



European
Commission



SPHERE Annual Conference 2024

Higher education engagement with society and the economy

3-4 December 2024

Online

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.



Centralised Support
to the Network
of Higher Education
Reform Experts

Background

Centralised Support to the Network of Higher Education Reform Experts ([SPHERE](#)) is an initiative managed by [OBREAL](#) (Coordinator) and the [European University Association](#) (EUA) on behalf of the European Commission. The **Higher Education Reform Experts - HERE** - are a diverse network of individuals coming from universities, ministries, national higher education agencies, student unions and other relevant organisations, in European neighbourhood countries (Southern Mediterranean, Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central Asia). The SPHERE Team is organizing seminars, study visits and other training events for this network, including the present conference. All training topics are based on a thorough needs assessment of the countries being targeted.

About the HERE Annual Conference?

The HERE Annual Conference brings together the HERE and NEOs, but also some of additional speakers and experts. The conference usually showcases the work and lessons learned from the year, and forecasts themes and topics for the following year. The conference is intended to be highly interactive, premised on case studies and presentations of results and impacts, and should allow the participants to discuss with the colleagues from different EU countries and institutions, and among each other. As all SPHERE events, the conference also provides opportunities for peer learning and networking, on higher education developments, but also regarding the ways of how HERE teams organise their work. Last but not least, the conference provides some guidance to the SPHERE team to develop the next year's programme.

Target audience

Participants are Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) representing the Southern Mediterranean, the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership Countries, and the Central Asia region. These experts play a crucial role in promoting and enhancing the modernisation of higher education at both local and national levels. Additionally, National Erasmus+ Office representatives, which coordinate the HERE networks, are present at the annual conference.

The theme

The theme of the 2024 virtual conference is coherent with the Overarching Theme of SPHERE activities in 2024: “Higher education engagement with society and the economy”. This has encompassed events that have tackled the following sub-themes:

- Institutional approaches and strategies for greening
- Universities in local ecosystems
- University-Industry partnerships (educational/teaching focus)
- Inclusion in internationalization
- European University Alliances and their international projection

The annual conference will revisit highlights from the different SPHERE activities in 2024, establishing linkages between the sub-themes and inspiring take-aways for the HERE as they continue to design and implement reforms and national and institutional level.

Objectives and Learning outcomes

- Provide a space for reflection and assessment related to the SPHERE 2024 activities, notably in relation to the policy topics identified and the types of events and activities organised.
- Provide a specific focus on the topic of higher education and the third mission, presenting and discussing the preliminary results of a study that SPHERE has been requested to produce by the European Commission.
- Offer an information and practice sharing space for current reform priorities linked to the HERE Team annual work plans, as well as a space for promoting relevant EU projects connected to these reforms.
- Forecast the 2025 SPHERE work plan and overarching theme and assess the interests and needs of the HERE.

AGENDA

3 December 2024 (time expressed in CET)

Day 1: 2024 in review: Lessons learned

LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85773884666>

9:30 Opening welcome

Antoaneta Irikova. Policy assistant. Unit C3 International cooperation, DG EAC, European Commission

Elizabeth Colucci. SPHERE Team

9:45 Introduction to programme and ice-breaker exercise

Elizabeth Colucci and Nicole Font - SPHERE Team

10:00 2024 in review: An overview of activities and main messages from events

Elizabeth Colucci and Nicole Font - SPHERE Team

10:30 Panel discussion: Key take-aways for HERE teams

Kristine Gevorgyan. HERE Armenia

Rita Ismailova. HERE Kyrgyzstan

Khalid Berrada. HERE Morocco

Yuriy Rashkevych. HERE Ukraine

11:30 Break

11:45 Break-out groups: Internationalization, inclusion and new alliances

Group 1: University - industry collaboration (Tampere)

Chair: Nicole Font

HERE Intervention: Asiya Tureniyazova. HERE Uzbekistan

Group 2: Inclusive internationalisation (Ghent)

Chair: Oumy Dramé

HERE intervention: Sonia Abdelhak. Tunisia

Group 3: Transnational inter-university collaboration (Online seminar)

Chair: Elizabeth Colucci
HERE intervention: Dr. Chafic Mokbel. Lebanon
Group 4: Third mission (Uzbekistan)
Chair: Lika Glonti
HERE intervention: Irma Grdzeldze. Georgia

12:30 Break out groups repeated

Group 1: University - industry collaboration (Tampere)
Chair: Nico Patrici/Nicole Font
HERE Intervention: Asiya Tureniyazova. HERE Uzbekistan
Group 2: Inclusive internationalisation (Ghent)
Chair: Oumy Dramé
HERE intervention: Sonia Abdelhak. Tunisia
Group 3: Transnational inter-university collaboration (Online seminar)
Chair: Elizabeth Colucci
HERE intervention: Dr. Chafic Mokbel. Lebanon
Group 4: Third mission (Uzbekistan)
Chair: Lika Glonti
HERE intervention: Irma Grdzeldze. Georgia

13:15 Short summary of break-out groups discussions

13:30 Close

4 December 2024

Day 2 – Policy updates and looking forward

LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85773884666>

9:30 Introduction to day 2

Elizabeth Colucci, SPHERE Team

9:45 Updates on the Bologna Process: New priorities and working methods

David Crosier. Eurydice, EACEA

Chair: Michael Gaebel – SPHERE Team

10:45 Updates on the new EU Commission: Policy impacts

Chair: Michael Gaebel – SPHERE Team

11:15 Break

11:30 Case studies: HERE synergies with EU projects for greater impact

Kahina Amal Djar. HERE Algeria

Chair: Lika Glonti, SPHERE Team

12:15 SPHERE programme 2025: Feedback session with HERE

Chair: Elizabeth Colucci – SPHERE Team

12:45 The SPHERE Website, publications and dissemination: Updates and new features

Nicole Font – SPHERE Team

13:00 Close
