



## UNICA IRO GROUP MEETING 2023

Hosted by

**Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski**

**6-8 November 2023**

### Concept Note & Draft Agenda

#### **IRO Meeting 2023: Enhancing International Collaboration and Student Support in Higher Education**

The international landscape of Higher Education continues to evolve, presenting new challenges and opportunities for universities, not only in Europe but worldwide. Leveraging on recent work by the UNICA IRO group – in particular during the meeting on the occasion of the General Assembly in June and the online meeting with DG EAC in May -, the upcoming IRO in-person meeting in Sofia aims to foster knowledge exchange, collaboration, and innovative thinking among members of the network.

The event focuses on three central themes:

- **Global Partnerships for Success:** Exploring strategic partnerships beyond Europe, this theme aims to delve into the significance of international collaboration in driving quality in higher education. Participants will share experiences, insights, and innovative strategies for creating effective alliances that enrich the academic experience and broaden the horizons of students.
- **Empowering Students in a Diverse World:** the theme revolves around the multifaceted challenges of student inclusion and housing. By highlighting student voices and experiences, this theme addresses the critical role universities play in fostering an inclusive environment that supports all students.
- **The future of Erasmus+:** as usual, there will be a section of the programme dedicated to the EU programme, with a representative of DG EAC. Moreover, the session will layout conclusions from UNICA's participation in the KA131 Higher Education Working Group, created by the EC with the goal of enhancing the effective execution of future higher education Erasmus+ initiatives funded by internal policy funds.

**Outcomes:** This event envisions fostering a collaborative spirit that transcends geographical boundaries. By the event's conclusion, participants will have gained insights into effective partnership strategies, innovative student support approaches, and the latest developments in the Erasmus Programme. Additionally, the event aims to kick off two concrete initiatives:

- development of a handbook of good practices on student housing at UNICA universities;
- formulation of a UNICA IRO position paper on the future of Erasmus+.



## DAY 0 – Monday, 6 November

18:30 – 20:00	Welcome reception
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## DAY 1 – Tuesday, 7 November

**Overall chair:** Elena Avgoustidou-Kyriacou, Acting Director of the International Relations Service, University of Cyprus and IRO Coordinator and Observer to the Steering Committee

09:00 – 09:30	Registration of participants and welcome coffee
09:30 – 10:00	<b>WELCOME AND OPENING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welcome words by representative of the University of Sofia</li> <li>- Welcome and introduction by Elena Avgoustidou-Kyriacou, Acting Director of the International Relations Service, University of Cyprus and IRO Coordinator and Observer to the Steering Committee</li> <li>- Presentation by the University of Sofia</li> <li>- Tour de table</li> </ul>

10:00 – 13:00	<b>SESSION 1- Strategic partnerships outside Europe</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributions from UNICA members</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
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13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
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14:00 – 17:00	<b>Session 2 – Students in the spotlight: tackling the challenges of housing &amp; inclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation by a representative from a student organisation</li> <li>• Contributions from UNICA members</li> <li>• Presentation on the project “MP4s - Mindfulness practices for students project”, in which UNICA is a partner</li> <li>• Launch of the initiative to create a Handbook of good practices on student housing at UNICA universities</li> </ul>
17:00	Optional social programme

20:00/20:30	Dinner
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## DAY 2 – Wednesday, 8 November

09:00 – 09:30	Morning coffee
09:30 – 13:00	<b>Session 3 – Updates on the Erasmus Programme</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Presentation by a representative from DG EAC</b></li> <li>• <b>UNICA &amp; the KA131 Higher Education Working Group:</b> Results survey/focus group + reporting by Ibrahim Yorgun, METU</li> <li>• <b>Discussion in breakout groups on the 4 thematic areas proposed by DG EAC:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accreditation system</li> <li>2. Eligibility rules - mobility</li> <li>3. Funding system - mobility</li> <li>4. Digitalisation/future of the European Student Card Initiative</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Reporting from breakout groups to the plenary <i>Conclusions and feedback will feed into future developments of the HE Working Group + a UNICA IRO position paper</i></li> </ul>
12:45 – 13:00	Conclusions and wrap-up
13:00 – 14:00	Farewell lunch