



Network of Universities
from the Capitals of Europe



UNICA DAYS

2026 BRUSSELS



EU-Canada Cooperation: Shared Values, Shared Futures

IN COOPERATION WITH:



Co-funded by
the European Union



UNICA DAYS 2026

“EU–Canada Cooperation: Shared Values, Shared Futures”

Brussels, 25 – 27 February 2026

ORGANISED IN COOPERATION WITH
[Delegation for Relations with Canada](#) of the European Parliament
[International Association of Universities \(IAU\)](#) and [Science | Business](#)

INTRODUCTION

Canada and Europe have cultivated a longstanding, multidimensional partnership rooted in **common democratic values**, pluralism, a commitment to multilateralism, and a **shared commitment to research excellence, innovation, and scientific diplomacy**. In July 2024, the partnership entered a new era with Canada’s formal association to Horizon Europe Pillar II, granting Canadian institutions access to the EU’s premier research and innovation funding programme, which marked a turning point in bilateral relations.

In today’s fragmented and often volatile geopolitical landscape - marked by rising authoritarianism, disinformation, and declining trust in democratic institutions - such **value-driven alliances** gain renewed significance. As global science becomes increasingly shaped by geostrategic considerations and international collaboration faces new pressures, focusing on Higher Education Institutions is timely and strategic. **Universities are not only engines of knowledge production but also key contributors to civic engagement, global dialogue, and societal progress**. They play a unique role in shaping democratic citizenship, driving innovation, and addressing global challenges, offering distinct opportunities for international relations grounded in scientific collaboration and evidence-based dialogue.

Against this backdrop, the **UNICA Days 2026 propose to spotlight the EU–Canada relationship** through the lens of higher education, research, and scientific diplomacy by highlighting achievements, showcasing opportunities, and identifying challenges within the transatlantic education and research landscape.

The event aims to stimulate **forward-looking dialogue** on key issues such as research funding and innovation, and the **role of universities as global actors in science diplomacy**. By convening diverse stakeholders - including policymakers, university leaders, researchers, and civil society actors - the event aspires to enhance new and sustainable partnerships.

UNICA Days will serve not only as a celebration of shared institutional ties and common values, but also as a **strategic moment to strengthen transatlantic cooperation** in higher education and research and address common global challenges.

Event webpage:

<https://www.unica-network.eu/event/unica-days-2026/>

For any queries, please contact the UNICA Secretariat:
office@unica-network.eu

Bios of Speakers & Chairs:

SCAN ME



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PROGRAMME

16:00-16:30	Early registration & Welcome coffee
16:30-18:00	<p>SESSION 0 EU–Canada Collaboration – Pitch and Connect</p> <p><i>A dedicated networking moment for UNICA member universities, Canadian representatives and invited stakeholders, designed to strengthen mutual understanding, showcase institutional and network-level engagement, and create space for informal dialogue.</i></p> <p>Chair: Luciano SASO, UNICA Secretary General</p> <p>Introductions (15')</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorin COSTREIE, UNICA President • Giorgio MARINONI, Manager of Higher Education and Internationalization policy and projects, International Association of Universities (IAU) & Patrick DEANE, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Queen’s University and IAU Vice President <p>Pitch-style presentations (7' each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna K. PIOTROWSKA, Erasmus+ National Focal Point for Canada & Chantal PÉRIÉ, Erasmus+ Sub-national Focal Point for Québec (online) • Alice JARRY, Co-Director, Hexagram Network; Associate Professor, Design and Computation Arts, Concordia University • Larissa BEZO, President & CEO, Canadian Bureau for Higher Education • Marie LACHAPELLE, Scientist in Residence, Québec Government Office in Brussels • G3 network: Innovation – Responsibility – Francophonie: Building Bridges Across Continents, by Chantal ERTVELD, International Partnerships team leader & North American Affairs Officer, Université libre de Bruxelles & Yvon MOLINGHEN, International Relations Officer, Université libre de Bruxelles <p>Q&A and open discussion with the audience</p>
18:00-20:00	Welcome reception University Foundation, Room Marnix

DAY 2 | Thursday, 26 February

Venue: European Parliament | Rue Wiertz 60, 1047 Brussels | Room SPINELLI 1G2

Overall Chair: Sorin COSTREIE, UNICA President

8:00 – 9:15	Accreditation & Registration – Welcome coffee
9:15-9:30	Welcome & introduction by Sorin COSTREIE , UNICA President
9:30-11:00	SESSION 1 Scientific Diplomacy and Societal Leadership: the role of universities in EU-Canada cooperation
	<p>Chair: Anne WEYEMBERGH, Vice-Rector for External Relations and Development Cooperation, Université libre de Bruxelles, and member of the UNICA Steering Committee</p> <p>Panel discussion (<i>speakers are listed in alphabetical order</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassador Nicholas BROUSSEAU, Deputy Head of Mission, Mission of Canada to the European Union • Patrick DEANE, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Queen’s University and IAU Vice President • Josep M. GARRELL, President, European University Association (EUA) • Javier MORENO-SANCHEZ, Chair of the Delegation for Relations to Canada of the European Parliament • Maria Cristina RUSSO, Deputy-Director-General for Innovation, Prosperity and International Cooperation, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission
11:00-11:30	Coffee-Break
11:30-13:00	SESSION 2 EU-Canada Research Cooperation: challenges and opportunities
	<p>Chair: Pieter BALLON, Vice-Rector for Research, Vrije Universiteit Brussel & Coordinator of UNICA Research</p> <p>Panel discussion (<i>speakers are listed in alphabetical order</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hélène DRAINVILLE, Delegate General of Québec in Brussels • Anja GEITMANN, Vice-President Global Engagement, McGill University • Daniel JUTRAS, Chair of U15 Canada and Rector of the University of Montréal • Carole MANCEL-BLANCHARD, Head of Unit – International Cooperation: Europe and Americas, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission • Liliana PASECINIC, Deputy Head of Unit – Member States Partnerships and International Relations, European Commission Joint Research Center • Cecília ROQUE, Vice-Rector for Research and Advanced Training, NOVA University Lisbon

13:00-15:00	Group picture at the European Parliament Transfer from the European Parliament to the University Foundation (10' walking distance) Networking lunch at the University Foundation
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Venue: University Foundation | Rue d'Egmont 11, 1000 Brussels | Room Cattier

15:00-16:30	SESSION 3 EU-Canada cooperation for climate action, urban resilience and global sustainability
15:00-16:30	<p>Chair: Charline URBAIN, Advisor for Sustainable Development in Teaching and Research, Université libre de Bruxelles</p> <p>Presentations (speakers are listed in alphabetical order)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • François GÉLINEAU, Vice-Rector, International Affairs and Sustainable Development, Université de Laval • Aurélié JEANTET, Vice President in charge of the Ecological Transition, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3 • Benjamin PRUD'HOMME, Vice-President, Policy and Global Affairs, Mila - Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute • Jonas SCHOLZE, Head of Unit for Intergovernmental Cooperation, European Urban Initiative <p>Q&A and discussion</p>
16:30-18:30	Free time
18:30-20:30	<p>Reception hosted by the Mission of Canada to the EU Avenue des Arts 57, 1000 Brussels</p>

DAY 3 | Friday, 27 February

Venue: University Foundation | Rue d'Egmont 11, 1000 Brussels | Room Cattier

8:30 – 9:00	Welcome coffee
9:00-10:30	SESSION 4 Global Education for Global Citizenship: Universities Mission in a Changing World
	<p>Chair: Liviu MATEI, Professor of Higher Education and Public Policy, Head of the School of Education, Communication & Society, King's College London</p> <p>Panel discussion (<i>speakers are listed in alphabetical order</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larissa BEZO, President & CEO, Canadian Bureau for Higher Education • Romita IUCU, President of the Board of Trustees, University of Bucharest • Serge JAUMAIN, Co-Director of AmericaS, Advisor to the Rector for Cooperation to Development, Université libre de Bruxelles • Daniel JUTRAS, Chair of U15 Canada and Rector of the University of Montréal <p>Q&A and discussion</p>
10:30-11:00	Coffee-break
11:00-12:30	SESSION 5 Shared Values, Shared Futures: a roadmap for EU– Canada academic Cooperation
	<p>Chair: Giorgio MARINONI, Manager of Higher Education and Internationalization Policy and Projects, International Association of Universities (IAU)</p> <p>Panel discussion (<i>speakers are listed in alphabetical order</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorin COSTREIE, UNICA President • Tim EVANS, Vice-President Research, Innovation and Impact, Concordia University • Bill FLANAGAN, President & Vice-Chancellor, University of Alberta and Vice Chair of U15 Canada (online) • Marie GRUBER, Principal Advisor in Research and Scientific Strategy, Mila – Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute • Ksenija VIDMAR HORVAT, Vice-Rector for Study and Student Affairs, University of Ljubljana, and Member of the UNICA Steering Committee
12:30-12:45	Closing by Sorin COSTREIE , UNICA President
12:45-14:00	Farewell lunch