

PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 28 OCTOBER, AT NOON.

First RUN-EU General Assembly will take place in Ireland

Leiria, 28 October 2021

The first Regional University Network – European University’s (RUN-EU) General Assembly (GA) will be held in Ireland, at the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS), between 1 and 5 November. This high-level event will mark the first in-person RUN-EU meeting since the COVID-19 pandemic started in 2020.

The GA is a strategic governing body that acts as a senate for the alliance and as a venue for the RUN-EU Student Week. It meets once a year to discuss ways to improve cooperation between the seven higher education institution members and associated partners to achieve the goals of RUN-EU and cooperate towards the development of the associated regions.

This year, it will bring together the rectors/presidents of all RUN-EU higher education institution members, around 100 student representatives, 30 representatives from the Associated Partner Advisory Board, as well as 17 international experts from higher education, research and innovation, regional government, business and society. The Irish Minister of State Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science with responsibility for Skills and Further Education, Mr Niall Collins, will also be present at the General Assembly final meeting on Friday (5 November).

TUS President, Professor Vincent Cunnane said: ‘We are extremely proud to host the inaugural RUN-EU General Assembly here at TUS. The Assembly gives us the opportunity to showcase what the Midlands and Midwest of Ireland have to offer for international stakeholders. It is certainly a win for the region to host this event, and in a year where many industries and sectors have faced major challenges, it is clear TUS’s role in the RUN-EU network will bring many new opportunities for students, research, and industry in the region, particularly for SMEs. The network has been working hard to bring this assembly to fruition and enable staff, students and stakeholders involved in RUN-EU to meet and collaborate in person. Along with our 200 guests, we have 17 European partners of RUN EU-from across industry and government organisations in attendance’.

Speaking ahead of the event, Vice-President of Research, Development and Innovation at TUS, Dr Liam Brown said, 'We look forward to welcoming staff, students and many of our associated partners and regional government colleagues to Ireland. Included in the General Assembly will be four student-led short advanced challenge programmes, delivered during the week across the TUS campuses. RUN-EU promotes and develops joint student-centred, challenge and work-based flexible educational activities, through collaborative and innovative inter-university and interregional approaches to higher education, research and innovation generating new opportunities for industry and many other stakeholders in our regions'.

'We are also launching the RUN-EU+ Coordination and Support Action this week. This innovative project focuses on the development and deployment of collaborative professional practice-based research degrees in Future Industry and Sustainable Regional Development, the Bioeconomy and Social Innovation, across the RUN-EU alliance', he continued.

The President of the Polytechnic of Leiria, Mr Rui Pedrosa, said 'the GA will be a major opportunity for the RUN-EU higher education institutions and associated partners to reaffirm their commitment to the shared values and principles underpinning the RUN-EU mission'.

'I am delighted that our students, teachers, staff and associated partners will be able to meet in person for the first time and celebrate all the collaborative work and all the challenges we have been through during the last year. The engagement of 15 students from each RUN-EU university in the Student Advisory Board, as well in four short advanced programmes, will be a great achievement that will increase even more the cooperation within the alliance', added Mr Rui Pedrosa.

More than an opportunity to evaluate and decide on high-level policy issues, the GA will enable around 100 student representatives to take part in the RUN-EU Student Week and participate in four Short Advanced Programme (SAP) Challenges (Sustainable Development – Social Enterprise Challenge; Bioplastics Challenge; Eco-Innovate Challenge; and Food Challenge).

During the event, a RUN-EU Challenge Programme based on the SAPs will also be promoted. It consists in placing international teams of students from all universities of RUN-EU working as a group on a societal challenge related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and relevant to the region that is hosting the event. The RUN-EU Challenge Programme is jointly organised with regional stakeholders and government authorities and aims to find sustainable solutions for real societal issues. The results will then be presented to the RUN-EU community at the final General Assembly meeting on Friday (5 November).

RUN-EU General Assembly Agenda (1-5 November 2021) – [SEE ATTACHMENT](#)

The first two days of the event will focus on providing students with an immersive multicultural experience, that will engage them with the hosting region and other international colleagues and professors, during the SAP Challenges activities. Two of the SAPs will take place in Athlone, one in Limerick, and another in Thurles, meaning that students will be divided across TUS' three campuses between 1 and 4 November.

The programme of the General Assembly week also includes work meetings of the management teams of RUN-EU, as well as visits to TUS campuses (Athlone and Limerick) and relevant regional stakeholders (Limerick City and County Council Chamber Offices, Limerick School of Art and Design, Irish Bioeconomy Foundation, and CONFIRM).

The fourth day of the event will mark the first time RUN-EU presidents/rectors and associated partners will meet and engage in networking activities in the Athlone and Limerick campuses. The day will end with a reception gala dinner for all guests at the Strand Hotel, in Limerick.

On the last day, 5 November, the Student Advisory Board and the Associated Partner Advisory Board meetings will take place at the same time in different sites of the Limerick campus. This will be followed by a meeting of the RUN-EU presidents/rectors and associated partners, at the Limerick School of Art and Design Gallery and campus tours.

In the afternoon, the final General Assembly meeting will bring together the rectors/presidents of all RUN-EU university members, four elected representatives from the Associated Partner Advisory Board, elected members from the Student Advisory Board, as well as two international experts in the European higher education system. This meeting will feature the launch of a series of RUN-EU projects, such as the RUN-EU+, which is an R&I strategy that aims to reinforce academia-business collaboration in the RUN-EU focus areas (Future Industry and Sustainable Regional Development, the Bioeconomy and Social Innovation).

Several preventative measures have been put in place to ensure the health and safety of all participants in the event, according to the Irish government public health measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Editor's Note

The [Regional University Network – European University](#) (RUN-EU) is an alliance of seven like-minded higher education institutions drawn from all regions of Europe and established in 2020 under the [European Universities Initiative](#). It works collaboratively across languages and national frontiers to secure the sustainable economic, social, cultural, and environmental progress of our regions and stakeholders through education.

The seven higher education institutions that compose the alliance are the Polytechnic of Leiria (Portugal), the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (Ireland), the Polytechnic of Cávado and Ave (Portugal), the Häme University of Applied Sciences HAMK (Finland), the University of Győr – Széchenyi István University (Hungary), the NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences (The Netherlands), and the Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences (Austria). Overall, RUN-EU comprises a student population of more than 75,000 students and 97 research centres and groups spread across Europe.

RUN-EU's mission is to deliver future and advanced skills that will help students, researchers, academics, and partners successfully meet the challenges of the future, engage in societal transformation, and promote active citizenship, thereby leading to the creation of a new type of multinational interregional alliance, a European Zone for Interregional Development.

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