



The European University of Post-Industrial Cities

Deliverable number: D1

Deliverable title: D1.1 Joint Vision UNIC2040

Due date: M3

Work package number: 1

Work package leader: EUR

Dissemination type: R

Dissemination level: PU

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Joint Vision UNIC2040

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Our Joint Vision on UNIC2040

As European University of Cities in Post-Industrial Transition (UNIC) we are united in our joint vision on revolutionizing education, research and impact towards 2040. Our vision is the foundation for our work towards innovative and transformative modes of collaboration between our ten universities and between our ten cities. Our vision is founded on our joint values which include doing science and providing education with impact and engagement in the context of our post-industrial cities, being open, inclusive and democratic towards the superdiverse populations of our cities and being transformative and innovative towards the future of higher education of Europe.

The joint Vision UNIC2040 is a living document that will guide future UNIC activities and impacts. It builds on the first Joint Mission Statement that UNIC's partners renewed in January 2023. As UNIC strengthens its foundations and commits to co-creation and agility in the face of new challenges and opportunities, this joint vision will be further refined and developed following our "whole-university" approach. Together with students, staff and (city) stakeholders, all represented in the UNIC Council, The Joint Vision UNIC2040 will grow alongside the alliance, and with its community. The document is subdivided into UNIC Shared Identity, UNIC Vision and UNIC Strategy.

Our UNIC shared identity: What is UNIC and which way do we go?

We are UNIC, an established European Alliance of ten universities based in cities in post-industrial transition with a mission to further boost development of knowledge and co-creation through collaboration, innovation and inclusion for societal impact and improvement.

UNIC's unique qualities index our ambitions: a bold geographical spread of locations across Europe, an inspiring shared post-industrial city legacy, our collaborative experience and the superdiverse nature of our staff and students, and our toolkits of co-creation and impact-creation within a changing urban environment. We share one identity as universities situated in cities in post-industrial transitions and committed to shaping the future of our cities.

Our UNIC approach not only works for our cities and the communities that make up our cities; UNIC is committed to being led by these communities and working with these communities to create open, democratic and engaged universities ready for the future of Europe. By 2040 UNIC will make sure that any student and any member of our staff or academic at our universities, has the opportunity to enjoy a unique European learning, working or researching experience. Our ambition is for our UNIC Campus to form the heart of a truly European innovative ecosystem that will help navigate Europe through its most urgent transitions.

By 2040, UNIC is characterised by:

- Being one University and one community, situated in cities with differing outcomes of post-industrial transition.
- Being even further committed to academic excellence and our shared ambition to create societal impact
- Celebrating the unity in superdiversity of our university staff, cities, and citizens; where accessibility, equity and inclusion are ensured for all.

In 2040 we will still be learning from each other, working together and establishing best practice for the resilient European Universities of the future.

The UNIC Vision

1. What is specific about UNIC Alliance work?

Our alliance is unique in its identity driven nature and its engagement with the transitions that our cities and our cities' communities are going through. By 2040, the UNIC Alliance aspires to be an example of synergies in research and education. UNIC will foster transformative modes of teaching, research, and learning that respond to the challenges, both residual and emergent, of post-industrial cities. Qua governance, UNIC will grow to become an entity, marked by deeply inter-connected services across the Alliance. The open and democratic nature of UNIC shall be represented not only in our governance structure but also in our engaged modes of operation, in engaged research as well as engaged education.

2. Vision on Education, Learning and Innovation

Everyone in our cities is a (potential) student and our students are our most unique form of impact. We will invest in innovative forms of education across all levels; we will invest in skills and talent pathways for staff and students, and we will offer pathways to lifelong learning. Students will be represented on all levels of UNIC governance – as a community, as stakeholders, and as an organisation working towards inclusive education for all; they are the change agents for the future of higher education in Europe. By 2040 we will have unlocked the potential of a European learning experience to all our students, regardless of their backgrounds, and tailored to their specific needs and aspirations.

3. Vision on different types of Mobility

By 2040, UNIC will have pioneered a number of sustainable and innovative approaches to physical and virtual mobility, fitting the needs of different groups. The intercultural or international “UNIC Experience” will be offered to all students and staff, adjusted to physical and learning ability and needs. We believe in a variation of mobility offerings to address the needs of ALL students, rather than a one size fits all. Our UNIC Campus will provide the foundation for various modes of physical as well as virtual mobility, in the form of joint programs as well as microcredentials, shared modules and any other form of mobility that is tailored to needs of our students and our cities. As part of the UNIC Campus, the Teaching and Learning Centre will play a key role in making our joint vision on educational innovation happen.

4. Vision on Research

Synergy between education and research is a key part of our UNIC approach. The current Thematic Lines will grow to become major interdisciplinary research and education focus areas throughout our universities, covering all major disciplines, and eventually forming European inter-university "UNIC faculties". UNIC will become an active research hub that brings innovation at the cross-over of disciplines, both through engaged research and in research- and challenged-based teaching. Students and teachers will play critical, integrated roles in ensuring the relevance and impact of UNIC's research agenda. By 2040 we will have shaped truly European collaborations in UNIC faculties, strengthening the joint

positioning of our universities and through engagement setting a model for the university of the future.

5. Vision on Cities

Working hand-in-hand with city institutions to develop student skills in change-making will become a standard in the university curriculum. UNIC will be fully established as a leader in regional engagement and as a true partner for the city, naturally involved in municipal activity. As an active research hub, UNIC will deliver innovation through inter-disciplinary research practice. A mutually co-operative relationship between the city and the UNIC Alliance allows a natural collaboration between societal partners and university experts, with a long-term commitment to serving local communities. As part of the UNIC Campus, the Center for City Futures will play a key role in making our joint vision on engagement and collaboration with and between our cities, happen. The Center for City Futures together with the UNIC faculties will work with our cities to help navigate Europe through some its most urgent transitions, including health and wellbeing, sustainability, resilience, strong institutions, arts and culture, superdiversity and entrepreneurial learning. By 2040 we will have established UNIC as a truly European innovative ecosystem for solutions to post-industrial transitions that apply to Europe more broadly.

6. Vision on European Policymaking

By 2040, UNIC does not only work on institutional transformation of European higher education institutions, but has a major say in Europe on how the single European Research and Education Area shall develop further. Each UNIC partner will offer its national institutions unique expertise on national policy and European policymaking. Together, UNIC partners co-lead and co-create change in Europe, in close coordination with other Alliances.

7. Vision on Global Engagement

UNIC work and values will spread globally through education partnerships, funding of research, informal academic interactions, overseas visits and international conferences, exchange of data, information, research materials and equipment, hosting of short and long-term visitors and recruitment of staff and students. The Alliance is open to new like-minded partners and non-European associate partners sharing the approach, values and collaborative principles of UNIC. The UNIC Alliance will take a responsible approach to global engagement. By 2040 UNIC shall have formed a global partnership around challenges that we all have in common, including sustainability, resilience, learning, health, diversity, art and justice.

Our strategy: UNIC in 2040 - how do we get there?

The strategy to implement the Joint Vision UNIC2040 is built around three main pillars: Education, Research, and Societal Impact & Engagement. United as a well-established European Alliance of ten universities, we possess a strong foundation to achieve these ambitions together.

1. Developing and embedding the 'UNIC Campus', consisting of three UNIC Centres:

- UNIC Teaching and Learning Centre, a space to develop new ways of innovative, collaborative international teaching.

- UNIC Centre for City Futures, the societal engagement infrastructure of UNIC to engage with cities, communities and stakeholders to accomplish societal impact.
- UNIC Capacity Building Centre, facilitating different professional communities within ten universities to bind their forces for the development of UNIC.

The UNIC Campus will host our collaborative and support structures and spread our methods of practice. It will function as an umbrella portal for student, staff and researcher engagement. Completely interlinked and integrated with the 10 local UNIC campuses, the Campus will work closely with their learning, teaching, research and administration. Thereby it will become an engine of innovation around teaching and learning, research, superdiversity and city futures. This will set a model for the emergent landscape of European education and research.

2. **Setting up UNIC Council.** The UNIC Council will be set as a source of initiatives for UNIC leadership and management bodies. The Council, including representatives from students, cities, staff and researchers, will have a central role in the design of the UNIC Campus as well as in connecting the UNIC Campus to the broader intra-university collaboration.
3. **Establishing UNIC Faculties,** based on thematic lines developed around post-industrial transitions. These faculties will contribute to research as well as education and will form the hubs around which our universities will engage with each other, our cities and the communities that make up our cities.
4. **Awareness raising on the common vision,** for example through internal communication but also alignment with the strategic frameworks of all universities and cities. This includes engaging the UNIC community with the common vision, through the organisation of meetings and conferences.
5. **Building on the resources and networks of UNIC** on an ongoing basis to leverage success and deliver a multiplier effect.