UNICA
Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe

Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου
University of Cyprus

Co-funded by the European Union

UNICA IRO MEETING 2026

Hosted by the University of Cyprus, 4-6 November 2026

"IROs in the Next Erasmus+ Era: rethinking the concept of successful internationalisation"

Introduction

Internationalisation in Higher Education is undergoing a structural shift. While the numbers of staff and students taking part in mobility experiences remain central indicators of internationalisation, they are no longer sufficient as standalone indicators of internationalisation success. Universities are being asked to demonstrate the *meaning, impact, and institutional value* of international engagement beyond participation numbers.

In short, we are **moving from the logic of *mobility as output* ("what is delivered") to *mobility as leverage* ("what mobility we enable, transform, and improve across the institution").**

This evolution is closely linked to the **ongoing policy discussions on the future of Erasmus+ for the post-2027 period**. Current negotiations and preparatory policy directions indicate a clear shift towards a more impact-oriented, skills-driven, and system-level approach. In this emerging framework, learning mobility is increasingly positioned not as an end in itself, but as part of a broader strategy for skills development, inclusion, institutional capacity building, and competitiveness across European higher education systems.

In this context, **evolving formats of international engagement** that have been practised already for some time – including blended mobility, short-term staff weeks, thematic summer & winter schools, and elements of internationalisation at home – gain a new momentum to expand. These developments pressure International Relations Offices to move beyond administrative coordination towards **more strategic roles**: connecting mobility to institutional priorities, fostering inclusive participation, and demonstrating impact.

The UNICA IRO meeting 2026 aims to provides an opportunity to collectively reflect on the shift from mobility as a metric of activity to mobility as a driver of institutional transformation and impact.

Driving questions

- If mobility is no longer the main metric, what should universities be measuring instead? And what tools can universities use to measure that?
- How do internationalisation at home and mobility strategies reinforce each other within a more integrated, impact-oriented approach?
- How can higher education institutions demonstrate and evaluate the contribution of staff mobility and short-term international programmes to the emerging priorities of Erasmus+?
- What innovative formats of international engagement can universities explore to make international experiences more accessible, inclusive, and sustainable?
- How can the sector strengthen the understanding of internationalisation at home as a complementary dimension of mobility-based strategies?

PROGRAMME

Overall Chair: Elena AVGOUSTIDOU-KYRIACOU, Director of the International Relations Service, University of Cyprus and Coordinator of the UNICA IRO Group

Day 0 | Wednesday, 4 November

16:45	Gathering at the meeting point in the city centre
17:00	**Guided walking tour in the old city of Nicosia**
18:30	**Welcome dinner in the old city** (Kathodon Greek Restaurant & Kafeouzeri)

Day 1 | Thursday, 5 November

Venue: University of Cyprus, 1 Panepistimiou Avenue 2109 Aglantzia, Nicosia, University House "Anastasios G. Leventis", 1st Floor, Senate Room (no 115)

7:40 -7:50 7:50	Gathering of participants outside of Cleopatra Hotel Bus departure to UCY
8:15-8:45	**Registration of the participants and welcome coffee**
8:45-9:00	**Welcome words** • **Tasos Christofides**, Rector, University of Cyprus • **Luciano Saso**, UNICA Secretary General • **Elena Avgoustidou-Kyriacou**, Director of the International Relations Service, University of Cyprus and Coordinator of the UNICA IRO Group
9:00 – 9:15	**Tour de Table**
9:15-9:30	**Presentation of the University of Cyprus**, by **Stella-Maria Vassiliou,** Coordinator of the International Recruitment and Promotion Sector, International Relations Service, University of Cyprus
9:30-10:15	**Opening talk**
	"What does successful internationalisation look like today?" By **Meritxell Chaves**, Secretary General, CHARM European University (online) **Q&A** (15')
10:15-10:45	Coffee break

10:45-12:15	**Session 1 | Rethinking impact — beyond mobility numbers** **Chair: Luciano Saso**, UNICA Secretary General **Panel discussion** • **Alina Cristovici**, Director for International Relations & Erasmus Institutional Coordinator, University of Bucharest • **Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho**, Reader of Brazilian and Latin American Studies and former Vice Dean International for the Faculty of Social Science & Public Policy, King's College London; Circle U. Academic Chair Programme Coordinator • **Åsa Petri**, Head of Unit, International Office, Deputy Head of Student Services, Stockholm University **Q&A**
12:15-13:30	Time for a group picture & Tour of the UCY Campus and Library
13:30-14:45	Cocktail lunch
14:45-16:15	**Session 2 | Beyond traditional mobility: emerging formats of international engagement and internationalisation at home** **Chair: Elena Avgoustidou-Kyriacou**, Director of the International Relations Service, University of Cyprus and Coordinator of the UNICA IRO Group **Opening talk "Internationalisation at home: shaping resilient universities for an uncertain future" | Pablo T. Salvadores Alonso**, Director of Internationalisation, Rey Juan Carlos University (20') **Presentations** (15' each) • **EUCI – Eutopia Certificate of Internationalisation | Helena Deršek Štuhec**, Head of Department, Office for international cooperation, University of Ljubljana • **Developing successful and sustainable BIPs – from concept to implementation | Emma Zeniou**, Coordinator of the International Relations and Development Sector and Head of the Mobility Office, International Relations Service, University of Cyprus • **Implementing Successful and Impactful Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs): Panteion University's Good Practices | Eleni Vasileiou**, Head of the & European Union and International Partnerships Directorate, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences **Q&A and discussion**
16:15-16:30	Short comfort break
16:30-16:40	Gathering of participants at UCY bus stop and transfer to Larnaca
17:15-19:00	**Walk in Larnaca, followed by dinner at Zephyros Beach Tavern**
20:20-20:30	Gathering of participants outside Zephyros Beach Tavern
20:30	Bus Departure to Nicosia (UCY Campus and Cleopatra Hotel)

Day 2 | Friday, 6 November

Venue: University of Cyprus, 1 Panepistimiou Avenue 2109 Aglantzia, Nicosia, University House "Anastasios G. Leventis", 1st Floor, Senate Room (no 115)

7:50- 8:00	Gathering of participants outside of Cleopatra Hotel
8:00	Bus Departure to UCY
8:30 – 9:00	**Welcome coffee**
9:00 – 11:30	**Workshop "Tools and methods for demonstrating the value of internationalisation"**
	Led by **Federica Nestola**, UNICA Project and Policy Officer • Developing impact frameworks: learn how to define objectives, identify relevant indicators, and select appropriate methods for collecting evidence; • Work in groups to build a simple impact assessment framework for initiatives such as staff mobility, short-term programmes, or internationalisation at home; • Explore strategies for translating data into compelling narratives that demonstrate value to university leadership, funding bodies, and other stakeholders; • Draft impact frameworks that participants can adapt to their own institutions
11:30-12:00	Coffee break
12:00-12:15	**Wrap up: main takeaways and conclusions by Elena Avgoustidou-Kyriacou**, Director of the International Relations Service, University of Cyprus and Coordinator of the UNICA IRO Group
12:15-13:00	**Time for UNICA IROs' business**
	• UNICA IRO Meeting 2026 evaluation survey • Announcements & Communications from UNICA • Discussion on future UNICA IRO meetings and initiatives • Members' corner: sharing open announcements and whatever they wish
13:00-14:00	**Farewell lunch**
14:30	Departure by bus to Cleopatra Hotel

INFORMATION AND CONTACT

Regular updates and registration form available at the **event's webpage:**
https://www.unica-network.eu/event/unica-iro-meeting-2026/
For any questions, please contact the UNICA Secretariat:
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