

Where are we with the 'Stairway to Excellence'? The Role of European Universities

programme

Seminar

Brussels, Belgium

26 June 2015

9:30 – 12:30

Room JDE 51



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EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions



The ATELIERS
of the Committee of the Regions

Conference objective

The aim of this conference is to gather experts, academics and members of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Parliament (EP) to jointly discuss the **future of universities in Europe** and their involvement in bringing about the **“Stairway to Excellence”** at local and regional level. Participants from the Committee of the Regions’ SEDEC commission, the European institutions, together with renowned academics (Jean Monet Chairs and leaders of university/ research associations), will be take part in the discussion.

Apart from fostering a much needed debate about the role of European universities in closing the ‘innovation divide’ at both national and regional level, this event would also like to showcase some good practices and provide an opportunity to network between key players and stakeholders. This conference will equally serve as a follow-up to a recent Latvian Presidency event, **Week of Innovative Regions in Europe (WIRE)**¹, in which the CoR has been involved.

Focus of the debate

General themes:

- Modernisation of EU higher education and improving research capabilities

¹ <http://www.wire2015.eu/>

- Taking stock of key issues for European regions regarding research and innovation and how to achieve a “Stairway to Excellence”
- Overcoming innovation barriers and stimulating regional strategies and smart specialisation

Specific issues:

- To examine the participation of universities in regional clusters and their impact on local employment and competitiveness – short- and medium-term perspectives;
- To receive up-to-date information regarding the new official ranking of European Universities, U-Multirank (www.u-multirank.eu), requested and overseen by the EC;
- To examine various modes of financing and recruitment at regional universities and research centres – particularly in a post-crisis context – in order to better promote a “Stairway to Excellence”;
- To reveal the “added value” of European strategies and key programmatic documents on the development of national (and regional) high education policies;
- To highlight some of the existing CoR opinions and to contribute to the preparation of future positions of the SEDEC commission in the field of high education policy.

9:00 Registration

9:30 – 9:50 Welcome addresses

Ms Yoomi Renström (SE/PES), Chair of Committee of the Regions’ SEDEC commission and Member of Ovanåker Municipal Council

9:50 – 10:30 Session 1: “Modernising European Higher Education. Do recent EU Programmes really have a Regional and Local Dimension?”

Chaired by: **Dr Giorgos Grammatikakis** (GR/S&D), Member of the European Parliament, Committee on Education and Culture

- **Mr Csaba Borboly** (RO/EPP), SEDEC member and President of Harghita County Council, rapporteur on “European Higher Education in the World”
- **Mr Simon Roy**, Policy officer for modernisation of higher education, Modernisation Agenda and Erasmus unit, DG EAC, European Commission

Open debate (approx. 10 min.)

10:30 – 10:45 Coffee break

**10:45 – 11:20 Session 2: “EU Universities in building the ‘Stairway to Excellence’”:
Regional and Academic Perspectives”**

Chaired by: **Prof. Rumyana Kolarova**, Secretary for Education and Science, the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, and former Minister of Education of Bulgaria

- **Prof. Tatjana Muravska**, Jean Monnet Chair, Director of the Centre for European and Transition Studies, University of Latvia
- **Prof. Carlos Rodrigues**, Associate Professor at the Department of Social and Political Sciences and Territorial Studies, University of Aveiro, Portugal

Open debate (approx. 10 min.)

**11:20 – 12:10 Session 3: “European Universities: R&D Laggards or Innovation Champions?
Possibilities of Promoting Growth and Regional Specialisation”**

Chaired by: **Dr Ulla Engelmann**, Head of Unit, International, Inter-institutional and Stakeholder Relations, Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Commission

- **Dr Dimitri Corpakis**, Head of Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation unit, DG RTD, European Commission
- **Prof. Robert Tijssen**, Chair of Science and Innovation Studies, Leiden University, the Netherlands, www.U-Multirank.eu project consortium
- **Dr Thomas Jorgensen**, Head of Unit, European University Association (EUA)

Open debate (approx. 10 min.)

**12:10 – 12:30 Concluding remarks: Mr Markku Markkula, President of the European Committee of
the Regions**

Working language: *English*

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<http://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/stairway-to-excellence.aspx>



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