

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **EU–Canada Academic Cooperation Brings Higher Education and Research Leaders Together in Brussels**

- Representatives from European and Canadian universities will meet in Brussels on 25–27 February for a three-day conference on higher education, research, and scientific diplomacy
- The conference is organised by [UNICA](#) in partnership with the European Parliament’s Delegation for Relations with Canada, the [International Association of Universities \(IAU\)](#), and [Science|Business](#).
- Ambassador Nicholas Brousseau, Deputy Head of Mission at the Mission of Canada to the European Union, will speak at the opening plenary.

How can universities help safeguard democratic values, strengthen global cooperation, and tackle today’s most pressing challenges? This question is at the heart of the [UNICA Days 2026](#), a three-day international event taking place in Brussels from **25 to 27 February**, bringing together European and Canadian leaders in higher education, research, and policymaking.

Under the theme **“EU–Canada Cooperation: Shared Values, Shared Futures”**, the event will explore the evolving transatlantic relationship through the lenses of **higher education, research, and scientific diplomacy**, highlighting the growing strategic role of universities in an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape.

Organised by **UNICA**, a network of 51 universities from 38 capitals of Europe, in collaboration with the **Delegation for Relations with Canada of the European Parliament**, the **International Association of Universities (IAU)**, and **Science|Business**, the event will convene policymakers, university leaders, researchers, and representatives from civil society to reflect on achievements, opportunities, and future challenges in EU–Canada cooperation.

#### **Universities at the centre of global cooperation**

Against this backdrop of Canada and Europe’s longstanding cooperation – remarkably highlighted by Canada’s formal association to Horizon Europe Pillar II in July 2024 - discussions will focus on the unique role of universities in international cooperation, as global science becomes increasingly shaped by geostrategic considerations.

Much beyond traditional engines of knowledge production, universities are increasingly called to play a unique role in shaping democratic citizenship, driving innovation, and addressing global challenges. Over the course of two days, speakers from institutions of both sides of the Atlantic will build on this perspective, exploring the role universities as key contributors to civic engagement, global dialogue, and societal progress.

## A platform for dialogue, partnerships, and shared values

Through five thematic sessions, speakers and participants will address different dimensions of the topic, highlighting achievements, showcasing new opportunities, and identifying challenges shaping the transatlantic education and research landscape.

More than a forum for discussion, the UNICA Days 2026 marks a strategic moment to reaffirm the importance of **transatlantic cooperation in higher education and research**. By placing universities at the centre of EU–Canada relations, the event is underlining their potential to shape not only scientific progress, but also more democratic, connected, and sustainable societies.

## Speakers

With over 30 speakers representing European and Canadian higher education institutions, alongside distinguished representatives from European institutions, the European Union, and the Mission of Canada to the EU, the programme brings together a diverse range of perspectives to enrich the transatlantic dialogue. The panel of speakers includes:

- **Ambassador Nicholas BROUSSEAU**, Deputy Head of Mission, Mission of Canada to the European Union
- **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
- **Hélène DRAINVILLE**, Delegate General of Québec in Brussels
- **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
- **Jonas SCHOLZE**, Head of Unit for Intergovernmental Cooperation, European Urban Initiative
- **Larissa BEZO**, President & CEO, Canadian Bureau for Higher Education

## About UNICA and the UNICA Days

Founded in 1990, UNICA is the institutional Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe, currently bringing together 52 member universities from 38 European capitals.

UNICA provides these institutions with a trusted platform to connect, collaborate, and act collectively in the pursuit of a stronger European Higher Education and Research Area. Through member-driven activities, the Network facilitates the exchange of strategies, amplifies the voice of universities in European policy discussions, and by build bridges between academia, cities, and society.

UNICA's work is organised around five strategic and interconnected clusters, reflecting key priorities for universities today: Leadership and Governance, Internationalisation, Innovative learning and teaching, Research and Innovation, and Mission and Link with Society.

The UNICA Days, launched in 2024, constitute the network's flagship event and mark a significant milestone in its ongoing efforts to contribute to the future of Europe's Higher Education and Research. Each year, the event focuses on a distinct theme and convenes the UNICA community in Brussels alongside key stakeholders, policymakers, experts, and peer organisations, offering a vibrant space for meaningful exchange, collaboration, and forward-thinking discussion.

## About the co-organisers

### The International Association of Universities (IAU)

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

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.

## Further information

- [UNICA Days 2026 \(event's webpage\)](#)

## Contacts

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