Αγαπητοί συνάδελφοι,

Εκ μέρους της ΥΔΣ, σας αποστέλλουμε για ενημέρωσή σας το Ενημερωτικό Δελτίο (Μάιος 2021) του European University Association (EUA) (https://eua.eu/), στο οποίο το ΠΚ είναι μέλος.

Στο ενημερωτικό δελτίο του EUA μπορείτε να ενημερωθείτε για:

- Τη Διάσκεψη «Conference On The Future Of Europe» που διοργανώνει το Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο, Μέλη του Συμβουλίου της ΕΕ και η Ευρωπαϊκή Επιτροπή και αποτελείται από σειρά δραστηριοτήτων μέχρι την Άνοιξη 2022

- Τον νέο κανονισμό της ΕΕ για την τεχνητή νοημοσύνη με στόχο την ανάπτυξη εμπιστοσύνης στις νέες τεχνολογίες.

- Την υποβολή σχεδίων σχετικά με τον τρόπο δαπάνης της χρηματοδότησης της ΕΕ της επόμενης γενιάς στα κράτη μέλη της ΕΕ

Για οποιεσδήποτε περαιτέρω πληροφορίες σε σχέση με τις δραστηριότητες του Δικτύου EUA, μπορείτε να αποταθείτε στην κα Στέλλα – Μαρία Βασιλείου, Λειτουργό Πανεπιστημίου Α΄, Υπεύθυνη Γραφείου Διεθνών Σχέσεων και Προβολής (ηλεκτρ. δ/νση: vassiliou.stellamaria@ucy.ac.cy, τηλ.: +357 22894299).

Είμαστε στη διάθεσή σας για οποιεσδήποτε χρειαστείτε επί του θέματος.

Ευχαριστούμε για τη συνεργασία.

Με φιλικούς χαιρετισμούς,

Μαρία Κελβέρη
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Upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe

This year’s Europe Day on 9 May will mark the beginning of the Conference on the Future of Europe. This series of public debates and events will last until spring 2022 and provide people across the EU. It is an
opportunity to exchange and share their ideas about the future of Europe. The Conference is organised jointly by the European Parliament, the Council of the EU representing member states and the European Commission.

On 19 April, a digital platform was launched in 24 languages, allowing active engagement through online events. On 9 May, a hybrid inaugural event will take place in Strasbourg with speeches from the presidents of the three EU institutions involved and citizens’ panels. Ten future-shaping themes will be covered throughout the year: climate change and the environment; health; economy, jobs and social justice; the EU in the world; values and rights, rule of law, security; digital transformation; European democracy; migration; and education, culture, youth and sports. On the digital platform anyone interested can search for planned events and even propose to organise one. By involving citizens in the debate about the future of Europe, it is the first event of its kind in EU history. As Europe faces major challenges and European democracy is under pressure from various sides, the Conference on the Future of Europe is an opportunity to foster open public debate and collective thinking.

Why this is important: As outlined in EUA’s “Universities without walls – A vision for 2030”, universities play an important role through their civic mission in fostering open exchange and in contributing scientific evidence and expertise. In the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe, universities can host events and motivate their students and staff to contribute. The various ideas and proposals for the future of Europe will be collected and fed into discussions between the EU institutions and member states about whether there is a need to make adaptations to the functioning and competences of the Union.

New EU regulation on artificial intelligence
The first in the world, the European Commission issued a proposal for a regulation on artificial intelligence on 21 April. It is accompanied by an updated plan on how to strengthen the ecosystems developing artificial intelligence in Europe and a Communication outlining the EU’s overall strategy.

The goal of these initiatives is to boost the use of artificial intelligence in Europe by increasing trust in the technologies. The idea is to ensure that companies know what can be done in the field of artificial intelligence and that citizens know how it is used. The main concept of the legislation is that if there is a risk in the use of artificial intelligence, there would be either obligations to follow or – in the most extreme cases – the use would be prohibited. In most cases, there would be no restrictions to applying artificial intelligence. However, if the use affects people’s lives in a significant way, companies would have to meet certain standards, for example on human oversight or cybersecurity, and they would be under the supervision of national bodies. The prohibited cases would be the ones that are contrary to fundamental rights, such as social scoring (where individuals are assigned a score based on their behaviour) and mass surveillance using biometrics, for example finding a face in a crowd.

When it comes to developing the ecosystems, the European Commission proposes coordinating the various national strategies on artificial intelligence and working to use it to enhance its priorities, such as the green transformation. Regarding funding, much has already been allocated through Horizon Europe and the Digital Europe Programme, for example in the Digital Innovation Hubs. In addition, new funding at the national level could come from the Next Generation EU recovery fund (see next story).

For now, this is all a proposal at the beginning of a long approval process between the Commission, European Parliament and the member states. If and when it will be agreed and entered into force, it would be immediately applicable at the national level as an EU regulation.

*Why this is important:* The regulation as proposed would have an impact on the practical use of technologies, also in a university context. One area to watch is that of spin-outs and start-ups. Digital industry groups have pointed out that the many small companies that develop services based on artificial intelligence may not have
the capacity to deal with several regulators and complicated rules. Another area of concern is applying artificial intelligence to university management (not mainstream yet): Commissioner Margrethe Vestager used the example of applying artificial intelligence for admission to education as a high-risk area, as it has a profound impact on the lives of individuals. The more universities and their students use these technologies, the more the future regulation will matter.

Recovery plans of the EU member states

The deadline for submitting plans on how to spend the Next Generation EU funding in the EU member states was 30 April. These plans set out the main areas where countries want to spend the more than €650 billion in the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) aimed to relaunch the economy and make countries more resilient in the future. The drafting of the plans has been complex in some cases, leading to government crises in more than one country. Once they are submitted, the Commission must approve the plans before the money can be spent, which could happen already by the summer.

Concerning the content of the plans, research, education and innovation are included in many countries. The next question will be how the projects will work. Some member states already have challenges spending the cohesion funding that is in the normal EU budget, and now they will be asked to spend more money in less time. Another concern is that the EU money will replace national funding if the financial impact of Covid-19 leads to cuts for universities.

Why this is important: With billions of euros in extra investments across Europe in just four years, a targeted and efficient use of these instruments could support relevant university activities. In their plans, many
countries have included investments in education, research and innovation. It will now be crucial that these are also well implemented. EUA has argued that universities need to be closely involved throughout the whole process, also to ensure synergies with national and other EU funding instruments. This topic is part of the recently updated EUA Public Funding Observatory and an upcoming webinar on university funding towards 2030. It is of utmost importance that universities engage now at the national level by putting forward concrete funding and project proposals on how they can contribute to the recovery effort. Drafting the plans was complex but making them a reality might be even more so.

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