

# MEMBER MAGAZINE

Discussing international education



# OUR CHANGING CLIMATE

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SPRING 2022

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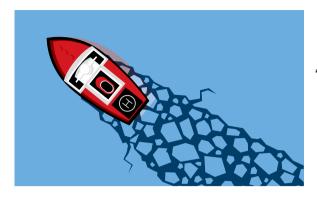
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06

"International educators have a responsibility, and a unique capacity, to help turn the tide"

UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO LEAD ON CLIMATE ACTION

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"Sustainability is a wider concept than climate, and internationalisation is far more than mobility"

SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH INTERNATIONALISATION





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"Sustainability is a journey, not a checklist"

IN CONVERSATION WITH DANIELLA TILBURY

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"Equitable access to education will require models for distance and hybrid education across borders"

BROADENING ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES



## **EDITORIAL**

he Spring 2022 issue of Forum looks at the growing body of enquiry and reflection on how international education intersects with our changing climate. This question has taken on significant prominence in the last several years in light of two profoundly important - and ironically contradictory - truths. On the one hand, the physical mobility associated with international education contributes directly to climate degradation. At the same time, international collaboration in higher education can and must play an active role in addressing this worldwide crisis.

As we are now aware, the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, shone an unflinching spotlight on the urgent challenges currently facing the environment and the impact of human activity on the planet. So how do we, as international educators, reconcile the environmental impact of our work, and what are the alternatives? Internationalisation in higher education can be understood as a direct contributor to the climate emergency, particularly via the extensive use of air travel. However, it should also be seen as a key source of innovative solutions that will support the global effort to deter further degradation and enhance environmental resilience and regeneration.

Articles selected for this edition of Forum are drawn from individuals, institutions and associations from across Europe and further afield. In some cases, they present case studies of how particular institutions or groups of international educators have sought to frame local responses, such as the enhancement of online international learning or the integration of sustainability initiatives into

the curriculum. Other articles question where the responsibility for greening international education lies, be it with students themselves, with their institutions, with national governments or within the funding parameters of EU programmes. In that context, the policy framework for action is brought into question, with reflections on how to strategically align international higher education and climate goals, as well as how to empower changemakers at all levels.

I am delighted that Professor Daniella Tilbury agreed to be interviewed for this issue, given her academic and policy work on sustainability as a key agenda for the future of higher education. From Gibraltar, and formerly the inaugural Vice-Chancellor and CEO of the University of Gibraltar, Professor Tilbury reflects on how her career in education for sustainability was kick-started by an international study experience in Australia. Indeed, she views international education as an accelerator of change, pointing to the fact that cross-border travel by students and staff challenges assumptions and bursts socio-cultural bubbles. That being said, she joins with other authors in this issue to call for a smarter and more efficient approach to travel. Compellingly, Professor Tilbury states that sustainability itself is a journey, rather than a checklist. She calls on higher education institutions to mainstream sustainability concerns and considerations into all courses so that future decision-makers, leaders and practitioners embed sustainability in their everyday thinking and planning across all professions.

In addition to the interview, I'm pleased that some of the authors in this issue have a close association with the



Climate Action Network for International Educators (CANIE). From its origins as a collective of concerned practitioners hosting meetings on the sidelines of international education conferences, CANIE has grown to become a key influencer of policy and practice at institutions worldwide, with chapters established in Europe, Oceania, and the Americas.

With my thanks to fellow members of the EAIE Publications Committee Dr Jos Beelen and Han Aarts who joined me in reviewing submissions; I hope that you enjoy reading this edition of Forum.

— DOUGLAS PROCTOR, EDITOR PUBLICATIONS@EAIE.ORG

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

#### Adrienne Fusek

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Inspired by her time studying abroad in Mexico, Adrienne dedicated her career to helping others have similar experiences.

#### Michael Salmon

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#### Policy and research officer, European University Foundation

Inspired by her background in international relations, Helena began working in international education to help people broaden their horizons.

#### Paola di Marzo

#### Project officer, Erasmus Student Network (ESN)

Paola discovered the positive effects of international education through her experiences studying in Poland and working in Kosovo. She is a self-described cookie-lover.

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Elena started her international education journey by analysing the use of English in academic settings and has since studied the acquired skills of double-degree students.

#### 🗺 Sebastian Fernandes

#### Chief operating officer, FPP

Having studied in five countries and speaking almost five languages, Sebastian is truly a citizen of the world. He is passionate about gardening and has many amazing trees.

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Though he has never studied abroad, Jack has spent the last five years living in Spain, Italy, and South Africa. He loves to be outdoors with his golf clubs or his camera.

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With expertise in sustainability and government policy, Pii-Tuulia is also a cofounder and board member of the Climate Action Network for International Educators (CANIE).

IN CONVERSATION WITH

# DANIELLA TII RIIRY

MARIO ADAMO EAIE Former Vice-Chancellor and CEO of the University of Gibraltar, Professor Daniella Tilbury firmly believes that international education can accelerate change. With her decision to pursue a career in education for sustainability having been heavily influenced by an international study experience in Australia, she acknowledges the power of cross-border travel to challenge assumptions and burst sociocultural bubbles. She encourages us to view sustainability as a journey, rather than a checklist, and calls on higher education institutions to approach travel more efficiently and to reframe the student experience by mainstreaming sustainability and teaching students to shape change as it happens.

How did you choose the topic of your PhD dissertation, the wholly new discipline, that is 'education for sustainable development' (ESD)? What concerns, thoughts and aspirations influenced your decision? DT: That is a good question to start with. I did my PhD in Cambridge, in the late 1980s, at a time when very few were talking about the term 'sustainability' and what it meant. More specifically, no one had addressed sustainability in higher education or confronted the implications for teaching and learning, or the type of organisations that universities needed to become. This meant that my work was very exploratory as there was no prior work that I could base it off of or learn from. I was very much discouraged by others from undertaking this research, as sustainability was considered a passing fad or trend. I was advised that it would be academic suicide to pursue this investigation.

The fact is that I was driven by the underpinning ambition of sustainability and its focus on education for change. A significant life experience influenced this. I had the fortune of being an exchange or international student at Deakin University in Australia as an undergraduate. It was a formative experience when I understood the need to question the purpose and practice of education and not just the themes of learning. Most importantly, the experience challenged many of my worldviews and decentred me

from what had been a limited worldview. It broadened my horizons so that I had understood the need to look beyond immediate issues and saw the sometimes invisible connections between people and planet issues. I came back very driven with the idea of pursuing research in this area.

It clarified for me that universities and colleges were not fit for purpose and that we needed to engage in a process of reimagining and re-crafting higher education. I was interested in the role and purpose of higher education, and how sustainable development was actually questioning the whole premise of what universities were doing and why.

Fast forward to the present day and the future ahead. How can university administrators and educators continue to innovate ESD and keep its relevance and effectiveness intact, for example in equipping future generations with the skills they will require?

DT: Higher education has been involved in international negotiating processes on climate action and sustainable development from the very start. Universities and colleges have been very present since Stockholm in 1972 and continue to be leading influencers at Climate Change COPs. The issue for me is that society still sees universities primarily as the generators of climate science. However, we

shouldn't simply be talking about having the data and the research, or training enough climate science experts. We need to mainstream sustainability concerns and considerations into all of higher education, leading to every profession: doctors, nurses, architects, vets – all existing careers. We need to talk about how we teach the decision-makers,

# We need to get to the core of what university student experiences are, and reframe them

leaders and practitioners of tomorrow to embed sustainability in their everyday thinking and planning.

At the moment, we are just developing students' knowledge and understanding of the current issues and how the world is changing, while we need to be moving towards helping them learn to shape that change as it is happening. So we can't just add the Sustainable Development Goals, the SDGs, to existing practice. We can't just add themes to assignments or field trips. We need to get to the core of what university student experiences are, and reframe them. Until we start reforming, we will continue to be just expertise in someone else's agenda, rather than social disruptors. And higher education has a role to play in social disruption, just like we did with women's and gender issues.

By definition, education yields its profits in the medium to long term. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, can internationalisation act as a catalyst for education to yield a quicker profit, and amplify its reach?

DT: I believe that international education can accelerate change. When a student or a lecturer travels; when they go to a different social context that challenges their assumptions; that challenges their experience, their socio-cultural bubbles, and moves us closer to a sustainable future. They see the world differently; these experiences and being exposed to people from other cultures and concerns, challenges and questions the 'glasses'

carbon compensate when we can, and only travel when it is needed. Cutting out travel completely from international education, for me, is not the answer with regards to climate change.

Scholars and climate activists stress the crucial role of participatory processes in the quest for sustainability. Is this also true for universities, and how do we get there?

DT: Participation is a token word in higher education at the moment, and that needs to change. We used to think that participation was simply about creating spaces for people interested in doing something, whether that was creating a green office,

## What we need to do is travel more smartly, more efficiently; we need to carbon compensate when we can, and only travel when it is needed

through which we often see the world. If we want change to happen, we need to constantly be exposed to these experiential or 'life-significant' moments. People often say to me, "oh, but the carbon footprint associated with international travel, that's the real problem". No, that's not the problem! In fact, travel is, for me, a key to the solution to this problem, because you are displaced, and placed in a position where you are questioning and rethinking. What we need to do is travel more smartly, more efficiently; we need to

a voluntary experience, or a field study centre associated with a particular issue. What we've actually learned over the course of the last decade, is that young people no longer know how to participate or make a difference. Greta and her generation are hitting the streets because it's the only thing they know how to do. They don't know how to participate to influence. Yes, we need to continue to create spaces for participation. However, we also need to scaffold and help stakeholders understand how they can participate

with meaning and with influence. That requires an element of capacity building, but also time. One of the key things about good projects and initiatives is that they don't happen in a linear way. Those who want to learn will do so in their own time. We need to make a bigger effort to not only explain why participation is necessary, but to help them do it. We need to create opportunities inside and outside the classroom, so that our students, educators and administrators can feel a part of a significant life experience that will change their way of engaging, as well as their role at the university.

#### Participation is a token word in higher education at the moment, and that needs to change

As a university and sustainability leader, you have set the sustainability strategies of numerous HEIs across various geographies. How can university leaders replicate successful models, while doing justice to the unique potential and challenges of local contexts?

DT: I find that the experiences of others tend to be good for a couple of things. Looking to others is important as a motivator and also as a driver for change, in the sense that the experiences of others become useful case studies to illustrate how things can happen. But, as every



Daniella Tilbury speaking at the UN Climate Change Conference, UK 2021

institution is unique, they are not useful when you try to replicate them. Sustainability is a journey, not a checklist. That means that if you want to bring about change in your institution to address climate or sustainability, you need to understand your context. And it's frustrating, because it will take time and there are no quick fixes. You have to provide opportunities for reflection, safe spaces for capacity building and for listening, participation and engagement, rather than checklists of actions (or reactions) for change.

COP26 has been a reminder of the painstaking complexity of multilateralism. How can university partnerships and alliances for sustainability bear fruits, and offer a healthy model of international collaboration?

DT: Universities are more recently competing in sustainability, through rankings and a whole range of different indices, awards and prizes. I don't think these are helping, because there has to be a sharing of not just experiences but resources in this agenda. For example, why can't we have sustainability offices across two universities in the same city that share resources and expertise? It would make

more sense and have more impact: economies of scale. When I was Dean of Sustainability, I reached out to the local college and other institutions in my region to share resources and do projects together. Why reinvent the wheel? It just makes a lot more sense, and the students get a much more expanded bubble of experiences and understand the meaning of partnerships for sustainability.



The signature Catalan university system is pulling out all the stops when it comes to achieving sustainable internationalisation. Working together in such areas as student mobility, training and research on the wellbeing of our planet, they have made strong collaboration a cornerstone of their system and are collectively tackling the climate crisis.



atalonia shares in the concerns about climate change and agrees that the urgent challenges we are facing call for a variety of transformative actions. In connection, the Catalan university system is doing its part to see change come to fruition.

Made up of 12 universities<sup>1</sup>, 66 research centres, 265,000 students, 20,000 professors and 25,000 researchers, the Catalan university system is working together to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition to the university system's own 2030 Agenda action plan, all of its universities have internationalisation plans that include actions for sustainability.

Moreover, beyond the actions envisaged in the joint plan, Catalonian universities are prioritising three elements of sustainable internationalisation above all else: the sustainability of student mobility, training in sustainability and institutional and research projects on planetary wellbeing.

#### TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

Not only did the COVID-19 pandemic accelerate hybrid collaboration formulas that were already being developed, newly introduced COIL methodologies have also taken us further down the path towards more innovative and sustainable programmes at the international level. It is against this backdrop that sustainable mobility remains at the heart of current projects within the Catalan university system. The Universitat de Girona has been raising awareness of the impact of mobility by



showing the CO2 emissions of exchange journeys based on the type of transport used. On top of that, the Universitat de Barcelona (UB) has developed a training module on circular economy as a part of the European Erasmus+ UNI-ECO project. The Universitat Internacional de Catalunya also offers annual cross-disciplinary sustainability workshops.

Universities included in the European Commission's European Universities initiative<sup>2</sup> are equally concerned about sustainable mobility as a key issue within their international partnerships. These partnerships have given rise to a wide range of initiatives. One such example is the creation of a master's degree in Global Challenges for Sustainability, promoted by the UB through CHARM-EU. Another initiative, created by the Universitat Rovira i Virgili's Aurora Alliance Sustainability Working Group, is the Aurora Travel Codex, a guide to promote green travel and reduce and mitigate CO2 emissions. The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona has also designed training modules in English using a challengebased learning methodology. These are offered to local students and students from the ECIU University consortium.

#### COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION

Catalan universities are also leading numerous initiatives to embed sustainability in higher education curriculum. Particularly noteworthy is the introduction of the SDGs in undergraduate and postgraduate education, such as the master's degree in planetary health offered by the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) and the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), in collaboration with the Barcelona Institute for Global Health. The role of AQU Catalunya, our university quality assurance agency, also plays an important role in guaranteeing that SDG training at bachelor's degree level is present in all studies.

This dedication to sustainability education is further demonstrated by various measures to accelerate the process of making campuses more sustainable, as well as action plans to address the climate emergency. One example of this is the Sustainable UPC 2030 Plan, an initiative



of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya aimed at moving towards the decarbonisation of international mobility. More globally, they are carrying out strategic projects related to the health and wellbeing of the planet, such as UPF's Planetary Wellbeing initiative.

Catalonia seeks to be present in all those initiatives and projects that are committed to the transformation and wellbeing of the planet

#### **EXPLORING PLANETARY WELLBEING**

Finally, Catalonia seeks to be present in all those initiatives and projects that are committed to the transformation and wellbeing of the planet, and actively promotes a model based on respectful practices in the environmental, economic and socio-cultural spheres. Alongside individual research initiatives, the 39 centres that form part of the Catalan Research Centres Institute (CERCA)<sup>3</sup> are working towards achieving the SDGs within the RIS3CAT and Horizon 2020 projects. There are currently 442 projects under way.

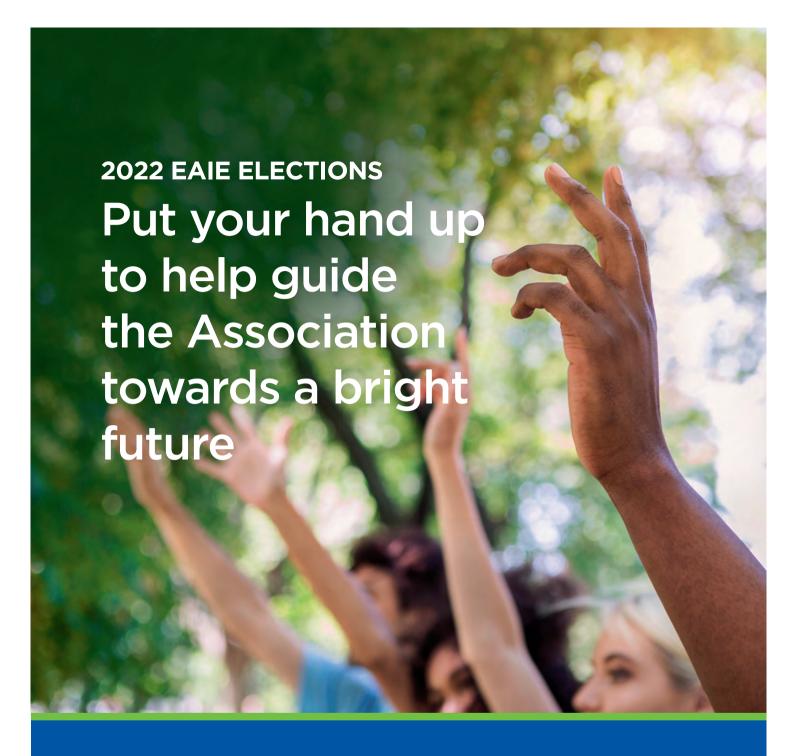
Furthermore, Catalan universities are involved in a number of notable applied research initiatives that involve knowledge transfer to society. For example, the La Salle-Universitat Ramon Llull project, 'Towards Healthy smArt MetropOliS (THAMOS): Data-driven multidisciplinary strategies for pursuing sustainable mobility', focuses on the transformation of smart and healthy metropolises. Comparatively, a project headed by Universitat de Vic-Universitat Central de Catalunya looks at zero waste treatment in the agri-food industry, specifically when it comes to meat-processing. Finally, the UOC is endeavouring to help industries, cities, infrastructure operators and citizens in general to benefit from the Internet of Things.

#### WHAT LIES AHEAD

The 32nd Annual EAIE Conference and Exhibition will take place in Barcelona, a city that has been awarded a Biosphere certification for its commitment to sustainability in the tourism sector. Catalonia is very pleased to host this event and sees it as an exciting time to meet and reflect on all the challenges ahead of us – as individuals, institutions and as a society – as we continue to tackle the climate crisis.

— COORDINATED BY THE INTER-UNIVERSITY COUNCIL OF CATALONIA

- 1. Catalan universities: Universitat de Barcelona (UB); Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB); Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC); Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF); Universitat Ramon Llull (URL); Universitat de Lleida (UdL); Universitat de Girona (UdG); Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV); Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC); Universitat Central de Catalunya (UVic-UCC); Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (UIC); Universitat Abat
- 2. European Universities partnerships: CHARM-European University (Challenge-driven, Accessible, Research-based Mobile). Participant: UB; ECIU University. Participant: UAB; UNITE! (University Network for Innovation, Technology and Engineering). Participant: UPC; EUTOPIA (European Universities Transforming to an Open, Inclusive Academy for 2050). Participant: UPD; Aurora Alliance (European University Network initiative). Participant: URV.
- 3. CERCA: Centres de Recerca de Catalunya



**NOMINATIONS:** 

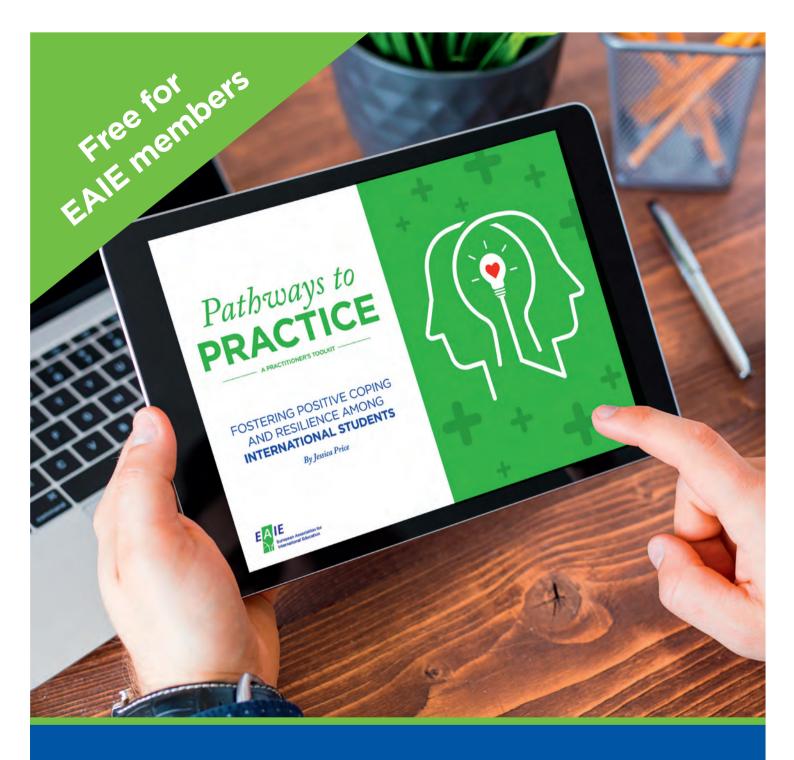
22 April-06 May

**VOTING:** 

30 May-10 June

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