

## 31<sup>st</sup> UNICA General Assembly Rectors Seminar

### THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

23 June 2021

## BIOGRAPHIES OF SPEAKERS



#### OVERALL CHAIR: LUCIANO SASO

UNICA President

Professor 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).



## KEYNOTE SPEAKER: XAVIER PRATS MONNÉ

Senior International Advisor on Public Policy, Education, and European affairs; former Director-General for Education and Culture and former Director-General for Health and Food Safety, European Commission

Xavier Prats Monné is currently the Special Advisor of Teach For All, a global non-profit organisation whose mission is to expand educational opportunity around the world, and the Senior Advisor for Strategic Initiatives of the Open University of Catalonia (UOC). He is the president of the European Committee of the King Baudouin Foundation, and Chief Advisor to the Board of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT-Health). He advises several non-profits as well as Astanor Ventures, a mission-driven impact investor that focusses on the sustainability of food systems. He previously served at the European Commission, including as Director-General for Health and Food Safety, Director-General for Education and Culture, Director for employment policy, and Deputy Chief of Staff of the Vice-President for Foreign Affairs. He is from Spain, grew up in Rome, and is a social anthropologist by training.

### **Abstract: The impact of Covid-19 on Higher Education in Europe**

Higher education in Europe has a great future – but it will not be education as we know it. While there is a great diversity of situations and contexts, the pandemic has shown significant shortcomings in educational institutions and systems: when Covid-19 arrived, few institutions were prepared or resilient enough, be it on human capital, strategy, infrastructure or technology. The temporary interruption of face-to-face activities increased global inequalities, with often dramatic social and economic consequences. At the same time, technology is becoming as disruptive in higher education as it has been in other sectors: universities are losing their monopoly in the creation, transmission and certification of knowledge.

Yet, the pandemic has also shown the potential of universities to help address the strategic challenges of our societies. Higher education institutions can provide open platforms of cooperation, trust and security in the transmission of knowledge, in a world that has lost confidence in public institutions and multilateral cooperation. Deeper networks of cooperation between European universities would make a compelling case for multilateral cooperation and for a more prominent role of the EU in the world.

## SPEAKERS

### Panel 1 - The impact of Covid-19 on Higher Education in Europe: current challenges



#### JÓN ATLI BENEDIKTSSON

Rector, University of Iceland

Jón Atli Benediktsson 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. He is currently Rector and President and Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Iceland. From 2009 to 2015, he was Pro-Rector of Science and

Academic Affairs at the University of Iceland. From 2001 to 2014, he was a Visiting Professor at the University of Trento, Italy. 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 is the 2011-2012 President of the IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society (GRSS) and has been on the GRSS Administrative Committee since 2000. He was Editor of the IEEE Transactions on Geoscience and Remote Sensing (TGRS) from 2003 to 2008 and has served as Associate Editor of TGRS since 1999 and the IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Letters since 2003. Prof. Benediktsson is a co-founder of the biomedical start up company Oxymap. He is a Fellow of the IEEE and a Fellow of SPIE. He received the Stevan J. Kristof Award from Purdue University in 1991 as outstanding graduate student in remote sensing. In 1997, Dr. Benediktsson was the recipient of the Icelandic Research Council's Outstanding Young Researcher Award, in 2000, he was granted the IEEE Third Millennium Medal, in 2004, he was a co-recipient of the University of Iceland's Technology Innovation Award, in 2006 he received the yearly research award from the Engineering Research Institute of the University of Iceland, and in 2007, he received the Outstanding Service Award from the IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society. He is co-recipient of the 2012 IEEE Transactions on Geoscience and Remote Sensing Best Paper Award. He was a co-recipient of the 2013 IEEE GRSS Highest Impact Paper Award and received in 2013 the IEEE/VFI Electrical Engineer of the Year Award. He was a co-recipient of the International Journal of Image and Data Fusion Best Paper Award for both 2011-12 and 2017. Dr. Benediktsson received the Outstanding Alumni Award from the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering in 2016. He is a member of Societas Scinetiarum Islandica and Tau Beta Pi.



## **VERENA BLECHINGER-TALCOTT**

Vice President for International Affairs, Freie Universität Berlin

Verena Blechinger-Talcott is Vice President for International Affairs and Professor of Japanese Politics and Political Economy at Freie Universität Berlin. She studied Political Science, Japanese Studies and Law in Munich, Kyoto and Tokyo. She received her

M.A. in Japanese Studies in 1991 and her PhD in Political Science in 1997, both from Munich University. She has been invited as Visiting Professor to the University of Tokyo (2008). In 2012, she became Director of the Graduate School of East Asian Studies which is funded through the German Federal Excellence Initiative.

Since January 2021 Verena Blechinger-Talcott is also the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Una Europa Alliance.



## **ALAIN FUCHS**

President, Université Paris Sciences & Lettres - PSL University

Dr Fuchs, Senior Professor, devotes his research work to the modeling and molecular simulation of confined fluids. He served as President of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) between 2010 and 2017 and was previously Director of the École nationale supérieure de Chimie de Paris from 2006 to 2010. Prior to that, he

founded and led the Laboratoire de Chimie Physique (CNRS/Université Paris Sud). He is a member of the Academia Europaea, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry and was awarded an honorary PhD by the Université de Québec. Alain Fuchs took on his position as the President of PSL in October 2017. His term was renewed in February 2020. He was also elected President of the PSL Foundation in October 2017, renewed in February 2021.



## **RAFAEL GARESSE ALARCÓN**

Rector, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Rafael Garesse Alarcón is a Doctor of Pharmacy from the Complutense University of Madrid and professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the Faculty of Medicine of the Autonomous University of Madrid. He completed his doctoral thesis at the CSIC Institute of Enzymology, the FIR at the Puerta de Hierro Hospital in Madrid, and his

postdoctoral training at the MRC Molecular Biology Laboratory in Cambridge (UK). Garesse's research work is focused on the study of the pathophysiology of mitochondrial diseases. He has directed more than 30 research projects funded by national agencies and the European Union, and published a hundred articles in international books and magazines. He has been director of the Biochemistry department of the Autonomous University of Madrid and president of the technical commission for the evaluation of human resources of the Carlos III Health Institute. In recent years, he has been vice-rector for research (2009-2011) for Scientific Policy and Research Infrastructures (2012-2014), for Innovation and Scientific Policy (2014-2015) and for Research and Innovation at the UAM (2015-2017). Since June 2017 he has been Rector of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.



### **ANASTAS GERDJIKOV**

Rector, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

Professor Anastas Gerdjikov is the Rector of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. He gives lecture classes on Latin and Roman Literature at the Department of Classical Philology at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski both to BA and MA students. His scientific interests are in the field of Roman literature and the political theory of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages. He is the author of 4 monographs and more than 40 studies and articles on the topic of ancient literature and on the regulations of higher education. He is the first translator in Bulgarian of Aristotle's "Politics". He is fluent in English, German, French, and Russian. Professor Gerdjikov was a Deputy Minister of Education and Science (2001-2003), Chairperson of the Fund for Scientific Research (2007-2008) and member of the Specialized Council for Studies in Literature at the High Attestation Commission (2007-2010). In 2010 he was appointed deputy-rector of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski and was in charge of accreditation and the scientific activities (2010-2011) and of the educational process, PhD students and continuous education (2011- 2014). He is on the editorial boards of Strategies of the Educational and Scientific Policy and of the Bulgarian Journal of Science and Education.



### **ANDREW DEEKS**

President, University College Dublin

Professor Andrew J Deeks has been the President of University College Dublin, Ireland's largest and most globally engaged university, since January 2014.

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). Professor Deeks is highly respected for his research in structural mechanics, structural dynamics and dynamic soil structure interaction.

His strong commitment to students is acknowledged in the awards he holds for teaching excellence and innovation.

He is a member of the Executive Committee the Universitas 21 university network, a member of the Administrative Board of the International Association of Universities and a Council member of both the European Universities Association and the Irish Universities Association. He is a Fellow of the Irish Academy of Engineering, the Institution of Engineers Ireland and the Institution of Engineers Australia.



### **NOURIA HERNANDEZ**

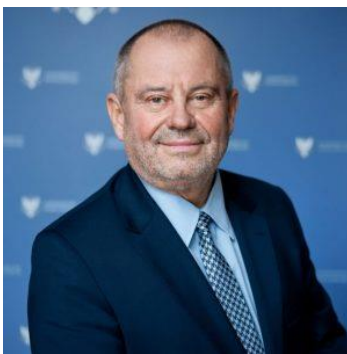
Rector, University of Lausanne

Nouria Hernandez is an internationally renowned biologist, specialising in fundamental research on genes, and the Rector of the University of Lausanne since 1 August 2016.

Nouria Hernandez studied at the University of Geneva (diploma in 1980) and received a doctorate from the University of Heidelberg (in 1983). From 1983 to 1986, she then worked at the Yale University. In 1987, she was nominated group leader at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory and, in

1988, became professor at the Watson School of Biological Sciences. In 2004, she moved to Europe and became professor at the University of Lausanne where, between 2005 and 2014, she was also director of the Centre for Integrative Genomics. In 2007, she received the Cloëtta Prize. Between 2008 and 2014, Nouria Hernandez was also a member of the central committee of the Swiss Academy of Natural Sciences.

As rector, she has a particular interest in questions of sustainability and one of her priorities is to promote the theme of "viable development", that she sees as an interdisciplinary subject of reflection involving not only technology but also biology, ecology, philosophy, economy and politics.



### **ALOJZY Z. NOWAK**

Rector, University of Warsaw

Prof. Alojzy Z. Nowak graduated from the SGH Warsaw School of Economics in 1984. He is affiliated to UW as of 1984. In 1991, he earned his doctoral degree in Economic Sciences at the University of Warsaw. He received tenure in Economic Sciences in 1995 there. Between 1996 and 2002, he held the position of an associate

professor. By the decision of Poland's President, he received professor degree in 2002.

Prof. Alojzy Z. Nowak has held a variety of leadership roles including Head of the Academic Subunit for International Economics and the Academic Unit for Economics at the Faculty of Management, Director of European Center. In years 1999-2006, Prof. Nowak was Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Management, and in 2006-2012 Dean of this unit. Next four years, he spent at UW working as Vice-Rector in charge of research and cooperation. In 2016, he was elected as Dean of the Faculty of Management. During his academic career, he was delivering lectures at universities in France, UK, USA, Russia, China and Korea. He also studied at the University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign (USA), the University of Exeter (UK), in Antwerp and the Free University of Berlin (Germany).

As of 2018, Prof. Alojzy Z. Nowak chairs the Academic Sports Association (*Akademicki Związek Sportowy, AZS*) – a mass students' sport organisation, one of the biggest sports associations in Poland.



### **IVANKA POPOVIĆ**

Rector, University of Belgrade

Ivanka Popović is the Rector of the University of Belgrade and Full Professor at the Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, University of Belgrade. She obtained all of her academic degrees in chemical

engineering at the FTM. She served as the first female Dean of the FTM (2006 - 2012). She has coordinated the R&D strategy of the University since 2012 and previously to assuming the office of Rector, she was for many years Vice-Rector for International Relations. Her research interests are polymer science and sustainable development. She has headed several national projects and has been involved in several TEMPUS and ERASMUS, two FP7 projects and currently in one H2020 project. Ivanka Popović has authored or co-authored more than 70 papers in international scientific journals with a total citation of more than 2200 and h-index of 17. She was the first female President of the Serbian Chemical Society (2009 – 2013) and is the President of the Association of Italian and Serbian Scientists and Scholars since 2012.



## **EDITA SUŽIEDĖLIENĖ**

Vice-Rector and Pro-Rector for Research, University of Vilnius

Professor Edita Sužiedėlienė has been the Pro-Rector and Vice-Rector of Research of Vilnius University since April 2020.

Prof. Sužiedėlienė graduated at Vilnius University with a degree in biochemistry in 1986 and she continued her scientific career at Vilnius University, Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics, where she obtained her doctorate in 1995. Her main scientific interests include

fundamental and applied research in the fields of biochemistry and molecular biology, studying the molecular mechanisms of bacterial resistance to antibiotics, responses to environmental influences and pathogenesis, and the development of molecular detection and inactivation methods of pathogenic bacteria.

Professor at Vilnius University since 1995 and former Head of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (2012–2020), she was a member of the Natural and Technical Sciences Committee of the Lithuanian Science Council (2013–2020) and Chairwoman of the Academic Ethics Commission of the Lithuanian Science Council (2013–2020). She was awarded the Rector's Prize for Scientific Achievements (2010), and she was selected as the best lecturer at the Life Sciences Center of Vilnius University (2017).