

UNAI MEMBER ACTIVITY REPORT 2016/2017

League of European Research Universities (LERU)

Belgium

During the 2016/2017 reporting period, League of European Research Universities (LERU) undertook a number of activities that underscore its commitment to UNAI and its principles. The following examples stand out as particularly noteworthy:

Since its foundation in 2002, the League of European Research Universities (LERU) has emerged as a prominent advocate for the promotion of basic research at European universities. LERU strongly believes that basic research plays an essential role in the innovation process and significantly contributes to the progress of society. LERU aims at furthering the understanding and knowledge of politicians, policy makers and opinion leaders about the role and activities of research-intensive universities. Drawing on the impressive academic potential and expertise of its network, LERU has a strong and significant impact on research policy in Europe.

In 2017, LERU undertook a variety of activities related to research, innovation and education policy. In February, LERU published the position paper 'Interdisciplinarity and the 21st century research-intensive university'. Interdisciplinarity is a powerful driver of knowledge creation, research and innovation. Although it has always been part of the scientific enterprise, interdisciplinarity has rapidly developed in many scientific areas and has become an important issue for universities riding on the wave of dramatic societal changes and challenges, and an increasingly collaborative research system.

LERU regards disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity as equally important to find solutions to pressing problems. Interdisciplinarity is essential to the evolution and reconfiguration of disciplines and the emergence of new ones. But without thorough disciplinary knowledge it would not be possible to conduct interdisciplinary research to begin with. Making interdisciplinarity count in universities requires significant levels of investment and commitment within a system built primarily for disciplinarity. Universities that succeed in creating a virtuous circle between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, in education, research and innovation, are well positioned to reap major benefits. The paper formulates recommendations for universities,



governments and funders on how they can incorporate interdisciplinarity in their policies and programmes.

More information is available [here](#).

Also in 2017, LERU organised a Doctoral Summer School 'Citizen Science - nexus between research and public engagement'. Citizen science - the involvement of non-professional scientists in research - is generating broad attention across and beyond the scientific community. Activities range from small-scale local projects, largely with layperson participation, to large-scale international projects, which may involve professional scientists and research institutions. Though laypersons have been actively assisting in scientific discovery to varying degrees for centuries, in our current digital age, citizen science is experiencing a boom thanks to rapidly developing technologies made available to a wider public. Citizen science thrives in an open and transparent environment, and it is widely seen as a cornerstone of a broader open science movement. Citizen science is a phenomenon that is multilayered and comes in many hues. However, many questions remain unanswered, such as legal, ethical, commercial and privacy issues.

In 2016, LERU published a paper related to the topic: 'Citizen science at universities: Trends, guidelines and recommendations'.

More information about the LERU Doctoral Summer School 2017 is available [here](#). More information on the published paper "Citizen science at universities: Trends, guidelines and recommendations" is available [here](#).

On 7 March 2017, LERU organised an event devoted to 'science diplomacy', the interaction between science and diplomacy and the many challenges and opportunities arising from it. The use of science cooperation to improve international relations -science for diplomacy-, facilitating international science cooperation -diplomacy for science- and informing foreign policy objectives with scientific advice -science in diplomacy have a decisive role to play in solving global and societal challenges and setting the future ahead. Being universities one of the pivotal actors in the twenty-first century landscape, their influence cannot go unnoticed.

More information is available [here](#).

Link: <https://www.leru.org/>

Disclaimer: This activity report has been submitted by League of European Research Universities (LERU) and does not necessarily reflect the views of or represent an endorsement by the United Nations Academic Impact.