



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/>.

VENUES

- European Parliament, rue Wiertz 60, 1047 Brussels - Room SPINELLI 1G2
- University Foundation, rue d'Egmont 11, 1000 Brussels – Room Cattier (ground floor)

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/>

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DRAFT PROGRAMME (as of 19 December 2025)

DAY 1 | Wednesday, 25 February

Exclusive to UNICA Members & Canadian representatives

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

15:00-15:30	Early registration & Welcome Coffee
15:30-18:00	Welcoming Canadian partners & exchange among UNICA member universities and Canadian partners
18:00-20:00	Welcome reception (venue TBC)

DAY 2 | Thursday, 26 February

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

8:30 – 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: representative of Science Business (name TBC) Panel discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrick DEANE, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Queen’s University and IAU Vice President • Josep M. GARRELL, President, European University Association (EUA) • Maria Cristina RUSSO, Deputy-Director-General for Innovation, Prosperity and International Cooperation (as of 1st Jan 2026), Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission • Javier MORENO-SANCHEZ, Chair of the Delegation for Relations to Canada of the European Parliament • Anne WEYEMBERGH, Vice-Rector for External Relations and Development Cooperation, Université libre de Bruxelles and member of the UNICA Steering Committee (TBC) • Canadian Ambassador to the EU (to be appointed)

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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hélène DRAINVILLE, Delegate General of Québec in Brussels • Representative from EURAXESS (name TBC) • Alice JARRY, Professor, Concordia University and member of the Hexagram network (TBC) • Maria LEPTIN, President of the European Research Council (ERC) (TBC) • Carole MANCEL-BLANCHARD, Head of Unit International Cooperation: Europe and Americas, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission • Speaker from UNICA member university (TBC)
13:00 – 15:00	Group picture at the European Parliament Networking lunch at the University Foundation

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

15:00-16:30	SESSION 3 EU–Canada cooperation for climate action, urban resilience and global sustainability
	<p>Chair: TBC</p> <p>Panel discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasman CROWE, Vice-President for Sustainability, University College Dublin (TBC) • François GÉLINEAU, Vice Rector, International Affairs and Sustainable Development, Laval University • Aurélie JEANTET, Vice President in charge of the Ecological Transition, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3 (TBC) • Mona NEMER, Canada's Chief Science Advisor (TBC) • Jonas SCHOLZE, Head of Unit for Intergovernmental Cooperation, European Urban Initiative • Speaker from the Joint Research Center (TBC)
18:00-19:00	Meet & Greet in cooperation with the Mission of Canada to the EU (TBC)
19:00-21:00	Dinner (venue TBC)

DAY 3 | Friday, 27 February

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: Hilligje VAN’T LAND, Secretary General, 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)
- **Anja GEITMANN**, Vice-President Global Engagement, McGill University (TBC)
- **Marie LACHAPELLE**, Scientist in Residence, Québec Government Office in Brussels

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 56 universities based in 41 European capitals and 38 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.