



# CATCH-UP

- / VILNIUS SUMMIT 2024
- / TRAVELLING SEMINARS
- / STUDENT VOICES
- / OPEN CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS
- / WHAT'S TO COME

Mykolas Romeris  
universitetas



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# List of Acronyms

<b>UNIMC</b>	University of Macerata
<b>MRU</b>	Mykolas Romeris University
<b>NBU</b>	New Bulgarian University
<b>EUV</b>	European University Viadrina
<b>SWPS</b>	SWPS University
<b>ULPGC</b>	University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
<b>UAEGEAN</b>	University of the Aegean
<b>UP8</b>	University of Paris 8
<b>ERUA 2</b>	Current EU-funded ERUA Project 2023-2027





## EDITORS' NOTE



Daniela, ULPGC



Muhammad,  
Viadrina



Elena, NBU

As we embark on publishing the first edition of the European Reform University Alliance (ERUA) Magazine, we welcome you in the ERUA community. Our small but diverse team from 3 different countries strives to make an inclusive space charged with transformative power.

ERUA has come a long way ever since its inception in 2020. What started off as an initiative to introduce reforms in European higher education has turned into a complex, diverse, and robust venture focusing on new, innovative models of accumulating knowledge and forming a community with wider collaborations among 8 partner universities scattered across Europe.

At the core of this Magazine, lies the idea of showcasing each other's talents, ideas and stories, gaining knowledge and experiences while keeping in touch. As a reader, you will get a glimpse of what has been achieved so far and we will make sure you stay up to date with what is going on across our European student network through news, opinions, research articles and much more.

To achieve all that, this magazine is going to significantly rely on your insightful contributions, ideas, and support. Details on how you can get more involved are given on page no. 24. As an editorial team that wants to show you the best of ERUA, we keep in mind that at the center of it all is you and the role you play in this little world of ours.

For this pilot edition, you will get to tour the "Rich but Mysterious" Grand Canary Island. Then, we are going to take you on a trip to the beautiful and cozy city of Vilnius, Lithuania where Mykolas Romeris University hosted the 4th Annual ERUA Summit, covering various aspects of social innovation. The Summit perfectly signified how students, when given autonomy and treated as research partners can bring thought provoking and innovative concepts to reality. We are then going to take an in-depth look at one of the workshops representing a compelling example of how collaboration can open new doors in research. Many more stories are awaiting you...

**Dive bravely into this issue and discover the true spirit of ERUA !**



UNIVERSITÉ  
**PARIS 8**  
DES CRÉATIONS



**unimc**  
UNIVERSITÀ DI MACERATA



**SWPS**  
University



**UNIVERSITY OF THE**  
**AEGEAN**



**Mykolas Romeris**  
universitetas



**Universidad de**  
**Las Palmas de**  
**Gran Canaria**



JUNE 2024

# VILNIUS SUMMIT

SOCIAL INOVATION FOR TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIETY







June 25, 2024 marks another significant milestone for the European Reform University Alliance (ERUA) as Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) hosted the 4th Annual Summit, focusing on the pivotal role of social innovation in creating a transformative society.

Over three days, the event featured workshops, panel discussions, and conferences, all organized by the students and professors from MRU, European University Viadrina, SWPS, New Bulgarian University, University of Macerata, and University of Paris 8. Take a look at how the event unfolded...





# HIGHLIGHTS

DAY 1



Another panel focused on "Transformative Approaches to Academic Governance and Research Administration," discussing ways to re-imagine education, drive attitude changes, address sustainability, and build societal resilience through innovative university programs.

Collaboration and well-defined roles are arguably the most crucial elements in research. The two-partner workshop by moderator: Zuzanna Siwinska (SWPS) demonstrated exactly this in a practical manner. The workshop emphasized the importance of treating students as research partners instead of traditional learners. This was followed by the collaborative writing of an article, co-authored by all 16 participants.

*The article will be published soon.*

The day wrapped up with a cozy networking reception in Vilnius's historic Old Town at "Bokšto skveras." It was the perfect spot for us to connect and unwind over delicious Lithuanian cuisine, while soaking in a bit of local culture.

On a sunny Tuesday, over 200 participants, including students, professors, and staff from ERUA's partner universities, gathered at MRU. The event kicked off with opening speeches by the rectors of MRU, SWPS University, University of Paris 8, and Lithuania's Vice-Minister of Education. This was followed by a panel discussion on "Critical Approach to Research Impact on Social Innovation," emphasizing the unique role of students in driving social innovation, distinct from traditional entrepreneurship.

The opening day featured 12 workshops exploring research impact, inclusivity, sustainability, educational reforms, and social innovation. Highlights included a session on "Transforming Research with Open Science Initiatives," examining how open science can enhance research practices.



DAY 2

With 28 workshops, the second day provided participants with deep insights into the challenges to social innovation. Although it's not possible to encompass the full depth of each session, a few examples of workshops that illustrate the range of discussions unfolded include "ERUA students' voice" which illuminated discussions regarding economic, legal, social, and governance challenges to social innovation. The presentations led to invigorating discussions on democracy in the Lithuanian context, resident permits posing challenges to immigration, digitization of the Euro, and social loafing as a conflict trigger in group-based learning.







## DAY 3

The final day opened with a closing speech from Bruna Vives, Secretary General of ERUA, celebrating the success of the 4th ERUA Summit and thanking MRU for their warm Lithuanian hospitality. She highlighted the summit as an important milestone for ERUA, with students leading the way as key decision-makers in educational reform.

The rest of the day focused on meetings between ERUA leaders and teams, reflecting on past initiatives, evaluating ongoing projects, and planning the steps to keep students at the core of ERUA's future direction. These discussions were essential for shaping the alliance's next phase and reinforcing student-driven goals.



The 2024 ERUA Vilnius summit was a landmark event, bringing together participants to build new connections and strengthen existing ones. The success of the summit is a tribute to the students within the alliance, who, when given the right platform, have shown they can lead meaningful reforms and collaborate as responsible research partners. The popularity of student-led workshops demonstrated the impact students can have when they are empowered.

With a theme centered on social innovation, the summit provided a space to explore education, AI, innovation, and social issues in depth. The collaborative spirit of the students was the highlight, especially through projects like the co-authored article on the role of students as research partners and the powerful "Story Exchange" session.



A special recognition goes to MRU for its flawless organization, offering participants an unforgettable experience rich in Lithuanian culture and hospitality, setting a high standard for future events.





**Max Heber**  
Universität Konstanz

**The workshop "ERUA students joint workshop activities: Story Exchange" took place at the 2024 Vilnius Summit and was organised by Alexandra Petrova (NBU), Elena Schmid (EUV), Judith Franke (EUV) and Gabriela Pawlowicz (EUV).**

## The Story Exchange Workshop

I was eager to hear more about student activities within ERUA. I am intrigued by intercultural exchange and I do believe that exchanging stories can be a highly meaningful way of building bridges to connect cultures. In the workshop, I was somewhat surprised to find out it was dedicated to exchanging authentic personal stories, first tete-a-tete with another participant and subsequently with the whole group when it comes to re-telling the stories we had just heard from our partners. Sharing personal stories in such a fashion is a highly personal and thus a very sensitive topic. Therefore, I knew that the workshop's success would largely depend on whether or not the organizers would be capable of creating a "safe space" in which the participants would have enough faith in each other. This also ties in with performance anxiety, which some participants might struggle with.

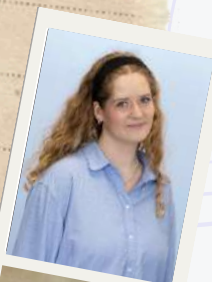
This exercise gives a person the chance to do their best when it comes to listening carefully. Beyond that, it gives us a chance to look at one's problem from a different angle. In essence, I experienced that method as an equally playful, creative and constructive way of explaining challenges to larger groups to look at a matter jointly. I wholeheartedly congratulate the organizers on managing their workshop in such a successful fashion. This involved mindfulness on a range of levels such as when it comes to explaining a complex methodology to others in foreign language as well as empathetic, encouraging and far-sighted classroom management.

From my part, I am delighted to say that the constructive safe space I was hoping for did get created in the seminar room - and quite spectacularly so. Not only did the organisers explain the motivation behind the scope and the method really well, but I also felt that they were very encouraging and welcoming towards the participants when it comes to letting them try out their own approaches to the method. In my opinion, this created a highly energetic, meaningful and authentic learning experience.

To wrap things up: As stated previously, I profited from the workshop very much. In fact, I would even say that it was my favourite session of the ones I visited during the 2024 summit.



**"**Witnessing the powerful impact of the story exchange was truly touching. These workshops demonstrate how natural empathy becomes when you actively listen to your conversation partner. This shift allows the other person to open up, breaking down various barriers that may have existed between you."  
Gabriela Pawlowicz (EUV)



**"**Through the power of storytelling and actively listening to each other's personal stories I have the feeling the Story Exchange brought us all closer together as a group, deepened our understanding of each other's perspectives and increased our empathy towards each other."  
Judith Franke (EUV)



**"**Seeing people who have met half an hour ago share stories from their lives and open up to everybody in the room created a unique atmosphere of trust, understanding and closeness contributing to the creation of connections between us as members of the ERUA community and making us rethink the power of human relationships and emotions."  
Alexandra Petrova (NBU)



**"**To see this skepticism turn into emotional openness and the ease with which they all spoke afterwards had a real 'wow' effect on me. As well as the trust people give you when they open up and become vulnerable."  
Elena Schmid (EUV)







# TRANSFORMING HOW WE DO RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY

What happens when SWPS's student Zuzanna Siwińska, organizes a workshop that is focused on transforming the research in universities?

We get a thoughtful discussion on how students can truly play their role in research as partners. Not only that, a collaborative article, co-authored by 16 participants got created, highlighting the importance of collaboration between students and teachers.



Don't worry about the first "no", go to the next "yes".

From small steps... to the big ones

We have to work together. We have our view, but we need joint view.

Collaboration. Communication. Information to students.



# TRAVELLING SEMINARS

Travelling seminar  
in Gran Canaria

Vacuum and what  
we have left?

European capitals  
of psychoanalysis

Learning English  
through the art of  
puppetry



# TRAVELLING SEMINAR IN GRAN CANARIA

Daniela Sánchez

March, 2024

University of Paris 8 in collaboration with University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC), organized a travelling Seminar in regards to ERUA-2 project. Paris 8 delegation consisted of students from degree programs of Hispanic Philology, Master's in Media & Culture (with 2 Languages), and Master's in Transnational and Transcultural Studies. The Seminar was co-organized by Claire Laguian (Spanish literature and Canarian culture associate professor at Paris 8) and Pascale Thibaudeau (Spanish Cinema full professor at Paris 8). The ULPGC's professor, Lucas Pérez Martín not only made this Travelling Seminar possible but also invited the Paris8 students to take part in his lecture "The Current Migrations From Africa to the Canary Islands In Comparison With France and Brazil".

During this Seminar, participants from Paris 8 immersed themselves in Canarian culture where they interacted with professors as well as the students. ULPGC offers Translation and Interpretation degrees in French. Thanks to the associate professor in French, Patricia Pérez, it was proposed that these students should be allowed to participate in a language exchange program with Paris 8.

Paris 8 students who participated in the seminar gave presentations about the activities they were involved in during their visit to Gran Canaria. These presentations were shared via Zoom during the Festival of Languages, hosted by the Paris 8 Faculty of Languages, for the Parisian students. ULPGC students also contributed by giving presentations in French, introducing their university and discussing topics such as "Tenerife's Particular Microclimates." The Faculty of Translation and Interpreting, along with the Faculty of Canarian Archipelago Studies, led these discussions. After the presentations, students and professors from both universities continued the meetup in a relaxed setting at the cafeteria.

I was fortunate to be one of the ULPGC students who benefited from this opportunity. It was an incredible experience to meet and interact with other European students within the alliance. With the support of Ms. Pérez, I connected with Professor Laguian, whose invaluable guidance enabled me to conduct interviews with the participating students. The friendly and open-minded disposition of the interviewees led to insightful and unexpected responses.

When asked to describe Gran Canaria in one word, the participants mentioned "richness" and "mysterious but welcoming." It's rare to hear such intriguing descriptions, and I was pleasantly surprised by their responses. When asked about what they enjoyed most during their visit, they highlighted the landscapes, nature, and the sea. While I expected those responses, what intrigued me the most was the use of the word "richness" to describe the wide range of places to explore and discover in Gran Canaria. Living on an island, it is easier to jump to the conclusion that there is not much to explore, let alone discovering something new. It was a refreshing change of pace for me to realize that, we as locals, are not fully aware of the richness of our homeland.

The Canary Islands are internationally recognized as a tourist destination known for their paradisiacal beaches and spectacular subtropical climate. While it's true that the ideal climate is a highlight of the Canary Islands, other marvelous aspects of the archipelago, like its people, often get overshadowed. That's why I'm glad that we, as inhabitants of the Canary Islands, left a lasting impression on these students, who described us as smiley, kind, joyful, and possessing a remarkable sense of fashion.







The seminar's main theme was exploring African influence in the Canary Islands' history, art, and migration—a topic that is not often addressed within the islands. I asked the participants if they believed Canarians are aware of the historical linkages with the neighboring continent. Both interviewees felt that Canarian people are not fully aware of these connections. This lack of awareness is not due to ignorance but rather to the limited emphasis placed on its history.

As part of the program, participants visited official historical sources, including museums. One participant joined the ULPGC History Degree students and their professor, Germán Santana Pérez, on visits to archaeological sites. Both interviewees noted that the political and social implications of this connection are not sufficiently emphasized. They also mentioned that certain aspects, such as the cultural richness of the Amazigh—the African nomadic people who arrived in the Canary Islands long ago—have been overlooked. Similarly, the enslavement of Moorish and sub-Saharan people in the Canary Islands starting in the 16th century has been underrepresented. From their perspective, without visibility of these historical aspects in educational settings, it is challenging to raise awareness about the African-Canarian connection.



Among Canarian art forms, they enjoyed Canarian literature the most. They were particularly intrigued by the artistic aspects covered in the seminar and appreciated the paintings of Escuela Luján Pérez at the Gabinete Literario. With the help of ULPGC professors Nayra Pérez Hernández and Antonio Becerra Bolaños, they explored Canarian literary texts related to Africa, spanning from the 16th to the 20th century. They visited locations named after these authors, such as the square dedicated to Cairasco de Figueroa, a Canarian poet whose verses deeply moved one of our interviewees.

Undoubtedly, the word "rich" that has been highlighted throughout the article is the one they mentioned the most when describing this seminar and the exchange between universities. Our interviewees were so impressed by Gran Canaria that they intend to comeback, but as ULPGC students along with the long-term mobilities of the ERASMUS program.

Reflecting on France and the Canary Islands, one might think they are worlds apart. While there are certain differences, there are also many similarities. One of our interviewees pointed out an interesting similarity: in both cultures, people's favorite pastime is meeting for coffee after lectures or work.

Both of our interviewees agreed that French and Canarian people interact in different ways. Although this should not be generalized, Canarian people are described as more sociable, approachable, whereas French people are considered to be reserved at first. We may have different ways of socializing, but the profound impact of such interactions always results in an invigorating experience where we could learn from each other, adhering to the core purpose of this alliance.





## WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT...

# Psychoanalysis in Paris



The city of Paris, with its rich historical tapestry and vibrant cultural milieu, served as the perfect backdrop for my recent intellectual odyssey into the depths of psychoanalysis. Between April 26th and May 1st, I attended a seminar jointly organized by New Bulgarian University and University Paris 8 focusing on Lacan. This sojourn was not only intellectually stimulating but also profoundly liberating, as it afforded me the latitude to explore my inner self within an emancipating framework.

Paris itself seemed to epitomize the spirit of intellectual exploration and introspection. The seminar, ensconced within the city's intellectual epicenter, convened scholars, students, and psychoanalytic enthusiasts. The discourses were expansive, traversing Lacan's enigmatic theories and the intricate nexus between art and the unconscious. What stood out most, however, was the seminar's lack of rigid structure, which allowed for a free form of engagement that felt both liberating and deeply personal.



The highlight of the seminar was indubitably the exhibition "Lacan, the Exhibition: When Art Meets Psychoanalysis." This exhibition provided a fascinating confluence between Lacan's theories and contemporary art. Traversing the gallery, I encountered artworks that vividly illustrated Lacanian concepts such as the mirror stage, the symbolic order, and the Real. These artistic interpretations illustrated Lacan's often abstruse and arcane ideas, offering new insights and perspectives. The experience was immersive, encouraging profound reflection on my psyche and how art can unlock hidden dimensions of the self.

In addition to Lacan, the seminar also delved into the works of Julia Kristeva and Sigmund Freud. A particularly memorable moment was our meeting with Julia Kristeva at the Institut Culturel Bulgare à Paris. I departed with the feeling that psychoanalysis serves as both a mode of communication and a manifestation of one's inner self or more accurately how one could embody oneself. Kristeva's expositions on the semiotic and the symbolic, as well as her exploration of abjection, provided a nuanced understanding of the intersections between language, psychoanalysis, and art. Her insights into the role of the maternal in psychoanalytic theory were particularly edifying. Revisiting Freud's foundational theories, the seminar underscored the enduring pertinence of his ideas while also illuminating how Lacan and Kristeva have extrapolated upon them.







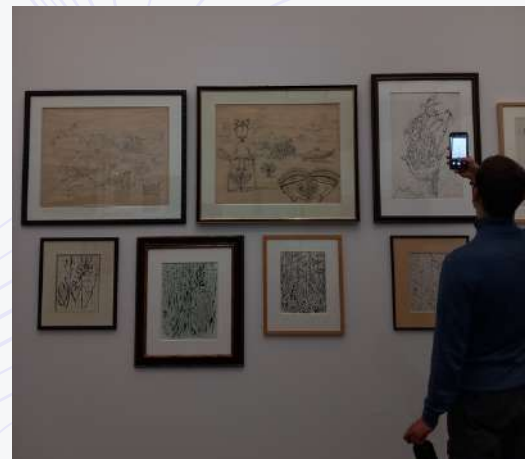
A particularly enriching experience during the trip was a day spent at a colloquium held by University Paris 8, where Lacan's theories served as the lodestar. Many of the participants were philosophers, which imparted a rich layer of depth to the deliberations. This connection to philosophy was especially resonant for me, given my academic pursuits in the field. The philosophical discourse illuminated how Lacan's ideas intersect with broader philosophical inquiries about the nature of self, language, and reality. The colloquium also highlighted the synergies between psychoanalysis and literature, exploring how literary texts can be scrutinized through a Lacanian lens to uncover deeper psychological and symbolic strata.



Throughout the seminar, I found myself cogitating on the personal significance of these theories. I spent time meandering through Paris, frequenting cafes that once hosted luminary thinkers, and contemplating the interplay between my own experiences and the psychoanalytic concepts discussed in the seminar. This sense of liberation and self-discovery was perhaps the most invaluable aspect of the trip. It allowed me to internalize the precepts of psychoanalysis in a manner that was profoundly personal and transformative.

In conclusion, my time in Paris attending the seminar on Lacan and psychoanalysis was an experience of profound erudition and personal metamorphosis. The intersection of art and psychoanalysis provided a unique prism through which to perceive both the external world and my internal landscape. The unstructured nature of the seminar offered a liberating space for introspection and self-exploration. This journey into the heart of psychoanalysis, set against the backdrop of Paris and punctuated by visits to significant places like Hospital Saint Anna, was not merely an academic endeavor but a deeply enriching personal experience. As Michel Foucault poignantly stated, "The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning."

After each corner turned, each café passed, past lives echoed. All in now, never in the past, never in the present, but always a footstep before me (or after me?).







KORAL BEACH,  
BULGARIA

Teodora Nancheva, NBU

# VACUUM AND WHAT WE HAVE LEFT?


This was the topic of the Koral Climate Preservation School 2024. We collaborated in teams alongside our teachers. The wild beach of Koral near the village of Lozenets was the exhibition space for our projects. A key aspect of the brief encouraged the use of materials found at the seaside. While the summer school has been a long-standing tradition for New Bulgarian University, this year marked its first collaboration with ERUA, which facilitated international participation from Paris 8 University and Kyiv State Institute of Decorative Art And Design M. Boychuk. This expanded the scope of the initiative, enhancing intercultural dialogue and introducing a broader perspective.

Beyond our project work, we had the opportunity to participate in different workshops like cyanotype printing, painting and a lecture on smells.

The project was preceded by the travelling seminar "The Museum and Its Social Roles", held in Paris earlier in May. The different perceptions of art and preserving it inspired me for the Koral project. The remote, calm setting, alongside being surrounded by like-minded individuals, all immersed in the same topic, attributed to an atmosphere of empathy and creative support, which makes me believe in positive change in the face of meaningful ideas.







## Another version of myself: Learning English through the art of puppetry

Debora Shofelinova , NBU



*"ERUA projects are an opportunity not only to travel, but also to make friends for life. The workshop "Another version of myself - or Learning English through the art of puppetry" is an inspiring project that combines language learning with the magic of puppetry. It was held in Paris, France. It was an opportunity to discover new ways of expression and communication while learning English in a fun and innovative way. In three words: inspiring, educational and unforgettable. Highly recommend it!"*





# STUDENT VOICES





# Students as Customers in Higher Education

## The Opportunities, The Pitfalls, & The Way Forward

Perceiving students as customers in education and higher education in specific has been an unstated reality. However, the adage that “customer is always right” rarely applies in this context. Before we dissect this notion, it is important to understand and revisit the definition of a customer. As Robert Simons defines customer in its March 2014 article for Harvard Business Review as “the people or entities that buy your products and services and supply your revenue.” Putting this definition in context, students are the people or entities that buy services and supply revenue to universities in form of tuition, contribution, administrative fees thus, inferring that they are the customers.

To provide further context, universities market themselves to students through advertisement across various mediums. These mediums include but are not limited to social media, education expos and campus recruitment drives. These

marketing efforts intend to recruit and retain both the potential and current students. Regardless of the fact that many universities, especially in Europe, offer either very affordable or tuition free education, they still employ various marketing strategies to engage their target audience. By virtue, the main target of a marketing activity such as advertisement is always the customers. Therefore, students by default are customers. Furthermore, Alex Douglas in his conference paper in 2006 pointed out that the relationship between a student as customer and educational institution is more complex than a regular commercial customer and supplier relationship. This is mainly attributed to the fact that it is not a one time or repeated transactional relationship but rather a longitudinal one where a student is associated with an education institution as a member.

Now that we have established that students are indeed customers, there is still an ongoing debate in academia about whether or not they should actually be treated as one. According to Melodi Guilbault in its article “Students as customers in higher education: The (controversial) debate needs to end”, rather than getting into the debate that students should be treated as customers or not, the focus of educational institutions should be towards how to better serve students as customers. This sounds like a win-win scenario but the ethical implications cannot be ignored. For one, a market driven education could turn education into a commercialized product rather than a transformative tool to enrich the society. Curriculum would be tailored to prepare students for the job market instead turning them into critical thinkers. Not to mention that in all likelihood education would then be perceived as more of an economic investment instead of its inherent intrinsic social values to develop a society.

If students are actively being considered as customers, then that could potentially lead to a competitive market driven education system. This competitive landscape could negatively affect the collaboration between the higher education institutions in regards to research, educational reforms, and innovation. Moreover, this could also turn students into passive customers. As passive customers, their primary purpose would be to attend a university and to acquire skills to be job ready rather than having an intrinsic interest for education. This has been clearly the case in a study conducted by Paul Ashwin, Benjamin Goldschneiderb, Ashish Agrawalc and Reneé Smith published in ‘Studies in Higher Education’ journal. From their study



of 47 students from 3 different countries,  $\frac{3}{5}$  of the respondents indicated that their primary intention for getting an undergraduate degree is goal oriented instead of commitment towards knowledge. However, while this research provided important insights, its scope remained limited to chemistry and chemical engineering disciplines. The sample could be diversified by including students from social sciences and humanities, to understand the student-customer dynamic.

In his article “Students as customers: a paradigm shift”, Javier Paricio Royo mentioned that not only this student-customer dynamic could impact students’ commitment to knowledge but it also affects the societal role of universities. Universities under such conditions, could divert their focus to be more market competitive rather than serving as a conduit of societal development. This ideology further gives credence to the so-called “ranking and reputation” system. The universities would then be more concerned about their brand management than anything else. Also, when students perceive themselves as customers, it turns education from a transformative growth to a transactionally motivated process. As evident in a typical customer supplier relationship, a customer seeks maximum value for its money. A student in this context would seek growth in career prospects and upward economic mobility rather than personal development or knowledge seeking. Moreover, the author referred to Lee Harvey and Peter Knight’s assessment that education is a participatory process and students are not its consumers or customers but participants.



Students are more likely to be more active partners in their learning process when they are not treated as customers. However, one could argue that not treating the students as customers or keeping things status quo is not the way forward either.

Although this student-customer paradigm has certain drawbacks, it also comes with its own benefits. Research has shown that a market-oriented environment pushes organizations to improve the quality of their products and services. By this logic, when students are treated as customers, the universities strive to work on enhancing the quality of their curriculum. The further implications are that this would lead to a student-centred approach where a student as a customer would have rights as any other customer. This could involve treating students as customers in areas such as feedback, classroom experiences, and communication, which enhances their overall educational experience. Moreover, it can be inferred that the curriculum would be structured according to industry standards and thus increase their practicality. All of these assertions have been indicated by Javier Paricio and Melodi Guilbault in their respective articles. In hindsight, it can be argued that while theoretically the benefits of such a dynamic exist, their practical applications are non-existent. For example, if a market driven approach would compel universities to improve the quality of education from a practicality standpoint, then graduates of private universities would be dominating the global job market instead of public universities. This is not to say that there are not any notable exceptions to this.

Referring back to the “customer is always right” adage, it can be contended that this is not always the case, especially in the higher education sector. The universities that treat students as customers, often implement policies that are one-sided and

undermine the rights and feedback of students. In my assessment, student course feedback is a prime example of this. This kind of feedback, although it may seem customer centric, is often used as a way to create a customer centric illusion. It is the very same reason that most students consider such feedback mechanisms as a formality instead of a right to voice their opinions.

The on-going debate that whether or not students should be treated as customers provides thought provoking insights. Nonetheless, it is imperative to identify a solution that captures the essence of the best of both alternatives. It seems that the customer-centric approach has more disadvantages than the other way around. However, keeping things the way they are, is not the solution either.

From my point of view, the way forward is to view students as partners rather as customers or traditional learners. Students bring significant value to their universities, just as universities do to them. They contribute their talents, diverse backgrounds and knowledge, along with a collaborative spirit that enhances the university's brand. Additionally, universities benefit further when students become alumni, as they serve as vital connections to various industries. In order to treat students as partners, the first step is recognizing the substantial value students contribute to their educational institutions. Secondly, student empowerment and engagement should be a top priority for educational institutions. This can be achieved by involving students in decision-making processes, particularly through the empowerment of student boards. However, it's important to recognize that this is a transformative process, and gradual implementation is likely to be more effective than a rapid approach. Finally, the student-as-partner model should be further explored through empirical studies to foster greater awareness and stimulate discussion on the topic.





Vanina Ninova  
NBU

# My ERUA STORY



For me ERUA is a fantastic way to bring students closer to their university by inspiring them to be part of a unique European university community and to seize all the opportunities the alliance provides them with. During my studies in New Bulgarian University (NBU), I was lucky to experience ERUA from a student perspective as well as from a research one. As a student, I have participated in several interesting and engaging workshops and travelling seminars in other ERUA universities. As a researcher, I rediscovered my own university and recognized its role as an agent of the reform ideals like interdisciplinarity, student empowerment, societal engagement, and critical thinking.

All of my experience within the frame of ERUA has influenced me in a positive way and has enriched me not only as a student but as an individual and a European citizen as well. For example, I took part in the inspiring ERUA Manifesto writing workshop at the University of Paris 8, enjoyed a unique architecture tour of the modernist and brutalist buildings at the University of Konstanz (now an ERUA associate member), and reflected deeply on migration with students from around the world during the inter-cultural travelling seminar organized by professors from NBU and the University of Konstanz. I am also proud to have been among the selected students to represent ERUA at the European Student Assembly 2023 in the European Parliament in Strasbourg together with more than 230 students coming from 40 European Universities Alliances.





# MEET THE AMBASSADORS



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# WHAT'S TO COME ?

## Young Forum for Action on Climate Change

Young Forum for Action on Climate Change is an initiative to empower young leaders and professionals that are committed towards tackling climate change through international collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and hands-on action.

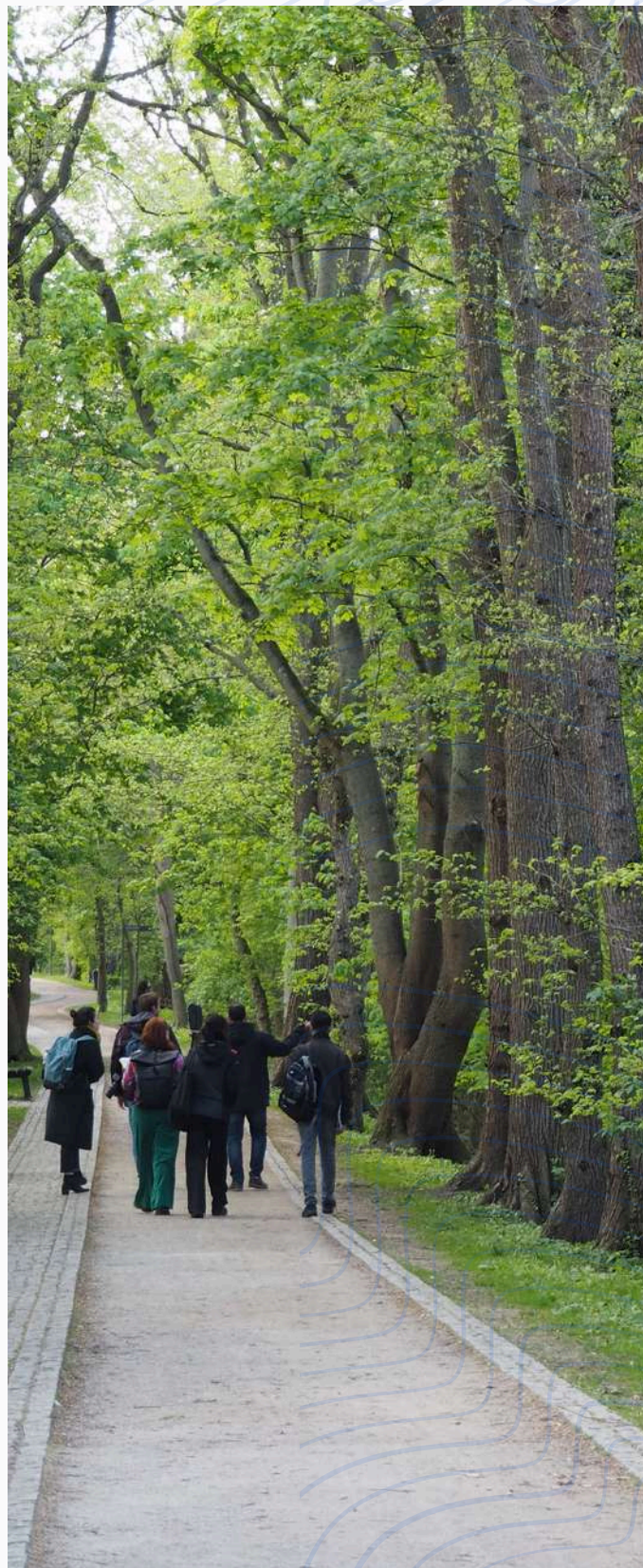
Led by the passionate and committed team of University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, the Blue Commission has been established consisting of students from ERUA partner universities. This co-organized Commission is working towards launching local lectures and activities in 2025 covering various dimensions of climate change as well as a joint conference in Las Palmas.

## Tutorship Program

The Tutorship Program is another step taken towards increasing student engagement. The program will work on a Train-The-Trainer model fostering bottom-up student participation and co-creation.

## Joint Bottom-Up Project Call- II

The call for joint bottom-up projects II will be launched in the upcoming year. An opportunity for ERUA members to collaborate on a joint project while receiving both financial and logistic support from ERUA.





### **Science Cafe: Democracy and Human Rights, Inclusion, Gender Equality**

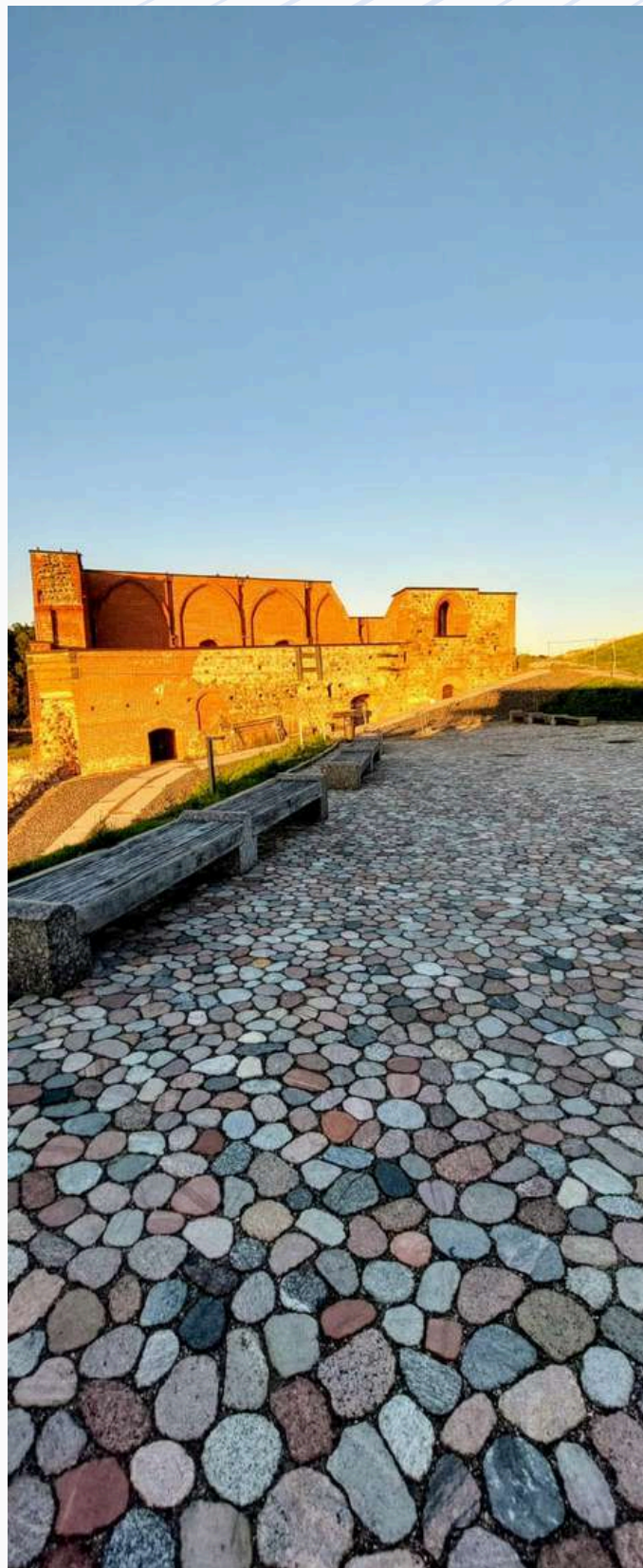
The science cafe promotes community-based participatory research involving various audiences including students, citizens, scientist, community leaders and many more .

The upcoming science cafe is a starting point for engaging discussion on the areas of Democracy and Human Rights, Inclusion, Gender Equality.

### **Peer-to-Peer Exchange Program**

ERUA Student Engagement Team is diligently working on enhancing Peer-to-Peer Exchange program. This program addresses several domains affecting students, including mental health, discrimination, and learning.

For example, in July 2024 Linda Seewald, a Viadrina student hosted a workshop on "How to Deal with Stress and Challenges Mindfully?" focusing on mental well-being.





# Open Call: Become a Contributor for Catch-Up!

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- Are you an excellent content creator?
- Do you have a passion for storytelling, raising awareness, or shedding light on topics that truly matter?
- If your answer is yes, you're in the right place!

Catch-Up - the ERUA student magazine invites you to showcase your content writing talents and contribute meaningful content to our platform. We're looking for creative, impactful, and engaging pieces that resonate with our audience. That's not all! With Catch-Up going digital for the future editions, you can submit videos, audios and images as well.

Before you begin drafting your masterpiece, here are a few important guidelines to keep in mind:

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**Word Limit:** Your content should be concise and impactful, with a maximum of 1000 words.

**Images:** If you include images, ensure they are high-resolution and properly credited. Attribution is a must!

**Originality:** Plagiarism is strictly prohibited. Always credit original authors and sources to maintain integrity.

**Alignment:** Your content must reflect the values and mission of the ERUA (European Reform University Alliance). Learn more about these values here: [ERUA Values and Mission](#).

**Creativity:** Feel free to unleash your creativity! However, always keep your target audience (in the case of Catch Up, ERUA students) in mind to ensure your content resonates.

**Polish Your Work:** Double-check for spelling, grammar, and formatting errors. Tools like Grammarly can be incredibly helpful. Always proofread your work thoroughly before submission.

**Video Guidelines:** Your video submission should be brief and no longer than 3 minutes. Please contact us first, in case your content is of longer duration. The file size should not exceed 100mb. For additional guidance checkout [Video Submission Guideline by Wharton University of Pennsylvania](#)

## Additional Tips for Contributors:

**Structure Your Content:** A clear introduction, engaging body, and strong conclusion make your piece more impactful.

**Audience Engagement:** Use a tone and style that captivates and retains your audience's attention.

**Relevance:** Ensure your content is current and aligns with Catch-Up's purpose and themes.

**Call to Action:** End with a statement or question that encourages readers to think, share, or take action based on your content.

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**Join us in making an impact by sharing your voice, ideas, and creativity.  
We look forward to reading your submissions!**

*You can find our contacts on the following page*



**Website:** [erua-eui.eu](http://erua-eui.eu)

**Instagram:** [we\\_are\\_erua](https://www.instagram.com/we_are_erua)

**Facebook:** ERUA - European  
Reform University Alliance

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# ERUA

 **ERUA**  
European Reform  
University Alliance



Co-funded by  
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# DAY

12.12.2024

16:00 EET 15:00 CET 14:00 WET



## DigiTalk: ERUA Students & Local Societies

ONLINE, UNIVERSITY OF THE AEGEAN



## Entrepreneurship Conference: 3 Students' Portraits

ONLINE

11:00 EET 10:00 CET 09:00 WET



## Opening Ceremony

HYBRID, PARIS 8 UNIVERSITY

11:30 EET 10:30 CET 09:30 WET



## Concert of the Unimc Orchestra

HYBRID, UNIVERSITY OF MACERATA

17:00 EET 16:00 CET 15:00 WET



## Presentation of the Entrepreneurship Online Course

ONLINE

12:00 EET 11:00 CET 10:00 WET



## Academic Lecture in English on Critical Thinking and Media Disinformation

HYBRID, SWPS UNIVERSITY

18:00 EET 17:00 CET 16:00 WET



## Meet Our ERUA Teams

ONLINE

19:00 EET 18:00 CET 17:00 WET



## Closing Ceremony

ONLINE

13:30 EET 12:30 CET 11:30 WET



## Story Exchange Workshop: Connecting Through Storytelling

ONLINE

