



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

The European University of the Future

Citation for published version:

Bayne, S, Gallagher, M, Brozek, B, Capitant, D, Esposti, MD, Piel, B, Rybowski, R, Salmi, A-M, Sintubin, M & Villaverde Lopez, G 2021, *The European University of the Future: Bold, Integrated, Open*. UNA Europa.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



The European University of the Future

una europa

FUTURE UNILAB

Bold, Integrated, Open

Future UniLab position paper

The pillars of the European university of the future

Europe's universities have shaped and influenced the world over centuries, and we have the vision and sense of purpose to define and build a strong future in which our work can continue. We are values-driven, shaped by a commitment to freedom of speech, freedom of movement, knowledge, democracy, peace, equality and justice. The pillars of the European university of the future will be built on these values, on a commitment to sustainability and on a creative bringing-together of our richly-symbolic campuses with the new, dynamic spaces opened up by digital technology.

Pillar 1: Values

The European university of the future will be committed to intellectual discovery, bringing together the rigour of natural and social scientific method, the critical and expansive insights of the arts and humanities, and the energy that drives knowledge creation and sharing. It will support the creativity, curiosity, criticality and serendipity that characterise the best research, teaching and knowledge sharing. Its core values will be affirmed in practice, in pedagogy, in administration and in our connectedness to society. They will be reaffirmed through committed advocacy which positions the university as a valued, influential and trusted institution driving positive social change.

Pillar 2: Sustainability

The European university of the future will be sustainable in all senses. It will actively work to protect and secure the environment, to be financially sound and inclusive, and to put the wellbeing of people and planet at the centre of its activity. Sustainability understood in this broad sense is a reflection of the university's fundamental responsibility to generate and share knowledge, and by doing so to promote justice, advocate for equality and support a good life for all citizens of our globe. Sustainability is systemic and will require a new contract between planet and people.

Pillar 3: Spaces

The European university of the future will be a bringing-together of our historic campuses with the new expanses of digital space. Our physical presence within the cities and towns of Europe will materialise and symbolise the importance of universities to society, and be a focus for our community of scholarship. Our digital spaces will become far-reaching and inclusive sites within which our work is performed, designed and built in ways which support a viable and just future. Both spaces will support a debate, dynamism and change, where our values will be contested, reaffirmed and translated.

How we act: BIO

Under the pressures of commercialisation, crises of trust, instrumentalist attitudes driving reductive measurements of our worth, there is a need for a new impulse and a broad, innovative vision for universities facing the challenge of the future. To shape this impulse and vision we can think in terms of being BIO: bold, integrated and open.

Bold: universities lead rather than follow. They are open to innovative, often disruptive ideas, and are values-driven: they emphasise freedom, rigour, creativity, equality and diversity, and never succumb to intellectual inertia.

Integrated: universities are driven by a shared mission combining research, education and cooperation with external partners, both locally and globally. They are firmly embedded in their complex ecosystems and support interdisciplinary endeavours to catalyse optimal growth and responsible use and creation of knowledge.

Open: universities embody hope for a just, inclusive, educated future. They are transparent in their actions, committed to the open society, making knowledge shareable with all who have a stake in it, actively engaging citizens in research and education and building social trust in their mission and operation.

Putting the university of the future to work

The contemporary world offers us many challenges, from environmental crisis through economic instability and mass migrations to the COVID pandemic. In such a context universities need to consider their role and take action on fundamental aspects of their functioning. At the same time, policy makers and funders at national and EU level need to provide the necessary enabling frameworks and funding for universities to support them to act with 'BIO'. These might include the following indicative actions.

Values may be promoted by:

- embedding value-related training into academic programmes and using this as an opportunity to reflect on existing graduate attributes and their viability in Europe and beyond
- developing a Values Lab where the academic community has safe space to revisit and reinterpret these values in the face of emerging pressures and opportunities across a range of spaces and sectors
- implementing the idea of protected spaces; maintaining and broadening the number of Universities of Sanctuary; and widening participation from marginalised groups
- openly implementing citizen science and citizen humanities formats alongside comprehensive communication strategies and communal spaces for civic engagement

Sustainability may be promoted by:

- developing a Sustainability Lab to allow for bold experimentation and innovation around models of sustainability, particularly for exploring systemic issues (such as poverty), for providing leadership in response to a range of critical questions (such as climate change), alternative models for financing universities, and health and wellbeing
- supporting integration by adapting university structure so that it is based not only around disciplines but also around clusters of problems
- further aligning graduate outcomes and curricular activity to the Sustainable Development Goals
- dedicated political and social advocacy at national and international levels
- continued divestment from sectors and spaces that diverge from our values

An equitable and just bringing together of our physical and digital spaces may be promoted by:

- treating our campuses as citizen spaces fully embedded and open to their local contexts
- opening our built spaces to local citizens and creating new ways for diverse groups to participate in our community
- supporting a new Digital Lab, committed to co-designing and co-governing a digital architecture which enables the free exchange of ideas in a way which is beneficial to the well-being of researchers, teachers, staff, and students
- interdisciplinary engagement with climate science and carbon innovation in research and around the development and sustainability of educational technology
- the development of digital spaces that draw together the European community and foster their support networks, research, teaching, and peer development, spaces that resist logics of surveillance and unnecessary monitoring
- co-designing with students and staff a support network to counter toxicity, trolling, and victimization online
- developing, with students, applications that allow for students to work creatively with their own learning data to understand issues around its use and ownership

Overview

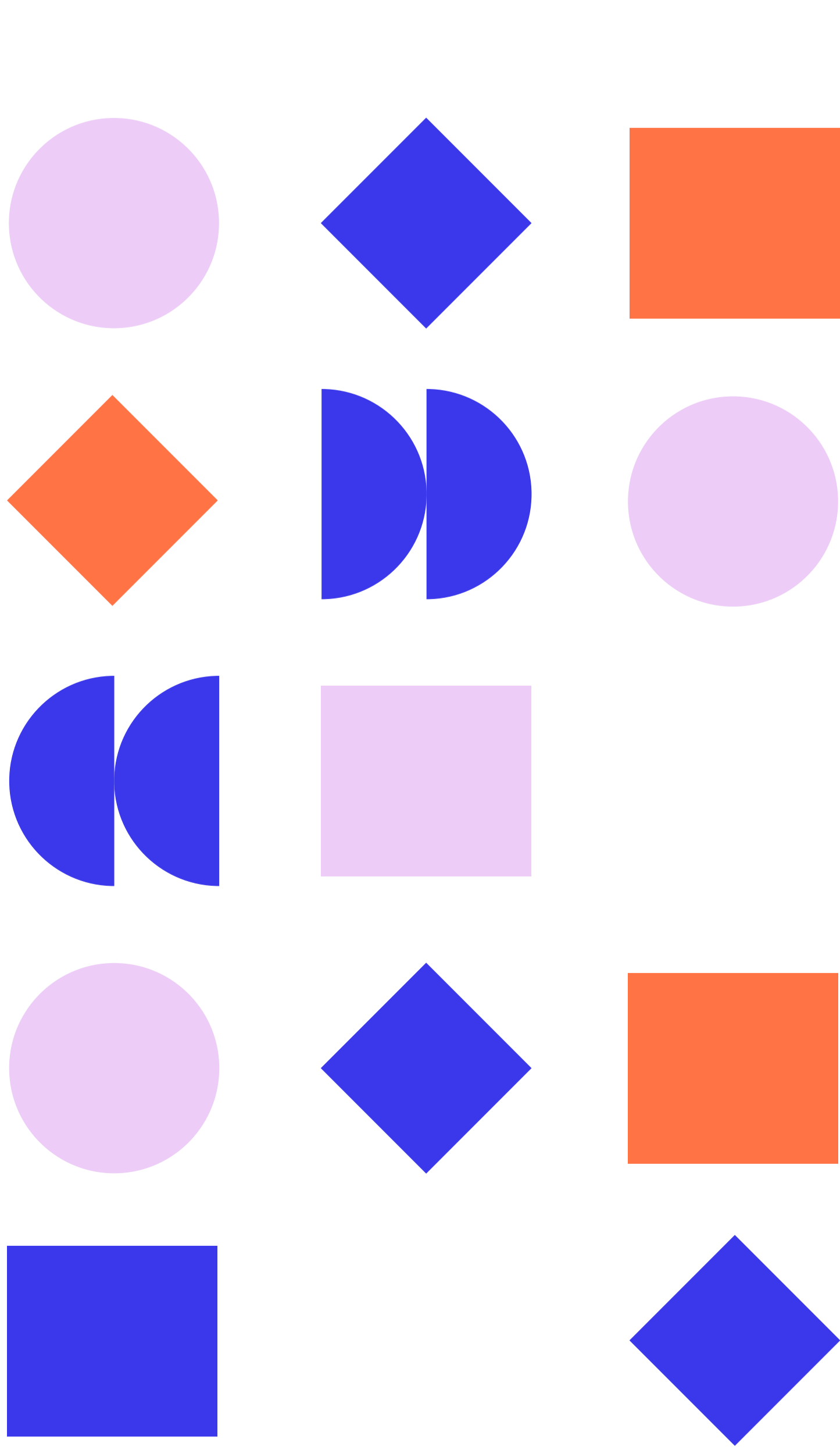
The Una Europa Future UniLab is a space for strategic reflection and innovation. In the day-to-day functioning of the universities there is little time to consider the challenges to higher education and research which might materialise in the future. Meanwhile, universities must be prepared to face such challenges. The consideration of potential future threats and opportunities may lead to groundbreaking ideas, formats of cooperation, and institutional improvements that can also influence and reshape the present day.

Therefore, our goals are:

- to rethink the role and functioning of the universities in the near and more distant future
- to develop innovative instruments to foster cooperation and creativity within a truly European university ecosystem
- to initiate and moderate discussion within Una Europa and beyond, pertaining to all aspects of the university's mission

Our ambition is to become an important source of innovative ideas and inspiration for Una Europa and, more generally, European universities.

Unique methodology



The Future University Lab embodies a unique methodology which gives rise to innovative, out-of-the-box thinking and problem-solving. We identify fundamental problems connected to the functioning of the universities and appoint visionaries teams, consisting of creative specialists from within and outside academia, to offer innovative solutions to the problems. These visionary ideas are translated into workable, scalable, and translatable formats by the teams of implementers, i.e. people who are well-versed in the legal and procedural aspects of the functioning of the universities.

Authors

The Future UniLab Position Paper was developed by the Una Europa Future UniLab Core Team:

Prof. Sian Bayne,
Prof. Bartosz Brożek,
Prof. David Capitani,
Prof. Mirko Degli Esposti,
Dr Michael Gallagher,
Britta Piel,
Prof. Radosław Rybkowski,
Dr Anna-Maria Salmi,
Prof. Manuel Sintubin,
Dr Guillermo Villaverde López

