

## EUA Focus Group: Universities and Public Engagement

Hosted by the Open University of Catalonia  
Barcelona, Spain  
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*Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.<sup>1</sup>*

### **1. Context**

The European University Association (EUA) is organising a Focus Group for University Practitioners across Europe to discuss how to articulate and implement strategies for public engagement.

Universities need to be open. They have both the capacity and the obligation to play an active role as major civil society actors in their own right. Research and higher education have an increasingly direct impact on society, and universities must interact and engage in a dialogue with citizens and stakeholders in society at large.

Universities have been effective in involving the larger public in their activities for a long time now; the ‘ivory tower’ is long gone, and the concept of impact is becoming more and more important. The more universities become active as societal actors, the more they will be engaged openly and willingly in debates at the local, national, and global level for instance with employers, municipalities, or schools, in order to support skills development and foster innovation. This can take many forms, such as initiating dialogue around curriculum development and content, raising awareness of global challenges, and opening up the research and innovation agenda through ‘citizen science’, all of which can demonstrate how universities are a strong voice for evidence and knowledge in a time of ‘alternative facts’.

How do institutions across Europe engage strategically in sustaining a positive dialogue beyond their institutions? What are the good practices, where are the risks and pitfalls? The Focus Group on Universities and Public Engagement offers an opportunity to share practices and experiences among university leadership from all over Europe.

### **1. Event description**

EUA invites university practitioners from across Europe with experience in developing and implementing institution-level strategies for public engagement and dialogue with society to exchange and share their views on these important issues. The purpose of the focus group is both to explore how universities are dealing with these issues, and to provide a forum for peer learning and sharing of good practices. The outcomes of the discussion will also be used to feed into further development of EUA policies and activities with members.

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<sup>1</sup> Working definition of the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement in the UK

The focus group, conducted in English, will be a one-day event built around open discussions between all participants. Key questions will be sent in advance and participants should be prepared to contribute actively to the discussions.

The number of participants is limited to a maximum of 25, and applicants shall be selected according to the criteria specified under point 2 below (Selection criteria). The event is restricted to staff from EUA member institutions.

There is no registration fee, and participants are expected to cover their own travel and accommodation costs. Meals and refreshments on the day of the event will be provided free of charge to participants. Applicants should not make any travel arrangements before they have officially been selected for participation. Participants selected to take part in the event will receive additional practical information in due course.

## **2. Selection criteria**

Applicants will be selected based on their experience in public engagement and their motivation to attend. Special consideration will be given to ensuring a geographical balance as well as a diversity of experiences and institutional profiles. Applicants should have a coordination function at their institution (vice-rector or similar).

## **3. Submitting your expression of interest**

For more information please contact [events@eua.be](mailto:events@eua.be). To submit your expression of interest, please click on the link below, fill in the application form and do not forget to click on the red button at the end: [https://eua.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_cNl2fyZyjdnmvhr](https://eua.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cNl2fyZyjdnmvhr)

The **deadline for applications is 10 November 2017**.

We strongly encourage you to submit your application to participate as soon as possible.