



Institute for the  
Danube Region  
and Central Europe



**DRC**  
Danube Rectors' Conference

# **DRC STRATEGIC FORESIGHT**

**The Future of Research and  
Education in a Globalized  
World: a View for and from  
the Danube Region**

## **Call for Applications**

## About the Project

The DRC Strategic Foresight project aims at developing strategic foresight concerning the future of higher education in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The project is funded by the **Danube Rectors` Conference (DRC)**, implemented and coordinated by the **Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM)**.

The project focuses on **involving students, early-stage researchers and young scientists in the debate revolving around the future of higher education and academia**. By developing multiple future scenarios revolving around four relevant thematic areas, the project result should **provide decision-makers with valuable projections on the future developments of higher education in the Danube Region from the perspective of young experts**.

## Target group

The project involves **20 participants** with different academic and professional backgrounds coming from all over the world. The project targets **university students, young scientists and early-stage researchers** affiliated with a higher education institution (i.e. universities, academies, research centres) and/or other research institutes and organizations (i.e. think tank, NGO). We are looking for:

- Candidates with a proved interest and/or experience in the field of higher education and one of the four thematic areas in particular;
- Candidates with solid research and analysis skills;
- Expertise on and/or relations with the Danube Region is an asset;

## Implementation and Methodology

The project will be implemented within a **hybrid format**, including both **online and in presence meetings** taking place in **Vienna** (Austria), **Uzhorod** (Ukraine), and **Maribor** (Slovenia). After the first in presence meeting, it will follow a series of online sessions monthly from April to June and September to October.

To develop the strategic foresight documents, participants will use **different research methods**, i.e. horizon scanning (e.g., desk research, expert surveys, literature review), megatrend analysis (e.g., large-scale changes and policy analysis), scenario planning, visioning and back-casting.

## Participation fee, accommodation and travel expenses

**Participation in the project is entirely free of charge** for participants.

**Travel expenses, as well as accommodation in Vienna, Uzhhorod and Maribor, will be covered by the DRC.** Further details will be communicated to the selected participants after the selection process.

## How to apply

In order to apply for participation in the project, candidates must fill out the **online application form** at the following link: <https://forms.gle/CPQ3C7LiriZWN46PA>

The deadline for applications is **February 15, 2022**. Early-bird applications are strongly recommended.

## Contacts

For any further information on the project and questions concerning the application process, please contact the **DRC Secretariat** at the following email address: [info@drc-danube.org](mailto:info@drc-danube.org)

## Thematic Areas

Participants will be divided into four groups to develop four strategic foresight within four thematic areas on the future of higher education:

- **UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY AND GOVERNANCE**

University autonomy and academic freedom represent a core principle in the functioning of an institution of higher education while fulfilling its primary mission of producing and disseminating knowledge. Particularly in the DRC region, the limitation, undermining or destruction of university autonomy is becoming more frequent due to political reforms and the establishment of informal power structures within respective young democratic systems.

What steps must be taken to assure the long-term independence of higher education? With what tools can we counter the erosion of universities' institutional autonomy across the Danube Region and beyond?

- **SCIENCE AND LEARNING IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

The Covid-19 crisis proved to be a significant impetus in the long-term digitization of higher education and learning. Distance education and remote learning has become a daily experience and a new normal even for digitization less-prepared universities of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

Digital innovative education emerging from the all-encompassing digital transition of our age can, on the one hand, support open, transparent and flexible research and schooling. On the other hand, however, it also brings many drawbacks, such as challenging the interdependency of both amongst students and/or within the student-teacher relationship.

How should we shape the digital transformation to secure it serves everyone in the educational system and “post-fact” society at large?

- **SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH FOR EUROPEAN DECISION-MAKING**

The challenges of the 21st century affect the whole planet, having an impact also in the countries of the Danube Region. Universities and their research centres constitute an essential component in providing evidence-based solutions to address challenges such as climate change, sustainability, globalization, migration or demographic shifts.

However, to what extent is this research used in decision-making at the national and European levels? How is it possible to enhance the role of science in the decision-making processes? Finally, as Anglo-Saxon scientific activity and its results remain the predominant source for policy-making processes in the European Union, how can the scientific voices from other parts of Europe be strengthened?

- **EMPLOYABILITY OF STUDENTS AND EARLY-STAGE RESEARCHERS**

With the advancement of European integration, the conditions for employability of students and university graduates are constantly changing in a manner that rather negatively influences both the institutions of higher education and the labour market in the Danube Region. While the European Union is moving towards instituting the so-called European Education Area building on the well-established Europe-wide recognition system (Bologna Process), the free movement of talents also has to a certain extent facilitated undesirable developments such as brain drain, underemployment or lack of human capital in underdeveloped regions.

What instruments should be used to reverse these side-effects of integration efforts? Is there a need for institutional reform to create better employment prospects for migrating university-educated workers?