

30  
YEARS



Network of Universities  
from the Capitals of Europe

## 30th UNICA General Assembly & Rectors Seminar

THREE DECADES OF UNICA:  
ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE COVID-19 ERA

### RECTORS SEMINAR – Abstracts & Biographies

Thursday, November 19 | 13:00 pm – 16:50 pm CET

#### WELCOME ADDRESS



**LUCIANO SASO**

President  
UNICA

Prof. Luciano Saso (Faculty of Pharmacy and Medicine, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy) received his PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences from Sapienza University in 1992. He is author of more than 220 scientific articles published in peer reviewed international journals with impact factor (SASO-L in [www.pubmed.com](http://www.pubmed.com), total impact factor > 500, H-index Google Scholar 45, Scopus 37). He coordinated several research projects in the field of pharmacology and has been referee for many national and international funding agencies and international scientific journals in the last 30 years. Prof. Saso has extensive experience in international relations and he is currently Vice-Rector for European University Networks at Sapienza University of Rome. In the last 15 years, he participated in several projects

including IMS2020, EGRACONS, IMOTION, BUCUM, UZDOC, TRAIN and has been speaker and chair at many international conferences organised by UNICA and other university networks. He coordinates the Sapienza team in the European University CIVIS ([www.civis.eu](http://www.civis.eu)). Prof. Saso has been Member of the Steering Committee of UNICA for two mandates (2011-2015) and in November 2019 he has been re-elected President of UNICA for the second mandate (2019-2023).

## AUDIO MESSAGE BY EU COMMISSIONER MARIYA GABRIEL



### **MARIYA GABRIEL**

EU Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture,  
Education and Youth

Mariya Gabriel is a Bulgarian politician and a member of the GERB party serving as European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth since 2019. She was previously European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society from 2017 to 2019 and a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from 2009 to 2017. She is also the First Vice-President of the European People's Party (EPP) since last year. She has a BA in Bulgarian and French Languages from Paisii Hilendarski Plovdiv University and a Master in Comparative Politics and International Relations from the Academy for Political Science, Bordeaux.

Source: [European Commission](#)

## Session 1. 1990-2020: UNICA & Europe, two success stories



### TANJA BÖRZEL

Jean Monnet Chair, Director of the Center for European Integration and the Center of Excellence "The EU and its Citizens", Freie Universität Berlin

Prof. Dr. Tanja A. Börzel is a professor of political science and holds the Chair for European Integration at the Otto-Suhr-Institute for Political Science, Freie Universität Berlin. She earned a Doctor of Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute, Florence, Italy. She is the Director of the Cluster of Excellence "Contestations of the Liberal Script" as well as the H2020 Collaborative Projects "EU-STRAT – The EU and Eastern Partnership Countries: An Inside-Out Analysis and Strategic Assessment" and "EU-LISTCO – Europe's External Action and the Dual Challenges of Limited Statehood and Contested Orders". She also directs the Jean Monnet Center of Excellence "Europe and its Citizens". Her research focus and teaching experience lie in the field of institutional theory and governance, comparative regionalism and diffusion. She mainly concentrates on questions of governance and institutional change as a result of Europeanization as well as on the diffusion of European ideas and policies within and outside of the EU. The latter is part of her current research, which deals with compliance with EU norms and rules in member states, accession countries and neighboring countries. Moreover, she is interested in how governance in and by the EU compares to other regional organizations.

Source: [Freie Universität Berlin](#)



**SABINE KUNST**

President

Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

*photo © Matthias Heyde*

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dr. Sabine Kunst has been the President of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU) since May 2016. Before her inauguration, Kunst was Minister for Science, Research and Culture (MWFK) in Brandenburg, starting in February 2011. Until she was appointed Minister, she was President of the University of Potsdam from January 2007 until February 2011. Prior to this, the university teacher and researcher held several senior positions, including Director of International Affairs and Vice President for Teaching, Studies and Further Education at Universität Hannover. From 1972 until 1982, Sabine Kunst studied and gained a doctoral degree in biology, political science and water management at Universität Hannover. She completed her doctoral studies in engineering in 1982, and in political science in 1990.

From 2010 until 2011, Sabine Kunst was the very first female President of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the largest organisation for the worldwide exchange of researchers and students. Her international engagement as a researcher and university teacher has taken her to a number of countries, e.g. to Bolivia and Peru for development cooperation, and later to Mexico. This was followed by several extended research visits in Cape Town. In 2010, she was named University Manager of the Year. In 2013, she received an honorary doctorate in Berlin from the American Jewish University Los Angeles.



**GÜNTER M. ZIEGLER**  
President  
Freie Universität Berlin  
*photo © Maik Machals*

Günter M. Ziegler started his studies at LMU Munich. He received his PhD in Mathematics at M.I.T. in 1987. Since 1995 he has been Professor of Mathematics at TU Berlin, since 2011 at FU Berlin, where since 2018 he serves as the President. He is a member of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, of the German National Academy Leopoldina, and of the German Academy of Engineering Sciences acatech. He has received numerous awards, including a DFG Leibniz prize, an ERC Advanced Grant, the Communicator Award, and the Berlin Science Prize of the Governing Mayor of Berlin.



**LUCIANO SASO**  
President  
UNICA

*See above.*

## Session 2. Challenges & opportunities for universities in the COVID-19 era



### **SORIN COSTREIE**

Vice Rector, University of Bucharest

Member of the UNICA Steering Committee

Vice-rector of the University of Bucharest since 2017 and pro-dean of the Faculty of Philosophy during 2016-2017, Associate Professor Sorin Costreie, Ph.D., is specialised in the philosophy of language, in the philosophy of mathematics and in philosophical logics, being member of the academic staff of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Bucharest.

Associate Professor Sorin Costreie, Ph.D. is a doctor in philosophy of the University of Bucharest since 2007. His research interests cover the fields of logics, the philosophy of science, metaphysics, epistemology, critical thinking and the history of philosophy (particularly focusing on the beginnings of analytical philosophy and on Leibniz).

He has held advanced research activities at the University of Western Ontario, where he has held a series of courses and workshops for the students in Philosophy.

*Source:* [University of Bucharest](https://www.unibuc.ro/en/rectorat/vice-rector)



**ULRICH GROTHUS**

President

ACA – Academic Cooperation Association

*photo © Buessemeier*

Ulrich Grothus (b. 1952) is the president of the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), the European umbrella organization of national internationalization agencies. Before his retirement in July 2018, he was Deputy Secretary-General and head of the Berlin office of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). He obtained a master's degree in Political Science at the Freie Universität Berlin in 1976. He then worked as a journalist before joining the International Division of the former West German Rectors Conference in 1982. He worked for DAAD from 1988 through 2018, first as spokesman and head of the president's office. From 1991, he was consecutively director of all three DAAD program directorates, for the Southern and Northern hemisphere and for supra regional internationalization programs. In between, he served as director of the Paris office from 1998 to 2000 and of the New York office from 2004 to 2008. Grothus speaks five foreign languages and has given three others a try.



**SARI LINDBLOM**

Vice President

University of Helsinki

Sari Lindblom is the Vice-President at the University of Helsinki and a Professor at the Department of Education. She got her PhD in Psychology in 1999 at the University of Helsinki. Her research focuses on student learning at university, in particular on individual study paths, well-being, stress and self-efficacy beliefs of university students and on study success and progress. Procrastination and, on the

other hand, fast study progress is also in the focus of her research. Students' approaches to learning and self-regulation skills of university students are also among Lindblom's research interests.

Source: [University of Helsinki](#)



**JÓN ATLI BENEDIKTSSON**  
Rector  
University of Iceland

Jón Atli Benediktsson is the Rector of the University of Iceland. He is a Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering and received the Cand.Sci. degree in electrical engineering from the University of Iceland, Reykjavik, in 1984, and the M.S.E.E. and Ph.D. degrees from Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, in 1987 and 1990, respectively. From 2009 to 2015, he was Pro-Rector of Science and Academic Affairs at the University of Iceland. His research interests are in remote sensing, image analysis, pattern recognition, biomedical analysis of signals, and signal processing, and he has published extensively in those fields. Prof. Benediktsson was the President of the IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society (GRSS) in 2011-2012 and has been on the GRSS Administrative Committee since 2000. He is a co-founder of the biomedical start-up company Oxymap.

Source: [ORCID](#)



## Session 3. The future relevance of Higher Education for Society



### **CARMELA CALÉS BOURDET**

Vice Rector, Universidad Autónoma of Madrid  
Member of the UNICA Steering Committee

*photo © Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*

Carmela Calés Bourdet is the Vice-Rector for Internationalization of Universidad Autónoma of Madrid. She is full Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the Department of Biochemistry, School of Medicine, Universidad Autónoma of Madrid. Her research has evolved from classical biochemistry to molecular and cell biology and is currently focusing on biomedical approaches at the Instituto de Investigaciones Biomedicas Alberto Sols (IIBAS), a joint center from the "Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) and the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) and currently one of the most important Biomedical Research Centers in Spain.

In her position as Vice-Rector, Prof. Carmela Calés Bourdet has been developing the UAM internationalization strategy since July 2017 and has been involved since the very beginning in CIVIS, the European University Alliance that has been selected for funding in the first pilot call.

Since 2018, she is one of the three elected vocal members of the CRUE (Spanish Rectors Conference) Executive Board for Internationalization and Development. From 2010 to 2017, she was the Director of UAM Scientific Culture Unit. From 1999 to 2001 she was Vice-Dean for Research of the School of Medicine, and Vice-Director at the IIBAS from 2001 to 2003.



**ANDREW DEEKS**  
President  
University College Dublin

Andrew was educated at the University of Western Australia, where he received a first class honours degree in civil engineering in 1984. After completing his Masters degree he worked in industry briefly, before returning to UWA to pursue his PhD and an academic career. He became Winthrop Professor, Civil and Resource Engineering, in 2004 and was Head of School from 2004 to 2009. In 2009, Andrew joined Durham University as Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Science. In this role he led the development of the university's global presence strategy and extensive international partnerships, particularly in China and Brazil. On 1 January 2014, Andrew moved to University College Dublin to take up the role of President, becoming the first Australian to lead an Irish university, and the first person from outside Ireland to lead the University since John Henry Newman (1854). Andrew's primary research focus is in computational mechanics; specifically in the scaled boundary finite element method, which is a semi-analytical approach for solving elastostatic, elastodynamic and allied problems in engineering. His other research interests include structural mechanics, structural dynamics and dynamic soil structure interaction.

Source: [University College Dublin](https://www.unica-network.eu/office/andrew-deeks)



**IGOR PAPIČ**  
Rector  
University of Ljubljana

Prof. Dr. Igor Papič is a professor at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering at the University of Ljubljana. He is the Head of the Laboratory of Electricity Networks and Devices, and he was the Vice-Dean for Education from 2011 to 2013 and the Dean of the Faculty from 2013 to 2017.

He received his bachelor's degree in 1992, his master's degree in 1995 and his doctorate in 1998 from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering at the University of Ljubljana. From 1994 to 1996, he trained at Siemens' Power Transmission and Distribution department in Erlangen, Germany. In 2001, he taught as a guest professor at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. His research includes active compensators, FACTS (Flexible AC Transmission System) devices, power quality and smart grid concepts.

Prof. Dr. Igor Papič has also led numerous domestic and international research and development projects. In 2009, he and his partners established Reinhausen 2e, d.o.o., a spin-off company of the University of Ljubljana. The company's two main activities include engineering and the development of passive, hybrid and active compensators. His activity extends beyond the academic sphere as well, having served as Chairman of the Slovenian Smart Grids Technology Platform from 2006 to 2017.

He was elected and is serving as Rector of the University of Ljubljana for the mandate from 1 October 2017 to 30 September 2021.

Source: [University of Ljubljana](https://www.unilj.si/en/about-us/rector)



**PETER MATHIESON**  
Principal  
University of Edinburgh

Professor Peter Mathieson MBBS(Hons)(London), PhD(Cambridge), FRCP(London), FRCPE, FMedSci assumed the office of Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh in February 2018.

He read Medicine at the London Hospital Medical College and qualified with First Class Honours from the University of London in 1983. After junior medical posts in London, he obtained a research training fellowship from the Medical Research Council (MRC) to study at the University of Cambridge. He was awarded a PhD by the University of Cambridge in 1992. He became Director of Studies for Clinical Medicine at Christ's College, Cambridge following his PhD. After a further MRC fellowship he moved to Bristol in 1995 as the foundation Professor of Renal Medicine at the University of Bristol and Honorary Consultant Nephrologist, North Bristol NHS Trust. In 1999, he was elected to Fellowship of the Academy of Medical Sciences. In 2007, Peter became Head of the University Department of Clinical Science at North Bristol, was appointed as Director of Research & Development for the North Bristol NHS Trust, and was elected President of the Renal Association (the UK's national speciality association for nephrologists and renal scientists) in a competitive ballot of the membership, being the youngest President in its history. He served the full three year term as President and remained a Trustee for a further two years as Immediate Past-President.

In 2008 Peter was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Bristol, serving most of a sixth year after his initial five year term. He played a major role in the formation of Bristol Health Partners from 2008 onwards and was appointed as its founding Director in May 2012, a role he undertook alongside that of Dean. In April 2014, Peter assumed office as the 15th President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, a post he held until January 2018.

Source: [The University of Edinburgh](#)