

CESAER

Harnessing transformations

Annual Report 2023



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Letter from the President

As we navigate an ever-evolving international landscape, I am proud of the efforts the over 1500 individuals from our association's 58 Member universities have dedicated towards our shared mission to champion excellence in higher education, training, research and innovation. Through our collective endeavours, we have not only embraced change but also harnessed its potential for positive transformation.

First and foremost, I extend my gratitude to you, the leaders and experts from our Members, engaging in numerous ways in our association. Your commitment is the bedrock of our progress. Every idea, every initiative, and every collaboration within our association is helping us to face challenges head-on and seize opportunities that come our way in the fast-moving European landscape. Your enthusiasm and engagement in our association's seven task forces is the engine that drives us forward.

I also wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our Envoys. These dedicated individuals, who contribute their extensive networks and unique experiences to foster relationships with key partners, and open new doors, have helped boost our impact in key themes and at all levels, including at the highest political levels as exemplified by our Envoys to the Presidencies of the Council of the European Union (EU).

In the midst of shifting geopolitical realities, it is more critical than ever that we stand united as conscientious stewards of scientific knowledge, living and advocating for the shared values that underpin knowledge-based societies. The challenges of our time – from climate change to technological disruptions – transcend borders and demand cooperative solutions. By fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual understanding among our universities across all of Europe and beyond, we can catalyse breakthroughs that contribute to a more peaceful, sustainable, and just world.

Our universities of science and technology (S&T) hold a unique position in society, one that comes with great responsibility. As centres of learning and teaching and

as hubs of innovation at the forefront of scientific and technological developments, it is our duty to work with and instill in our communities a deep sense of ethical responsibility, a commitment to inquiry, and the capacity to effect positive change. As we prepare the next generation of leaders, let us ensure that they are equipped not only with scientific and technical prowess but also with the empathy and wisdom needed to tackle complex global challenges.

In conclusion, let us continue to march forward with unwavering determination. Our association stands as a testament to the power of unity and collaboration. As we come to the end of my two terms serving as CESAER's President, I am honoured to have contributed alongside each and every one of you on this journey. Thank you for your enthusiasm, your wisdom, and your dedication.



Rik Van de Walle
President of CESAER from 2020 to 2023
Rector of Ghent University

Foreword from the Secretary General

2023 for CESAER was a year when much work came to fruition.

It marked the completion of the Work Plan from 2022 to 2023 under the stewardship of President Rik Van de Walle who completed his second successive term. The seven task forces deployed under this work plan brought together representatives from across the 58 Member universities of the association and delivered in seven key areas: sustainability, openness of S&T, learning & teaching, innovation, benchmark, human resources and sustainable funding. A range of key outcomes and deliverables came from all of these areas of work, and I extend my gratitude to all representatives from our Members for all their efforts and contributions.

Following a multi-year long effort to continue to reinforce the position of CESAER as a constructive and proactive partner at the European level, combined with the strong content-driven focus of our task forces that are the engine of our operations, our association now enjoys a high level of visibility and trust with key decision-makers at the European level in matters related to science & technology related to research, innovation and higher education. This is a success story we will continue to build on also in the next years.

Following the admission of National Technical University of Ukraine - Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute on 1 January, this association united 58 Members from 29 countries in Europe and beyond.

The ability to leverage the perspectives of over fifty universities of science & technology from across all of the continent, is an important part of what makes our association unique in the European landscape.

Looking ahead, the EU institutions have elaborated several strategic areas where reinforced action is needed at the European level. Science and technology is a key focus, with three priority areas explicitly

identified also at the level of the President of the European Commission: deep and digital technologies, clean technologies and biotechnologies. Members of this association are at the forefront of the cutting-edge science, technology and talent that underpin these developments. As science & technology is being increasingly acknowledged as essential at the European level and beyond, including with important geopolitical considerations, working together as the strong and united voice will continue to be vital to help guide these developments.

As 2024 starts, I thank my colleagues in the Secretariat for the great work together. Our Operations Manager Indrė Antanavičiūtė, our advisors Louise Drogoul and Sophie Ratcliff, and our Information & Communication Officer Justine Moynat. I also express my gratitude to President Rik Van de Walle and his team from Ghent University who expertly supported his presidency from 2020 to 2023: Dieter De Bruyn, Andries Verspeeten and Wendy Sonneveld.

Finally, I express gratitude to all those leaders and experts who volunteer their time to our association: in our governing bodies, in the leadership of our task forces, and as members of our task forces. You are the ones who have helped make the great successes over the last years possible, and I look forward to building on these successes together with you over the next years.



Mattias Björmalm
Secretary General

Strong

In 2023, we had **58 Members** from **28 countries** in Europe and beyond.

4 out of the 5 universities that were the most successful in being awarded funding under Horizon Europe during 2023 are CESAER Members.

More than **1,3 million students** educated at our Member universities.



58

MEMBERS



28

COUNTRIES
in Europe and beyond



1.3

MILLION STUDENTS
educated at our Member universities

United

Over **1,550** staff from our Members were involved in our association as volunteers and leaders.

In the last year we produced **16 publications**, e.g. positions, white papers, open letters and statements.

In **2023**, we held **17** task force meetings which enabled our Members to lead on both our advocacy and learning-among-peer institutions trajectories.

Our governing bodies (General Assembly, Presidency and Board) met **11** times during the year.



1.550

STAFF
from our Members



16

PUBLICATIONS



17

TASK FORCE
meetings



CESAER Members gathered for the General Assembly in Madrid on 20 October 2023

Impact stories

Research security

CESAER joined forces with the European Commission and the governments of the United States, Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands, as well as the International Science Council to organise a closed workshop on research security in the context of global cooperation under increasing geopolitical tensions.

“It is crucial to continue and expand an open dialogue between universities and authorities, to empower universities to continue to be fully global players. This includes anticipating and mitigating any potential side-effects of knowledge security measures on the openness of science and technology. Such a dialogue will increase the support for, and effectiveness of, these measures. We can have a clear impact by working together in these types of fundamentally cross-border topics, as it leverages the expertise of over 50 universities of science & technology from across our full continent. This is vital to help guide rapidly evolving developments at national and EU levels, preventing fragmentation and creating synergies in areas such as research security where there are direct implications for science & technology.”



Irna van der Molen, Secretary of Task Force Openness of Science & Technology, Senior Policy Advisor for knowledge safety and export control at University of Twente, and lead author of white paper [‘Keeping Science Open?’](#)

Generative AI

CESAER was invited by the European Commission to contribute to the development of guidelines in the use of generative AI for research.

“The ability to quickly generate vast amounts of content (e.g. text, code, data, images) underlines the disruptive potential – both positive and negative – of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT. Enabling and facilitating positive developments, while mitigating against potential risks, is a key challenge in such a fast-moving field. Through CESAER, we can have a clear impact together by contributing directly to the drafting of European guidelines, such as the effort around generative AI led by the European Commission. This strengthens our capacity to support our own researchers in navigating this space, as well as our key partners such as research funders and policymakers.”



Marjo Rauhala, Head of Responsible Research Practices at TU Wien, and member of Task Force Openness of Science & Technology

Boosting success rates in Horizon Europe

Engagement in CESAER can help further boost the success rate in EU funding programmes for a Member university. For example, 4 out of the 5 universities that have been the most successful in getting Horizon Europe funding in 2023 are CESAER Members. This includes Ghent University which has seen a recent boost in its success rates, including by having its researchers be awarded a record number of 20 grants from the European Research Council (ERC) in 2022, outranking all other European universities.

“Our ERC success can be attributed to three main factors: our pioneering vision on career progression of our professors, the incentive of paying salaries of ERC winners on central budgets, and the profound knowledge of our EU team experts on the ERC funding scheme. Our strategic investments, including to know about the latest policy developments in Brussels, and being part of influencing them, has helped to shape a productive local environment in which the EU team and the Ghent University researchers it supports can thrive. Here, engagement in CESAER has been instrumental.”



Rik Van de Walle, Rector of Ghent University and President 2020-2023 of CESAER

Academic freedom

CESAER was invited by the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA) of the European Parliament to contribute to a sounding board on academic freedom.

“In an initiative launched by its President Roberta Metsola, the European Parliament hosts a Forum on Academic Freedom which monitors the state of play of academic freedom in Europe and provides recommendations for action. Through our invited position in the sounding board, CESAER directly contributed to these efforts, with an important outcome being a concrete proposal for a legal act to safeguard the freedom of scientific research. As fundamental values underpinning the mission of universities of science & technology are under increasing pressure, together we can have a clear and positive impact by joining forces with the European Parliament to boost the legal protection of those values.”



Mattias Björnmalm, Secretary General of CESAER

Mission, aims, activities and benefits

Mission

Rooted in advanced engineering education and research, CESAER is an international association of leading specialised and comprehensive universities with a strong science and technology profile that advocate, learn from each other and inspire debates. Our Members champion excellence in higher education, training, research and innovation, contribute to knowledge societies for a sustainable future and deliver significant scientific, economic, social and societal impact.



Aims

The aims of the association are to:

1. Advocate Members' interests by aiding policymakers and funders shaping European strategies, policies and programmes for research, education, innovation and university leadership;
2. Learn from each other by sharing and spreading intelligence, knowledge and best practice in research, education, innovation and university leadership;
3. Safeguard sustainable funding by advocating and shaping sustainable competitive and non-competitive funding streams to our Members from different sources at various levels;
4. Lead debate on key issues by advancing reflection and understanding of the roles of science and technology in knowledge societies for a sustainable future;
5. Amplify the Members and association's strengths by supporting Members in displaying their excellence and distinctiveness in Europe and beyond.

Activities

The aims of the association will be achieved by the following activities:

- Monitor European strategies, policies and programmes and inform Members;
- Undertake consultations and surveys amongst Members and represent and advocate their collective interests;
- Publish inputs, positions, white papers and press releases;
- Liaise with European institutions and other stakeholders;
- Share experiences, identify best practices and provide guidance;
- Establish and empower committees, task forces and workgroups;
- Organise events, such as meetings, workshops and conferences;
- Support Members' communication and outreach activities in Europe and beyond;
- Engage with Members and encourage active participation in the work of the association.



Workshop with the Members of our Task Force Human Resources in July 2023

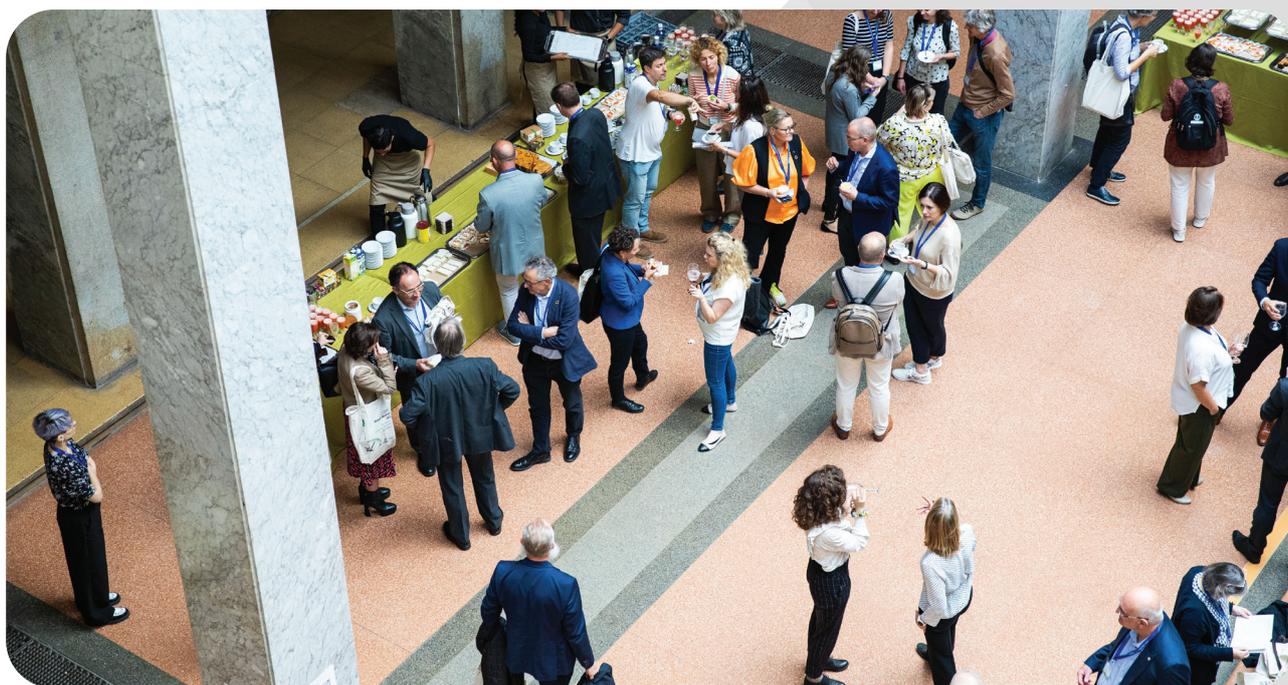


Members of our Task Force Benchmark in Stuttgart in November 2023

Benefits

We provide the following benefits to our Members:

- A strong and united voice of universities of science and technology in Europe, taking into account a range of needs and positions;
- Collective and acknowledged representation, connections and advocacy on key issues such as the European Research, Education and Innovation Areas and the EU funding programmes to senior policy-makers, politicians and funders at the heart of European decision-making;
- Privileged access to and exchange with leaders, experts and volunteers from leading universities of science and technology;
- Amplified efforts and impact at regional and national levels through international best practices by the collective of Members;
- Opportunities to set agendas, inspire and pave the way for developments directed towards shaping knowledge societies for a sustainable future;
- Support to positioning leaders and experts of Members at the European level;
- Access to intelligence and resources in the Extranet exclusively for Members;
- Participation in a range of bodies that strengthen Members' expertise in learning and teaching, excellent research and innovation, leadership, and strategic influence;
- Being part of a network of peer leading research-intensive universities of science and technology fostering and multiplying cooperation, including learning and teaching, excellent research and innovation, and infrastructures;
- Attractive range and programme of events such as CESAER Annual Meetings and workshops every year;
- Collective safeguarding of scientific integrity, academic freedom and institutional autonomy;
- Inclusive and respectful working environment that celebrates equality and diversity;
- Sharing best practices and tailored benchmarking data between members from various data sources and surveys;
- Exclusive access to dedicated training sessions.



Networking lunch for our Members at CESAER Annual Meetings in Madrid in October 2023

Our Members

In 2023, we united the following 58 Members from 29 countries in Europe and beyond:

1. Aalborg University - Denmark
2. Aalto University - Finland
3. Brno University of Technology - Czechia
4. Budapest University of Technology and Economics - Hungary
5. Chalmers University of Technology - Sweden
6. Czech Technical University in Prague - Czechia
7. Delft University of Technology - Netherlands
8. Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne - Switzerland
9. ETH Zurich - Switzerland
10. Gdańsk University of Technology - Poland
11. Ghent University - Belgium
12. Graz University of Technology - Austria
13. Institut National des Sciences Appliquées Lyon - France
14. Institut Polytechnique de Paris - France
15. Instituto Superior Técnico - Portugal
16. Istanbul Technical University - Turkey
17. Karlsruhe Institute of Technology - Germany
18. Kaunas University of Technology - Lithuania
19. KTH Royal Institute of Technology - Sweden
20. KU Leuven - Belgium
21. Leibniz Universität Hannover - Germany
22. Lund University - Sweden
23. National Technical University of Ukraine - Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute - Ukraine
24. National Technical University of Athens - Greece
25. Norwegian University of Science and Technology - Norway
26. ParisTech - France
27. Politecnico di Milano - Italy
28. Politecnico di Torino - Italy
29. Poznan University of Technology - Poland
30. Riga Technical University - Latvia
31. RWTH Aachen University - Germany
32. Sapienza University of Rome - Italy
33. Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava - Slovakia
34. Tallinn University of Technology - Estonia
35. Technion - Israel Institute of Technology - Israel
36. Technische Universität Berlin - Germany
37. Technische Universität Braunschweig - Germany
38. Technische Universität Darmstadt - Germany
39. Technische Universität Dresden - Germany
40. TU Wien - Austria
41. Universidad Politécnica de Madrid - Spain
42. Universidade NOVA de Lisboa - Portugal
43. Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya - Spain
44. Universitat Politècnica de València - Spain
45. Université Catholique de Louvain - Belgium
46. Université Grenoble Alpes - France
47. Université Paris-Saclay - France
48. University College Dublin - Ireland
49. University of Belgrade - Serbia
50. University of Porto - Portugal
51. University of Sheffield - United Kingdom
52. University of Southampton - United Kingdom
53. University of Strathclyde - United Kingdom
54. University of Stuttgart - Germany
55. University of Surrey - United Kingdom
56. University of Twente - Netherlands
57. University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest - Romania
58. Warsaw University of Technology - Poland



In addition, Tomsk Polytechnic University (Russia) was a Member of our association, and their membership was [suspended](#) in March 2022.

Presidency



Rik Van de Walle
(President and Rector
of Ghent University)



Jennifer Herek
(Vice President & Treasurer and Dean
of Faculty of Science and Technology at
University of Twente)



Mihnea Costoiu
(Vice President and Rector of University
POLITEHNICA of Bucharest)

Board of Directors

On top of the Presidency, we had the following Directors



Tim Bedford
(Associate Principal Research & Knowledge
Exchange of University of Strathclyde)
(re-elected on 20 October 2023)



Toril Hernes
(Vice President of Innovation at Norwegian
University of Science and Technology)



Mikael Östling
(Deputy President of
KTH Royal Institute of Technology)



Guillermo Cisneros Perez
(Rector of Universidad
Politécnica de Madrid)



Karine Samuel
(Vice President for International Affairs of
Université Grenoble Alpes)



Anna Andrea Steiger
(Vice Rector for Human Resources & Gender
of TU Wien) (resigned on 20 October 2023)



Justyna Szostak
(Chair of Internationalisation Committee at
Gdańsk University of Technology)



Ronald Tetzlaff
(Chief Technology Officer & Internationalisation at
Technische Universität Dresden)



Roberto Zanino
(Rector's Delegate for European Relations at
Politecnico di Torino)
(re-elected on 20 October 2023)

At the General Assembly on 20 October 2023:

Orla Feely (President of University College Dublin) was elected as President for 2024-2025;

Katharina Füglistner (Director of International Affairs at *Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne*) was elected as a Director for 2024-2027.



From left to right: **Katharina Füglistner** (*Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne*), **Roberto Zanino** (*Politecnico di Torino*), **Orla Feely** (*University College Dublin*) and **Tim Bedford** (*University of Strathclyde*) at the General Assembly on 20 October 2023



Areas of work

In 2023, we worked in seven domains and operated seven corresponding task forces: Sustainability, Openness of Science & Technology, Learning & Teaching, Innovation, Benchmark, Human Resources and Sustainable Funding.

The task forces are essential in (i) identifying the challenges of and pressures on our Members, (ii) including our Members in the priority-setting and (iii) carrying out the activities of the association. They provide our Members with opportunities along our [aims](#) and [benefits](#).

Task Force Sustainability

The three themes of the Task Force Sustainability were to (i) inspire our Members and other universities of S&T about their contribution to knowledge societies for a sustainable future, (ii) advocate the corresponding framework conditions for optimising the contribution of universities of S&T to policy makers and funders, and (iii) learn from each other and promote best practices when contributing to knowledge societies for a sustainable future.

This task force supported the achievement of the overarching objective of the Work Plan from 2022 to 2023 by finalising two main deliverables namely the white paper '[Leading by example: Boosting sustainability through good governance adopted by universities of S&T](#)' and the corresponding declaration '[Contributions of universities of S&T to sustainability](#)'. These efforts culminated at the CESAER Annual Meetings (CAM) 2023 hosted by the Chair of the task force, Guillermo Cisneros, Rector of *Universidad Politécnica de Madrid*. Indeed, all content aspects of the CAM were supported by this task force particularly the high-level conference where the white paper was launched, and the leadership track where leaders from our Members explored how they envision taking forward the declaration adopted by the General Assembly on 20 October 2023.

The task force met in-person in Lund in April 2023 and held a workshop on contributions of universities of S&T to sustainability where other organisations and trusted partners critically assessed the content of the white paper. Subsequently, it held a workshop 'Measuring contributions of universities of S&T to sustainability' together with the Task Force Benchmark. The task force additionally met twice online in November 2022 and September 2023 respectively. To support the finalisation of the white paper and declaration, the task force held two feedback rounds with the whole association in February and May on the white paper, and a summer consultation on the declaration with all Member universities.

In parallel this task force continued its ongoing partnership efforts with the International Sustainable Campus Network ([ISCN](#)), [Science Europe](#) and the [University of Strathclyde](#) around the [Call to Action](#) launched during the twenty-sixth United Nations Climate Change conference (COP26) in 2021. Together, they organised a [symposium](#) on interdisciplinarity for the net-zero transition as an online lead up event to COP27 in November 2022, alongside new partners: the European University Association ([EUA](#)) and the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe ([UNICA](#)). This event led to a [joint report](#) 'Interdisciplinarity for the net-zero transition: the perspectives of universities and research organisations' which was presented at a webinar 'Acting together for net-zero: the role of research organisations' hosted by the task force in April 2023.

Task Force Openness of Science & Technology

The Task Force Openness of Science & Technology pursued three main themes during the year: (i) open science, (ii) knowledge safety and (iii) citizen science.

On open science, this task force led on key topics such as advancing rights retention of research data and institutional data, shaping the overall landscape on digital legislation (e.g., see May 2023 [joint statement](#)) and the future of scholarly publishing (e.g., see May 2023 [position](#)). This task force coordinated with our association's European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) Envoy Karel Luyben, who was elected for a second term as President of EOSC association on behalf of our association (see November 2022 [press release](#)).

In knowledge safety, the task force led the finalisation of a [white paper Keeping science open?](#) which was launched during a dedicated event as part of CESAER Annual Meetings 2023. The white paper contains a synthesis on the state-of-play at the interface of open science and knowledge safety and security, with key recommendations for national authorities, EU institutions and university leadership.



Launch event of the white paper Keeping science open?

On citizen science, the task force delivered a workshop to guide developments of and build trust in key technologies as part of CESAER Annual Meetings 2023. The workshop explored effective two-way engagement between universities of S&T and society at large with a view to further advance the evolving shared understanding around the societal role of key technologies (e.g. artificial intelligence).

In addition to these workstreams, the task force has provided support to cross-cutting activities related to its areas. This includes leading on the preparation of a position of S&T infrastructures (see October 2022 [position](#)) which was presented in Brussels (see February 2023 [presentation](#)), and supporting our association's ESFRI Envoy Sally Chambers (Ghent University) in their engagements on behalf of the association. The task force also coordinated efforts contributing to shaping efforts around a potential European regulation on the freedom of scientific research (e.g. November 2022 [conference](#)). Furthermore, the task force has been driving various activities in support of Diamond Open Access Plan, following up on the [endorsement](#) in 2022. The task force is also leading on activities related to [science diplomacy](#) and [research security](#).

Task Force Learning & Teaching

The Task Force Learning & Teaching (i) advocated to shape European education policies and strategies working together with Task Force Sustainable Funding, (ii) explored the ‘Engineer of the future’, and (iii) hosted and accompanied the successor of the [Competition Best Idea 2021](#). This task force led our advocacy contributions in relation to the [European Strategy for Universities](#) and contributed to the workshop ‘Sustainable funding for European Universities alliances’ with a focus on supporting real and full costs through full budget estimates. As part of the follow-up activities, a survey was conducted on (i) the landscape of support that Members receive for their participation and (ii) the penetration of the alliance culture inside the universities.

A white paper ‘Engineer of the future’ was advanced during the year and is being finalised (envisioned publication Q1 2024) under the auspices of the task force aimed at advancing our understanding of how universities of S&T can provide future-proof engineering education. The task force held a dedicated workshop on the topic in May 2023 kindly hosted by Tallinn University of Technology.

The task force launched the [CESAER Student Challenge 2023](#) in March 2023. Following the launch of the challenge, prospective teams were supported with a dedicated Innovation Talk in collaboration with the [Start up Academy](#) in May and Expert Talks organised by [Gdańsk Tech](#) in July. Thirteen excellent submissions from teams across our Members were received, which were evaluated by a panel consisting of three independent experts. After a careful review of all submissions by the panel, two outstanding teams from KU Leuven and ETH Zurich were selected as [finalists](#). The students’ leaders of the two selected teams presented their ideas during the high-level conference at CAM 2023 in Madrid, where it was announced that the team led by Elias Broeckhoven, PhD candidate at KU Leuven, was the winner.



From left to right [Pier Giuseppe Rivano](#) (ETH Zurich), [Justyna Szostak](#) (Gdańsk University of Technology), [Elias Broeckhoven](#) (KU Leuven), [Alberto Garrido](#) (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid) and [Sophie Ratcliff](#) (CESAER Secretariat).
Announcement of the winner of the student challenge



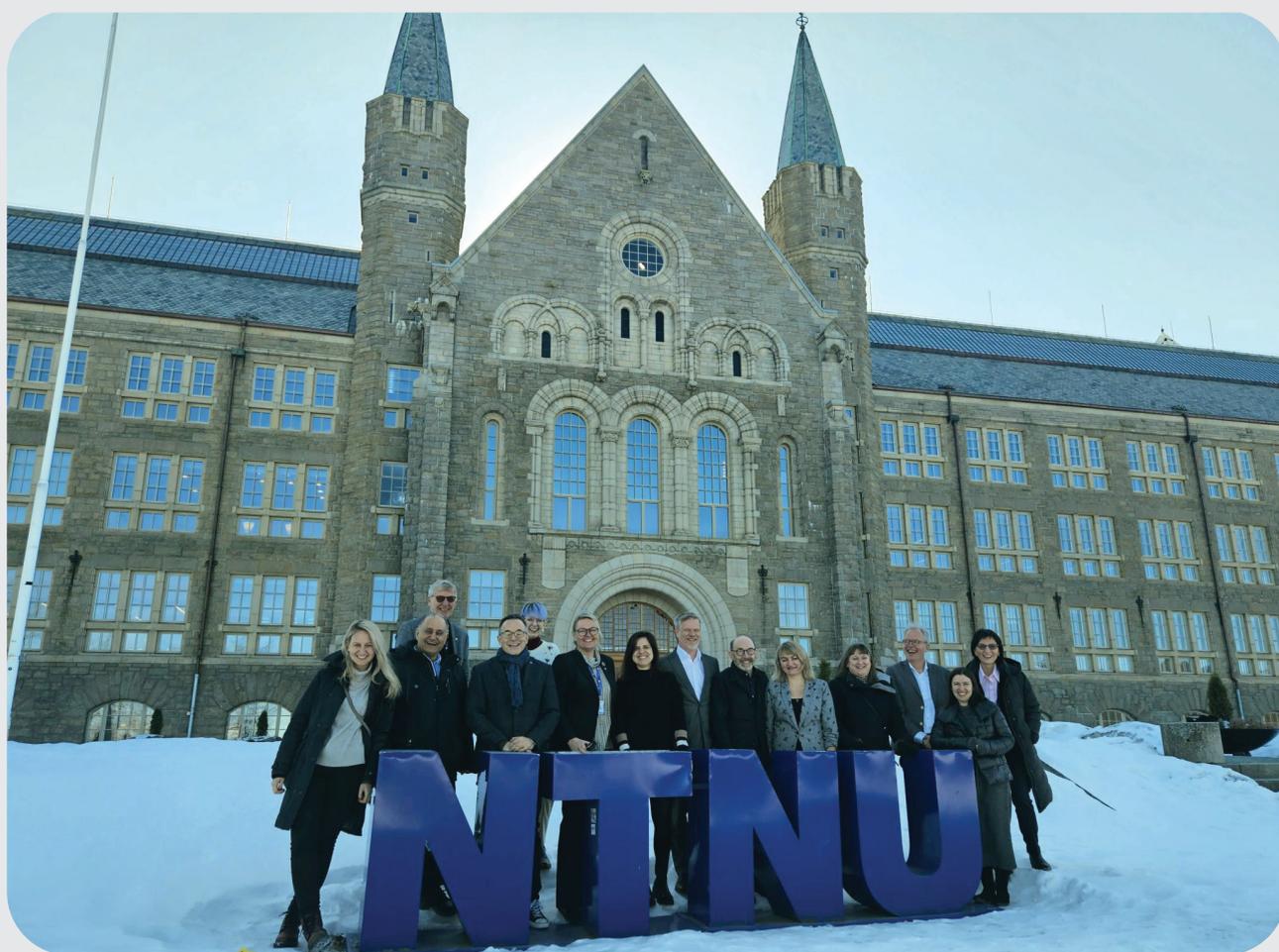
Pier Giuseppe Rivano: “Participating in the CESAER Annual Meeting 2023 in Madrid while still a student was not only an incredible honour but also a deeply enriching experience. I had the chance to interact, network, and discuss with delegates from leading universities all around Europe and it was great to learn from their experience and point of views. Additionally, listening to workshops and to the carefully selected panels of experts was insightful, as it allowed us to focus on and contribute to some of the most pressing challenges educational institutions currently face, something students are typically not exposed to. Thanks to CESAER for the well-organised event and to my institution, ETH Zürich, for giving me this incredible opportunity to present our work at Unbound Potential on such an international stage.”



Elias Broeckhoven: “In October 2023, I had the fantastic opportunity to join the CAM in Madrid as finalist of the CESAER Student Challenge 2023. This event was a great opportunity to broaden my horizon beyond the lab benches that are typically my domain. Hosted by UPM in lovely Madrid, I got the chance to follow the workshops and top-level conference gaining invaluable experiences and perspectives from all presenters and moderators. Additionally, the numerous social events provided a fantastic platform to network and connect with like-minded, and top-level, individuals who share a passion for impactful and sustainable research. It was a breath of fresh air to interact with these brilliant minds and forge potential collaborations with other member institutes in such a pleasant setting. This contest has given me the opportunity to join such a prestigious gathering in such an early stage of my academic and professional career, gaining connections and insights that will undoubtedly shape my future for the better. I am deeply grateful to CESAER for providing us students with such a unique and enriching opportunity!”

Task Force Innovation

The Task Force Innovation (i) supported the development of sustainable innovation ecosystems in and around universities of S&T, (ii) advocated to shape European innovation policies and EU funding instruments in collaboration with the Task Force Sustainable Funding and (iii) explored the evolving model of engagement of PhD candidates at universities of S&T with non-academic partners. In March 2023, the task force organised a joint workshop with the Task Force Sustainable Funding on potential options to enrich the approach of using Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) when making funding decisions. The task force led on efforts which resulted in a [position](#) 'Deep tech unlocked by universities of science & technology', in time for a conference on 'Deep tech entrepreneurship for an innovative, resilient, and competitive internal market' organised by the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU. The position was also highlighted in a panel on innovation ecosystems to reach net-zero, as part of the Green Deal & Climate Days in Brussels in September 2023 where our association was invited and represented by Louise Drogoul (Advisor for Innovation & Sustainability).



Members of the Task Force Innovation meeting at NTNU.

The task force engaged in several advocacy trajectories related to knowledge valorisation, including through the co-creation of a code of practice on the management of intellectual assets for knowledge valorisation aimed at putting into practice the Council Recommendation on guiding principles for knowledge valorisation which was agreed by the Council of the EU in December 2022. The task force led on efforts which resulted in the publication of a [position](#) 'Advancing innovation and knowledge valorisation from European Innovation Council (EIC)' calling attention to concerns on the model grant agreement's Intellectual Property (IP) provisions as related to the EIC.

The task force led on follow-up advocacy efforts which resulted in the EIC issuing [its statement](#) on the revision of their IP provisions, which our association welcomed and responded to in a [joint reaction](#) with other research and innovation stakeholder organisations.

Finally, related to the workstream on the evolving model of engagement of PhD candidates at universities of S&T with non-academic partners, the task force carried out interviews and gathered best practice examples. The results of this work were revealed at a dedicated workshop during the CESAER Annual Meetings 2023 where participants explored the role of industrial doctorates as vehicles of innovation and mechanisms for boosting academia-industry collaboration.

Task Force Benchmark

The Task Force Benchmark (i) promoted the integration of next-generation and progressive metrics for institutional development; (ii) contributed to the development and design of the European Higher Education Sector Observatory; and (iii) observed university rankings, especially changes in rankings methodology, and engaged with rankers by providing structured feedback. The task force held a workshop on ‘Rights retention of research data and institutional data’.

The task force is heavily engaged in shaping the ranking landscape. In February and March 2023, the task force organised workshops with Drew MacFarlane (Senior Research Manager at QS) and Duncan Ross (Chief Data Officer at Times Higher Education) to provide feedback on and to help shape proposed changes to the ranking methodologies of QS and THE. In May, the task force held a workshop on ‘Measuring contributions of universities of S&T to sustainability’. In November, the Task Force hosted a [workshop](#) to discuss how COARA is reshaping research assessment and the approach to rankings.

Task Force Human Resources

Following the efforts of the Task Force Human Resources on digital transformation in human resources reported on in the [2022 annual report](#), the two main themes for 2023 were (i) diverse and modern academic careers, and (ii) equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). For the theme of diverse and modern academic careers, the task force led on follow-up activities related to the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#), including preparing the advice adopted by our Board of Directors for our association to [sign the agreement](#). The task force provided support to the association’s [COARA Envoy](#). Following a workshop on ‘Supporting diverse and modern academic careers’, the task force contributed to shaping the broader landscape including developments towards a recommendation on research recognition for research funding organisations, a European framework for attractive and sustainable careers in higher education and a European framework for research careers, as detailed in the dedicated [position](#). The task force also provided support for its members in advancing best practices in



Members of the Task Force Human Resources participating in a workshop at Riga Technical University

institutional strategies for talent management and research careers including to attract, support and retain top talent through a July 2023 workshop hosted by Riga Technical University.

For the theme of EDI, the task force delivered a workshop including two external expert contributions on 'Non-binary from a medical perspective' (see March 2023 [op-ed](#)) and 'Accounting for all kinds of researchers in university digital infrastructures' (see March 2023 [op-ed](#)). The task force also supported the delivery of an online seminar series 'Advancing leadership at European level and beyond by women rectors of technical universities' (April 2023 [seminars](#)) organised together with the European Women Rectors Association ([EWORA](#)). The task force has additionally coordinated the delivery of the EDI Survey 2023 (summer 2023), where first results were presented to the General Assembly on 20 October 2023 constituting a follow up action from the [EDI Declaration](#) adopted by the General Assembly on 18 October 2019.

Task Force Sustainable Funding

The Task Force Sustainable Funding (i) advocated for sustainable funding and its vital importance for delivering long-term impact and to safeguard balance between (top-down) challenge-driven research and (bottom-up) investigator-driven frontier research; (ii) advocated to shape European research, education and innovation policies and strategies (especially towards the EU institutions); (iii) contributed to implementing the European Research Area (ERA) and the European Education Area (EEA); and (iv) helped shape EU funding programmes in research, education and innovation such as Horizon Europe, Erasmus, European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The task force led efforts which resulted in the publication of a [position](#) 'Rebalancing research and innovation calls under Horizon Europe', subsequently holding a joint workshop with the Task Force Innovation in March to explore the potential options to enrich the approach of using TRLs and its alternatives. This contributed to efforts around infrastructures and synergies which resulted in the publication of [two dedicated positions](#). It led efforts to prepare [recommendations](#) towards ensuring the 'Do No Significant Harm' (DNSH) principle boosts the contributions of science & technology.



Lunch break during the in-person meeting of the Task Force Sustainable Funding

The task force prepared guidelines intended to support our Member universities when navigating and applying for funding within the ‘Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence’ funding schemes under Horizon Europe, and prepared a [position](#) ‘ERA as a trailblazer’ (July 2023). In March, the task force held a workshop at which representatives from our Member universities explored the implementation of lump sums within the EU funding programmes Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ providing input to our association’s advocacy activities. The Task Force Sustainable Funding led our association’s efforts in responding to the European Commission’s public consultation on the past, present and future of the European research and innovation framework programmes 2014-2027 and prepared [three contributions](#) with recommendations to strengthen the EU framework programmes for research and innovation. Follow-up activities in this area resulted in a [position](#) on ‘EU missions and the way forward for mission-oriented research & innovation’ and [input](#) ‘Towards next framework programme for research & innovation 2028-2034 (‘FP10’)’.



Resources

The annual subscription in 2023 amounted to €12,966. The annual account for our fiscal year from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023 was:

TYPE OF COSTS	ACCOUNT 2022-2023, €
INTERNAL BODIES	27,208
SECRETARIAT	73,307
EVENTS	1,088
INITIATIVES	43,817
ICT	18,112
ADMINISTRATION	21,457
SALARIES	430,042
TYPE EXPENSES	615,031
TYPE INCOME	726,114
TO RESERVE	111,083

Secretariat

The Secretariat ensures the execution and implementation of the decisions by the governing bodies and manages and supports the daily operations of the association. During 2023, Communication Officer Gary Paterson completed his one-year contract on 31 January 2023. On 9 January, Edward Ricketts and Sophie Ratcliff joined the Secretariat as new Advisors, for research and higher education, respectively. On 31 March, Edward departed the association to join the EU Executive Agency for Innovation and SMEs. On 1 August, Justine Moynat joined the Secretariat as IT & Communication Officer.

As of January 2024, the Secretariat has the following staff supporting our association's over 1,550 volunteers and leaders.



Indrė Antanavičiūtė
Operations Manager



Mattias Björnmalm
Secretary General



Louise Drogoul
Advisor for Innovation & Sustainability



Justine Moynat
Information & Communication Officer



Sophie Ratcliff
Advisor for Higher Education

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