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UAS4EUROPE Networking Conference: From breakthrough ideas to breakthrough innovation

Brussels - On 11 May 2021, UAS4EUROPE (<https://www.uas4europe.eu>), the informal network of European Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS), held its biennial Networking Conference, this time as a virtual event, with high-level keynote speeches, a political discussion, interactive workshop sessions, face-to-face matchmaking and a virtual exhibition.

Around 400 researchers, policymakers, stakeholders and EU advisors from 24 countries joined the prominently staffed conference.

In his opening speech, the Bavarian State Minister of Science and the Arts, Bernd Sibler, stressed the key role Universities of Applied Sciences play in the fields of research, innovation and education. "UAS have a unique profile, they are close to industry and society, highly innovative, and deeply embedded in the regions." The President of Hochschule Bayern e.V. and current chair of UAS4EUROPE, Prof. Christiane Fritze, informed about the fruitful activities of the network in the last years and the intention to develop UAS4EUROPE further to an association under Belgian law in the near future. Mariya Gabriel, the European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education, Youth and Sport, highlighted that Europe needs to take up the challenge of transforming science into breakthrough innovation. The new European Research Area priorities and the focus on building a true innovation ecosystem will help to achieve Europe's green and digital goals and recover from the current crisis. Commissioner Gabriel: "I thank UAS for their support and count on their excellent and strong network to make Europe's flagship programmes a success and contribute to the changes needed to transform our societies". Angelika Niebler, Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and honorary professor at the Hochschule München UAS, underlined in her keynote speech the importance of UAS for Europe's innovation policy and its future labour market. UAS are unique environments where young people are not only educated, but also empowered to put their education into practice. Ms Niebler: "UAS make things happen!"

In a lively political panel debate, high-level representatives discussed more concretely the mission, excellence and value of Universities of Applied Sciences in Europe and at international level. UAS are ready to contribute to the EU's ambitions for a green and digital Europe within Europe's post-COVID recovery and the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation "Horizon Europe".

Signe Ratso, Deputy Director-General for Research & Innovation (European Commission), emphasized the need for strengthening innovation ecosystems and the establishment of European Research Area Hubs, both objectives that UAS are already familiar with and could help to implement on the ground. She also highlighted the importance of synergies between Research, Education and Digital Area. Krista Taipale from the regional Council of Häme (Finland) and Pascal Brunner, CEO and co-founder of the Swiss enterprise Vatorex, explained the significant role of UAS as smart partnerships for regional impact. UAS should be much more integrated in regional development agendas and could help to reach the EU's widening goals. By offering practice-based research to companies and start-ups, UAS show how to accelerate technology transfer and to close the gap between research and market needs. MEP Claudia Gamon, Member of the ITRE Committee, drew attention to the fact that the experience and commitment of UAS should be built upon to tackle Europe's skills and employability challenges after the pandemic.

As one of the UAS4EUROPE presidents, Marjolijn Brussaard confirmed the strengths of UAS, but noted that their specific skills and potentials are still quite unknown at European level. UAS want and need to become part of European decision-making processes in the fields of research and innovation and with UAS4EUROPE they join forces to help to fulfil Horizon's "moonshot" missions.

During the lunch break, UAS presented themselves and their best practices with some impressive video clips.

The afternoon was dedicated to networking activities. The participants had the opportunity to engage in thematic workshops, with a focus on the six clusters defined in Horizon Europe and on the position of Universities of Applied Sciences within regional innovation ecosystems and their contributions to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The workshop on decision-making processes in Horizon Europe was particularly successful and attracted a high number of participants.

As a further networking component, more than 130 face-to-face matchmaking sessions took place during which conference attendees could get in contact virtually with other colleagues.

Parallel to the conference, most of the participants used the possibility to walk through the virtual exhibition with 25 booths designed by several Universities of Applied Sciences and industry and governmental bodies.

About UAS4EUROPE

UAS4EUROPE (<https://www.uas4europe.eu>) is a joint initiative of swissuniversities (<https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en>), Hochschule Bayern e.V. (<https://www.uas.bayern>), EURASHE (<https://www.eurashe.eu>), University Colleges Denmark (<https://danskeprofessionshøjskoler.dk>), Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (<https://www.verenighogescholen.nl>), Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (ARENE - <https://www.arene.fi>), Hochschulen für Angewandte Wissenschaften Baden-Württemberg e.V. (<https://hochschulen-bw.de>), the Austrian Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences (<https://fhk.ac.at>) and the University Alliance for SMEs (<http://www.hochschulallianz.de/ueber-uns.html>). The initiative is committed to a strong position and increased visibility of UAS in the European research landscape. UAS4EUROPE represents 2.3 million students, more than 400 universities and more than 60,000 researchers.

For more information on UAS4EUROPE's activities, please visit our website: <https://www.uas4europe.eu>.

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About the Bavarian Research Alliance (BayFOR)

The Bavarian Research Alliance GmbH is an organisation whose purpose is to promote Bavaria as a centre for science and innovation within the European Research Area. It supports and advises scientists from Bavaria and stakeholders from the private sector on European research, development and innovation funds. The focus is directed at the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation "Horizon Europe" (<https://www.bayfor.org/en/eu-funding/horizon-europe.html>). As a partner in the network for SMEs "Enterprise Europe Network" (EEN - <https://een.ec.europa.eu>), BayFOR provides specific advice for SMEs which are interested in EU research and innovation projects. BayFOR is a partner institution in the Bavarian Research and Innovation Agency (<https://www.research-innovation-bavaria.de>). For further information please visit <https://www.bayfor.org/english>.

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