



24-26 June 2026

36th UNICA General Assembly & Rectors' Seminar

A decorative background pattern consisting of a repeating geometric design of interlocking triangles and hexagons. The design is rendered in shades of blue, red, and gold, with intricate floral and geometric motifs. The pattern is set against a dark blue background.

**“Bridging Continents.
University Leadership for
Transformative Euro-Latin
American Collaboration”**

Venue: University of Alcalá, Colegio de San Ildefonso
Plaza San Diego s/n, 28801, Alcalá de Henares (Madrid, Spain)

UNICA GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND RECTORS' SEMINAR 2026

TARGET GROUPS

Rectors/Presidents, Vice-Rectors/Vice-Presidents, representatives of academic leadership responsible for international affairs and partnerships, UNICA institutional Contact Persons, Heads of International Offices, Senior managers involved in International Affairs and International partnerships, from UNICA member universities.

FORMAT

The General Assembly and Rectors' Seminar are designed as an in-person event, and in person participation is warmly encouraged. However, **options for online participation and vote will be available for the administrative General Assembly** only.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION & CONTACT

Event webpage: <https://www.unica-network.eu/event/unica-ga-and-rectors-seminar-2026/>

Accommodation in Alcalá

The hosting university has **pre-booked a number of hotels conveniently located to the venue.** Details about the pre-booked hotels and booking instructions are available at the [event webpage](#).

For **regular updates** about the programme, please check out the [event webpage](#).

Any questions or needs? Please contact the UNICA Secretariat: office@unica-network.eu

OVERALL SCHEDULE

Day 0 – Wednesday, 24 June 2026		
SC members only	16:00-18:00	UNICA Steering Committee meeting ♀ Room María Isidra de Guzmán
Exclusive to UNICA members	18:30-20:30	Welcome Reception ♀ Ruzafa Café
	Day 1 – Thursday, 25 June 2026	
	08:30-9:00	Registration & welcome coffee ♀ Patio de Santo Tomás
	9:00-12:15	UNICA Administrative General Assembly ♀ International Conference Room Format: in person, with options for remote participation and vote <i>Coffee break and time for a group picture from 10:45 to 11:15</i>
	12:15-13:30	Short comfort break followed by INFORMAL MEETING OF UNICA LEADERSHIP, IROs and CONTACT PERSONS ♀ International Conference Room
Open to UNICA members and to invited speakers and guests	13:30-14:30	Lunch ♀ Ruzafa Café
	14:30 - 19:30	UNICA Rectors' Seminar ♀ Paraninfo & Capilla de San Ildefonso <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening and keynotes • Session 1 Building Sustainable Academic Partnerships • Session 2 Universities as Agents of Civic Change: Research and Knowledge Transfer in Europe and Latin America
	20:30	Conference dinner ♀ Parador de Alcalá de Henares, Calle Colegios, 8
	Day 2 – Friday, 26 June 2026	
	8:30 - 10:00	Social programme: City walking tour ♀ Meeting point: Colegio de San Ildefonso
10:00-13:40	UNICA Rectors' Seminar ♀ Capilla de San Ildefonso <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session 3 Innovative Pedagogies in the AI Era: A Latin America–Europe Perspective • Session 4 Joint Responses to Global Challenges: Reinforcing Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law through Education 	
13:40 - 15:00	Farewell Lunch ♀ Patio de Filósofos	
15:00 - 15:30	Cervantes Talk ♀ International Conference Room	

UNICA RECTORS' SEMINAR

“Bridging Continents. University Leadership for Transformative Euro-Latin American Collaboration”

Hosted by the University of Alcalá, 25-26 June 2026

INTRODUCTION

Universities are increasingly called to act as **bridges between regions, cultures, and societies**. In today's **interconnected yet fragmented world** - marked by geopolitical tensions, environmental crises, technological disruption, and widening social inequalities - cooperation beyond geographical and political boundaries has become an imperative for higher education. Institutions are expected not only to generate knowledge, but also to contribute to **societal resilience, democratic stability, and inclusive development**.

Latin America and Europe share a **long history of cultural exchange, intellectual dialogue, and political cooperation**. This legacy has been reaffirmed in recent years through renewed high-level political engagement, including the [EU-CELAC Summit held in Brussels in July 2023](#), which relaunched the bi-regional partnership and emphasised cooperation on **multilateralism, climate action, digital transformation, and social cohesion**. The partnership was further strengthened at the [4th EU-CELAC Summit in Santa Marta \(Colombia\) in November 2025](#), where Heads of State and Government adopted a comprehensive **Joint Declaration** outlining shared commitments on renewable energy, inclusive digitalisation, climate adaptation, biotechnology, food security, migration, and the defence of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

These summits underscore the **strategic importance** of the bi-regional relationship and highlight areas where universities can play a decisive role: advancing research and innovation, supporting evidence-based policymaking, fostering people-to-people contacts, and contributing to sustainable development.

Latin America, with its **vibrant academic traditions, demographic dynamism, and expanding research ecosystems**, is an indispensable partner for Europe. Conversely, European universities offer opportunities for **joint knowledge production, mobility, and capacity building**, while contributing to the development of **inclusive and equitable cooperation frameworks**.

Yet collaboration between the two regions continues to face **structural obstacles**: asymmetries in resources and research capacity, fragmented policy environments, language barriers, and uneven access to mobility and funding instruments.

Against this backdrop, the **UNICA Rectors' Seminar 2026** will explore the opportunities and challenges of strengthening cooperation with Latin America through four interconnected themes. The discussions will examine how universities can foster **long-term, structurally embedded partnerships**; how they can act as **agents of civic change** through research and knowledge transfer; how they can develop **innovative pedagogies in the AI era** that promote inclusion and academic integrity; and how they can contribute to **joint responses to global challenges**, including the reinforcement of **democracy, human rights, and the rule of law** - priorities explicitly reaffirmed in the [2025 EU-CELAC Joint Declaration](#).

Sessions

- **Session 1** | Building Sustainable Academic Partnerships
- **Session 2** | Universities as Agents of Civic Change: Research and Knowledge Transfer in Europe and Latin America
- **Session 3** | Innovative Pedagogies in the AI Era: A Latin America–Europe Perspective
- **Session 4** | Joint Responses to Global Challenges: Reinforcing Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law through Education (organized in cooperation with [Instituto Universitario de Investigación en Estudios Latinoamericanos - IELAT](#), University of Alcalá).

The Seminar aims to explore how universities can further **continue to serve as strategic connectors between Europe and Latin America**, by fostering dialogue, supporting informed policy engagement, and advancing forms of academic cooperation that remain both impactful and sustainable.

PROGRAMME UNICA RECTORS' SEMINAR

“Bridging Continents. University Leadership for Transformative Euro-Latin American Collaboration”

Conference venue: Colegio de San Ildefonso de la Universidad de Alcalá, Plaza San Diego s/n, 28801, Alcalá de Henares

Overall Chair: Sorin COSTREIE, UNICA President

Thursday, 25 June 2026

 **Paraninfo**

14:30 - 15:00

Opening of the Rectors' Seminar and Welcome addresses

- **Carmelo García Pérez**, Rector of the University of Alcalá
- **Sorin Costreie**, UNICA President

15:00-16:00

Shaping the Conversation: Opening Keynote

“Universities' crucial role in fostering deeper cooperation between Europe and Latin America”, by **Josep Maria Garrell Guiu**, President, European University Association

Q&A

16:00-16:30

Coffee break

 **Capilla de San Ildefonso**

16:30-17:50

Session I: Building Sustainable Euro-Latin American Academic Partnerships

Chair: Sorin Costreie, UNICA President

Panelists

- **Franz Dieter Hensel Riveros**, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Autonomous University of Bucaramanga
- **Zeynep Kayacik**, Director of the Centre for Latin American Studies, Ankara University
- **Frédéric Louault**, Co-Director of the *Centre interdisciplinaire d'étude des Amériques (AmericaS)*, Université libre de Bruxelles, Vice-President of the *Observatoire Politique de l'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes* of Sciences Po Paris (OPALC - Sciences Po)

17:50-18:10

Short comfort break

18:10-19:30	Session 2 Universities as Agents of Civic Change: Research and Knowledge Transfer in Europe and Latin America
	<p>Chair: Ksenija Vidmar Horvat, Vice-Rector for Study and Student Affairs, University of Ljubljana and member of the UNICA Steering Committee</p> <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capucine Boidin, Vice Rector for Research, University Sorbonne-Nouvelle • Rakel Österberg, Professor and academic representative of Stockholm University for the Academic Collaboration Chile Sweden (ACCESS) network • Christian Lermينياux, Director of the joint institute PSL - University of São Paulo, PSL – Paris Science et Lettres University • Aluisio Segurado, Rector, Universidade de São Paulo
20:30	Conference dinner 📍 Parador de Alcalá de Henares, Calle Colegios, 8
📍 Capilla de San Ildefonso	
Friday, 26 June 2026	
8:30 – 9:45	Social programme: Walking tour of the city 📍 Meeting point: Colegio de San Ildefonso
9:45 - 10:00	Welcome coffee
10:00-11:30	Session 3 Innovative Pedagogies in the AI Era: Latin America - Europe Perspectives
	<p>Chair: Julio Cañero Serrano, former Vice Rector for International Relations, University of Alcalá and UNICA Vice President</p> <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ismael Gómez, Director of Global Digital Strategy, Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) • Tomás Poveda Ortega, Vice President for EMEA, University of San Ignacio de Loyola • Manuela Aparício, Pro-Rector for Pedagogical Innovation, Nova University Lisbon
11:30-12:00	Coffee break

12:00-13:30	Session 4 Joint Responses to Global Challenges: Reinforcing Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law through Education
	<p>Chair: Laura Aragonés Molina, Assistant Professor in International Law and Coordinator of the LLM Programme on International Human Rights Protection, University of Alcalá</p> <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irune Aguirrezábal, Director, Ibero-American Programme in Human Rights, Democracy, and equality, Organization of Ibero-American States • Manuel Pedro da Cruz Baganha, Organización Iberoamericana de Seguridad Social • Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho, Professor of Brazilian and Latin American Studies, King's College London • Castellar Granados, Coordinator of the Research and Analysis Department, Fundación Carolina
13:30-13:40	Closing
13:40-15:00	Farewell lunch
📍 International Conference Room	
15:00 - 15:30	Cervantes Talk "Cervantes: A Man Shaped by the Frontier"
	by Carlos Herrero , Research Coordinator, Franklin Institute, University of Alcalá, Professor in the Study Abroad in Spain Program, Lecturer in "Cervantes: The Adventures of Don Quixote"