

## Webinar: Global alumni relations and models of alumni services & engagement as a strategic task of HEIs

14 September | 15h00 – 17h00 (CEST)

### Biographies and abstracts of the speakers

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#### ARNIM HEINEMANN, President, SGroup

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Arnim Heinemann holds a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies and Comparative Literature. During his academic career, his time in the German diplomatic service and several senior executive positions in academic and HE management, he gained expertise in science diplomacy, strategic internationalisation and global HE leadership with a focus on global research networks and responsible development of sustainable HE collaboration worldwide. He oversees the University of Bayreuth's global engagement with offices in Africa, Australia, Asia and Europe. He is an executive committee member of SGroup – Universities in Europe, as well as a member of the committee for new funding programmes at the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

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#### LUCIANO SASO | President, UNICA Network

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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).

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## THORSTEN PARCHENT, Head of Welcome & Alumni Services, University of Bayreuth

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Studied German Language and Literature, European History and History of Africa at the University of Würzburg and at the University of Bayreuth. Lecturer for many years at the Institute for International Communication and Foreign Cultural Exchange in Bayreuth and at the Language Center (University of Bayreuth) as well as working as an intercultural trainer. Since 2011 working at the International Office of the University of Bayreuth and currently head of the "Welcome and Alumni Services" and the "Services for Refugees and Migration".

### **How to engage alumni for different functions?**

Alumni/e (can) contribute on several levels to university strategies. For the University of Bayreuth this is especially true for international alumni/e therefore the presentation will focus on this group. We will learn how alumni/e can support to build up local hubs or contact points in strategic countries or regions which later built the fundament of international gateway offices. Here they might act as network creators on the ground or even run physical offices and are linked to more operative goals/outcomes.

In a more research oriented function alumni/e provide their specific knowledge to foster multilateral and international research proposals and thus enable international research networks. They also act as ambassadors, in both directions. They represent the first hand contact of their former alma mater(s) locally and are the visible representative of their actual employer, country or the country of their origin. In this role they ensure knowledge transfer, the exchange with industries, access to study and research programmes or research working groups and third party funding.

Coming from this very global dimension alumni/e are also a key element on a very local level. As mentors for bringing students into the regional labour market they are not only fostering the third mission goals of universities in terms of regional development and integration of refugees and international high potentials likewise. So to say they are functioning in this context as bridgeheads between research, industries and the municipal community.

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## CAROLE PICALET, Policy Advisor International Alumni, Ghent University

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Carole Picavet, international alumni officer at Ghent University, is responsible for developing the university's worldwide alumni network. With around 20 years of experience in internationalization of higher education, she is working on different initiatives and programs to keep international alumni connected to their alma mater with the goal of creating a dynamic international community for personal and professional growth.

### **Institutional support for international alumni chapters - challenges and best practices**

When an international alumni policy is officially included in the general strategy plan of the University and the components are in place, our worldwide alumni chapters and alumni representatives require full support from the University to realize the defined objectives. A good database management is essential, the provision of an online community platform for alumni adds significant value. Also marketing material, guidelines and event promotion are important elements to support the chapters. Fundamental to successfully establishing and sustaining international alumni chapters is to involve internal and external stakeholders, the University can certainly advise here.

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## BÁRBARA COSTA, Director Alumni Network, University of Porto

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Bárbara Costa holds a degree (pre-Bologna) in International Relations - cultural and political branch - from the University of Minho, in Portugal. She has more than 20 years of experience in International Relations and Institutional Cooperation in Higher Education. Currently she is the Director of the Alumni and Fundraising Areas at U.Porto.

Between March 2014 and January 2021, she was the Director of the International Relations Office and Erasmus+ Institutional Coordinator of the University of Porto. Approximately, during the same period, Bárbara Costa was a member of the Executive Committee of SGroup Universities in Europe and was one of the Coordinators of the Group's Think Tank 4Latin America. Between 2002 and 2014, she was also the Liaison Officer of the SGroup, representing the University of Porto.

Under her technical coordination and guidance, UPorto has obtained numerous projects funded by the Erasmus+ Programme in all its Key Actions (KA1, KA2 and KA3). Over these several years, the actions undertaken under the many Erasmus+, Intra-ACP, Intra-Africa and Erasmus Mundus projects involved around 150 countries, +700 Higher Education Institutions around the world and represented a total funding of €67 million directly managed by the University of Porto.

### **The “mobile student ambassadors” strategy**

It is commonly accepted that student mobility has very clear and favorable consequences on the participants’ educational, social, personal and professional development. Such international experiences not only enhance their knowledge, skills and attitudes, and improve their employability rates and opportunities, but also (on a more personal level), support their confidence, encourage their autonomy and self-reliance and, very important, promote mutual understanding, which is key to build better and more tolerant societies.

HEIs also benefit from the exchange of best practices and networking in an international environment. By engaging in successful and beneficial initiatives, they develop their international cooperation capacities, generate new knowledge and nurture pedagogical and scientific innovations that ultimately lead to improvements easily perceived in its different dimensions.

Having this in mind, one starts to wonder: “What if mobility can also contribute to strengthen even further the presence of the University of Porto worldwide?” This was the starting point of our brainstorming. The programme was launched in January 2021 and, in just a few months, the results are absolutely remarkable. Overall, our experience shows that when the mobility experience is positive, international mobility students are keen on maintaining the link with their host institution and very much enthusiastic to work as U.Porto’s ambassadors.

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### **ATHINA FRANGOULI, Development & Alumni Relations Officer, University of Cyprus**

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*Current duties & responsibilities* derive from the mission of the Development and Alumni Relations Office, as part of the mission and vision of the University of Cyprus at large, specifically its mission is to promote the work and the value of the UCY through the provision of excellent and contemporary communication services, the organization of various actions and the provision of counseling to all members of the university community.

At the same time, the Section aims, through specialized actions and the delivery of services, at the development of relations with the alumni and the other community members, but also the design and implementation of

fundraising campaigns and other activities aimed at financially supporting students, the development of the University Campus, the purchase of state-of-the-art research equipment, etc.

*Previous duties & responsibilities:*

2007-2015: Head of the Rector's Office (Office Management).

2015-2017: University Business Development Officer (UBDO), providing support and advice to the Rector in carrying out their duties and in keeping with best practices of goal-oriented university management.

Earned both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from the University of Cyprus (undergraduate alumna of the Department of English Studies and Foreign Languages and postgraduate alumna of the Department of Business and Public Administration).

Before joining the University's administration, she served as a teacher in the private education sector (primary, secondary schools, institutions and colleges).

## **Digital Alumni Engagement with emphasis on social media**

The digital alumni engagement strategy has been an essential component for universities and their alumni relations entities operations for more than a decade now, especially after the social media rise. They have been using for years now social media & other digital means, as strategic tools to reach, communicate with, engage and manage their stakeholders (alumni, students, staff, friends/supporters/business partners/state/society).

Due to the ongoing technological and social media evolution, and lately the pandemic, institutions have shifted to digital engagement, while trying to find new ways to adjust to the new reality of alumni relations, redesigning their strategies and balancing the in-person with the digital alumni engagement.

Moreover, they have been constantly evaluating the efficiency and return on investment (ROI) of their digital tools and the practices used so that the alumni (and community at large) reach, engagement and management is improving constantly, meeting their goals.

The case of the University of Cyprus will be presented, giving the opportunity to brainstorming, assessment of practices and approaches in place for boosting digital alumni engagement, identifying gaps in current strategic plans and sharing ideas.

- What to be covered in the presentation:
- UCY & DAR Office at a glance
- DARO – Role, Services & Activities

- How UCY DARO does it – Approaching & engaging alumni and other stakeholders
- UCY DARO Strategic Tools for digital communication, engagement and management, with emphasis on Social Media
- Social Media as key strategic tool for alumni community engagement at UCY - Role, Goal, Advantages, Challenges
- How UCY DARO does it – Style & Practices
- Comments for discussion and ideas exchange

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## ZALA SIMČIČ, Head of Alumni Clubs Development, University of Ljubljana

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Zala is Head of Alumni Clubs Development at University of Ljubljana. Since past June she leads an association of about 60 alumni clubs that are formed throughout all of University of Ljubljana's 26 faculties and artistic academies. She advises on alumni engagement – events, benefits and communication.

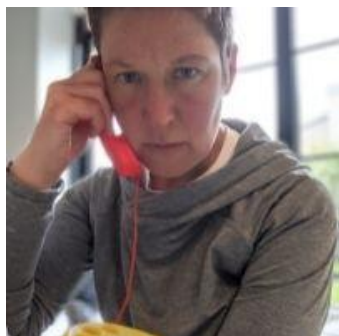
She is passionate about connecting people, sharing knowledge and enabling others to reach their full potential. As an avid problem solver, she loves to dig in the alumni relations challenges and make stuff happen.

### **Using a digital platform as a backbone for the association of 60 alumni clubs**

University of Ljubljana consists of 23 faculties and 3 academies, which all have 61 alumni clubs. All the clubs and all of the alumni are connected through the platform.

We use online platform as alumni clubs associations' backbone as this is the place where all alumni meet and communicate with each other. Platform is designed to host joint landing page for general discussions, information, job posts and event sharing and closed off parts for each of our clubs where members of particular club have their own private space. Association and platform are centrally lead, however clubs are in domain of every faculty/academy/department.

We will present some of the best practice examples of nurturing alumni relations from our most successful alumni clubs.



Sonia is interested in community, belonging and understanding how to connect people together around things that matter to them. Having worked in various strands of communications since 1997, including publishing, stakeholder engagement, digital communications, and PR and marketing, she was drawn to the University of Edinburgh and alumni engagement after considering how her own university managed its relationship with graduates. Convinced that a progressive HE institution was one that offered a sustained relationship with former students based around shared values, intellectual curiosity and meaningful opportunities to stay involved, she joined Development and Alumni in 2012. She is now Head of Alumni Communications and is currently missing her cycle to Chambers Street in the centre of Edinburgh.

### **What is it like to graduate during a pandemic?**

Effective alumni communications understands and responds to the needs of our graduates. It captures and reflects motivations and shared experiences and it places each graduate within an extended university community that offers support, advice and opportunities to stay involved and to support future alumni. But what happens when you graduate during a pandemic? How do we understand what happened and how the experiences of the last 18 months have impacted both the lives of our newest alumni?

At the University of Edinburgh we wanted to understand the real impact of 2020 - the personal challenges and the fears and anxieties so that we could better support our Class of 2020. We wanted something that was unfiltered and honest and so we looked to podcasting as a way of creating an authentic and honest tapestry of experiences that could be shared. Multi Story Edinburgh, the podcast talked to 32 graduates from the Class of 2020. Each 10 minute episode is a snapshot in time, place, experience and emotion. As you listen, emotion hits you first. How does it feel to graduate during a pandemic? Then reflection and understanding kicks in. What has been learnt during these exceptional times and what can it teach us?