



Pécsi Tudományegyetem
University of Pécs



**WESTERN BALKANS
FORUM** on Higher Education
and Innovation

 studyportals

Venue: Kodály Centre, University of Pécs, Hungary

Date: October 8-9, 2026

Co-hosts: University of Pécs & Studyportals

Day 1: Strategic Vision & Regional Cooperation

Theme: *The Future of Higher Education in the Western Balkans: Integration, Innovation, and Internationalisation*

08:00–09:00 | Arrival & Registration

- Welcome coffee & informal networking

09:00–09:15 | Opening Ceremony

- **Host welcome:** Prof. Adrián Fábíán, Rector, University of Pécs

09:15–10:00 | Opening Keynote

Title: *Bridging Regions, Building Futures: The Role of Higher Education in Regional Integration*

- **Speaker:** Prof. Jo Ritzen (previously Dutch Minister for Education and Science, then President of Maastricht University, and is now the driving force behind 'Empower European Universities' (EEU))

10:00–11:00 | Panel 1 – Regional Leadership Dialogue

Topic: *From Aspiration to Accession: What Role Does Higher Education Play in EU Integration?*





- Format: Ministerial panel discussion
- Participants:
 - Katalin Kurucz, deputy state secretary, European Union and International Affairs, Ministry of Education and Child Affairs, Hungary
 - Prof. Jasna Durakovic, Minister of Education and Science, Bosnia and Herzegovina
 - Hajrulla Çeku, Minister of Education, Kosovo
 - Prof. Jo Ritzen former Minister of Education, the Netherlands
 - Moderator: Ferenc Németh, Senior Research Fellow, Hungarian Institute for Foreign Affairs

11:00–11:30 | Coffee Break

11:30–12:30 | Panel 2 – Global Trends & Regional Impact

Topic: *The Changing Landscape of International Higher Education: Challenges & Opportunities for the Western Balkans*

- Speakers:
 - Dr Gjergj Murra, executive director, Western Balkans Fund
 - Rob van Schaijk, Business Unit Manager UKI & EMEA at Studyportals
 - Prof. Dr Christos Michalakelis, President, Study in Greece
 - Moderator: Prof. István Tarrósy, University of Pécs





12:30–14:00 | Networking Lunch

14:00–15:15 | Parallel Workshops – Session I

Track A: Strategy & Policy

- *How Can Universities Strategically Prepare for EU Membership?*
 - Speakers:
 - Prof. Dr. Nermina Hadžigrahić, Vice-Rector for Digitalisation, University of Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina
 - Marija Filipović-Ožegović, Director of Foundation Tempus, Serbia
 - Danilo Popovich, project manager at Montenegro EU Project Consulting ,
 - Prof. Valentyna Yakubiv, Rector of the EDUC Alliance associated member from Ukraine, Vasil Stefanyk Carpathian National University
 - Moderator: Péter Tordai, director-general, Tempus Public Foundation, Hungary

Track B: Curriculum development

- *How to create locally relevant and globally competitive curriculum in the Western Balkans?*
 - Speakers:
 - Cara Skikne, Head of Sector Research and External Communications, Studyportals
 - Dr. Péter Merza, senior lecturer, University of Pécs Faculty of Business and Economics
 - Dr. Albina Balidemaj, Dean of Faculty, RIT Kosovo
 - Bálint Koós, vice-president of the European Student Union





Track C: Research & Innovation

- *Accessing Horizon Europe and Other EU Research Frameworks*
 - Speakers: Ms Réka Jankovics, Head of International Grants' Department, University of Pécs
 - Prof. Afrim Hoti, University of Prishtina, Kosovo
 - Prof. Ferenc Miszlivetz, founder and general director, iASK
 - Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes, director, House SSH (MSH Mondes), University Paris Nanterre
 - Moderator: Dr Ferenc Németh, lead researcher, Hungarian Institute of International Affairs

15:15–15:45 | Coffee Break

15:45–17:00 | Parallel Workshops – Session II – Innovation and Partnerships

Track A: Excellence from the Edge: What Makes a Regional University Globally Competitive?

- Speakers:
 - Carina Eriksson, Director of International Relations, Karlstad University, Sweden
 - Dr. Theodoros Papaioannou, Director-General, Study in Greece
 - Marko Delic, Head of Marketing, Dream!Apply
 - Moderator: Prof. Eszter Lukács, Vice President for Global Strategy, Széchenyi István University





Track B: The Role of Corporate Partnerships in 21st Century Higher Education

- Huawei
- KONČAR Group
- MVM Group
- Podravka
- Moderator: Dávid Siptár, director of Innovation Management and Economic Relations, University of Pécs

19:00 | Gala Dinner & Cultural Evening

Day 2: Collaboration & Practical Solutions

Theme: *Turning Dialogue into Action: Tools, Networks, and Partnerships*

09:00–10:00 | Fireside Chat

Topic: *The Future University in Central and Eastern Europe: Building and Dismantling the Ivory Pyramid*

- Participants:
 - Dr. Jody Jensen, senior research fellow at the Institute of Political Sciences at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences
 - Prof. Maurits Van Rooijen, Chief Executive (Academic), Global University Systems
 - Dr. Ivana Stepanovic, research fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies Köszeg, Hungary
 - Prof. Marko Hölbl, Vice-rector for Research and Arts, University of Maribor, Slovenia
 - Moderator: Dr István Vilmos Kovács, director for Learning and Teaching, Budapest Metropolitan University, Hungary





10:10–11:00 | Parallel Workshops – Session II

Track A: Institutional Development & Governance

- *From Bologna to Beyond: Quality Assurance & Governance Models*
- Speaker: Kathy Charles, Executive Director of Education, Quality, and Partnerships, Nottingham Trent University
- Moderator: Dr. Balázs Németh, Vice-president and Steering Committee member, European LifeLong Learning Platform and eucen Ambassador

Track B: University–Industry Collaboration

- *Skills & Innovation: How to Build Meaningful Public–Private Partnerships*
- Speaker: Prof. Florian Schweigert, former VP at University of Potsdam, CEO of BioAnalyst GmbH
- Moderator: Prof. József Betlehem, University of Pécs

Track C: Student Experience & Employability

- *International Student Support & Career Services: Making Regional Universities Competitive*
- Speaker: Ágnes Tóth, CEO of Prohuman
- Moderator: Dr Norbert Sipos, Associate Professor, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Pécs

11:00–11:30 | Coffee Break





11:30–12:30 | Panel 4 – Partnerships in Practice

Topic: *What Makes Regional and Cross-Border Partnerships Work?*

- Panelists:
 - Ana Nikolov, Head of AEBR Balkans Office
 - Prof. Asst. Dr Rozafa Basha, Vice rector for Internationalisation and Academic Exchange, University of Prishtina
 - Slavomir Rudenko, Vice President of the Executive Committee of the Compostela Group of Universities (CGU), Director for International Affairs, Pan-European University (Slovakia)
 - Prof. István Tarrósy, University of Pécs - Pécs' partnerships with the region

12:30–13:00 | Closing Session & Takeaways

- Summary of key insights from moderators
- Remarks by the co-hosts (Pécs & Studyportals)
- Launch or announcement of a possible joint initiative or working group

13:00 | Light Farewell Lunch & Departures

Parallel events:

- **Hungarian Rectors' Conference General Assembly**





“A Day of Indigenous Grape Varieties” Conference on Viticulture and Oenology in the Western Balkans

The role and prospects of Balkan and Pannonian autochthonous and new-generation (Piwi) varieties in future European wine markets

workshop on Viticulture and Oenology in the Western Balkans and Pannonia

Thursday, October 8

- **10:00-13:00 | Opening and Plenary Session** – together with the Main conference
- **13:00-14:00 | Lunch**

Venue: Kodály Centre, University of Pécs, Hungary

- **14:00-17:00 | The role and prospects of Balkan and Pannonian autochthonous and new-generation (piwi) varieties in future European wine markets workshop** – session 1

Chair: Dr Péter Teszlák, Research Director, University of Pécs Research Institute for Viticulture and Oenology

Venue: University Library, University of Pécs, Hungary

- **19:00-22:00 | Gala Dinner & Cultural Evening**
- **Venue:** Kodály Centre, University of Pécs, Hungary

Friday, October 9

- **9:00–11:00 | Visit to the University of Pécs Research Institute for Viticulture and Oenology**

Venue: RIVO Pázmány Péter street site, University of Pécs, Hungary

- **11:00-13:00 | The role and prospects of Balkan and Pannonian autochthonous and new-generation (piwi) varieties in future European wine markets workshop** – session 2

Chair: Dr Péter Teszlák, Research Director, University of Pécs Research Institute for Viticulture and Oenology

Venue: University of Pécs Wine Estate, Szentmiklós Hill

- **13:00-14:00 | Lunch**

Venue: University of Pécs Wine Estate, Szentmiklós Hill

14:00-18:00 | Pannonia meets Western Balkans – Public Wine Tasting

Venue: University of Pécs Wine Estate, Szentmiklós Hill

