

FORUM

MEMBER
MAGAZINE

Discussing international education



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SPRING
2023

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“It is in our power to decide how and when we react to external factors”

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“Whatever else happens, science diplomacy never ends”

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“Organisations cannot simply see ‘the’ environment; instead, they actively construct their environments”

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“Full disengagement would come at a very high cost – not just for individuals or institutions, but for society more broadly”

WALKING THE LINE: THE UK AND CHINA



EDITORIAL

The Spring 2023 issue of *Forum* magazine looks at risk and response in relation to international education. As civil society and our institutions find a new balance after three years of the global COVID-19 pandemic, we have perhaps never been more aware of the risks faced by our institutions, staff and students in the pursuit of an international agenda.

In early 2020, who would have predicted the global health trajectory that we were forging? And who was planning, just over a year ago, for the consequences of war in Europe? While risk management has always featured in the thinking of an international educator (perhaps specifically in relation to international travel), this edition of *Forum* asks whether we have now fine-tuned our approach to risk in international education with a new set of responses.

Higher education institutions have certainly long had a focus on risk management in their activities, and many institutional risk registers now contain updated entries in relation to global health and geopolitical instability. Indeed, if the last few years have taught us anything, it is to always be prepared for the unexpected. But how will we retain the learnings from recent crises – from the hosting of refugees, to responses to climate change and threats to academic freedom – not to mention the next global pandemic or further political unrest leading to violence? Beyond updating risk registers and frameworks, what tangible examples exist of how institutions and international educators have responded to new threats in innovative ways?

In this edition, I am pleased that we are able to present some compelling examples of good practice – from Europe and beyond – which draw on many elements of global risk, from managing geopolitical tensions in partnerships, to travel safety management, protecting academic freedom, and universities as sanctuaries. An article on scenario planning also reminds us about a useful methodology which readers can deploy on their campuses to model different responses to risk.

I am delighted that Dr Kai Sicks, Secretary General of the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst – DAAD) agreed to be interviewed for this issue. Stepping into this role in February 2021, Dr Sicks was immediately faced with managing a rapidly-evolving set of risks across the distributed network of DAAD offices around the world. As a national agency, the DAAD has also been responsive to growing government concerns about foreign interference and mounting geopolitical risks.

From a longer-term risk perspective, the DAAD has moved to ensure that its business operations are climate-neutral by 2030 and published its first ever Climate Report in November 2022. If you are particularly interested to know more about the risks of climate change and how institutions are responding, please refer to the Spring 2022 edition of *Forum* on ‘Our changing climate’, which covered this topic in detail.

For Europe and for other world regions, one key question at this juncture relates to the risk of further social division, and indeed war, in response to



rising nationalism. And yet the original goal of the Erasmus programme was to create lasting peace in a fragmented post-war Europe through cultural exchange. Although the causes and origins of conflict are complex, what are our reflections today on the success of the European programmes that were intended to create European cohesion and mitigate against the risks of a further war in Europe?

Whilst this edition of *Forum* cannot answer all of the hard questions on risk, I hope that it will help frame further discussion among EAIE members. With thanks to the authors and to Ragnhild Solvi Berg on the EAIE Publications Committee, who joined me in reviewing submissions for this issue.

I hope that you enjoy reading this edition of *Forum*.

— DOUGLAS PROCTOR, EDITOR
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IN CONVERSATION WITH

KAI SICKS

JACOB GIBBONS
EAIE

Dr Kai Sicks assumed the role of Secretary General of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in April 2021, a tumultuous time in the international higher education sector and in the world. Coming into office as COVID-19 vaccines came onto the market, Dr Sicks' tenure at the DAAD has coincided with rising geopolitical tension and growing trepidation around international cooperation in general, a trend he hopes to see the international higher education sector resist in the years to come.

Higher education institutions have long had a focus on risk management in their activities, and many institutional risk registers contain recently-updated entries in relation to global health and geopolitical instability. With a growing focus on internationalisation within higher education, what new or unperceived risks do you see for institutions?

KS: I would like to start with the optimistic sentiment that, while it is absolutely necessary to consider risks, we should never forget the many diverse opportunities and benefits that we get out of international academic exchange. I would also say that the risks that we face today are not completely fresh or new in kind, but rather have increased in intensity over the last several years.

What are those risks which have increased? Worldwide, we see that academic freedom is increasingly endangered. This is particularly critical for international partnerships when the free exchange of scientific ideas or free conversations in international classrooms come under pressure. Then there are dependencies on international money. For instance, think of the international student fees or tuition fees that come into a higher education system like the UK or Australia; this can create certain dependencies on other countries. Particularly in the research sector, there are potential risks connected to the misuse of research data and research results, which for example could be used for military purposes in other countries. These are, in my view, the most pressing current risks of internationalisation for institutions.

Having said this, however, the last few years have also shown us just how important international cooperation in science is. The rapidly-developed vaccine against COVID is just one example. Our future depends crucially on how well we work together in study and research worldwide.

You took up your role as Secretary General of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Spring 2021. At that time, what were your immediate thoughts about the risks faced by DAAD and how those had changed since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic?

KS: With the pandemic, something happened which had never happened before: the whole idea of international exchange suddenly became nearly impossible to realise, due to travel restrictions and a general fear of traveling abroad. The whole business model of the DAAD was suddenly in danger, and in 2020 up until early 2021, we couldn't see where this was going to end, whether borders would open again, whether people's mindsets would again be open enough for them to engage in exchange. From today's perspective, I am very pleased that interest in international academic exchange has recovered quickly after the pandemic – an important sign of the resilience of our sector.

Alongside that, the last several years have seen an increase in global geopolitical tensions, to the extent that the world appears to be shifting from a multilateral order to a new multipolar or even bipolar order,

which makes it much more difficult to carry out international exchange.

The first new crisis after I assumed my role at the DAAD was in Afghanistan, where we had had a presence for 20 years. When the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, the work that the DAAD had done there changed completely. We used to set up universities in Afghanistan; today, we award scholarships to Afghan students so that they can seek protection in neighbouring countries or in Germany. And then, of course, the war in Europe also changed many things. We immediately stopped institutional cooperations with Russia, which was a whole other thing, because while Afghanistan was a relatively small country, Russia was very important for Germany, the German research system and academic system, and suddenly that country broke away from international cooperation and international law. This is a new and unprecedented situation.

ks: The risks for international academics have become more global, pressing and complex. The previous decade was not a risk-free time – with threats like terrorism, natural disaster and health situations – but in this period, risk was much more local and specific to certain contexts.

We have a very specific risk security and crisis management system here at the DAAD, which is supposed to foresee and mitigate situations of crisis in other countries, particularly in those countries where we maintain our own offices and where we send German students. This risk system has several layers: for example, we have a thorough training programme for our staff members who go abroad, which covers all kinds of risk assessment as well as intercultural trainings. Secondly, we have a very targeted system of risk analysis worldwide, in which we are supported by the German Federal Foreign Office, which provides us with information about situations coming up

The world appears to be shifting from a multilateral order to a new multipolar or even bipolar order, which makes it much more difficult to carry out international exchange

With offices in multiple countries, how does DAAD conceive of risk on both a global and local scale? What responses have you sought to put in place to mitigate the different risks experienced by DAAD staff in different countries?

in the world that might be of importance for us. Based on this information, we have contingency plans in place for every office worldwide. So whatever happens, there is a well-defined checklist of what persons responsible for the office have to do in

The risks for international academics have become more global, pressing and complex

case of such a crisis. This is something that the DAAD implemented long before my time – but in these days, it's more important than ever to have something like this in place. We have made use of it quite a number of times in recent years.

The original goal of the Erasmus+ programme was to create lasting peace in Europe through cultural exchange, in response to the two world wars. Do you see Brexit, the war in Ukraine and other recent developments as signs of failure or perhaps insufficiency in the response? How would you evaluate the contribution of European programmes in mitigating the risks of a further war in continental Europe?

ks: I still belong to the believers. First of all, what Erasmus+ has achieved is really unique: in the last 35 years, we have had thirteen million Europeans spend time abroad thanks to Erasmus, which has contributed to something like a 'European identity'. Having said that, of course, Erasmus+ is not the only factor responsible for peace on the continent. The political context in particular has become more difficult, and Erasmus+ can help mitigate crises to a certain degree – but *only* to a

certain degree. If there are political tensions between countries, we can still have the kind of civil society exchange which Erasmus+ makes possible, but such an exchange will not necessarily solve these political tensions.

One recent positive example of the impact of Erasmus+, however, is the war in Ukraine. When the war started, many Ukrainian refugees came to EU countries, and all of these countries suddenly had the task of integrating these Ukrainians – often young Ukrainians, often also students – into their universities and societies. They often didn't speak the language of the country in which they sought refuge, and very often also didn't bring with them the necessary formal qualifications to be registered in universities there. So Erasmus+ very rapidly opened up the opportunity to register them as Erasmus students at European universities – even though this meant a complete reshuffling of the Erasmus regulations. In doing so, the Erasmus+ programme was able to put European universities in the position to

it was in many ways able to mitigate some of its consequences.

To what extent can a national agency like DAAD support governments and institutions to understand and respond to geopolitical risks and concerns about interference in teaching and research? What are the risks of limiting collaboration with 'undemocratic states' and their people?

ks: Whatever else happens, science diplomacy never ends. We should never light-heartedly cut off collaboration with any country of the world. Breaking off collaborations completely is a singularly exceptional situation which has only happened in the case of Russia – and even there, we still give out scholarships for Russian students coming to Germany. We cannot restrict our collaboration to those countries who share our values completely. Even if we don't share their values – and sometimes especially if we don't share their values – it is still worthwhile to engage in exchange.

its German acronym 'KIWi'. KIWi is the point of contact for universities about all questions related to international collaborations and their legal frameworks, and is responsible for supporting German universities with risk assessment in terms of partnerships. Whenever a researcher has a question about collaboration with a certain partner in another country, then they can contact KIWi for background information and on potential risks they need to consider.

Ultimately, the role of national agencies like the DAAD is to act as an advocate for global exchange, which includes 'undemocratic states'. We need this global perspective, because for all the global challenges ahead of us – from pandemics, to climate change, to poverty and more – we need to find global answers. Even if it is complicated at times, we have the responsibility to work together in order to find solutions to the planet-wide challenges that affect us all.

Even if it is complicated at times, we have the responsibility to work together in order to find solutions to the planet-wide challenges that affect us all

welcome these Ukrainian students and give them a living. This is an excellent example of both the potential of Erasmus+ and its limitations – academic exchange did not prevent the Russian invasion, but

Two years ago, we established a new sub-unit at the DAAD, called the international competence centre for academic cooperation (Kompetenzzentrum Internationale Wissenschaftskooperationen), known by



ASSESSING RISK

SEIZING OPPORTUNITY

The very exercise of risk assessment is risky: the more we seek out danger and threats, the more likely we are to perceive them all around us. Aalto University has adopted a highly structured approach to risk assessment, featuring broad senior leadership involvement and input from stakeholders across the institution.

At the core of the approach is the philosophy that global cooperation is in itself an opportunity, not a risk. ▶

“Our global relations are assets, not risks,” opened Aalto University’s president Ilkka Niemelä addressing the Aalto University Foundation Board, the university’s highest decision-making forum, in December 2022. These words introduced the results of a university-wide fact-gathering exercise providing reliable data about our institution’s global relations, highlighting potential risks caused by shifting geopolitics, increasing sanctions and general international turmoil – but also underscoring potentially underutilised or newly emerging opportunities. Looking back at

the importance of reflecting on the very act of determining the right questions to ask, dimensions to assess, and data to collect.

It also underscores the imperative of intra-organisational collaboration, as some risks may be on everyone’s mind due to the current media attention or political pressures, while others may be less apparent. Since we all see our institutional environments differently, depending on our individual tasks and where we are situated organisationally, aligning views and making meaning jointly across departments are essential for getting as close as

jective process, and thus not an objective real-world depiction.

DEFINING THE PROCESS

At Aalto University, we decided to have broad senior leadership involvement including the respective subordinate university areas throughout the risk identification process. This way we assured that all key operations were covered, and all staff involved had sufficient support. The responsibility of process management was assigned to our head of global engagement. *Table 1* outlines the process and division of tasks.

Organisations cannot simply see ‘the’ environment; instead, they actively construct their environments

the exercise, our experience may provide value to colleagues in other higher education institutions trying to make sense of this volatile global environment. Thus, in this article we describe our approach and three key learnings.

THE RISK OF RISK IDENTIFICATION

In organisational theory it is a well-established notion that organisations cannot simply see ‘the’ environment; instead, they actively construct their environments by choosing the information and data from which they form an idea about ‘what’s happening in the world’. While this is not a problem as such, it highlights

possible to a holistic risk assessment. Additionally, we live in a dynamic world, so things may change and are not accurately reflected anymore in the final assessment reports, which poses a risk in itself.

Key learning: If ‘the’ environment is never obvious and uncomplicated, then having a well-structured process for analysing it is key to ensuring a broad perspective for data collection. At the same time, staying realistic about the degree of predictability that can be achieved is important, thus a degree of humility is due: the results, as eye-opening they may be, are the result of a sub-

Key learning: Because of the wide range of areas to be reviewed, good coordination was needed for the process and finalising the outputs. The high level of senior management involvement, mix of simple tools for information exchange, use of presentation slides and graphics to keep information easily accessible, and repeatedly discussing and extending the scope of commentators, all contributed to a smooth assessment process and a broad discussion with joint sense-making. The latter in particular was very useful for subsequent decisions.

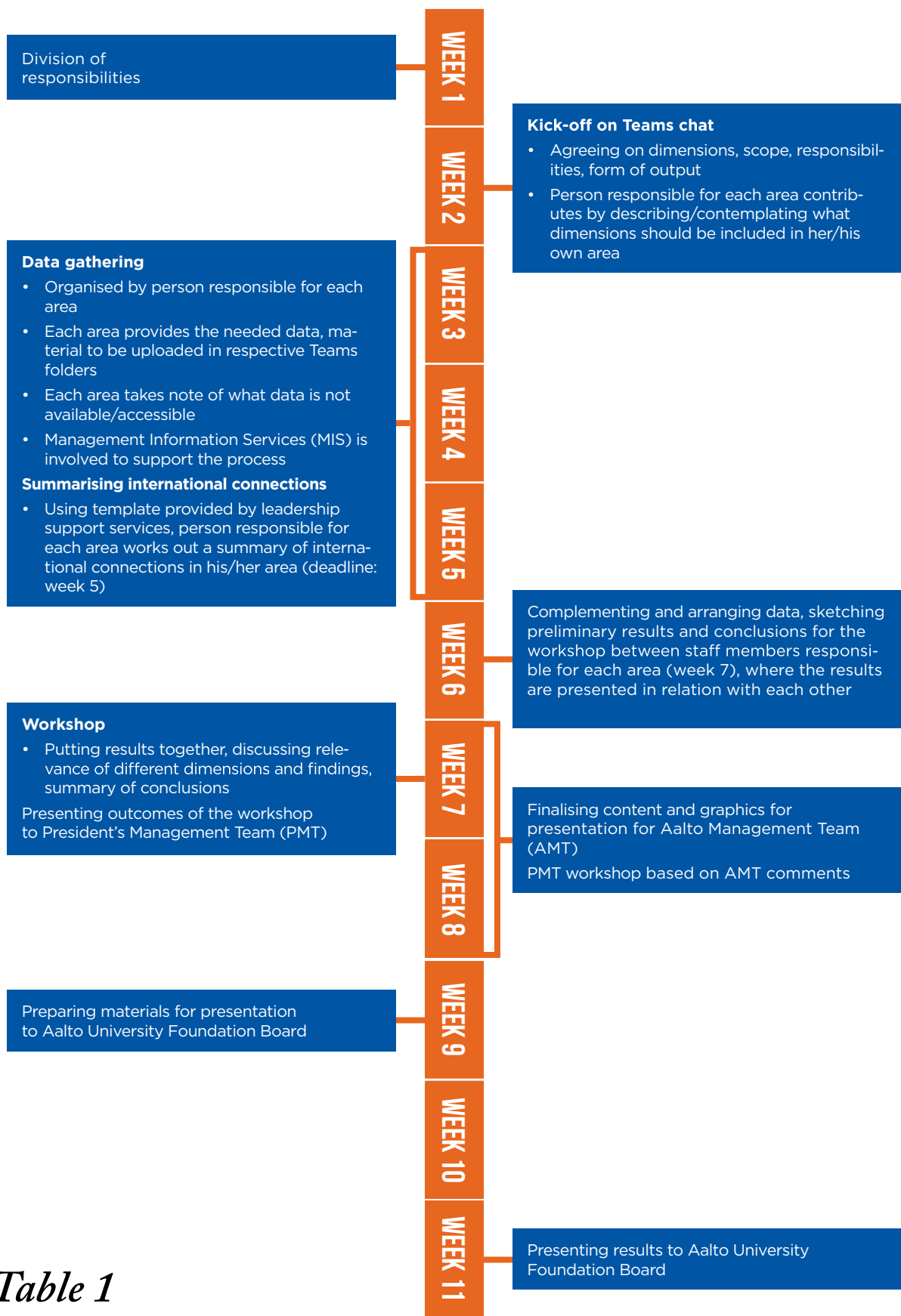


Table 1

WHERE OR WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT?

A globally volatile environment can lead to many risks. Some of the most obvious may be:

- Export sanction violations
- Physical threats to institutions or individuals involved in international research partnerships
- Intellectual property theft or infringement
- Cyber attacks or espionage targeting research data or sensitive information
- Threats to academic freedom and institutional autonomy
- Reputational damage from becoming embroiled in political disputes or conflicts
- Disruption to research collaboration or funding due to political tensions

To address these risks, institutions and national higher education sectors can develop policies and response plans that balance the need to protect intellectual property, academic freedom and national security with the benefits of international partnerships. To do so, different service units first gathered data from various sources, and that data was subsequently sorted into five categories: education; research, data and infrastructures; funding and corporate partners; personnel and long-term visits; and networking and media.

Within those five categories, we assessed a long list of more specific sets of data, including mobility patterns and composition of our student body, international projects and joint programmes, recruitment approaches and partnerships,

joint publications, international research project collaborations, library subscriptions for materials and data, foreign suppliers of research equipment and IT services, external users of research infrastructures, funding sources, investments, composition and affiliations of personnel and visitors, partnership and network portfolio, and global media presence.

General meta-findings from the exercise included the fact that data could be

gathered in a rather short time, and that no major areas of lacking or insufficient data were detected. Based on the gathered data and joint sense-making, we achieved a solid foundation for taking further action where opportune.

Key learnings: The composition of data provides a valuable overview not only of the scope of global ‘entanglement’ but also intensity and potential overreliance or other vulnerabilities from an institutional perspective. As such, it provides a solid basis for understanding potential direct consequences of geopolitical developments and subsequent institutional navigation and decision-making. At the same time, the data provides information on areas where there is little to be concerned about and new opportunities to pursue.

THE BIG PICTURE MATTERS

The current climate of newly-developing geopolitical power blocks, conflicting values systems, sanctions, war and terror, human rights violations and more, necessitates solid risk assessment and discourse about institutional positioning. At the same time, it is imperative to discuss processes and results within the broader context of our institutions’ missions and purpose in this world.

We as humans are often heavily biased towards risk aversion, and our perception of risk impacts how we see the world and value our global relationships

We as humans are often heavily biased towards risk aversion, and our perception of risk impacts how we see the world and value our global relationships. Thus, Aalto University President Ilkka Niemelä made an important point when he framed Aalto’s relationships as assets, not as risks. Aalto University’s mission is to “shape a sustainable future”. The latest UN Sustainable Development Goal report has clearly identified the recent regression in achieving the SDGs largely due to interlinking crisis such as COVID-19, and emphasised once more that we need much more global collaboration, not less. The question is not *whether*, but rather *how* to work jointly for the global common good without naiveté.

—JÉRÔME RICKMANN & KIRSI KETTULA



ROTTERDAM

CURRENT AND CONNECTED

Rotterdam, host of the 2023 Annual EAIE Conference and Exhibition, is a young, dynamic metropolis which is developing rapidly. From glistening skyscrapers to Europe's busiest port, from trendy restaurants and food markets to renowned museums and cultural attractions, Rotterdam runs the gamut. With ground-breaking architecture, vibrant festivals and revolutionary restaurants, it's definitely worth taking some time to explore Rotterdam during EAIE 2023.

A SYMPHONY OF STYLES

Rotterdam is what you would call a super-diverse city: more than half of its inhabitants have a migrant background, and more than 170 nationalities call it home. Rotterdam is not only diverse in terms of its inhabitants, but the city is also known for its pioneering architecture and its medley of building styles, which have everything to do with its history. In 1940, the city was bombed and then rebuilt in a radical way, the people of Rotterdam opting for renewal instead of repair. Architects were given every opportunity to experiment and innovate and are still doing so today. The result? A city full of exciting contrasts and a skyline that will delight any architecture lover, from the Cube Houses (01), Europe's first skyscraper, and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Van Nelle Factory, to the new Rotterdam Central Station, the Markthal (02) and iconic building De Rotterdam.

CULTURAL TREASURE TROVE

The people of Rotterdam continue to boldly build a city where creative ideas abound. The latest icon is the spectacular Depot Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, with a photogenic spherical shape and a facade of mirrors (03–04). Discover the treasures that used to be stored behind closed doors but, above all, enjoy the building itself,



Iris van den Broek

the view from the roof and the culinary art at Restaurant Renilde. Directly opposite, you can visit Het Nieuwe Instituut, the museum for architecture, design and digital culture. The museum also manages Huis Sonneveld across the street, a villa dating from 1933 and the best-preserved house in the Dutch 'Nieuwe Bouwen' style. A little further on, another beautiful villa, the Chabot Museum, shows the highlights of International Expressionism. And the Kunsthal is worth a visit both for its building and its interesting, topical exhibitions. Rotterdam's outdoor art is also larger than life, featuring sculptures of giant feet, foxes (05) and even Santa Claus.

THE RISE OF ROTTERDAM-ZUID

Attending EAIE 2023 offers the perfect opportunity to familiarise yourself with the south side of the city, which is home to Rotterdam Ahoy, this year's conference

venue. Zuid – Rotterdam's southern district – is finally getting the attention it deserves after being overlooked for years. With its vibrant street culture, young population and abundance of art and studio spaces, Zuid is an exciting, experimental and innovative part of the city. Be sure to get a glimpse of the FENIX, a new museum focused on migration which opens in 2024. It will be located in a historic warehouse that was once a departure point for millions of immigrants to America in the 19th century. The building is undergoing major renovations and will feature a stunning viewing platform called the Tornado.

CIRCULAR CITY

Rotterdam is a city that continuously adapts to changing circumstances. In terms of art, culture and architecture, as well as sustainability and innovation, the

city is boldly leading the way. Schedule a visit to the former tropical swimming paradise Tropicana, which has been transformed by a group of young idealists into BlueCity: a model city for the circular (blue) economy. Finish off the tour with a glass of natural wine at Aloha. This low-waste food bar does things radically differently to other restaurants by being as creative as possible with leftover products. They also serve bitterballen, a typical Dutch snack, prepared the Aloha way.



01 (Iris van den Broek)



02 (Ossip van Duivenbode)



03 (Ossip van Duivenbode)



04 (Iris van den Broek)



05 (Iris van den Broek)



06 (Iris van den Broek)

AIMING FOR RESILIENCE

Rotterdam is a green city rich in parks, lovely for a walk or a picnic. Zuiderpark, near Rotterdam Ahoy, is the largest city park in the Netherlands, and let's not forget Trompenburg, a beautifully designed botanical garden also designated as a museum and municipal monument. Leaning into its strengths, the city is investing heavily in its outdoor space in seven places to make them even greener and, above all, more resistant to heat, drought and heavy rainfall. Of these seven urban projects, Rijnhaven is the most developed. The Rijnhaven itself has become a testing ground for floating construction, with its showpiece the Global Centre on

Adaptation's (GCA) Floating Office (06). The floating office also houses one of the city's best restaurants: Putaine, a fine dining a la carte restaurant that serves small seasonal dishes with surprising flavours and high-quality products.

CULINARY ROTTERDAM

That there is more to discover in the culinary field in a young, diverse city like Rotterdam goes without saying. There are ways to taste the authentic Rotterdam for every budget, from a bag of fries from local hero Bram Ladage to a gourmet dinner at a Michelin-starred restaurant like Fitzgerald or FG Restaurant. Those who like adventure, meeting people and tasting

food can book several tours, such as the Inside Rotterdam bike tour Food 'n Route, where entrepreneurs share their delicacies and inspirational stories along the way. The Rotterdam food tour by Bike&Bite is also highly recommended: it takes participants past cultural and culinary highlights in a few hours. You can also venture out on your own, past the cosmopolitan restaurants and shops on West-Kruiskade. A visit to the Foodhallen or the Markthal, where numerous artisanal entrepreneurs offer their wares, is also recommended: a feast for all of your senses!
This article is provided by Rotterdam Tourist Information, a service provided by Rotterdam Partners.

EAIE BLOG SPOT

In between *Forum* issues, visit the EAIE blog for news, views and insights, anywhere and at your fingertips. Just grab yourself a comfy seat and start browsing!



17
JAN

Matching the right international student to your institution

International student recruitment is about knowing your audience. Here are six different student segments to familiarise yourself with.

<http://ow.ly/54TC50Mskrj>



24
JAN

Regional HEIs and the future of innovation

Regionally-anchored higher education institutions that play an important role in their communities – and in confronting global challenges.

<http://ow.ly/99gR50MYC58>



02
FEB

Leaving no one behind: providing higher education in emergencies

As global instability becomes the norm, providing higher education to displaced persons and societies in conflict becomes ever more important.

<http://ow.ly/UpZG50MHwoj>

EAIE PODCAST



25
JAN

Simon Marginson: Redefining internationalisation

Guest Simon Marginson talks about the need for change and the flaws in the current definitional approach to internationalisation.

ow.ly/gWr650MzW7N



01
FEB

Nicole Williams and Helen Whitehead: Women changing the world of science

Nicole Williams and Helen Whitehead share best practices for encouraging women to get involved in STEM.

<http://ow.ly/M69050MgtYB>



15
FEB

Tomáš Varga: Supporting mobility across the ability spectrum

What policies and strategies can universities implement to best address accessibility issues for students with disabilities?

<http://ow.ly/69aa50MSHaP>

CALENDAR



**24 & 26 APRIL
2023**

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foreign credentials
www.eaie.org/training

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a borderless world
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Conference 2023**
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