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Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου
University of Cyprus

UNICA IRO MEETING 2026

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

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

Biographies of speakers and chairs

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

Elena Avgoustidou-Kyriacou was born in Nicosia, Cyprus and was educated in the UK. She holds a BSc in Economics (University of Leicester) and an MBA-Finance (Imperial College London). She is the Director of the International Relations Service of the University of Cyprus (UCY), and the Director of the Confucius Institute at UCY since 2014. She is also the UCY Erasmus+ Institutional Coordinator and the Secretary of the UCY International Relations Committee. She has been working in international relations since 1993 and has an expertise in mobility, international cooperation, international development, cultural diplomacy, as well as international recruitment and promotion and publications.

Welcome words

Tasos Christofides, Rector, University of Cyprus

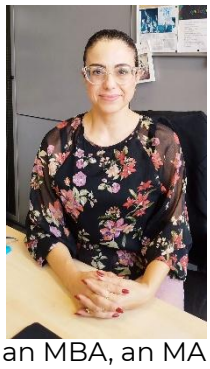
Professor Tasos Christofides completed his undergraduate studies in Mathematics at the University of Athens (Greece), and graduate studies (M.S.E. and Ph.D) in Mathematical Sciences at the Johns Hopkins University (USA). He has served as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mathematical Sciences of the State University of New York at Binghamton. In 1991 he joined the newly founded University of Cyprus and the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, becoming its first Chairperson, serving as an Associate Professor and later as Professor. His areas of expertise include indirect questioning techniques, stochastic orders, dependent random variables and probability inequalities. He is the co-author (with Arijit Chaudhuri) of a research book on Indirect Questioning Techniques in Sample Surveys (Springer, Heidelberg 2013), co-editor (with Arijit Chaudhuri and C.R. Rao) of the Handbook of Statistics Vol 34 and author of a number of papers on probability inequalities, randomized response and indirect questioning techniques in general. He is on the editorial board of four international journals of probability and statistics. He has participated in a number of research projects and has provided consulting services for

various organizations including the Statistical Service of Cyprus. He has served on various national and international scientific and expert committees, among them, the European Statistical Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee of the Greek Statistical System. He is the Rector of the University of Cyprus, the first public University of Cyprus and the President of the Cyprus Statistical Society.

Luciano Saso, UNICA Secretary General

Prof. Luciano Saso (Faculty of Pharmacy and Medicine, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy) coordinated several research projects in the field of pharmacology and has been referee for many national and international funding agencies and international scientific journals in the last 30 years. Prof. Saso has extensive experience in international relations and has been Deputy Rector at Sapienza University of Rome for 8 years (2014-2022). In the last 25 years, he participated in several projects and has been speaker and chair at many international conferences. Prof. Saso has been Member of the Steering Committee of UNICA for four years (2011-2015) and President for eight years (2015-2023) He took over the role of Secretary General of the UNICA Network in June 2023.

Elena Avgoustidou-Kyriacou, Director of the International Relations Service, University of Cyprus and Coordinator of the UNICA IRO Group (see above)



Presentation of the University of Cyprus | Stella-Maria Vassiliou, Coordinator of the International Recruitment and Promotion Sector, International Relations Service, University of Cyprus

Stella-Maria Vassiliou is a higher education professional with extensive experience in international relations, recruitment, promotion, at the University of Cyprus, where she has worked since 2010. She served as Officer-in-Charge of the International Relations and Promotion Office of the International Relations Service from 2010 to 2021, and since 2021 has held the position of Officer A and Coordinator of the International Recruitment and Promotion Sector. She holds an MBA, an MA in English Literature and Comparative Cultural Studies, and a BA in Political Science from the University of Cyprus.

Opening talk | Meritxell Chaves, Secretary General, CHARM European University

Meritxell Chaves has more than thirty years of experience in the higher education sector, in four universities of the Catalan university system, in different functional areas of the University such as academic management, strategic planning, quality and accreditation, and international relations in different organisational cultures.

As Secretary General of European University of CHARM-EU since the start of the initiative in 2019 she has been leading CHARM-EU team.

Session 1 | Rethinking impact — beyond mobility numbers

Chair | Luciano Saso, UNICA Secretary General (see above)

Panelist | Alina Cristovici, Director for International Relations & Erasmus Institutional Coordinator, University of Bucharest

Alina Cristovici is the Director for International Relations at the University of Bucharest, Romania, and has been coordinating the Erasmus and CIVIS Department and the Department for International Cooperation and Foreign Students of the University of Bucharest since 2013. She has over 25 years' experience in organizing international relations activities, especially in managing international exchanges and European educational projects. Since 2015 she has been appointed Erasmus Institutional Coordinator of the University of Bucharest, responsible for the management, coordination and reporting of the Erasmus projects.

She participates in UNICA activities as official representative of the University of Bucharest and acts as university contact person for several international networks, such as Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, CEEPUS, IREG, Black Sea Universities Network, Balkan Universities Associations, Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN).

Since 2019, she has been member of the governance bodies within CIVIS Alliance (Europe's Civic University Alliance) and coordinates mobilities and academic activities of the University of Bucharest within the CIVIS educational Projects.

Panelist | Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho, Reader of Brazilian and Latin American Studies, King's College London; Circle U. Academic Chair Programme Coordinator

Dr Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho was born in Barra Mansa, Brazil. He received his PhD from the University of Passau, Germany, and his undergraduate and MA degrees from the Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Brazil.

He joined King's in 2014 and before he was Associate Professor for Brazilian Studies at Aarhus University (2008-2014), Denmark, where he was also Director of the Latin American Centre (2012-2014). Vinicius was a Lieutenant in the Brazilian Army (2007-2008), serving in the Military Technical Corps.
At King's, Vinicius has served as a Vice Dean (International) for the Faculty of Social Science & Public Policy, and director of King's Brazil Institute between 2020 and 2022. At the War Studies Department, he is the Convener of the MA in Strategic Communications and teaches UG modules on Latin America issues.
Vinicius is the Circle U. Academic Chair Programme Coordinator. He has played an active role contributing to the field of Brazilian studies, founding and editing Brasiliana – Journal for Brazilian Studies and as Editor of the Anthem Brazilian Studies Series.

In 2022, Vinicius created the Observatory of Democracy in Latin America (KODLA). He is also an Associate Researcher at the Centre for Strategic Studies of the Brazilian Navy. Parallel to his academic career, Vinicius is a music conductor and currently directs the King's Brazil Ensemble.

Panelist | Åsa Petri, Head of Unit, International Office, Deputy Head of Student Services, Stockholm University

Åsa Petri is the Head Of Unit For The International Office as well as the Head Of Student Services Of Stockholm University. The International Office manages and supports international cooperation projects, student mobility, the Erasmus+ and other programmes, international student recruitment and strategic support in international affairs to the management of the university. Before Åsa Petri joined Stockholm University, she worked for the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research for 13 years. Five of these, she was posted in Brussels as the Education Attaché of Sweden to the EU, including chairing the negotiations on education policy in the Council of Ministers during the Swedish EU presidency in 2023. Åsa Petri has previously worked in international relations offices at the Stockholm School of Economics and the Anderson School of Business at UCLA, as well as for the Global alliance of management schools (CEMS), based in Paris.

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 (see above)

Opening talk | Pablo T. Salvadores Alonso, Director of Internationalisation, Rey Juan Carlos University

Pablo T. Salvadores Alonso is Director of Internationalisation at Rey Juan Carlos University (Madrid, Spain). He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Sociology and a Master's Degree in Public Management from the Complutense University of Madrid and is a senior civil servant at Rey Juan Carlos University. He serves on the Governing Board of the EULiST European University Alliance, which he chaired from 2024 to 2025, and currently leads the initiative *"EULiST Beyond Europe"*. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Group of Spanish Universities participating in the European Universities Initiative (UEUE), a permanent member of the CRUE working groups on Internationalisation at Home and International Promotion and represents EULiST in the FOREU4ALL Forum of European Universities.

His professional interests focus on institutional internationalisation strategies, internationalisation at home, European university alliances, and global engagement. He has delivered lectures and presentations on higher education internationalisation at conferences and professional forums across Europe and Latin America.

Presentation | Helena Deršek Štuhec, Head of Department, Office for international cooperation, University of Ljubljana

Helena Deršek Štuhec is Head of Department in the Office of International Relations at the University of Ljubljana. She is primarily responsible for coordinating incoming student mobility and the implementation of Erasmus+ and other international mobility programmes. She also serves as the Erasmus+ Digital Officer. With more than 20 years of experience in the Office, she has extensive expertise in student mobility and international cooperation.

Presentation | Eleni Vasileiou, Head of the & European Union and International Partnerships Directorate, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences

Dr Eleni Vasileiou, is currently Head of the & European Union and International Partnerships Directorate of Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences. She holds a bachelor's degree in human sciences and PhD of Faculty of Humanities, Department of Mediterranean Studies, University of Aegean. She has also Diploma in Journalism and Communication, Liberal Studies Laboratory "College of Journalistic Studies". She was in charge of the implementation of European projects and monitoring of financial management at Special Research Account of the University of the Aegean (1996-2007). She supervised a project team "Supporting international relations processes and international academic programs. She has also participated in numerous conferences and scientific publications.

Presentation | Emma Zeniou, Coordinator of the International Relations and Development Sector and Head of the Mobility Office, International Relations Service, University of Cyprus

Emma Zeniou holds a bachelor's degree from City University, London, and a master's degree from Imperial College London. She is the Coordinator of the International Relations and Development Sector and Head of the Mobility Office of the International Relations Service of the University of Cyprus (UCY). She has extensive experience in the management and implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme, she specialises in student and staff mobility, international cooperation, and the development of institutional partnerships. She has also been actively involved in European initiatives aimed at advancing the digital transformation of Erasmus+ administration. From 2023 to 2025, she served as a member of the European Commission's Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) Champions Group and currently serves as a member of the Erasmus Student Card Initiative (ESCI) Champions Group for the

2025–2027 term. Her professional expertise centres on strengthening international collaboration, enhancing mobility opportunities, and promoting digital innovation and efficiency for mobility in higher education.

Workshop "Tools and methods for demonstrating the value of internationalisation"

Federica Nestola, UNICA Project and Policy Officer

Federica joined UNICA as Project and Policy Officer in February 2025. In this role, she contributes to the development, coordination and implementation of European cooperation projects and policy initiatives, with a particular focus on the future of the Erasmus+ Programme, higher education policy, international cooperation and the role of universities in addressing societal challenges.

She holds a Bachelor's Degree in International and Diplomatic Studies and a Master's Degree in Diplomacy and International Cooperation. She has a strong background in project management, policy development, communication, institutional coordination and stakeholder engagement, alongside extensive knowledge of EU funding programmes and higher education cooperation. She has been actively involved in the Erasmus+ Programme since 2016, gaining experience across different dimensions of the programme, including international mobility, strategic partnerships, project development and implementation.

Before joining UNICA, Federica worked at the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), within the International Cooperation Unit. There, she contributed to the international dimension of Erasmus+ and EU higher education cooperation, with a geographical focus on Asia. Her work involved supporting cooperation with partner countries, monitoring regional developments and contributing to initiatives aimed at strengthening international academic partnerships and dialogue.