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University Alliances and Networks of Networks for Sustainability

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Kasetsart University, Bangkok February 2023



“Turn of the times”

Multiple crisis and new polarization are the challenges of human society in the 2nd and 3rd decade of the 21st century.

What is necessary now? Frequently used keywords in this discussion are resilience, regionalization and decentralization.

What does this and the much-vaunted "turn of the times" mean for the internationalization of universities?

Does this finally call into question the model of globalization?



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Critical Voices against Globalization

The
Economist

Globalisation is dead and we need to invent a new world order



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Preamble of the Annual Meeting 2023

Cooperation in a Fragmented World

The world today is at a **critical inflection point**. The twin triggers of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine rattled an already brittle global system. Economic growth in the world's largest economies is stalling, while navigating headwinds from rising food and energy prices. This is occurring alongside heightened **geo-economic fragmentation**, ..., and a **climate crisis** spiraling out of control, which could magnify any growth slowdown, particularly in emerging markets. **Unless these systemic and interconnected risks are addressed, the promise of a “decade of action” may become a decade of uncertainty and fragility.**



Where do suggestions for solutions come from?

More than ever before, the fate of the global community depends on science and education:

- Disciplinary knowledge is no longer sufficient to cope with the multiple crises and the related wicked problems. The interdependent systemic relationships must be recognized. There is no alternative to interdisciplinarity.
- Problems, while regionally diverse, do not stop at national borders. Here, international cooperation promises a significant acceleration of knowledge development through exchange of experience and more and bundled engagement.



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Interdisciplinarity, Responsibility and Proactivity

Research depends on openness, but needs implicit direction:

Interdisciplinarity and responsible research are necessary conditions to foster the dedication towards sustainability. Only broad and systemic approaches which normatively are committed to sustainability (e.g. the SDGs) are adequate.

Teaching faces numerous challenges:

Society must be empowered to make informed decisions. Great expectations are associated with the idea of imparting much more proactive knowledge in university education in order to train the *change agents* for the necessary transformation.

Transformation needs scientific, economic, political and social entrepreneurs!



Mission-Orientation/Dedication & Alliances

- The nature and magnitude of the tasks before us demands rigorous and comprehensive (systemic) solutions.
- Because of the Knightian true uncertainty and huge time requirements, worldwide enormous research efforts must be undertaken with the goal of sustainability transformation.

This requires

- a particular combination of basic research with sustainability focus (= the mission/dedication)
- and joint and bundled efforts of globally leading universities



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Pasteur's Quadrant

Research is inspired by:

		Considerations of use?	
		No	Yes
Quest for fundamental understanding?	Yes	Pure basic research (Bohr)	Use-inspired basic research (Pasteur)
	No		Pure applied research (Edison)

Replace **use-inspired** with **sustainability-inspired**

D. Stokes, 1997



University Alliances

- regional particularities relevant for developing solutions
- dispersed creativity in the global university landscape
- scope for cooperation in research and education

e.g. the overcoming of the **lock-in in fossil based resources** by strengthening the bioeconomy asks for massive contributions of agricultural and life sciences. **The decarbonization of the economy is considered to be the largest and most complex contemporary coordination problem.**

-> varieties of the bioeconomy (Pyka and Urmetzer, 2017)



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European bioeconomy university



European bioplastics



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University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna



WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH



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EBU Mission



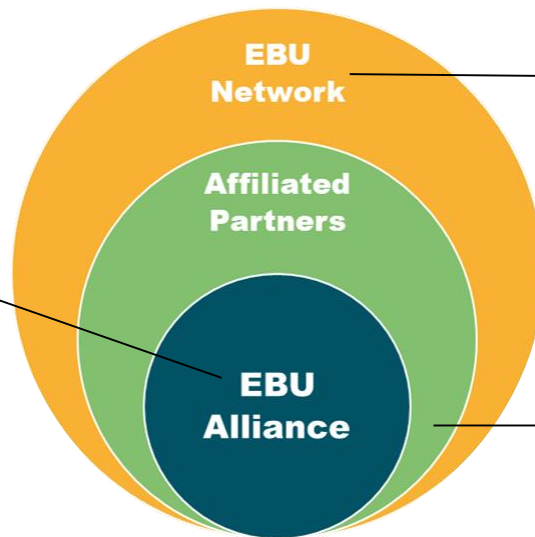
Creating Europe's leading intellectual institution for tackling the challenges of the 21st century, by

- covering the entire spectrum of Bioeconomy dimensions
- inter-, transdisciplinary, cross-sectoral and European collaboration
- providing an internationally unique and competitive model for a theme-based, system- and future-oriented university.
- taking university collaboration to a higher level of joint strategy development

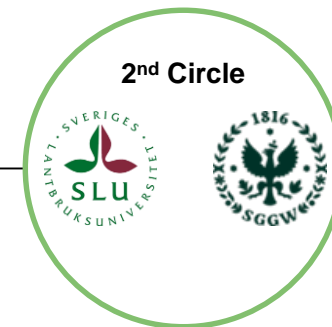
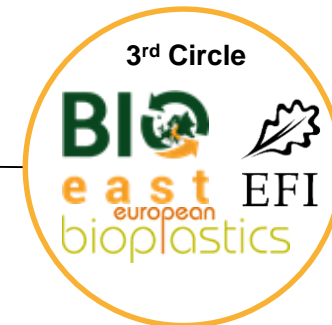


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Who is part of the EBU?



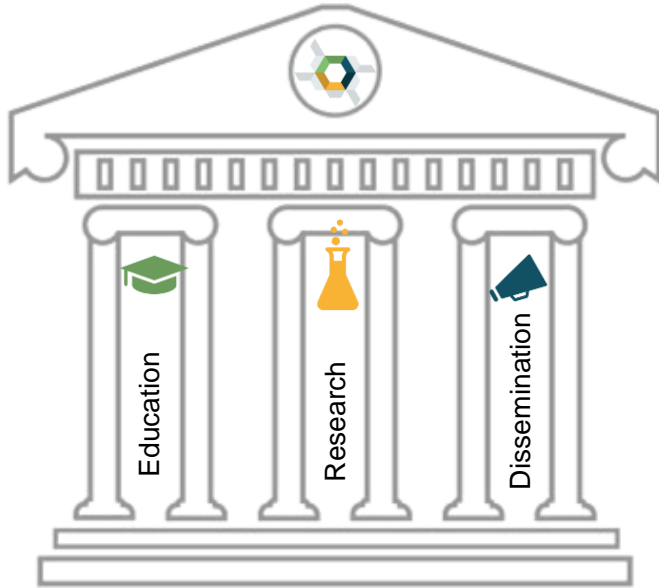
Est. in 2019
3 Circles Concept





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EBU Mission: 3 Pillars



Fostering relevant and
responsible Research



Lobbying for the EBU
and its researchers



Providing excellent
Education for truly
European Experts





The EBU is promoting research by

- supporting researchers in grant proposals and mobility within the EBU network (e.g. EBU PostDocNet)
- Building thematic research networks
- creating matchmaking events to help young researchers build their own networks more efficiently
- currently in the process of working towards a doctoral school – DESTINY ITN



The EBU is establishing itself as a valuable European institution by

- publishing position and opinion papers
- giving researchers a platform to promote their papers and results through thematic networks like the DIAF thematic network
- providing platforms for knowledge transfer and exchange like the EBU scientific forum
- Contribution to Bioeconomy events at national, EU and international level



The EBU is training European Experts by

- increasing mobility opportunities for students between partner institutions
- offering life-long learning opportunities for professionals (new Erasmus + Proposal in the works)
- Fostering a joint understanding of European values in education and research
- Regional outreach by establishing bio-based education centers
- establishing joint educational programs to connect students throughout Europe (e.g. FOEBE, EBU-Label)





EBU Projects



- common qualification supplement program for master students
- encouraging students to develop a T-shaped skills profile, to become relevant game changers in the European Bioeconomy
- aiming at upgrading existing disciplinary university curricula, by incorporating inter-trans-disciplinarity, cross-sectoral collaboration and sustainability competences



- Fostering Entrepreneurship for the Bioeconomy
- Equipping students with sustainable entrepreneurship skills
- Tackling skills gaps and mismatches essential for a growing bioeconomy sector
- Consists of e-learning and face to face study sessions during a final intensive study week at a partner institution



Advantages of Regional Alliances

- Exploiting and exploring the broad and diverse knowledge space.
- Joint learning from regional particularities.
- Accumulation of experience and reputation.
- Cross-fertilization between researchers.
- High visibility and reputation facilitates access to research funds.
- The brand name attracts students from all over the world.
- Highly valued advisor in the political process.
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My mission:

Globally more similar alliances are needed!

I am currently in discussion with Stellenbosch University, with the National Autonomous University of Mexico and with the government of Quebec, to consider to take over the lead in founding an African Bioeconomy University, a Latin-American Bioeconomy University and a North-American Bioeconomy University.

These geo-regional University Alliances can become the respective intellectual leaders in the field, bundling massive competences and creativity relevant for their regions.

Kasetsart University is in a pole position to think about a Southeast-Asian Bioeconomy University



My vision: A Network of Networks for Sustainability

- With specialized University alliances the prerequisite is created for a global network of geo-regional alliances.
- The supra-network would assemble the competences, creativity and impact for an outstanding contribution to the sustainability transformation providing knowledge for innovation, guidance for sustainability oriented policy design and the emergence of new sustainable sectors offering well-paid jobs for our well-educated students.
- This, in its own is already a substantial contribution towards higher degrees of sustainability and future-orientation.



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Thank you for your valuable attention.