ULYSSEUS International Networking Conference: From EU International Cooperation Policy to Partnership and Co-creation in Higher Education

10th November 2026, Brussels

BACKGROUND

As the European Union prepares for the next Multiannual Financial Framework beyond 2027 and considers the future development of both the Global Gateway strategy and the European Universities Alliances initiative, this conference offers a timely opportunity to strengthen dialogue among European university alliances, their international partners, and EU institutions. It aims to bring university-level experience and international partner perspectives into policy discussions, while translating shared European priorities into reciprocal, sustainable, and operational forms of institutional cooperation.

Ulysseus' international cooperation strategy encompasses key Global Gateway regions, including Sub Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia Pacific, while also building on established partnerships in other strategically important parts of the world. Through these relationships, Ulysseus and its partners can translate relevant EU priorities into concrete, reciprocal university partnerships, while preserving a broader commitment to global academic exchange, mutual understanding, and long-term institutional cooperation.

The conference will bring together invited non-EU universities, Ulysseus members, and representatives of EU institutions to deepen dialogue and develop new forms of collaboration. Ulysseus aims to serve as a coordinated European interface for international universities seeking multilateral engagement with its member institutions. The event will contribute to an operational blueprint for the alliance's internationalisation objectives, identify potential flagship activities aligned with relevant Global Gateway priorities, and feed evidence and recommendations from university into EU policy discussions.

By bringing EU internationalisation policy closer to universities and returning evidence based recommendations to policymakers, the conference will contribute to discussions shaping the post 2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and the design of Ulysseus Phase 3. It will also identify practical and transferable cooperation models while ensuring that the priorities and perspectives of non-EU partners are reflected in the design of reciprocal, sustainable, and strategically coherent partnerships.

We look forward to meeting Ulysseus cross-alliance international cooperation stakeholders, leaders and managers, Ulysseus international cooperation network partners, EU and Member States' institutional representatives and programme leaders.

AIMS

The conference should provide the following:

- Bringing the EU's strategic approach to international cooperation in higher education, research, and innovation closer to the alliance and its non-EU partners
- Exchange practice on functioning models of inter-university collaboration between EU and non-EU universities, with special interest in the voices from outside the EU.
- Developing proposals for cooperation models for Ulysseus with non-EU countries, especially as an input for the next stage of Ulysseus
- Formulating evidence-based recommendations for improving EU programs and funding instruments that support cooperation with non-EU countries

MEETING VENUE

Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11, Bruxelles

PROGRAMME (draft)
Tuesday, 10th November 2026

8:30 – 9:30 | Registration

Session I – Communicating the EU approach to international cooperation

This session will present the European Commission's vision for the future of the Global Gateway strategy and showcase evidence and case stories from the current policy cycle. Focusing on education and research, the session will explore how European universities and third country partners can implement Global Gateway priorities more effectively and in a human-centered way, and how to co-create project initiatives that contribute to the socio-economic sustainability of partner regions. Speakers will highlight practical lessons, funding instruments, and opportunities for deeper collaboration.

9:30 – 10:00 |Keynotes

- *Prof. Rocio Martinez de Pablos, Ulysseus General Coordinator – USE (Spain)*
- *Sophie Schondube, Ulysseus Project Officer, European Education and Culture Executive Agency*
- *DG for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, tbc*
- *Mr Petar Markovic, Ambassador, Head of Mission of Montenegro to the European Union*
- *Mr. Michal Wieczik, Member of the European Parliament (Slovakia)*

10:00 – 10:45 | Panel 1: From Global to Regional: Increasing the Impact of University International Collaborations on Local Territories

Moderator: Prof. Sanja Pekovic, vice-rector for internationalisation, University of Montenegro - Ulysseus

- *Luisa Bunescu, Policy Officer, DG International Partnerships*
- *Prof. Mauricio Lambertucci, Director of International Relations, University of Buenos Aires*
- *Prof. Emmanuel Awuni Kolog, University of Ghana*
- *Prof. Luis Ramon Vaccaro, Ulysseus – University of Genoa (Italy)*

II – Sharing success stories from Ulysseus and partners

Ulysseus members and their international partners have a long history of successful collaboration, reinforced since the alliance's establishment through joint projects, thematic activities within the Ulysseus innovation hubs, and regional partnerships. This session will showcase a selection of these success stories alongside external examples to inspire replication and adaptation. Live dialogue will be supported by poster presentations from across the alliance, creating opportunities for peer learning and networking.

10.45 - 11.35h | Success Story Presentations

- *Prof. Agostino Massa, University of Genoa (Italy) – Ulysseus: Successful CBHE projects of Ulysseus with Global Gateway regions*
- *Assoc. Prof. Maroš Halama, Technical University of Košice (Slovakia) - Ulysseus: EU supported collaboration on Enigma challenges in clean energy & medicine in smart cities*
- *Alizée Bonnet des Tuves, European Project Development Officer, World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Systems Thinking and Innovation in the Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases - Ulysseus Hub on Ageing and Wellbeing – Université Côte d'Azur (France)*
- *Dr. Yolanda I Chirino - Ulysseus international partner – Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México - UNAM (Mexico)*
- *Nada Bruer, Executive Secretary, Inter University Centre Dubrovnik (Croatia)*

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- *Poster Session: A dedicated poster area in the meeting hall where alliance members display best practices, project results, and partnership models.*

11.35 - 12.15h | Coffee break

III – Connecting the worlds of universities and diplomacy for impactful Science Diplomacy

Science diplomacy is a practical instrument for translating research excellence into sustained, trust-based international partnerships that advance sustainable development, resilience and innovation for the common good. The European Council has recently adopted an EU framework for science diplomacy that defines it as a set of practices - science in diplomacy, science for diplomacy, diplomacy for science, and diplomacy in science - and urges coordinated action to protect values, strengthen open and secure cooperation, and maximise R&I impact globally. The session will offer European Commission officials and

thought leaders an opportunity to update the audience on recent developments in policy and practice. The panel will showcase selected case perspectives from academics and diplomats. Together, the discussion will highlight how European alliances such as Ulysseus can draw lessons to advance a more inclusive and globally responsive science diplomacy agenda.

12.15 - 12.45h | Keynote

- *Prof. Emeritus Luk Van Langenhove, Brussels School of Governance at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, EUTOPIA alliance*
- *Karel Haegeman, Team Leader SHIFT - Transforming Territories at European Commission JRC*

12.45 - 13.30h | Panel 2 – Creating Joint Agendas and Aligning for Impact: Voices from Universities and Diplomacy

Moderator: Elke Dall coordinator of new HE project CUSP – Consolidating European Science Diplomacy

- *Jean-Francois Doulet, Former French Attaché in Canada*
- *Prof. Cecile Sabourault, Vice Rector for Internationalization, Université Côte d'Azur - Ulysseus*
- *Milena Milonjic, 2nd Secretary, Mission of Montenegro to the EU, Member of Ulysseus International Advisory Board*
- *Prof. Ennio Vivaldi, Rector of the University of Chile (2014-2022) and Chilean Ambassador at Rome (2023-2026)*
- *Dr. Serge Desnoyers, Assistant Vice President Research & Innovation, Université Laval (Canada)*

IV – Co-designing priorities for the next stage of European University Alliances and EU internationalisation

Through moderated conversations this session will support the design of flagship activities that translate Ulysseus strengths into long-term, reciprocal partnerships with non-EU institutions, ensuring alignment with the EU's strategic directions. A second strand will support designing concrete improvements to Erasmus+ CBHE and KA171 approaches, emphasising co-design with international partner institutions, simplified administrative pathways, blended mobility, and funding models that support sustained institutional collaboration rather than one-off projects. The discussion will also cover how existing Ulysseus educational and research resources and mechanisms can be leveraged to strengthen and expand collaboration while respecting local priorities and contextualised R&I approaches.

13.30 – 14.45 | Co-creation workshop

- *Participants from across Ulysseus alliance, international partners, EU and MS institutions, programme leaders. Process design and moderation by Ulysseus members;*
- ***Session leader: Prof. Siegfried Walch, MCI Management Center Innsbruck - The Entrepreneurial School - Ulysseus (Austria)***

V – Conclusions and Roadmap for the establishment of Ulysseus International Cooperation Network with invited universities

14.45 - 15.00 | Concluding reflections

- *Branka Žižić, University of Montenegro, Ulysseus*

15.00 - 15.15 | Roadmap for LoI-s with Ulysseus International Cooperation Network Partners

- *Ana Dragutinović, University of Montenegro, Ulysseus*

15.15 - 16.30 | Networking lunch

REGISTRATION

To register for ULYSSEUS NETWORKING CONFERENCE on November 10th 2026, please follow this link (please copy it and paste it in the browser):

https://forms.cloud.microsoft/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=DQSIkWdsW0yxEjajBLZtrQAAAAAAAAAAAANAAXclRgpUQjhBNDRISTU5VzQzNFNONDhQSFNWNkJGMS4u&r84000fc78da5491fb7071b32879bec75=Ulysseus%202nd%20International%20Networking%20Conference_Nov2026%20

Inquieries: ulysseus@ucg.ac.me



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