

## UNESCO National Commission and UNESCO Chair Consultation Report Form<sup>1</sup>

Under the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference ([WHEC2022](#))

[Section for Higher Education](#) | Division for Education 2030

### Basic information

<b>Date of consultation</b>	08/03/2022			
<b>Location of consultation</b>	Online			
<b>Partner institutions</b> (higher education institutions, other organisations – include webpage if available)	UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies for Open Educational Resources and Open Learning - <a href="https://unesco.ijs.si/">https://unesco.ijs.si/</a>			
<b>Name and email address of key contact person</b>	Ms Barbara Urbanija, Office of the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO <a href="mailto:Barbara.urbanija@gov.si">Barbara.urbanija@gov.si</a>			
<b>Complete name, title, and affiliation of moderator(s)</b>	mag. Mitja Jermol, UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies for Open Educational Resources and Open Learning			
<b>Language of consultation</b>	Slovenian			
<b>Time spent in consultation (minutes)</b>	90 minutes			
<b>Number of participants</b>	18			
<b>Participants profiles</b> (please, briefly describe the composition of the group)	Participation consisted of rectors and deans from universities, faculties and HE institutions as well as leaders from the rectors' conference and the national student organization.			
<b>Countries represented by participants</b>	Slovenia			
<b>Stakeholder groups</b> (please mark with an "x" as appropriate)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professors/ Researchers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students/Youth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Higher education managers/authorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Private sector
	<input type="checkbox"/> NGOs/civil society	<input type="checkbox"/> International organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy makers/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Others (please, specify): Chamber of Commerce

<sup>1</sup> This template includes some elements used by the consultation developed by the [Futures of Education](#) initiative.

## Which theme did you choose for this consultation?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 1: Impact of COVID-19 on higher education | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 7: Financing higher education                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 2: Higher education and the SDGs          | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 8: Data and knowledge production                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 3: Inclusion in higher education          | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 9: International cooperation to enhance synergies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 4: Quality and relevance of programmes    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theme 10: The futures of higher education    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 5: Academic mobility in higher education  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please, specify):                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 6: Higher education governance            |  |

## Synthesis of contributions

Kindly provide a summary, synthesising and reflecting the ideas provided by all participants. There is no need to identify participants. Consultation reports should not exceed 1,200 words, including the responses to the three questions outlined below (consider a balance of approximately 400 words per response). If necessary, add attachments. Remember that question 1 is general, but questions 2 and 3 should refer to the specific theme you have chosen (see list in Annex 1).

**Question 1:** *What should be the present and future role of higher education to favour the wellbeing of humans and sustainability of societies?*

- **Co-creation of policies for state and society:** universities, as providers of higher education, shall be integrated into society as a whole and into its functioning. In particular, they should be involved in the formulation of development strategies for the progress and prosperity of the country and be one of the main partners in shaping the green/sustainable transformation and digitization of society. To combat the increasing polarisation of our society and distrust of democratic institutions, everyone, including university staff and students, should become more actively involved in their local community and in promoting social inclusion and mobility. In addition, students should be recognised as active co-creators of modern society.
- **Cooperation:** higher education institutions must have strong infrastructural and human resource linkages to respond to society's needs for sustainable progress and other socioeconomic challenges.
- **Ecosystem:** higher education must foster the creation, inclusion, and functioning of a broader national ecosystem for the progress of society, an ecosystem in which education, science, and research are open to overlap or interdisciplinary connections with business, the social sciences, and the arts. It is important to introduce changes in such an ecosystem that follow current economic and environmental trends and enable higher education to provide, as a product, a highly skilled, professionally trained workforce capable of meeting the challenges of the future. Higher education institutions shall operate according to the principles of Society 5.0 (technological and humanistic progress) and be a key facilitator of social action according to these principles. They should offer high-quality, inclusive, diverse, decentralised and sustainable activities that provide long-term personal and social security and opportunities for intellectual development and creativity, i.e. the creation of goods in line with the needs of Society 5.0.
- **Internationalisation:** the internationalisation and integration of higher education should be further encouraged at both the institutional and national levels. This includes, in particular, the removal of unnecessary barriers, uniform certificates, funding for transnational programmes, intergovernmental institutions, as is the case in the EU. The EU's influence on

higher education is expected to increase as the creation of European universities is underway and lifelong learning certificates are to be unified.

- **Flexibility:** higher education should help shape the direction of the development of digital transformation in teaching, learning, research and innovation. It must be sufficiently open and able to respond effectively to change and constantly adapt its curricula to the problems of today and tomorrow (climatology, environmental sciences - interdisciplinary, social sciences/humanities - natural sciences/engineering, etc.). However, currently we see limitations in terms of legislation, structure, existing rules and authorities. Higher education must be able to change towards greater integration and integrity, transdisciplinarity, cooperation between universities and between the various social actors of the ecosystem.
- **Quality:** it is important to maintain and improve the quality of programmes, research and education. The goal is to prepare students for active citizenship and careers, enabling them to develop personally and professionally while taking care of healthy lifestyles and supporting well-being and quality of life. Quality programmes must prevent burnout and all forms of violence or exploitation, contributing to better mental and physical health for all stakeholders inside and outside the higher education system. Quality programmes should include training on sustainability, green change, and digitalization to achieve interdisciplinary knowledge, skills, and competencies. Sustainability should be embedded in curricula, pedagogy, organisational transformation, policy, and most importantly, ethos, as well as in the sustainability of education and research. Programmes must begin to address sustainability in public discourse in its broadest sense (in addition to environmental issues, economic issues, and social justice issues).

**Question 2:** What are the main **challenges/problems/gaps** in relation to “The futures of higher education” [rephrase content relative to the main theme you have selected]?

- **Lack of strategic orientations and appropriate policies and limited funding:** there is a lack of strategy and vision in the national development, including the development of research and higher education, and insufficient funding of public universities. Inadequate models and restrictions on private capital funding through e.g. tax incentives and donations.
- **Rigidity of programmes, policies, rules, organisational structures;** lack of involvement of universities in society and in the strategic governance of the country, unresponsiveness to societal needs, fear of change and new higher education institutions. The adaptation of study programmes to the rapid development of science, technology and the economic and political situation on the labour market is slow due to the mentioned factors. The challenge is to develop new methods of learning that will help to develop cognitive and critical thinking, which will be particularly important in the future. Higher education must better equip young people with the skills and knowledge they need in modern society, including for the professions of the future, by working more closely with the target environment for which it is educating graduates, through effective curriculum design, and this must be matched by the supply of study programmes and enrolment places.
- **Fragmentation and protectionism:** weak cooperation between higher education institutions, inflexibility and rigid organisation of higher education institutions. There are difficulties in introducing institutional change, staff constraints and habilitation barriers, which reduce the transferability of staff between higher education institutions within Slovenia and of foreign staff to Slovenia.
- **Weak internationalisation** at home due to poor provision of English language programmes and weak international mobility. In line with international strategic documents, higher education should strive to integrate and cooperate between various higher education programmes or fields, including the humanities and arts. The Slovenian higher education

area needs to become much more internationalised, both in terms of recruiting foreign staff and in terms of research and attracting foreign students. It is also important to create the conditions and opportunities for Slovenians, who study abroad, to return to our system and thus contribute to the enrichment and circulation of knowledge.

- **Linking formal - non-formal education:** creating a combination of knowledge (competences) that enables graduates to enter the labour market early and encourages them to pursue lifelong learning as a follow-up and deepening of their higher education skills. Greater efforts are needed to invest in the development of a modern curriculum, adequate pedagogical training of higher education teachers and the adaptation of infrastructure to the study process. The mindset that whoever learns also gets a job should be replaced by the mindset that it is necessary to acquire both formal and informal additional skills during the course of studies (many young people already today consider a diploma to be less valuable than it was 10 years ago). It is essential to include 21st century competencies in the study process - learning skills (critical thinking, collaboration, communication), literacy skills (information, media, technology literacy) and life skills (flexibility, leadership, social skills) ..
- **Digital transformation:** Higher education needs a digital transformation, upgrading existing teacher competences, integrating digitalisation into programmes, the education process and also into higher education governance. Providing as many different open source and free systems as possible will be crucial to ensure that all students have the same conditions to acquire knowledge. Given the existing social differences and the growth of generations, it is necessary to provide sufficient funds so that all students can be equally included.
- **Optimizing the system and not adapting the process to the individual (Society 5.0)** the need for a reform of higher education that focuses on the student, his/her abilities, goals and aspirations through a green and resilient transition to Society 5.0 (a system that is responsive to the needs of the environment and produces a highly skilled workforce for the professions of the future). It is important to follow the student cycle, which cannot be limited to people up to the age of 30, but is the time from entry into higher education to the end of their career.

**Question 3:** What needs to *change* or be *created* to face these challenges *within* and/or *outside* of higher education institutions?

- **Open, transparent, accessible, inclusive, integrated ecosystem** - linking all stakeholders in a comprehensive ecosystem of research, education, innovation, entrepreneurship, culture. Awareness of the value and relevance of higher education for society and its potential for social and economic innovation should be promoted by integrating the arts and humanities. The continuous development of an ecosystem which, in addition to new knowledge and skills and the needs of the environment, creates and takes into account criticism and offers alternative solutions It is important to promote the values of sustainability and the inclusion of all social groups or their needs. It is therefore necessary to establish effective systemic arrangements for higher education and research organisations, as well as for the status of higher education teachers and researchers, as well as for
- **Embedding the values of sustainability, inclusion** - dynamically creating new and phasing out old study programmes with sufficient enrolment places according to society's needs for human resources with competences that address the green, sustainable and digital transition. Taking into account the skills needs of the labour market and restructuring the existing and future workforce to create a Society 5.0 through lifelong learning concepts.
- **Autonomy to enable adaptation and flexibility** - Ensure autonomy to facilitate and thereby accelerate the development of new study programmes, enable transformation and

encourage integration for universities and autonomous higher education institutions. This requires the preparation of appropriate strategic development plans for the country, greater societal engagement, ensuring greater flexibility and responsiveness of HEIs to the needs of society, and the establishment of systemic measures to integrate smaller campuses, universities and research organisations into the global scientific architecture. It is important to ensure employable staff, to create modern and flexible educational programmes in line with international development guidelines and the needs of the environment, and to regulate the recognition of non-formal and lifelong learning at higher education level. De-politicisation is necessary to ensure normative, institutional, academic and research integrity, to promote the systemic staffing of higher education institutions and to ensure attractive working conditions, together with a system of active international open human resources policy to attract the best international teaching and research staff.

- **Funding - public finance and private equity funding models, spatial conditions** An effective system for rewarding and promoting excellence needs to be established, providing long-term stable funding for higher education and a framework for the development of philanthropy as an important private source of funding, together with a system of tax incentives.
- **Connected and integrated** - with international institutions, non-formal education, research organisations, companies and organizations, with a comprehensive vertical of education.
- **Internationalisation and international involvement** - Increase resources and reduce barriers to the integration of universities and independent higher education institutions into the common European and global higher education area and to the internationalisation of curricula. It is necessary to establish more attractive and open ways of attracting foreign students and associates, some of whom will remain in Slovenia and contribute to the well-being of society. It is important to help those university spaces that cannot compete with world-class universities.
- **Enabling innovation and the introduction of new models of higher education** - such as transformation from a process model to a system that follows and supports the student, integration of institutions into ecosystems, new teaching models and methods, support for the changing study process with increased use of ICT and considering the environmental aspect of greening; e.g. development of a sustainable and smart lecture hall, low-carbon ethical digitalisation using intelligent equipment).

**Which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were particularly emphasised during this consultation?**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 1: No poverty                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy              | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 2: Zero hunger                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth          | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 13: Climate action                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 3: Good health and well-being   | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 9: Industry, innovation, and infrastructure | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 14: Life below water                       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 4: Quality education | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 10: Reduced inequality                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 15: Life on land                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 5: Gender equality              | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities      | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 16: Peace and justice strong institutions  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the goals      |

**You may provide additional feedback...**

*Are there any other issues that should be considered in relation to higher education challenges and options in your community, your region, the world?*

- With the change of generations, does the way education is delivered need to change, and what part does the change of roles play in this?*
- What would be the new organisational structures of universities?*
- How do existing versus new business models of universities differ - what is the impact of globalisation, brain drain and what different can Slovenia offer?*

*Is there any other comment you wish to share with UNESCO or the organisers of the WHEC2022?*

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**List of participants**

[Please, include the moderator (s)]

<b>Mr./ Mrs.</b>	<b>First name</b>	<b>Last name</b>	<b>Title/organisation</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Email address (if the participant wishes to receive information about the WHEC2022)</b>	<b>Indicate with a "NO" if the participant DOES NOT want to be publicly identified as a participant in this consultation.</b>
Mrs	Klavdija	Kutnar	Rector University of Primorska	Slovene		
Mr.	Matej	Avbelj	Rector New University	Slovene		
Mr.	Gregor	Majdič	Rector University of Ljubljana	Slovene		
Mr.	Boštjan	Golob	Rector University of Nova Gorica	Slovene		
Mrs.	Janja	Hojnik	Vice-rector University of Maribor	Slovene		
Mrs.	Nevenka	Kregar Velikonja	Dean Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Novo mesto	Slovene		
Mr.	Andrej	Lipej	Dean Faculty of Mechanical engineering, University of Novo mesto	Slovene		

Mr.	Franc	Janžekovič	General Director, Directorate of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport RS	Slovene		
Mr.	Klemen	Šubic	Head of the Sector for Quality and International Cooperation Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education	Slovene		
Mr.	Andrej	Friedl	Adviser to the General Director Slovenian Chamber of Commerce	Slovene		
Mrs.	Barbara	Toplak Perović	President Association of Independent Higher Education Institutions	Slovene		
Mr.	Omar	Smajlovič	Chairman Committee for Higher Education Student Organization Slovenia	Slovene		
Mrs.	Irena	Mlinarič-Raščan	President Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO	Slovene		
Mr.	Gašper	Hrastelj	Secretary General Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO	Slovene		
Mrs.	Barbara	Urbanija	Office of the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO	Slovene		
Mr.	Mitja	Jermol	Head	Slovene		

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Mrs	Anja	Polajnar	“Jožef Stefan” Institute	Slovene		
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