

Plenary session

At the Duisburg-Essen Aurora Biannual – 2, 3 May 2018

At the Norwich Aurora Biannual, there was a broad consensus that the Biannuals in general and the Plenary session in particular need to gain in focus and concentrate on a limited number of topics. This will allow a more in-depth discussion with more relevance for the strategic development of Aurora.

For the more advanced key priority themes: Diversity & Inclusion and Societal Impact & Relevance of Research, the Antwerp Aurora Biannual (November 29-30) seems the best occasion to discuss the strategic development of these programmes.

At the same time, external developments have called for the attention also within Aurora.

Since the speech by president Macron, September 26, 2017, on an “Initiative for Europe; A sovereign, united, democratic Europe”, his call for more intense and high quality inter-university cooperation in Europe has gained momentum. The subject has been addressed at the European Summit of Gothenburg (November 17th, 2017) and at the European Council meeting for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (February 15th, 2018). The European Commission is actively preparing a new initiative – first modestly within the current Erasmus+ programme and then more extensively in the successor programme to Erasmus+.

This development needs to be carefully considered by Aurora with the question to what extent the development of Aurora as a network needs to be adapted to it and to the expected responses by universities and inter-university networks in Europe.

Thus, the Plenary session at the Duisburg-Essen Aurora Biannual will predominantly focus on the external developments and Aurora’s reaction to them.

In the second part of the Plenary session, we will present and discuss one specific Aurora project: *SDG Analysis: Bibliometrics of Relevance*. This project has been making significant progress and has strategically important results to show. This second part of the plenary will focus on the potential use of this *SDG Analysis* to further the common vision and mission of Aurora.

Part 1: Strategic focus on external developments

The plenary session in Essen on May 3rd, 14.00 – 15.30, will have a major focus on the external developments and the impact that these should or should not have on Aurora.

To focus the discussion, three alternative scenarios are presented. In the discussion, alternative scenarios or mixtures may present themselves. The three scenarios serve to trigger the discussion, not to harness it.

- a) What would be needed if Aurora aspires to be one of these 20 European Universities Networks – with a strong focus on international mobility and joint degrees?
- b) What would be needed if Aurora aspires to be as visible and as strong as these European University Networks, but pursuing its own strategy focused on *) matching academic excellence with societal relevance, *) learning from and with each other to best serve our regional communities, and *) seeing international academic collaboration as an interesting side catch of the Network?
- c) What would our position be if we continue our current speed of development in the Key Priorities, with the projects that are in the course of being developed and started?

To kick-off this strategic discussion, we have invited Thomas Jørgensen from the EUA to give us an overview of the external developments and to give us his thoughts on the various scenarios for Aurora in the perspective of these external developments. The required resources at each of the Aurora universities to successfully implement any of these strategies is of course a crucial part of the discussion.

Part 2: Strategic use of SDG Analysis

Maurice Vanderfeesten from the University Library of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam will present a bibliometric analysis of output, quality and impact of the research by Aurora universities in the respective Sustainable Development Goals.

To be followed by a discussion between the Aurora presidents and other participants on the possibility and potential to use the SDGs as a framework to present (externally) and monitor (internally) academic research in the Aurora universities.

Time schedule of the Plenary session

14.00 – 15.30		
Duisburg-Essen Aurora Biannual – Plenary session		
Glaspavillon		
14.00 – 14.05	Welcome and introduction to the session	David Richardson, Aurora chair
14.05 – 14.25	Introduction to external developments and possible Aurora responses	Thomas Jørgensen
14.25 – 15.00	Discussion	
15.00 – 15.15	Presentation of SDG analysis	Maurice Vanderfeesten, VU Library
15.15 – 15.30	Discussion	

About Thomas Jørgensen

Thomas Ekman Jørgensen is Senior Policy Coordinator at EUA. His responsibilities include ensuring coherent policies for universities as well as overall policy development and managing cross-cutting issues with policy relevance.

Dr Jørgensen worked with EUA as Head of the Council for Doctoral Education for a number of years. He studied History and German Studies at the University of Copenhagen and the Free University Berlin. He received his PhD in History and Civilisation from the European University Institute in Florence in 2004 and worked as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Copenhagen and at the Université Libre de Bruxelles before coming to EUA. As a historian, he has worked on students and left-wing movements around 1968. He has also published on youth movements during World War I.

