



The European University of Cities in Post-Industrial Transitions

UNIC CENTRE FOR CITY FUTURES

Building on UNIC mission

We are UNIC, an established European Alliance of ten universities based in cities in post-industrial transitions 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 Łódź	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

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Engagement infrastructure — Integral approach on city-engaged learning and research

Engaged research is an overarching term that describes a wide range of comprehensive research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaborative engagement ‘with’ and ‘within’ society. Fundamentally committed to academic freedom and the public good, engaged research aims to improve, understand, or investigate issues of public interest where societal partners are active collaborative participants in the research process. It nurtures democratic competencies through participation—from defining research need, to the co-creation of knowledge and equitable and reciprocal knowledge translation to and with society. Committed to sustainability, and inherently transdisciplinary, it explicitly builds awareness of the interconnectedness of our social-ecological systems. Imbued with different knowledge traditions (expertise, practice, experience and wisdom), it is manifestly impactful research that has an emancipatory and transformative social justice orientation—consistently pursuing intersectional understanding towards greater social solidarity, diversity, inclusion and equity.

The UNIC Management Board hereby formally establishes the UNIC Centre for City Futures, **aiming to engage with cities, communities and stakeholders to accomplish transformative innovation and societal impact.** UNIC Centre for City Futures is a methodological approach for UNIC as a European centre of excellence on city engagement. The UNIC Center for City Futures operates as part of UNIC and is co-owned by our cities. The Centre enables UNIC to become a leading role model in Europe on how universities can contribute to post-industrial transitions in cities.

The UNIC Centre for City Futures integrates all four missions of higher education institutions: education, research and innovation and service to society. It develops structural models of practice for implementing and achieving systemic and sustainable cooperation with our cities. For this, the UNIC Centre for City Futures **adopts a quintuple helix knowledge and innovation approach to integrate the complementary capacities of UNIC cities, societies, and citizens in and for city-engaged learning and research.** In general, quintuple helix is applied to the quality of democracy, including innovation systems, regional ecosystems, smart specialization and living labs, and sustainable development. The quintuple helix fosters the collective interaction and exchange of knowledge by means of five helices: education system, economic system, natural environment, civil society, and the political system. Respectively, each of the five helices has an asset at its disposal, with a societal and scientific relevance, i.e., human capital, economic capital, natural capital, social capital and capital of information, and political capital and legal capital, leveraging our joint capacity to contribute to post-industrial transitions.

The UNIC Centre for City Futures will be developed to an attractive **“one-stop-shop” infrastructure and service provider that facilitates collaboration and co-creation between various actors, turning the entire city into a living laboratory.** It brings learning and research to the cities and communities, and the needs of cities and communities into learning and research. It facilitates our universities’ engagement processes and develops engagement initiatives. It creates pathways for our cities, municipalities, communities, citizens, NGOs and private businesses, students, teachers, researchers, and academic professionals to work together to collectively identify societal challenges and opportunities, and to seek solutions to these by exchange of theoretical knowledge, methodologies and practical experiences.

Roles and responsibilities

To reach these objectives, the UNIC Centre for City Futures provides the **engagement infrastructure of UNIC.** The Centre provides joint infrastructure for both learning and research and brings these domains together via societal engagement. As part of its Open Discovery Process the UNIC Centre for City Futures systematically harvests societal challenges and opportunities with our cities, to frame engaged learning and research. The Centre increases transdisciplinary collaboration and engagement around city-needs based challenges and opportunities, in partnership with the UNIC Thematic Lines. To respond to the cities’ challenges and opportunities, the UNIC Centre for City Futures runs the UNIC CityLabs as a change laboratory, drives productive interactions, and facilitates co-creation for transformative innovation. The Superdiversity Community, on its behalf, fosters the city-engaged learning and research environment by building inclusive universities in the context of superdiverse cities.

With its interlinked capacities, UNIC Centre for City Futures will work on an **integrated approach towards urban resilience.** Whereas resilience refers to society’s ability to rapidly respond to and recover from disruptions through improved empowerment, engagement, adaptation, innovation, and learning, working on resilience may be key to the vitality of our regions and societal well-being.

Recognising the UNIC Mission, definition of engaged research, integral approach for city-engaged learning and research, and the aligned roles and responsibilities, the UNIC Management Board formally establishes the UNIC Centre for City Futures.

27th January 2023