



25-27 February

UNICA DAYS

2026 BRUSSELS

**EU-Canada Cooperation:
Shared Values, Shared Futures**

IN COOPERATION WITH:



SCIENCE | BUSINESS[®]

European Parliament's Delegation
for Relations with Canada



Co-funded by
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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.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Academic leadership of UNICA member universities; leadership of Canadian Higher Education Institutions and university networks; senior officials from Canadian and European institutions; policymakers; representatives of peer networks; higher education stakeholders.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

REGISTRATION

Participation is open but registration is mandatory via the form available at the event webpage: <https://www.unica-network.eu/event/unica-days-2026/>.

Deadline: 20 February 2026

VENUES

- European Parliament, rue Wiertz 60, 1047 Brussels - Room SPINELLI 1G2
- University Foundation, rue d'Egmont 11, 1000 Brussels

CONTACT

- For any queries, please contact the **UNICA Secretariat** at the following email address: office@unica-network.eu
- Please note that further information, the registration form and regular updates are available at: <https://www.unica-network.eu/event/unica-days-2026/>

PROGRAMME (as of 5 Feb 2026)

Please note that speakers are listed in alphabetical order

DAY 1 | Wednesday, 25 February

Exclusive to UNICA Members, Canadian representatives, and invited partners

Venue: University Foundation | Rue d'Egmont 11, 1000 Brussels | | Room A (first floor)

16:00-16:30	Early registration & Welcome coffee
16:30-18:00	EU-Canada Collaboration – Pitch and Connect <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>
18:00-20:00	Welcome reception Room Marnix

DAY 2 | Thursday, 26 February

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

8:00 – 9:15	Accreditation & Registration
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” Chair: Anne WEYEMBERGH , Vice-Rector for External Relations and Development Cooperation, Université libre de Bruxelles and member of the UNICA Steering Committee Panel discussion <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 Chair: Pieter BALLON , Vice-Rector for Research, Vrije Universiteit Brussel & Coordinator of UNICA Research Panel discussion <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 Networking lunch at the University Foundation
15:00-16:30	SESSION 3 EU–Canada cooperation for climate action, urban resilience and global sustainability Chair: Charline URBAIN , Advisor for Sustainable Development in Teaching and Research, Université libre de Bruxelles Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • François GÉLINEAU, Vice-Rector, International Affairs and Sustainable Development, Université de Laval • Aurélien JEANTET, Vice President in charge of the Ecological Transition, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3 • Jonas SCHOLZE, Head of Unit for Intergovernmental Cooperation, European Urban Initiative • Speaker from the University of Amsterdam (TBC) Q&A and discussion
16:30-18:30	Free time
18:30-20:30	Reception hosted by Mission of Canada to the EU Address: Avenue des Arts 58, 1000 Brussels

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"

Chair: Liviu MATEI, Professor of Higher Education and Public Policy, Head of the School of Education, Communication & Society, King's College London

Panel discussion

- **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 (Interdisciplinary Center of American Studies), 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
- Representative of **UNESCO** (TBC)

10:30-11:00 Coffee break

11:00-12:30 SESSION 5 | "Shared Values, Shared Futures: A Roadmap for EU-Canada Academic Cooperation"

Chair: Giorgio MARINONI, Manager of Higher Education and Internationalization policy and projects, International Association of Universities (IAU)

Panel discussion

- **Sorin COSTREIE**, UNICA President
- **Tobias CREMER**, Member of the European Parliament and Standing Rapporteur for Canada in the Committee on Foreign Affairs (TBC)
- **Bill FLANAGAN**, President & Vice-Chancellor, University of Alberta and Vice Chair of U15 Canada (online)
- **Marie GRUBER**, Principal advisor, Research and Scientific Strategy, Academic Affairs, Mila - Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute
- Speaker from a UNICA member university (TBC)

12:30-12:45 **Closing** by **Sorin COSTREIE**, UNICA President

12:45-14:00 Farewell lunch

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

UNICA - Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe – was founded in 1990 and is one of the leading and oldest institutional academic inter-university networks in Europe.

Its [membership](#) includes most of the more prestigious public universities in Europe and currently brings together 52 universities based in 38 European capitals and 35 member states of the Council of Europe. Members must be committed to high quality teaching and research and strive for excellence in both areas at the European and international level.

UNICA boasts a rich history of fostering international collaboration, promoting academic excellence, engaging academic leadership, and facilitating understanding, sharing and capacity building among academic communities throughout Europe and beyond.

This legacy has positioned UNICA as a driving force in advancing European Higher Education and Research and in promoting shared values that emphasise the use of knowledge, research, and innovation in service to society and future generations.

The International Association of Universities (IAU) - Founded in 1950, under the auspices of UNESCO, IAU is a leading global association of higher education institutions and organisations from around the world. The IAU connects almost 600 Members from more than 120 countries to identify, reflect and act on common priorities. It acts as the global voice of higher education to a wide range of international and inter-governmental organizations.

The IAU is an official partner of UNESCO (Associate status) and has been given special consultative status by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and granted the participatory status with the Council of Europe.

Science|Business exists to bring together three worlds which should work together but too often stumble apart: industry, research and policy. The Science|Business Network of universities, companies, and research and policy organisations is a uniquely powerful forum for driving innovation forward. Our newsletters reach Europe's most influential innovators and policymakers. Our meetings bring together speakers and audiences looking to make a real difference. Our reports utilise our unrivalled expertise and knowledge of European policy making to analyse and point the way forward.