Co-founder and first director of the Research Group in Intelligent Systems at URL. Experience as principal investigator in public and private research projects

EUA's Board activities

- Championing the Governance, Autonomy and Funding Board portfolio
- Chairman of the Autonomy Scorecard Advisory Committee
- Institutional coordinator of the ERASMUS+ funded project NEWLEAD

Other institutional positions

- URL Rector's Delegate for ITs (2000-2002)
- Vice-Rector for Research and Innovation at URL (2002-2010)
- Secretary General at URL (2006-2012)
- Vice-Rector for University Policy at URL (2010-2012)
- Coordinator of "Aristos Campus Mundus" interuniversity strategic alliance, which was awarded the Campus of International Excellence label by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (2010-12)
- Member of the Advisory Board of the Parliament of Catalonia for Science and Technology (CAPCIT) (2014-2022)

Honours

- Chevalier de l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques (2019) (French Republic award)

More information in the [EUA's Election 2023 Web Page](#)