

Glückwunschadressen

Universities of applied sciences as universities without walls¹

Michael Murphy

Dear Minister Stark-Watzinger,
Dear President, Professor Müller-Bromley,
Dear ladies and gentlemen,

Although I cannot be with you in person in Frankfurt today, I am glad to be able to send you my congratulations via this short video.

The German Association of Higher Education Teachers has been an EUA affiliate member for many years. Celebrating the 50th anniversary of your association is something very special, particularly in these times. EUA itself celebrated its 20th anniversary last year.

Anniversaries are not only there to look at the past, at the achievements and challenges overcome, but also an occasion to take a moment and reflect about the future and the direction to take.

EUA has done this as well. Together with more than 100 visionaries among our members and partners, we have developed „Universities without walls – A vision for 2030“. It is a positive, normative vision for Europe's universities that are open and engaged and grounded in academic values.

I just came back from the EUA Annual Conference in Budapest which was focused on university values. Defending these values and living up to them as institutions and academic communities is crucial in these times of accelerated change and increased uncertainty, as we slide from a pandemic into a new period of major geopolitical tensions.

As universities we are called to open up even more, connect with our communities to fulfil our missions in the service of open, democratic and pluralistic knowledge societies. We have a lot to offer!

1 This is the written version of a video message from the president of the European University Association to the Hochschullehrerbund's 50th anniversary which was celebrated on 20 May 2022 in Frankfurt am Main.

The unique combination of learning, teaching, research, innovation and culture that universities across Europe bring to the table with their diverse profiles is crucial in tackling societal challenges.

Old dichotomies of teaching versus research, of fundamental versus applied research, of excellence versus inclusion, of hard sciences versus social sciences and humanities have to be overcome. What we need is connection – connecting all these dots to innovate and contribute to a positive future. Climate change and the broader sustainability challenge make this very clear. We need to connect the evidence and knowledge we have from the natural and life sciences with expertise from engineering and technology as well as social sciences and humanities to find solutions through technological as well as social innovation that take account of people's concerns, motivations and behaviour. This is why we have made interdisciplinarity a prominent topic in „Universities without walls – A vision for 2030.“

As university teachers – and I explicitly refer here to the teaching mission – we have a particular responsibility to prepare our students for their professional life and empower them to face the many uncertainties of the future. The teaching mission is still undervalued in many systems and institutions across Europe. We have to advocate for parity of esteem of learning and teaching and research and EUA is doing this through its Learning and Teaching Initiative as well as through its work on reforming research assessment and academic careers. Over the past years we have developed a system of Thematic Peer Groups, where members get together to exchange good practices and experiences on university learning and teaching from topics such as digitally enhanced learning and teaching to diversity and inclusion in the classroom, and many more.

Universities of applied sciences, where many of you are serving, are well embedded in their local and regional environments. You educate many of the professionals we need in different areas from engineering to social work. With your research you are helping to find solutions to many concrete problems by working with partners in business, industry or civil society. I understand that from your perspective, parity of esteem of university missions also means valuing different types of research and making sure that as academics you can devote enough time to research and knowledge transfer alongside teaching. This is why a reform of academic careers and research assessment is crucial. We have to stop being fixed on citation indexes and move towards a much more nuanced way of assessing the contribution of academics to the different missions. We have to make academic careers more flexible, less precarious and more attractive. Moving between academia and other sectors has to be made easier as this

will ultimately benefit academic work, research and students and enhance the contribution we can make to society.

While getting organised as higher education teachers in organisations like yours, it is important to learn from each other and also advocate politically for our cause. You do this at national level. EUA does this at European level and beyond together with our individual member universities as well as the national university associations. It is very important to connect the different levels and also assemble the different voices of the university sector. This is what we are trying to do at EUA – to bring the different voices together, identify and advocate for the common cause of open, engaged and autonomous universities serving society for a sustainable future.

Congratulations again on your 50th anniversary. I wish you fruitful and inspiring discussions today and all the best for the future. I am looking forward to our continued collaboration.

