

**EMUNI Annual Conference  
and Governing Bodies' Meetings  
in partnership  
with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)  
under the Slovenian Presidency  
of the Council of the EU**

# **Higher Education in the COVID Era: Shaping the Future of Euro-Mediterranean Institutions**

13–15 September 2021  
Piran/Izola, Slovenia



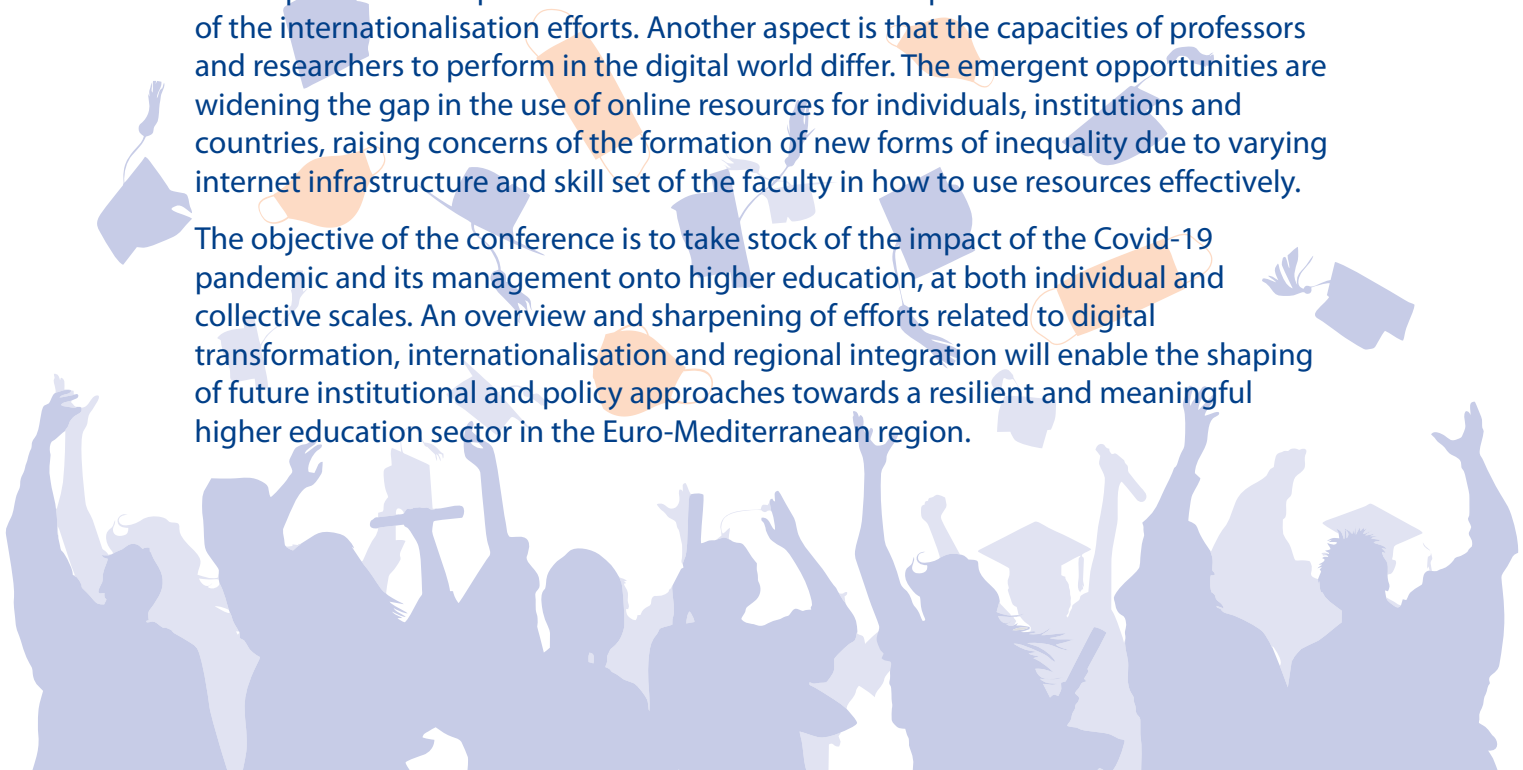
## Background

Like so many others, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has shaken up also the higher education sector. The most obvious impact has been a significant acceleration of the inclusion of ICT into learning and teaching. This has opened the discussion over the efficacy and desirability of such processes at the cognitive and skills levels of the students. Perhaps less examined are the many ways in which higher education has used and benefited from digital technologies in enhancing the opportunities for internationalisation. Thus, the pandemic should also be reviewed in light of its impact on the internationalisation of education and research, as these remain an imperative for every higher education institution in today's globalised world and knowledge economy, as well as a priority for international cooperation, including in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

When effective, internationalization improves quality of the education and research activities, extends opportunities, saves costs and facilitates intercultural understanding. This has benefits for the society at large, as human capital and innovative knowledge production are crucial for economic performance and societal wellbeing, and underscore peaceful regional cooperation. The internationalisation premise was the very driver of the establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in 2008 and its two academic arms, the Euro-Mediterranean University (Slovenia) in 2008, and the Euro-Mediterranean University Fes (Morocco) in 2012. It is believed that multilateral partnerships in the strategic area of (higher and vocational) education and research have a strong potential for regional integration and cohesion among Euro-Mediterranean countries.

At the intersection of internationalisation and digital transition, the potential benefits and shortcomings of utilisation of ICT tools remain ambiguous. On the one hand, visiting lectures, webinars and participatory digital events have widened the opportunities for exchange and expanded collaboration among institutions. As most events taking place online are free, their accessibility is almost unlimited. On the other hand, this kind of exclusively virtual events have limited benefits on the development of interpersonal skills and intercultural experience that lie at the heart of the internationalisation efforts. Another aspect is that the capacities of professors and researchers to perform in the digital world differ. The emergent opportunities are widening the gap in the use of online resources for individuals, institutions and countries, raising concerns of the formation of new forms of inequality due to varying internet infrastructure and skill set of the faculty in how to use resources effectively.

The objective of the conference is to take stock of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and its management onto higher education, at both individual and collective scales. An overview and sharpening of efforts related to digital transformation, internationalisation and regional integration will enable the shaping of future institutional and policy approaches towards a resilient and meaningful higher education sector in the Euro-Mediterranean region.



## Panels

### Panel 1 • **Towards a Euro-Med Higher Education and Research Area**

How big is the divide among the institutions and countries, after the height of the Covid-19 crisis? What are the benefits of the collective crisis on the region as a whole? How can institutions that are lagging behind in internationalisation be reinforced? How are technology transfer and cross-border research collaborations benefitting from the trend of internationalization, in comparison to education? How can skills to participate more equally within international research projects be built? How far does internationalization contribute to the cohesive Euro-Mediterranean partnership?

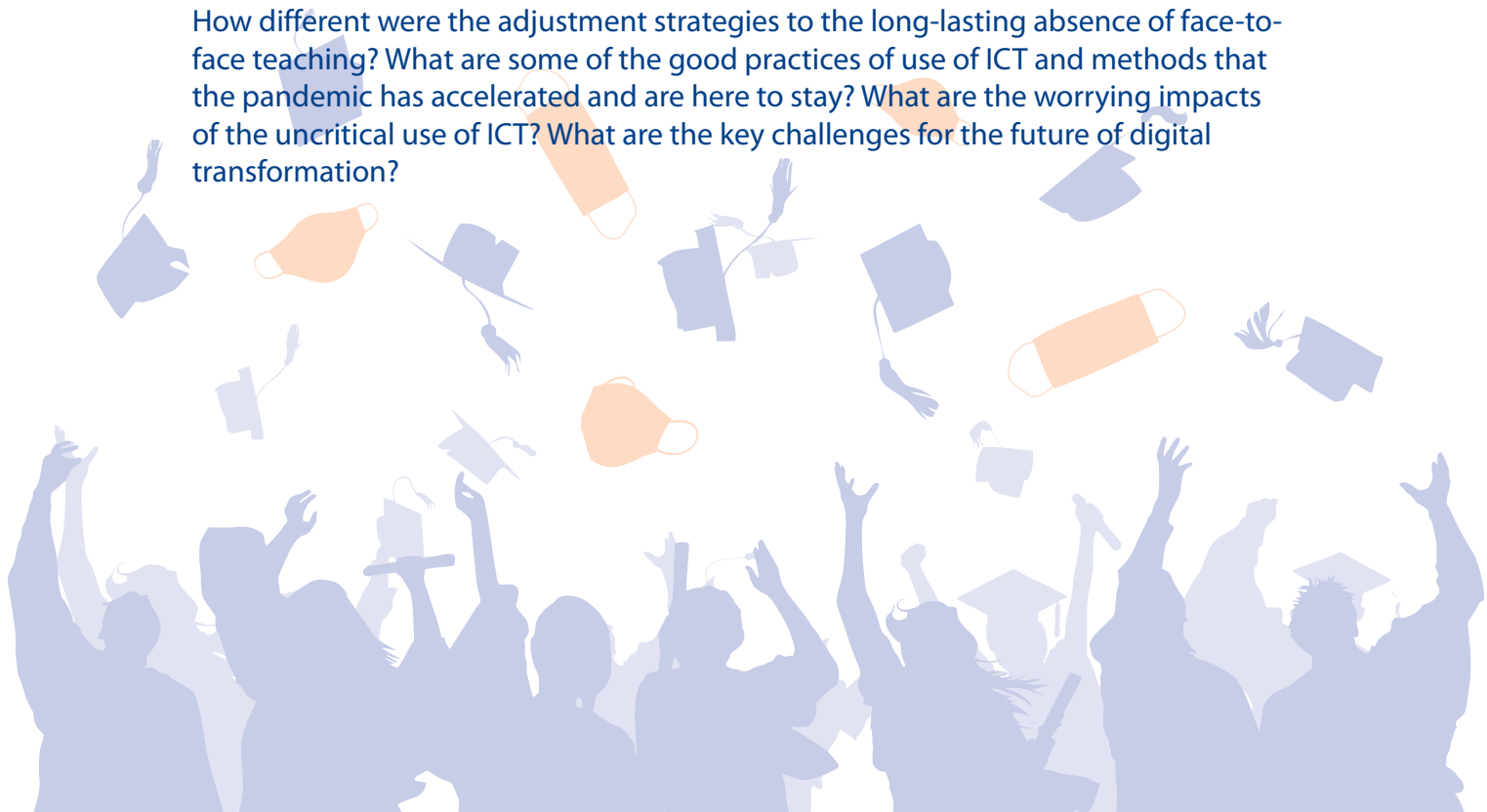
### Panel 2 • **Internationalization of Today: Has the Pandemic Brought Us Closer Or Further Apart?**

How relevant is the goal of internationalization in higher education? How has the pandemic, with the related increase in virtual exchanges and absence of travel, actually impacted internationalization? What is the potential of blended learning, virtual mobility, internationalisation of curricula, double degree programmes and enrolment of international students in today's strategies for internationalization; is traditionally physical mobility losing its role? What do meaningful and ambitious institutional strategies in the aftermath of the pandemic consist of? Are they inclusive of different staff groups, such as management, students, teaching, research and administrative staff? Is Erasmus+ (still) the central regional collaboration programme?

This panel is organised in cooperation with The MEDiterranean Countries: Towards Internationalisation at Home – MED2laH project.

### Panel 3 • **Digital Readiness of HEIs in the Region: How Has the Pandemic Impacted the Digital Transformation of Higher Education?**

How different were the adjustment strategies to the long-lasting absence of face-to-face teaching? What are some of the good practices of use of ICT and methods that the pandemic has accelerated and are here to stay? What are the worrying impacts of the uncritical use of ICT? What are the key challenges for the future of digital transformation?



## Programme

### Monday, 13 September

- 09.00–15.00 **Management Board retreat** (Tartini hotel, Piran)  
15.00–18.00 **53rd session of the MB** (Tartini hotel, Piran)  
19.00–21.00 **Dinner for MB members** (courtesy of EMUNI @ Pirat restaurant, Piran)

### Tuesday, 14 September

- 09.00–12.30 **Meeting of the Senate** (EMUNI premises, Piran)  
12.30–13.30 Light Lunch for MB, Senate and GA members (courtesy of EMUNI @ EMUNI premises, Piran)  
13.30–16.00 **General Assembly Meeting**  
16.30–17.30 **Boosting Active Citizenship Through Culture**, co-organised with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovenia (Light house, Izola)  
Introductory remarks by *Prof. Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry*, President, Euro-Mediterranean University  
*Prof. Mohamed Yousry Hashem*, President of Heliopolis University, Egypt  
*Ms. Tala Al Sayyed*, EUNIC Jordan Project Manager, Jordan  
*Assoc. Prof. Alenka Fikfak*, Faculty of Architecture Ljubljana, Slovenia  
*Mr. Ali Khair*, Cultural Manager at French Institute, Jordan  
*Dr. Jelena Ristić Trajković*, Faculty of Architecture Belgrade, Serbia  
17.30–18.00 **Conference registration** (Belvedere hotel, Izola)  
18.00–19.00 **Reception** (Belvedere hotel, Izola)  
19.00–19.30 **Conference Opening Speeches**  
*Prof. Michèle Gendreau-Massaloux*, Chairperson of the Management Board, Euro-Mediterranean University, Slovenia  
*Ms. Itaf Ben Abdallah*, Head of Higher Education and Research Division of the Union for Mediterranean  
*Mr. Gašper Dovžan*, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovenia  
*Dr. Franc Janžekovič*, Director-General, Higher Education Directorate, Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, Slovenia  
*Prof. Hassan Nadir Kheirallah*, Professor, Alexandria University, Egypt  
*Prof. Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry*, President, Euro-Mediterranean University, Slovenia  
19.30–21.00 **Dinner** (courtesy of the UfM)



**Wednesday, 15 September** (Belvedere hotel, Izola)

08.30–09.30 **Registration and Coffee**

09.30–11.00 **Panel 1 • Towards a Euro-Med Higher Education and Research Area**

Moderator: *Prof. Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry*, President of the Euro-Mediterranean University

Panellists:

*Amb. Hatem Atallah*, Co-Chairperson, EMUNI Management Board, Euro-Mediterranean University and former Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tunisia

*Prof. Amine Bensaid*, President of the Al-Akhwayn University, Morocco (online)

*Prof. Mouïin Hamze*, Secretary General, National Council for Scientific Research, Lebanon

*Prof. Hany Mahfouz Helal*, President of Senghor University, Alexandria, Egypt

*Prof. Michèle Gendreau-Massaloux*, Chairperson of the Management Board, Euro-Mediterranean University

*Prof. Dušan Lesjak*, Professor, International School for Social and Business Studies, Slovenia

11.00–11.30 **Coffee Break** (courtesy of the UfM)

11.30–13.00 **Panel 2 • Internationalization of Today: Has the Pandemic Brought Us Closer or Further Apart?**

Moderator: *Prof. Nada Trunk Širca*, Professor Euro-Mediterranean University, University of Primorska and International School for Social and Business Studies, Slovenia

Panellists:

*Ms. Armela Dino*, Science policy analyst, Ministry of Science and Innovation, Spain

*Mr. Juan Rayon Gonzalez*, President of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), Belgium

*Mr. Božidar Grigić*, Head of Tertiary Sector, Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (CMEPIUS), Slovenia

*Assoc. Prof. Karim Moustaghfir*, Associate Professor, Al Akhawayn University, Morocco (online)

*Dr. Marcello Scalisi*, Director of the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED), Italy

*Prof. Rouchdy Zahran*, Former President of Alexandria University, Egypt



13.00–14.30 **Lunch** (courtesy of the UfM)

14.30–16.00 **Panel 3 • Digital Readiness of HEIs in the Region:  
How Has the Pandemic Impacted the Digital Transformation  
of Higher Education?**

Moderator: *Dr. Jerneja Penca*, Head of Academic Affairs, Euro-Mediterranean University

Panellists:

*Mr. Andrés Archila*, AI Innovation Hub Officer, Ulysseus European University, Finland

*Assoc. Prof. David B. DeVallance*, Vice-Rector for Internationalisation, University of Primorska, Slovenia

*Dr. Emilija Stojmenova Duh*, Assistant professor, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia (online)

*Dr. Maysoun Ibrahim*, Member of directors of the Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence, Palestine

*Mr. Surendra Naidoo*, Vice President, Wiley International Education Services, United States

*Prof. Hani Sewilam*, Rectors Delegate for African Countries and Managing Director of the UNESCO Chair at the RWTH Aachen, Germany and Professor, American University in Cairo, Egypt

16.00–16.30 **Closing Remarks**

*Prof. Abdelhamid El-Zoheiry*, President, Euro-Mediterranean University

