



## UNICA IRO MEETING 2024

### **Building the Ideal International Relations Office: Balancing between Challenges and Tangible Results in a Dynamic Environment**

*Hosted by*  
**Bucharest University of Economic Studies**  
**13-15 November 2024**

## **JOIN AND GET INVOLVED!**

### **CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS & SPEAKERS**

The role of International Relations Officers (IROs) has evolved significantly in response to the shifting landscape of higher education and internationalisation. With the rapid development of global mobility, digitalisation, and cross-border collaboration, the expectations placed on IROs have never been greater. As we described it earlier this year in [the article written for EAIE's Forum](#) publication, IROs are the “next top model” in the art of mastering numerous hats.

Given these ongoing shifts, it's time for a deeper reflection on the journey that brought us here, and a clear vision of where we're headed.

**Join us in shaping the design of the ideal IRO, and in doing so, building the future of International Higher Education!**

#### **Objectives**

The UNICA IRO Meeting 2024 aims to provide a platform for IROs to collectively envision their ideal future. By understanding their evolving role through the lens of past achievements, present challenges, and future possibilities, participants will be better equipped to lead internationalisation efforts in their institutions. Here are the main objectives of the meeting:

- Reflect on the historical evolution of the IRO role and the concept of internationalisation;
- Address the current challenges IROs face, including resource limitations, rising student mobility, and the need for enhanced intercultural competencies;
- Identify and assess the key needs of UNICA IROs in relation to specific areas of the Erasmus+ program;
- Explore emerging trends, particularly in digitalisation and AI, that will shape the future of international relations in higher education.



## WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR...

### A) TWO CASE STUDIES/TABLE HOSTS FOR SESSION 1: “ERASMUS+ WORLD CAFÉ”

**Format:** The session will be opened by **case studies** related to new forms of mobility (e.g., Blended Intensive Programs, short-term mobilities), mobility within the European University Alliances, and Erasmus Without Paper.

Following these presentations, participants will engage in a **World Café**, rotating between tables dedicated to each topic to map the main needs of UNICA IROs. The collected insights will later be shared with the European Commission to help shape future directions for the Erasmus+ program.

**We are looking for 2 contributors to present their case studies and act as table hosts in the topics of:**

- **Mobility within the European University Alliances:** this case study should explore how mobility is being managed within a European University Alliance and how it has impacted the management of other mobilities in the IRO. It could showcase efforts to facilitate mobility while also addressing challenges.
- **Erasmus Without Paper:** We are looking for a case study that shares experiences with implementing or transitioning to the EWP. This could involve both successful practices and challenges faced during the process. The focus should be on how EWP has impacted the management of mobility, highlighting both positive outcomes and any issues encountered that could offer valuable lessons for other institutions moving towards digital mobility management.

### B) FOUR TO FIVE SPEAKERS FOR SESSION 2: “PRESENT-DAY CHALLENGES FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OFFICERS”

**Format: Panel discussion** followed by Q&A and interactive discussion with the participants.

This session seeks to delve into the practical strategies for dealing with the growing complexity of the IRO role, including managing partnerships, promoting diversity, and supporting student mobility in a post-pandemic world. **We are looking for experiences and stories - not necessarily good practices.** This will be a **conversational panel** where we encourage participants to speak openly about a range of topics, allowing for a dynamic exchange of insights and experiences.

Ideally, we would like to have a panel with representatives from different geographical areas.



**Below you may find a list of suggested topics but other experiences beyond these are also welcome:**

1. **Mobility today:** What does mobility look like at your university today? Are you still dealing with effects of the pandemic? What solutions support the recovery of exchange programs?
2. **Political uncertainty:** How do political shifts impact partnerships and funding at your university? What strategies are used to mitigate risks? Is there a national plan to mitigate risks? How does your university communicate decisions relating to partnerships impacted by political disruption?
3. **Inclusivity & access:** What efforts are being made to ensure equitable access to international experiences for all students?
4. **Global regulations:** How does your university manage compliance with evolving global regulations for students and staff?
5. **Work overload & burnout:** How is your university addressing IRO workload challenges and mental health? Are there any experiences of “alliance fatigue”?

A preparatory meeting with the panellists, the Coordinator of the IRO Group and a representative of the hosting university will be scheduled once the panel is complete.

## **Submissions of proposals/expressions of interest**

If you are interested in contributing to the programme of the IRO meeting 2024, please send an email to Laura Brossico ([laura.brossico@unica-network.eu](mailto:laura.brossico@unica-network.eu)) **no later than 23 October 2024:**

- **Call for Case studies (Session 1 - “Erasmus+ World Café”):** please send an expression of interest indicating the topic you would like to address and a short outline of your contribution (max 10 lines).
- **Call for Speakers (Session 2 - “Present-Day Challenges for International Relations Officers”):** please send your expression of interest with a list of the main points you would like to address.

**For any questions, please feel free to contact us:**

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