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Research and university communities united to tackle global climate challenges

Ahead of COP27, research and university organisations join forces to renew the call for collective, common global efforts for climate action, launched last year.

The European association of leading universities of science and technology (CESAER), the European University Association (EUA), the International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN), Science Europe, the Network of Universities in Capitals (UNICA), the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow the city hosting COP26, gathered to mobilise their expertise and call for cooperation in urgent climate actions.

Today's online symposium on "[Interdisciplinarity for the Net-Zero Transition](#)", a lead-up event to COP27, was an opportunity for the six organisations to present their commitment for climate action, share good practice, concrete examples, and call for the mobilisation of research and higher education communities. In 2021, CESAER, ISCN, Science Europe and the University of Strathclyde, in the city of Glasgow which hosted COP26, launched a [Call to Action](#) for research performing and funding organisations and universities regarding the Net-Zero Transition. This year, EUA and UNICA joined the four partners in co-organising the COP27 lead-up symposium focused on "interdisciplinarity".

Universities and research performing and funding organisations are key contributors to the global Net-Zero Transition effort in reducing their energy consumption and, most importantly, providing new insights into challenges, as well as solutions, including 'green' technologies and societal innovations. The climate crisis has multiple causes but only collective efforts and action, embedding whole-systems approaches will address and mitigate it effectively. Innovative and scientifically rigorous methods for estimating and mitigating increases in greenhouse gas and harmful emissions are needed to enable a more effective, robust and concentrated effort with resources being enabled for long-term investments to expedite the Net-Zero Transition.

"With our commitment for the Net-Zero Transition, together with partners from the research and university systems, we want to mobilise policymakers and societal stakeholders in a collective effort for the most pressing challenge of our time: climate change," declared Professor Rik Van de Walle, President of CESAER.

"European universities are committed to responding to societal concerns about the climate crisis, including by tailoring our educational offerings to ensure maximum impact through our graduates. The efforts and reforms we are seeing on the part of universities are informed by the demands of our students and engagement with our local communities, two drivers that are just as meaningful for climate action as regulations or targets for specific industries" declared Michael Murphy, President of EUA.

"The Net-Zero Transition is needed now, more than ever. The energy crisis, the war in Ukraine, and the lingering effects of COVID are all striking and dramatic revelations of the interconnectedness of our world, of which climate and sustainability are the ultimate examples. We are therefore committed to promoting international collaboration and working to build bridges between our institutions, to deepen our impact and accelerate our efforts toward realizing the Net-Zero Transition," stated Professor Gisou van der Goot, President of ISCN.

"Interdisciplinary research is not a new concept: we know we need to further mobilise all disciplines and organisations to tackle the climate crisis. We have just published a [report](#) with the experiences of Science Europe members. We need to scale up these efforts and work together involving all disciplines, research partners and societal stakeholders," stated Angelika Kalt, Vice-President of Science Europe.

"UNICA universities have the unique privilege of being in capital cities, which gives them the ability and the responsibility to influence European and government policies on the crucial challenges affecting our societies and our planet. We are determined to build on this specificity by encouraging our members to harness their academic research, innovative grit, and heterogeneous communities to impact policies in the direction of a green transition. We are committed to reach a sustainable future," said Professor Luciano Saso, President of UNICA.

"We share a vision of a world where research and education communities work together to solve urgent global challenges and believe that research and education will underpin a sustainable relationship between the use and preservation of natural resources, and human activity," said Professor Sir Jim McDonald, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow (UK).

The organisers propose a systemic approach where universities, national research performing organisations and research funding organisations shall work together, involving policymakers, business sectors, and non-government organisations, in Europe and globally.

Further information

- [**Call To Action to Research Organisations for the Net-Zero Transition**](#) (pdf)

- [**Survey report Interdisciplinary Research for the Green and Digital Transition**](#)

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Organisers

CESAER is the European association of leading specialised and comprehensive universities of science and technology that: champion excellence in higher education, training, research, and innovation; influence debate; contribute to the realisation of open knowledge societies; and deliver significant scientific, social, economic, and societal impact.

European University Association (EUA) represents more than 850 universities and national rectors' conferences in 49 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research, and innovation. Through continuous interaction with a range of other European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard.

International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN) is a global network of 90 universities in over 30 countries. The mission of the network is to provide an international forum to support higher education institutions in the exchange of information, ideas, and best practices for achieving sustainable campus operations and integrating sustainability in research and teaching.

Science Europe is the association representing 40 public research funding and performing organisations across 30 European countries. It brings together the scientific expertise of its members to push the frontiers of how scientific research is produced and delivers benefits to society. It advocates science and the scientific community to help build the European Research Area.

UNICA is an institutional Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe. It is currently made up of 56 universities from 41 capital cities of Europe. UNICA seeks to facilitate international collaborations and promote academic leadership through understanding and sharing between its Members throughout the European Higher Education Area. UNICA articulates the views of Member Universities to European institutions, to national, regional, and municipal governments, and internationally.

University of Strathclyde is a leading international technological university based in Glasgow, UK. Inspired by the founding principle 'a place of useful learning', its mission is to make a positive difference to the lives of its students, to society and to the world. It is a member of CESAER and ISCN and works closely with government, industry and NGO partners on the Net-Zero Transition.



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