



The European University of Cities in Post-Industrial Transition

MISSION STATEMENT

We are **UNIC**, an established European Alliance of ten universities based in cities in post-industrial transition with a mission to further *boost development of knowledge and co-creation through collaboration, innovation and inclusion for societal impact and improvement.*

✓ Universidad de Deusto	University of Deusto	Bilbao	Spain
✓ Ruhr-Universität Bochum	Ruhr University Bochum	Bochum	Germany
✓ Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh	University College Cork	Cork	Ireland
✓ Koç Üniversitesi	Koç University	Istanbul	Turkey
✓ Université de Liège	University of Liège	Liège	Belgium
✓ Uniwersytet Łódzki	University of Lodz	Łódź	Poland
✓ Malmö universitet	Malmö University	Malmö	Sweden
✓ Oulun yliopisto	University of Oulu	Oulu	Finland
✓ Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam	Erasmus University Rotterdam	Rotterdam	The Netherlands
✓ Sveučilište u Zagrebu	University of Zagreb	Zagreb	Croatia

As UNIC, we are connected by shared identity, vision and strategy. All ten universities operate in cities in post-industrial transition; our staff, researchers and students play a key role in the changing environment.

We are connected by a commitment to foster transformative modes of teaching, research and learning that respond to the challenges faced by our cities. Increasingly superdiverse populations requires attention to inclusion and accessibility across this work.

Together, we strive to promote common European values and strengthen European identity while working on institutional transformation of European higher education institutions.

Our goals include: (i) contributing to an inclusive global learning society with a readiness to act upon change and societal challenges, placing inclusion and mobility at the core of a new European University and developing models of best practice for teaching and learning in superdiverse settings; (ii) equipping the next generation of global citizens with the 21st century skills and knowledge to address the challenges of superdiverse societies; (iii) preparing students with a readiness to act when facing the demands of changing urban contexts in Europe and beyond, through the practice of engaged learning and engaged research; (iv) developing institutional culture, engagement instruments and academic governance within our Alliance.

UNIC joint long-term vision

Europe and the world are at a significant turning point, confronted with serious challenges. Digital transformation, security threats and major political developments will be among major drivers of change in coming years. Universities within UNIC are faced with the pressure to respond to challenges of growing complexity. Against this backdrop, UNIC aims to become a self-sustaining university within the next decade – characterised both by deeply inter-connected services across the alliance as well as by locally-embedded individual partners.

UNIC students and university staff, including teachers, researchers and professional staff, will enjoy a truly **European learning, teaching, research and working experience without administrative hurdles**. We will take inclusion to the next level, using our current expertise in superdiversity to broaden educational opportunities for non-traditional students, including members of new migrant communities and people living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. We will engage students in real-world urban challenges with our city partners through initiatives such

as City Labs, bringing **‘science to the city’** and contributing to the resilience and renaissance of Europe’s post-industrial urban centres. Our students and staff will study, teach and work throughout Europe, becoming change agents who will contribute to the ongoing transformation of our cities, ultimately building out a future for Europe.

In the coming decade, UNIC will be fully established as **a leader in regional engagement and a true partner for the city**, naturally involved in municipal activity. As an active research hub, UNIC will deliver innovation through inter-disciplinary research practice. A mutually co-operative relationship between the city and the UNIC alliance will allow for research to easily engage societal partners, and in turn for city partners to solve problems through university expertise.

United as a well-established European Alliance of ten universities, we possess a strong foundation to achieve these ambitions together.

UNIC identity

Unique qualities of the UNIC alliance include the geographical spread of locations across Europe, our shared post-industrial city history, our collaborative experience and the superdiverse nature of our staff and students. As an alliance we are characterised by:

- Being one University and one Community, situated in ten distinct cities in post-industrial transition.
- Being committed to academic excellence and our shared ambition to create societal impact.
- Celebrating the superdiversity of our universities, cities, and citizens to ensure accessibility, equity and inclusion for all.
- Exploring and creating the most sustainable and innovative

pathways to boost European student mobility.

- Working hand-in-hand with city institutions to develop student skills in change-making.
- Fostering transformative modes of teaching, research, and learning that respond to challenges of post-industrial cities.
- Learning from each other, working together and establishing best practice for the European Universities of the future.

UNIC fundamental purpose

Our aim is to empower students to shape Europe’s future. We believe that universities in cities in post-industrial transition are uniquely positioned to deal with Europe’s challenges and opportunities, as innovative skills and scientific expertise are in high demand.

We know from experience that working together on basis of our shared UNIC identity provides an exciting opportunity not only to learn from each other but also to shape new structures and models of practice, tailored to the needs of our students, staff, cities, civil society and urban companies. The UNIC consortium is paving the way towards an open, systemic and self-sustaining ‘European University’.

UNIC’s purpose is to unlock a truly European experience for a new generation of students who will further advance the post-industrial

transition of our cities. UNIC is strategically positioned to advance European values in some of Europe’s most rapidly changing areas and universities. This includes contributing to equality through integration of migrant people, advancing local arts and culture, increasing the engagement of students and young academics, and providing excellent higher education, embedded in post-industrial settings that are often marked by socio-economic inequality and youth unemployment. Human dignity, freedom and intellectual expression are all treated as a priority throughout our activity.

Since UNIC is a firm partnership / symbiotic relationship between universities and cities, any student of UNIC benefits not only from being a student of a pan-European university, but also from being taught to realise social responsibility and commitment to the flourishing of society.

UNIC ambitions

1. Co-creating a European collaborative structure for UNIC

Our ambition is for UNIC to become one ecosystem. The UNIC institution-building process is carried out by students and staff who overcome obstacles to shared activity and take new opportunities for collaboration in research, learning and teaching, university-wide policies, and administrative tasks. At all stages, our ambition is to increase the engagement of our community and city stakeholders for knowledge exchange and co-creation.

2. Enabling innovative mobility forms within UNIC to study, train, teach, do research, and share services

Our ambition is for students and university staff to be able to explore seamlessly within the UNIC alliance. We tailor mobility (physical, virtual and blended) to meet the disparate needs of superdiverse populations, integrating innovative forms such as modular collaboration, individual exchange, degree programmes, summer schools, and internships. We will provide language courses to continue our emphasis on language skills for students and staff to expand their mobility options. We’ll aim to continuously open European mobility for an ever-broader and more diverse sector of the university community.

3. Ensuring social inclusion in university life as well as in the broader context of superdiverse cities in post-industrial transition

Superdiversity is a great asset in today’s world, but it is only a first step towards inclusion. Fair inclusion means making everyone feel welcome and appreciated. It means understanding differences and using them to everyone’s advantage. UNIC advances inclusion even further by pooling expertise in our universities in this area to adopt groundbreaking best practice. This involves developing community engagement with superdiversity at its heart, optimising institutional equality and diversity practices, and developing research excellence in diversity-related fields such as inclusion, social cohesion, social justice, and equality.

4. Contributing to the urban resilience of post-industrial cities by providing excellent education and research with a clear ambition to achieve societal impact

Within UNIC we have been working together to impact post-industrial transitions by developing a core methodology for university-wide education and research. We consider education and research as co-creative academic processes, bringing students and researchers to the city while bringing societal challenges and stakeholders to our universities.

UNIC approach

At UNIC, we consider **students as our partners**, co-producers of knowledge, lifelong learners, change agents, and active global citizens. This is reflected at our **UNIC Governance Structure**, which integrates the fundamental involvement of students.

At UNIC, **we are an essential part of our cities and communities**, engaging with them to promote education, research and innovation that can have an impact on the lives of citizens. This holistic approach involves local people, NGOs, municipalities and universities jointly working on societal improvement.

At UNIC, we work in **collaboration** with, academics and professional staff across the ten universities. We build institutional convergence by taking a creative and entrepreneurial approach to negotiating practical and administrative variations.

At UNIC, we take a customised approach per partner, as we acknowledge that there is no ‘one size fits all’ model. We have learned to harness the strengths and resources of individual cities and universities for shared common good. Co-creation at varying paces and levels allows for success across partners.

At UNIC, we combine the best of our partners’ existing expertise with newly emerging ambitions and dynamics. This is reflected in a new **matrix design** to guide us, featuring our focus areas (education innovation, societal/city engagement, university facility building, research & education community building) as pillars interwoven by cross-cutting Thematic Lines (Superdiversity; Sustainability and Green Cities;

Urban Resilience and Smart Cities; Justice, Security and Institutions; Entrepreneurial Learning for Innovation; Health and Wellbeing; Arts, Culture and Creativity).

At UNIC, we bring that matrix to life through **our innovative methodologies, including varied mobility options, challenge-based learning, knowledge exchange and engaged research practice**.

At UNIC, we allow space for experimentation and development in our **UNIC centres together forming the ‘UNIC Campus’**:

- **UNIC Teaching and Learning Centre**, a space to develop new ways of innovative learning and teaching.
- **UNIC Centre for City Futures**, a structure to develop models of practice for city engagement.
- **UNIC Capacity Building Centre**, facilitating different professional communities within ten universities to bound their forces for the development of UNIC.

Finally, the UNIC approach establishes models of practice that are open for use by other European Alliances to promote mobility, inclusion and societal impact. **This openness to mutually enriching cooperation with other Alliances enables us to discover together the best suitable paths for development of our common European Education and Research Areas.**

