



European  
University for  
Well-Being

## Mission Statement



**University of Birmingham (United Kingdom)**

**Università degli Studi di Firenze (Italy)**

**Universität zu Köln (Germany)**

**Universiteit Leiden (The Netherlands)**

**Linnéuniversitetet (Sweden)**

**Université de Nantes (France)**

**Semmelweis Egyetem (Hungary)**

# Vision and Mission

## Ambition

### Well-Being in Context

In October 2019, the Council of the European Union outlined a series of recommendations for the European Commission and the Member States. These acknowledge that “wellbeing is a principal aim of the European Union”, underline that well-being includes “people, societies and the planet” and promote a “horizontal approach based on cross-sectoral collaboration”<sup>i</sup>. They build on a growing number of policy papers by the UN, OECD, EU and individual countries<sup>ii</sup>.

These recommendations, all stressing the crucial importance of well-being, underlie our decision to create EUniWell, the European University for well-being<sup>iii</sup>.

Well-being is multidimensional. It ranges from individual quality of life to social cohesion and environmental balance at a planetary level. It implies an understanding of the relations between these dimensions and the capacity to boost their synergies. It implies a “move beyond GDP” towards new ways of measuring progress that “put well-being at the centre of policy”<sup>iv</sup>. As the Council of the European Union underlines, “[w]ellbeing is ... at the heart of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to which all Member States are committed”<sup>v</sup>.

This emphasis on well-being as “systemic” and “sustainable” aims to answer a paradox. Today’s Europeans are members of the healthiest, wealthiest and most peaceful generation ever to have lived. Yet, the long-term well-being of our youth is endangered by challenges such as climate change, new diseases, rising populism, and a growing divide between different groups in society<sup>vi</sup>. Solving this paradox will require a holistic approach in which institutions of higher education, research and innovation have a leading role to play.

### Well-Being in Universities

Universities, like all institutions, are part of the broader social tissue. Their well-being depends on internal cohesion, external environment, and the right degree of permeability between the two. Each university, each educational programme, and each individual can increase their individual well-being. However, their well-being does not exist in isolation: it depends on the interactions within themselves, and with the outside world. As both the outer world and the inner institutional reality evolve, the balance constantly needs to be adjusted.

Within a university, well-being thus necessarily concerns all actors. It also concerns all fields from health, education, citizenship, rights and responsibilities to economics, culture, environment and language. It further considers how our societies are influenced by the digital transformation. It requires enhancing skills such as critical thinking, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, interdisciplinarity and social responsibility and shifting to a model whereby education is a lifelong experience. Just as importantly, it implies breaking down boundaries within our institutions, between our institutions and beyond them.

This is key, because universities, like the rest of our world, must change. We must accept that each of our actions has a wide-ranging impact that is never univocally positive or negative. Increasing individual well-being (for example by training future leaders) does not necessarily improve societal well-being (as inequality may rise), just as increasing societal well-being has had a dramatic impact on environmental well-being.

To become aware of how improvements within an institution can contribute to the common good outside the institution thus requires a pluri-institutional approach in the same way as tackling global challenges requires a pluri-disciplinary approach.

## **EUniWell: European University for Well-Being**

EUniWell unites seven universities from seven European regions in a cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary, knowledge-based perspective. Working in partnership with societal stakeholders and across the research-innovation-education nexus, we aim to generate new knowledge, play a critical, intermediary role in delivering research-based policy to inform decision-making, underpin education, training and skills development and have a measurable impact on European citizens' well-being and quality of life.

It is by bringing together our different expertises, perspectives, systems/structures and local contexts that we can identify synergies, challenge our way of teaching and doing research, and develop new perspectives that in turn enable a transformation of each of our institutions.

We have defined a core mission to understand, improve, measure, and rebalance the well-being of individuals, our own community, and society as a whole and formulated our values – democratic, inclusive, diverse, research- and challenge-based, inter- und transdisciplinary, entrepreneurial, and co-creational. We fully align with the European values and will foster European identity.

Our initial focus will be on four priority arenas where we are world leaders in both research and education, where the strengths and synergies of our universities are strongest, and where we can have the greatest impact: well-being and health; individual and social well-being; environment, urbanity

and well-being; and teacher education<sup>vii</sup>. These are closely aligned to 4 key Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)<sup>viii</sup>: SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being); SDG 4 (Quality Education); SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities); SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and to two transversal SDGs: SDG 5 (Gender Equality) ; SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality).

In the short-term, students will be able to follow any course on any EUniWell campus, academic staff will teach on different campuses and be part of trans-institutional research groups, and administrative staff will be able to spend periods working on any of our campuses. Experiences of all these groups will be enriched by new forms of digital, blended and physical interaction and co-creation with a diverse range of societal stakeholders.

Over the next ten years, this will progressively lead to a common curriculum marked by cutting-edge research- and challenged-based education and training, and a common identity across our seven universities and communities.

In the long-term, EUniWell will create a seamless, state-of-the-art educational environment in which our boundaries will dissolve as we become a multi-campus European University strongly intertwined with its local, regional, and global contexts.

## Vision and Mission

Together we will help create a world in which individual, societal, and environmental well-being are in synergy, in which we flourish and prosper together.

We will become a multi-campus European University that:

1. empowers our cutting-edge research, education and training and interacts ever more closely with society to enhance global and regional well-being in social, environmental, economic, and cultural terms;
2. promotes internal well-being for each student and member of staff, for each educational programme, for each disciplinary field and department, for each campus and for the university as a whole;
3. multiplies synergies by breaking down boundaries, both internal and external, increasing the permeability of our structures, and shifting to more inclusive and holistic ways of driving change by evaluating what we do and how we do it.

Our first mission covers the traditional missions of universities – teaching, research, and societal impact – but places them under the overarching framework of global well-being. It requires us to explicitly analyse and measure the multi-level impact of each action.

Our second mission is a mirror of the first. It underlines the importance of ensuring that the way we work is aligned with our vision, that the vision we carry is also one we live on a daily basis.

Fulfilling these two missions implies a change of frameworks, cultures and mind-sets. To achieve this, our third mission focuses on the way we interact both internally and externally.

Coming together as one European University gives us the power to truly transform our approaches and the impact we can have within our institutions, the European Higher Education Area and society at large. Coming together makes it possible to question the way we work and the boundaries that separate us, to address the growing global divides and ensure that the world not only survives but thrives. Coming together we can transform faster and better to support radical change, and to unite our mutual strengths. Coming together is synonymous with well-being.

## Addressing Global Challenges

### Aligning Research and Education with Global Challenges

Coming together as a European University enlarges our scope and increases our critical mass thus enabling both deeper specialisation and more transversal approaches. More importantly, it makes it possible to compare different models and identify ways of increasing our impact.

This is at the heart of EUniWell's ambition and perfectly reflects a shared strategic direction which our seven universities have taken over the last ten years. In this period, we have shifted our research focus by increasingly engaging in topics directly relevant to the United Nations' SDGs. This shift can be remarkably demonstrated by the rising percentage of publications on SDG topics rising from an average of just over 20% to 30% within this time frame.

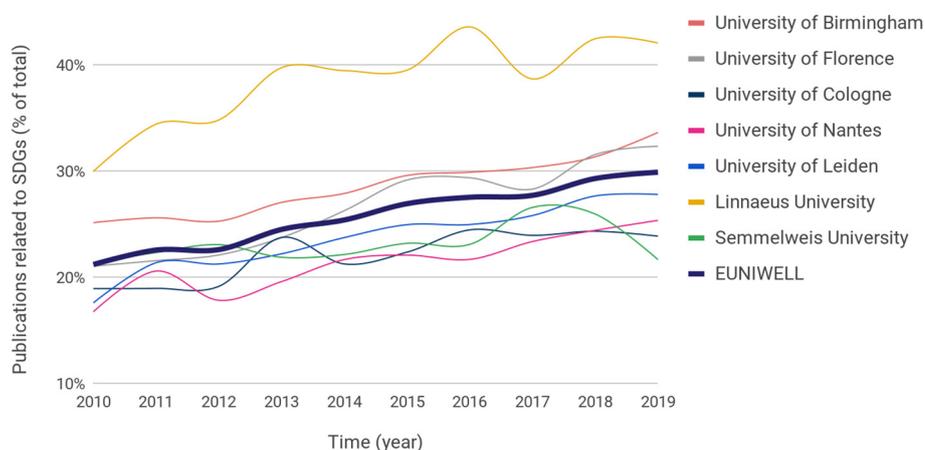


Fig. 1: Evolution of the percentage of publications identified as dealing with SDGs in the total productions of each university in the last decade <sup>ix</sup>.

As a European University, we will build on this expertise to ensure that the percentage of publications concerning SDGs reaches 40%, ensuring both maximal social impact on our priority fields, whilst continuing to nurture our expertise in fundamental research, without which we could not develop cutting-edge new approaches.

Perhaps even more significantly, this focus on global challenges is also reflected in our educational programmes, with over 700 course modules aligned with SDG priorities at the University of Birmingham alone. Based on this, we have started an in-depth review of all course modules across our seven universities to identify complementarities and place societal impact at the heart of our educational programmes.

Doing this will enable us to offer our students the possibility to build personalised trajectories around key societal challenges across our seven universities. It reflects the way well-being will transform our educational programmes.

### **Defining Four Key Priority Arenas**

To identify priorities we launched a bottom-up approach with a series of design challenge events and workshops amongst our researchers that identified four key arenas, closely linked to SDGs, in which we have strong expertise and where we feel that increasing our collaborations makes sense: well-being and health (linked to SDG 3, Good Health and Well-Being); individual and social well-being (linked to SDG 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions); environment, urbanity and well-being (linked to SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities); and teacher education (linked to SDG 4, Quality Education). We furthermore took into account two transversal SDGs that reinforce all four arenas: SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Finally, we mapped our scientific production over the last 10 years according to SDGs.

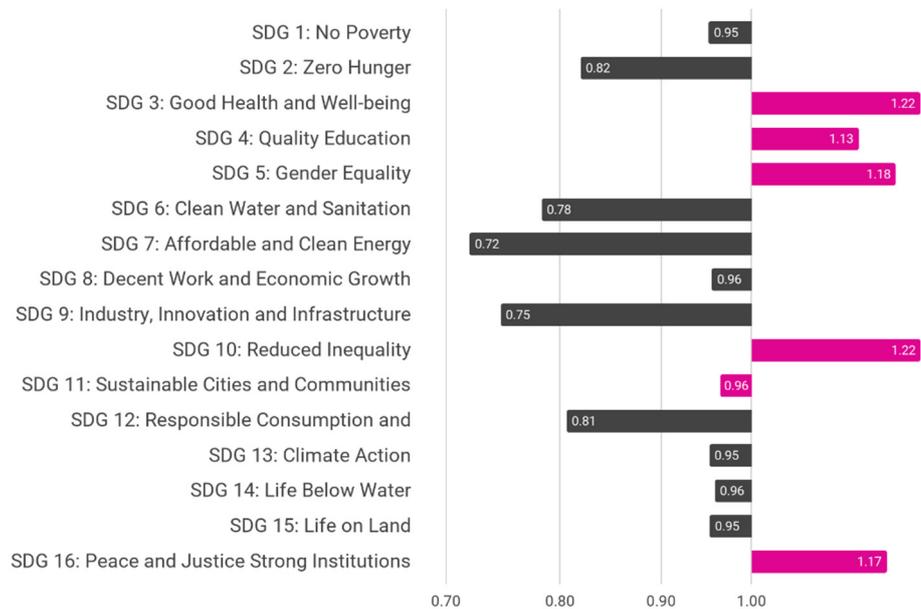


Fig. 2. SDGs Specialisation Index of EUniWell, compared to total production of the EU28. Data from Scopus (2010-2019). EUniWell is specialised in areas for which the index is above 1. For example, the share of articles that concern SDG10 is 1.22 times higher within EUniWell than within the EU28 as a whole. The SDGs that correspond to our 4 priority arenas as well as transversal SDGs are highlighted in pink<sup>x</sup>.

As the graph above shows, our areas of specialisation are closely aligned with our four arenas. As our detailed analysis in the annex shows, each of these arenas is deeply multidisciplinary with dozens of disciplinary fields contributing to our expertise and many, such as computer science (and in particular artificial intelligence), present across all four arenas.

## Empowering Diversity

### Building on Different Environments

Well-being is closely linked to both the natural and socio-economic environment. Being situated in the heart of major post-industrial cities with large immigrant populations such as Birmingham or Köln changes both the student profile and the social expectations when compared to semi-rural settings like Växjö and Kalmar or a Renaissance city such as Firenze. An ocean port like Nantes does not have the same feeling as a Central European city like Budapest. A university like Leiden, which is located in two cities with significantly different identities, again implies a unique dynamic.

This is why EUniWell includes universities situated in a wide variety of environments, which cater to students from different socio-economic and

cultural backgrounds. It is why all our city councils are partners of EUniWell. Enabling students and staff and members of our wider environment to discover and understand different realities and working together to identify both commonalities and specificities is key to our ambition.

## **Spanning the Centuries**

Well-being is deeply cultural. Each university was born under different circumstances and for different purposes, and these conditions continue to mould the universities today.

Our oldest university was founded in 1321 and a further EUniWell university was founded in every subsequent century (other than the 1600s and 1800s) up until 2010, when our youngest member was founded. EUniWell thus spans 700 years and combines the rich and varied histories of our universities, with their different institutional legacies, traditions, and cultural settings.

These different histories give us an understanding of how tradition and innovation can complement each other.

## **Aligning Institutional Missions under a Shared Vision**

EUniWell includes classical comprehensive research-intensive universities, practice-oriented universities like Linnéuniversitetet and specialised universities like Semmelweis Egyetem. This brings strong added-value: comprehensive members can draw on the wide range of disciplines that concern well-being; specialist members can provide focus, scale and expertise on specific aspects in, for example, health; practice-oriented members can contribute effective routes for knowledge transfer and the preparation of students for employment, e.g. by developing entrepreneurial skills.

The diversity of our profiles is also well reflected in our civic collaborations with a great variety of societal actors, including schools, and the private sector. This rich and diverse dynamic of collaborations gives us an inspiring basis for the development of new forms of interaction and co-creation with society at large.

As a result, each of our universities performs well according to different indicators, which range from classical bibliographic tools to employability or innovations indexes, and measures of social impact and teaching quality.

The diversity and complementarity of our environments, cultures, and profiles will multiply the value of mobility for our students. It will give them much greater choice and a much wider range of experiences. It will enable them to live a truly European university experience with the security that their choices in one campus will be automatically validated throughout the seven campuses.

## Opening Boundaries

### Within Universities and across Disciplinary Fields

There is a wide consensus within academia that a meaningful and sustainable change in culture through a holistic and system-thinking approach is much needed to ensure well-being of staff and students<sup>xi</sup>. Each of our universities contains a multitude of boundaries related to organisational and socio-cultural realities. These boundaries have a massive impact on the likelihood of students to go abroad, the success of female academics, or the graduation rates of minorities. They limit entrepreneurship and social engagement because these are perceived differently from department to department, due to organisational constraints and cultural preconceptions, which can lead to invisible barriers to participation. For example, white men in STEM disciplines are more likely to engage in entrepreneurship programmes designed to create companies.

Our diversity in internal structures provides EUniWell with a privileged setting to reflect on possible new frameworks, new ways of working, of addressing cultural issues relating to diversity and inclusion<sup>xii</sup>, open science<sup>xiii</sup>, reward systems and talent development<sup>xiv</sup>. We will start with pilot formats but with a system-level approach and a view to scaling up.

Similarly, the way disciplinary fields are structured and interdisciplinarity is promoted is different in each of our institutions, just as is the way research feeds teaching and the weight that is afforded to fundamental and applied approaches.

By coming together as EUniWell, we can learn from each other and question boundaries that exist without us even being aware of them.

### Between Universities

EUniWell universities currently operate in very different national and regional contexts. In some of these, the higher education systems are weakly stratified; in others, they are more highly segregated. However, our countries are all impacted by increased competition, fuelled by international rankings, which are increasing boundaries between universities.

By creating EUniWell, our seven universities are taking a stand against this. We aim to create a new type of university that brings together diverse universities for the benefit of society. Our universities have been chosen because of their differences and because they bridge so many different boundaries: *in varietate concordia*.

By working together, we expect to complement existing metrics applied to universities, and to elaborate new ones that are more aligned with our mission to increase well-being<sup>xv</sup>. We expect EUniWell to be an important player in promoting a more equal higher education system, one in which social impact, to take one example, is measured not only by the capacity to “market” knowledge through patents or start-ups but according to students’ competences, their educational processes and their understanding of the rights/duties of citizenship, according to our capacity at setting-up joint research, design, and co-creation processes with societal actors.

The strong research-intensive component of EUniWell – albeit within different institutional settings – enables us to build on our reputation for research excellence. Integrating a broader basis, more diverse approaches and partners in our way of working will ultimately strengthen our research design, research outcomes, our degree of innovation as well as the quality of our teaching. We will thus demonstrate that diversity, inclusion, and co-creation do not come at the expense of research excellence, but actually drive and accelerate it, enable equity and enhance universal well-being.

## **Across the European Higher Education and Research Ecosystem**

Although we tend to imagine that universities in different countries are comparable in terms of their roles within national higher education and research ecosystems, this is not completely true.

To take one example, Università degli Studi di Firenze and the University of Birmingham are both comprehensive, research-intensive universities. Yet, education-wise, Università degli Studi di Firenze has a higher percentage of undergraduate students than the University of Birmingham because the Birmingham higher education ecosystem includes other universities with high proportions of undergraduate students (such as Newman University or University College Birmingham). Whereas, research-wise, Firenze hosts various national research centres of the Italian CNR (IGSG, ICCOM, IFAC, INO, OVI, IBE) which are independent from the university and do not exist in Birmingham.

This is why EUniWell includes not only universities situated in different ecosystems but also, as associated partners, National Research Organisations such as INSERM, university colleges and universities of applied sciences such as Hogeschool Leiden and technological parks, like Leiden’s BioScience park. Working with these different institutions and comparing the way our ecosystems function will help to open boundaries and identify better models of cooperation.

## Beyond Higher Education and Research

Perhaps even more interestingly, the boundaries between universities and institutions whose core mission is not in higher education and research are also far more diffuse than sometimes imagined.

Semmelweis Egyetem is not only a university specialised in Health Sciences but the leading provider of healthcare in Hungary. The various university hospitals are thus fully integrated within the university governance, unlike in universities like Köln or Nantes where they are independent institutions. This has an enormous impact not only on higher education and research but on the structure of healthcare itself.

In another priority field for EUniWell, teacher education, where we provide education and training for ca. 20,000 future teachers, Semmelweis Egyetem, Universität zu Köln, and University of Birmingham own and manage secondary schools. As such, these universities are secondary school operators and highlight teacher education as an important strategic component in all performance areas.

Working together thus necessarily implies opening our European University to institutions in other sectors such as secondary education or health. Including associate partners such as university hospitals and schools in our consortium makes it possible to co-design solutions to societal challenges and improve well-being in our communities.

This in turn gives us a unique forum to address the wider participation of universities in the regional ecosystem, which is one of the priorities of the European Commission: “In the context of smart specialisation we also need to know how HEIs can better promote knowledge dissemination and application through cooperating with regional partners, or with their most important ‘products’; students who can provide valuable human capital”.<sup>xvi</sup>

## Beyond Europe

Finally, our diversity in terms of student bodies and our strong presence across continents will help us reach a deeper understanding of well-being through different cultures not only within Europe but throughout the world.

Climate change, political and health crises, economic inequalities and population growth are global issues (as the current Corona-Virus crisis clearly demonstrates). In each case, the world’s ability to cope with these challenges is equal to that of the weakest link. Analysing them in terms of well-being requires not only a global approach but one which is based on an equitable bidirectional exchange.

EUniWell will promote a global approach in each area with a special focus on Africa, where we have a strong presence with specialised degree programmes

and study centres in most of our universities (Birmingham, Firenze, Köln, Leiden and Nantes) and where the challenges and opportunities are particularly important.

Together we aim to build more tolerant and integrated societies, to contribute to a diverse Europe and a better world.

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- <sup>i</sup> See EU Council Conclusions (24 October 2019) on “The Economy of Wellbeing”, §§2-3 (URL: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/epsco/2019/10/24/>).
  - <sup>ii</sup> See for example, the OECD Background Paper on “The Economy of Well-Being” (2019/06/21); Stiglitz et al. (2009), written for the French government, or Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law in Bhutan (Chase 2017; URL: <https://today.law.harvard.edu/feature/law-happiness-bhutan/>).
  - <sup>iii</sup> “Creating an economy of well-being is not just the mission of governments” (OECD Background Paper on “The Economy of Well-Being” [2019/06/21], p. 7).
  - <sup>iv</sup> See EU Council Conclusions on “The Economy of Wellbeing” (2019/10/24), §§1, 5. At a global level, new measures include the World Happiness Report 2019 produced by UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (URL: <https://worldhappiness.report/>), the OECD Better Life Index (URL: <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>), or the UN Human Development Report 2019 (URL: <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf>). The Global Wellness Institute (n.d.) provides a useful list (URL: <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/happiness-wellbeing-index/>).
  - <sup>v</sup> EU Council Conclusions on “The Economy of Wellbeing” (2019/10/24), §8
  - <sup>vi</sup> As the European new Green Deal and the latest UN report on SDGs underline, now is the time to act: “[T]he world is not on track for achieving most of the 169 targets that comprise the Goals. [This] raises strong concerns and sounds the alarm for the international community. Much more needs to happen – and quickly – to bring about the transformative changes that are required: impeding policies should urgently be reversed or modified, and recent advances that holistically promote the Goals should be scaled up in an accelerated fashion.” Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now. Science for Achieving Sustainable Development, p. 20 (URL: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf)); see also A European Green Deal – Striving to Be the First Climate-Neutral Continent (URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)).
  - <sup>vii</sup> These arenas include (but are not limited to) fields such as aging, cancer, infectious diseases, human rights and peace studies, climate change, urban environments and human interactions and discourses, as well as teacher education.
  - <sup>viii</sup> UN Sustainable Development Goals (URL: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>).
  - <sup>ix</sup> SIRIS Academic methodology. Publication data source Scopus. See Duran-Silva, Nicolau, Enric Fuster, Francesco Alessandro Massucci & Arnau Quinquillà (2019). A Controlled Vocabulary Defining the Semantic Perimeter of Sustainable Development Goals (Version 1.2) [Data set]. Zenodo (URL: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3567769>).

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- x The only one in which our specialisation index is below 1 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) is a SDG on which non-university actors are particularly important. However, the Universities of Firenze and Linnaeus are well above the top 7 universities in the respective countries. Compared to the leading universities in our seven countries, our specialisation index is 1.06.
  - xi Wellcome Trust (2020) What Researchers Think about the Culture They Work in. Report Summary, January 15, 2020 (URL: <https://wellcome.ac.uk/reports/what-researchers-think-about-research-culture>).
  - xii Claey's-Kulik, Anna-Lena, Thomas Ekman Jørgensen & Henriette Stöber (2019) *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions. Results from the INVITED Project*. Brussels & Geneva: European University Association (URL: [https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/web\\_diversity%20equity%20and%20inclusion%20in%20european%20higher%20education%20institutions.pdf](https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/web_diversity%20equity%20and%20inclusion%20in%20european%20higher%20education%20institutions.pdf)); Buitendijk, Simone & Stephen Curry (2019) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Universities: The Power of a Systemic Approach. *LERU Position Paper*, November 2019. LERU Publications (URL: <https://www.leru.org/publications/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-at-universities>).
  - xiii Lerouge, Inge & Ton Hol (2020) Towards a Research Integrity Culture at Universities: From Recommendations to Implementation. *LERU Advice Paper* no. 26, January 2020. LERU publications (URL: <https://www.leru.org/files/Towards-a-Research-Integrity-Culture-at-Universities-full-paper.pdf>).
  - xiv Ruimte voor leders Talent: naar een nieuwe balans in het erkennen en waarderen van wetenschappers (Room for all Talent: Working towards a New Balance in Recognition and Reward Systems for Scientists). VSNU Position Paper, January 2020 (URL: <http://vsnu.nl/recognitionandrewards/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Position-paper-Ruimte-voor-ieders-talent.pdf>).
  - xv See <https://www.oecd.org/statistics/measuring-well-being-and-progress.htm>; especially the session on developing better metrics.
  - xvi Edwards, John & Elisabetta Marinelli, eds. (2018) *Higher Education for Smart Specialisation: A Handbook* (Version 1.0) Seville: European Commission, p. 2. (URL: <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/20182/222215/Higher+Education+for+Smart+Specialisation+A+Handbook+Version/c17b3304-d071-4fdc-a9b2-b540470ea424?version=1.0>).