II Unite! Branding Event:

Inspiring People – Sparking Innovation

25 September 2024

Darmstadtium Science & Congress Centre
Darmstadt, Germany
Since its inception in July 2019, the European Commission has been steadfastly propelling the European Universities Initiative, envisioning university alliances as key contributors to a more united and strong Europe. Unite! (University Alliance for Innovation, Technology, and Engineering) stands proudly among the inaugural 17 European university alliances established in 2019. As a strategic, agile, and dynamic consortium comprising nine esteemed European universities, Unite! is founded upon shared values, a clear vision, and mutual trust. Our collective aspiration is to serve as a catalyst for technology and innovation, aiming to establish a multilingual trans-European educational campus that nurtures professionals and leaders equipped to drive digital and ecological transformations towards a sustainable future.

This year, delegates from all nine Unite! universities and its partners will convene in Darmstadt, Germany – renowned as the "City of Science" (Wissenschaftsstadt Darmstadt) and home to the coordinating institution, Technical University of Darmstadt. Under the overarching theme "Inspiring People – Sparking Innovation," the aim is to reflect on and underscore the pivotal role of inspiration and innovation in fostering sustainable advancements in European higher education and research. In addition, by showcasing the achievements and successes of the alliance, the event highlights the importance of collective efforts, exchange, and societal outreach in shaping a promising future for Europe and beyond. Consequently, several distinct formats are tailored to address diverse stakeholders and objectives:

- **Unite! Branding Event** for external visibility, and
- **Unite! Dialogue** for internal exchange,
- a collaborative partnership with the Startup & Innovation Day fair, serving as a bridge to the regional startup and innovation ecosystem.
The **II Unite! Branding Event** is a dynamic conference, centred on fostering inspiration, innovation, and collaboration, and providing an exceptional platform for discourse on the achievements, challenges, and impact of our university alliance. With the aim to address challenges and explore aspirations, the event affords attendees a holistic understanding of the European University Initiative's influence on science, society, and business. The conference is expected to attract around 500 participants from the Rhine-Main region and other Unite! universities from Finland to Portugal, including high-level representatives of the European Commission, and will be broadcasted across Unite! media channels.

The **X Unite! Dialogue** serves as a forum for faculty, staff, students, and decision-makers to connect, collaborate, and deliberate on the progress and sustainable future of our university alliance. Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in various management and working group meetings, including the interactive world café format, introduced for the first time to meet the growing demand for transversal exchange between the working groups. The event will also encompass transversal and plenary sessions, providing a comprehensive overview of the Alliance's communities, focus areas, and ongoing projects.

**Startup & Innovation Day 2024** is an annual fair hosted by the **Innovation & Start-up Centre HIGHEST**, serving as a showcase for cutting-edge start-ups hailing from both TU Darmstadt and the broader Rhine-Main region. This event provides a platform for linking science, business, and industry through exhibition of ideas, innovations, products, and services, ranging from nascent concepts to market-ready ventures. In addition, several
Unite! universities and their start-ups will showcase their offerings, providing a valuable opportunity to network with key stakeholders in the region and join the vibrant entrepreneurial community propelling transformative ideas and ventures forward.

We are thrilled to have you join us for these events, aiming to inspire and energize you with the dynamic spirit of our vibrant Unite! community!
In celebration of the fifth anniversary of Unite!, TU Darmstadt is hosting a public conference themed "Inspiring People – Sparking Innovation". The main aim of the event is to delve into the achievements and the potential of European Universities like Unite! – as sources of creative innovation for a sustainable future. The event also presents an exciting platform to showcase the importance of collaboration between research, innovation, and industry in addressing contemporary challenges.

The conference will kick off in a hybrid format with welcome notes by the hosts, followed by two panel discussions where researchers and students from Unite! will exchange ideas with partners from the region and beyond, to conclude with an inspirational lecture on collaborative spaces of inspiration. Short pitches and a poster exhibition will showcase the diverse range of offerings, opportunities, and activities within Unite!.

**Programme**

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event &amp; location</th>
<th>Streaming</th>
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| 09:00-09:30 | Registration & Welcome Coffee  
Atrium / Foyer 1.05, Darmstadtium |           |
| 09:30-09:40 | Inspiring People – Sparking Innovation  
Welcome Remarks  
Tanja Brühl  
Unite! & TU Darmstadt President | ()         |
09:40-10:30  
**Inspiring People - for Europe & beyond**
Panel Discussion I  
Moderation:  
**Andreas Winkler**, Unite! Secretary General  
Panellists:  
**Tanja Brühl**, Unite! & TU Darmstadt President  
**Katarzyna Chojnacka**, Wrocław Tech  
**Vanessa Debiais-Sainton**, DG EAC (virtually)  
**Tyler Kraus**, TUDSaT  
**Kai Sicks**, DAAD

10:30-10:45  
**Unite! Initiatives**  
Short Pitches I  
Moderation: **Jana Freihöfer**  
Unite! Key Liaison Officer at TUDa

10:45-11:15  
**Coffee Break**  
Foyer 1.05, Darmstadtium

11:15-11:30  
**Unite! Initiatives**  
Short Pitches II  
Moderation: **Jana Freihöfer**  
Unite! Key Liaison Officer at TUDa

11:30-11:40  
**Welcome Remarks**  
**Timon Gremmels**  
Hessian Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science, and the Arts

11:40-12:30  
**Sparking Innovation – for Europe & beyond**  
Panel Discussion II  
Moderation:  
**Anshika Suri**, Unite! Policy and Finance Advisor  
Panellists:  
**Klaus Michael Ahrend**, HEAG Holding  
**Laura Laringe**, ReLi Energy  
**Joerg Niehoff**, ERA Governance and Implementation (virtually)  
**Ana Prata**, Ulisboa  
**Dunja Suttnig**, Infineon Technologies Austria AG (virtually)  
**Thomas Walther**,  
Vice President for Innovation and International Affairs, TU Darmstadt
12:30-12:50  Expanding Space(s)
Inspirational Lecture
Thomas Reiter
Former astronaut of the European Space Agency

12:50-12:55  Closing Remarks
Tanja Brühl
Unite! & TU Darmstadt President

12:55-13:00  Group Photo
End of the Event

13:00-14:30  Unite! Poster Session
Lunch Break
Foyer 1.05, Darmstadtium

Inspirational Lecture

Thomas Reiter is among the most experienced European astronauts, with a deep expertise in aerospace technology. His career includes military jet training, test piloting, and involvement in ESA's Hermes and Columbus projects. Selected for ESA's European Astronaut Corps in 1992, he completed notable missions including Euromir 95 and Astrolab, spending a total of 351 days in space. After his career as an astronaut, he served in key roles at the German Aerospace Centre and ESA, contributing significantly to space research and technology.

Source: ESA biography of Thomas Reiter

Panel Sessions

Inpiring People - for Europe & beyond
Panel Discussion

This panel discussion underscores the crucial role of inspiration in sparking new ideas for the future. It reflects on the transformative journey that the European Universities Initiative (EUI) and Unite! embarked five years ago. Panellists representing the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport & Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and members of the Unite! University Network for Innovation, Technology, and Engineering will delve into experiences and strategies related to developing long-term structural and strategic cooperation to promote research,
development, and innovation. The panel will also explore the current impact of the EUI across societal, political, and economic dimensions. Through dynamic interaction and diverse perspectives, the discussion aims to reflect on the achievements of the Unite! Alliance and highlight collaborative efforts as drivers of positive change.

Panellists

Tanja Brühl
President of TU Darmstadt
Unite! President
Photo: K. Binner

Katarzyna Chojnacka
Vice-Recto for external relations, Wrocław University of Technology
Photo: Private

Vanessa Debiais-Sainton
Head of Unit Higher Education, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport & Culture (DG EAC), European Commission
Photo: EC

Tyler Kraus
Board Member, TU Darmstadt Space Technology e.V. (TUDSaT)
Photo: TUDSaT

Kai Sicks
Secretary General, DAAD - German Academic Exchange Service
Photo: DAAD/Saenger

Moderation: Andreas Winkler
Unite! Secretary General
Photo: TUDa

Sparking Innovation – for Europe & beyond
Panel Discussion

The plenary discussion, "Sparking Innovation – for Europe & beyond," addresses critical topics in research, innovation, and industry cooperation, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts to meet contemporary challenges. Panellists include representatives from industry, startups, national and international research and innovation institutions, as well as university and non-university partners of the Unite! European University Alliance. They will explore the European Universities role in driving innovation and sustainability, contributing to global efforts to tackle pressing societal and environmental issues. Additionally, the panellists will reflect on the dynamic landscape of digital and green
transformation. Through engaging dialogue and diverse perspectives, the plenary aims to inspire collaborative action and foster transformative innovation for a better future, both within Europe and beyond.

**Panellists**

Klaus Michael Ahrend  
Board Member, HEAG HOLDING AG - Investment Management of the Darmstadt City of Science (HEAG)  
Photo: HEAG

Laura Laringe  
Chief Executive Officer, ReLi Energy  
Photo: HIGHEST

Joerg Niehoff  
Deputy Head of Unit, ERA Governance & Implementation, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), European Commission  
Photo: Active8-Planet

Ana Prata  
Invited Professor and Coordinator of Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Technology Transfer for Science Students, University of Lisbon  
Photo: Private

Dunja Suttnig  
Funding Project Manager, Infineon Technologies Austria AG  
Photo: Private

Thomas Walther  
Vice President for Innovation and International Affairs, TU Darmstadt  
Photo: K. Mai

Moderation:  
Anshika Suri  
Unite! Policy & Funding Advisor  
Photo: TU3a
Useful Information

Venue

The Dialogue takes place in the Darmstadtium Science and Congress Centre in the centre of Darmstadt and adjacent to the TUDA Campus City Centre and the Wissenschaftsschloss.
Lunch & Coffee Breaks

Lunch and coffee will be offered in the foyer of the congress centre. Participants are requested to wear their badges clearly.

Wi-Fi Access

Wi-Fi is available via eduroam.

Event Website

Please visit our event website to find information on everything you might need in preparation of your participation in the **Unite! X Dialogue and II Branding Event** at TU Darmstadt: [www.tu-darmstadt.de/unite-dialogue](http://www.tu-darmstadt.de/unite-dialogue)

The website will be updated continuously.

Contact

Our dedicated team is available to assist you with any inquiries regarding the events. Your opinion and feedback are invaluable to us, and we eagerly anticipate hearing from you!

E-Mail: [unite-dialogue@tu-darmstadt.de](mailto:unite-dialogue@tu-darmstadt.de)

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