

Coimbra Group Public Conference

**Online event
virtually hosted by Charles University**

**17 June 2021
8h45-12h30 CEST**

Sustainable Universities in the 21st century

Education, research and innovation, as well as the role of universities in society (in other words, the Knowledge Square) are present throughout the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as through dedicated Goals such as SDG4 seeking for *Inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of Life Long learning opportunities for all* or SDG9 fostering *Innovation*. The Coimbra Group public conference will focus on universities as *effective, accountable and inclusive institutions* (Goal #16) and as providers of ‘solutions’ to all SDGs at different levels.

Universities are operating within a multi-level governance environment co-created by different institutions at international level (among which are the United Nations), European level (that includes, on one side, the European Union institutions among which the European Commission, but also European associations such as the Coimbra Group and the newly created European University Alliances), national level (incl. governments) and local level (e.g. municipalities and socio-economic stakeholders). Universities also interact, inspire and enrich each other and so do also their communities (students, teachers, researchers, staff).

The conference will set out the theoretical framework of multi-level governance applied to the fields of education and research. It will approach the role played by the United Nations, European institutions, university associations such as the Coimbra Group, European University Alliances, student’s organizations, and universities themselves, in empowering universities into increasingly more “effective, accountable and inclusive” institutions thus serving Goal #16.

Following up and building on the results of the first Coimbra Group open session on the European Universities Alliances (10 June 2020, see full report [here](#)), the second part of the conference will address the sustainability of the European Universities in the multi-level governance context.

Tentative Program:

8:45 – 9:00 CEST

Welcome address

Prof. Tomáš Zima, Rector of Charles University

Prof. Ludovic Thilly, Chair of the Coimbra Group Executive Board,
University of Poitiers

9:00 – 9:15 CEST

The expected role of Universities in the Knowledge Square and in the future of EHEA and ERA

Ms. Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

9:15 – 9:35 CEST

Multi-level governance as a concept: education and research

Prof. Gary Marks, University of North Carolina, Robert Schuman Centre, EUI Florence (video message)

9:35 – 9:55 CEST

Universities and their role in the fulfilment of the SDGs seen from the UN perspective

Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (video message)

9:55 – 10:30 CEST - Public Conference Part 1

Panel Discussion:

Focus on multi-level governance and the role played by the university associations, European University Alliances and universities themselves in empowering universities into increasingly more “effective, accountable and inclusive” institutions thus serving Sustainable Development Goal #16.

Chair: Prof. Ludovic Thilly, Coimbra Group Executive Board Chair, University of Poitiers, EC2U

Participants:

- 3 Coimbra Group Rectors
- 2 Mayors, signatories of Poitiers Declaration

10:30 – 11:00 CEST

Coffee break

11:00 – 12:30 CEST - Public Conference Part 2

The sustainability of the European Universities Initiative in the context of multi-level governance.

Chair: Prof. Lenka Rovná, Coimbra Group Executive Board member,
Charles University, 4EU+

Participants:

- European Commission and European Parliament representatives
- Rectors from Alliances with the Coimbra Group as associated partner
- Representatives from European Students' Associations (ESN, ESU)

Conclusions: Prof. Tomáš Zima, Rector, Charles University

12:30 CEST

Lunch