

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Workshop IV ERUA WP 2

September 8-10, 2022, Sozopol, Bulgaria

New Bulgarian University

Digital Transformation of Research and Practice in the Reform Universities: Past, Present and Future

Internet and the new digital technologies brought globally the most important socio-cultural transformation during the last few decades. Universities, as all other educational institutions, are among the most affected by this transformation. As a factor of reform the digitalization acts at least in three major directions:

1) as an opportunity to bring a qualitative leap inside the university structure, providing a completely new level of communicative interaction among scholars, digitalized laboratories, virtual conferences, etc., thus multiplying the range and efficacy of research; this combined with unprecedented access to global repositories of research literature, raw data, archives, digital simulation of social and natural events, etc. At the same time new educational multimodal platforms facilitated teaching and assessment, reducing considerably the geographical and spatial limitations of didactics;

2) the second factor comes from the same phenomenon but seen from the perspective of the “outer world”. Internet has “democratized” access to knowledge and information (try to think of *Wikipedia* and *YouTube* among many others), with strong impact on the privileged position which academia held for centuries. Alternative *non-academic educational services* are flourishing, claiming to deliver the same results with less time and effort. Industry and tertiary sector, thanks to the new technologies, provide their own training without the need to collaborate with academia and even openly discouraging their employees to graduate.

3) we may think even the considerable *decline in the interest in humanities* as a result of the digital transformation. The pace with which the labor market of the new economy changes and requires updates of the qualification of the graduates, the early age in which digital natives can start working good jobs and studying as a “second occupation”, supported as well as by EU policies, coping with the aging of the population brought to a general economization of socio-culture life where liberal arts are dropped somewhere in the vacuum between work and leisure.

During our workshop we will find out to what extent such factors of change overlap with the idea of reform university in general and with the concrete fate of the ERUA universities during the last

decades. For 1) we may gather information about the organized efforts in all partner universities to provide skills and competences to researchers, students and staff for taking maximum advantage of the benefits of digital transformation. Thus one of the main targets of this call are the academics directly involved in providing theoretic courses, digital training and skills within the partner universities. We would like to open a long term collaboration since there are hi-tech labs in all partner universities like GameLab in Konstanz, Aegean FutureLabs, ArTeC in Paris 8, Digital media lab and Centre for Virtual Learning Technologies at RUC, our idea is to collect views on common research and practice interests and dedicate a panel to it. We will encourage the exchange of the most innovative and exiting practices in this field.

For 2) we plan to conduce a market research in Bulgaria of all commercial alternatives to the academic educational services, most of which offer interesting innovations in the employment of ICT and creative self promotion strategies from where our reform universities may get some useful ideas. The results of the survey will be presented in Sozopol. In case any of the partner universities is interested in involving students in marketing and branding in similar survey we are open to share and collaborate.

For 3) we invite mostly critical contributions from traditional humanities as philosophy, history, anthropology, but also from sociology and information sciences.

The Workshop will take place as part of the traditional for NBU *Early Fall School of Semiotics (EFSS)*, whose general topic is almost the same - “Digital Transformation of Higher Education: Semiotic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives” and with which we hope to establish important collaboration and synergies. This call concerns also papers for the EFSS which is open to ERUA members and will take place 6-10 September.

The workshop is organized by the ERUA Research Group as one of several ERUA activities within the Early Fall School of Semiotics. We also plan a workshop for students organized by the ERUA **Pedagogical Group** and a workshop for early career researchers organized by the ERUA **Research Support group**.

Deadline for abstracts and proposals (200-300 words, send to kbankov@nbu.bg): **10 May 2022**

All participants from the ERUA partner universities are **free of participation fee**.

For more information about ERUA visit <https://erua-eui.eu/>

No info yet for the accommodation, about the city of **Sozopol**: <https://bulgariatravel.org/sozopol/>

For more information about **New Bulgarian University**: <https://nbu.bg/en>