



Association for European Life Science Universities Rectors and Deans Forum 2023

COMMUNIQUÉ

Life Sciences Universities connecting the One Health Challenge with Carbon Neutrality and Biodiversity

“One Health is the integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment are closely linked and interdependent” (WHO/WOAH/FAO/UNEP). Since the COVID-19-pandemic, One Health has risen in importance on the global policy agenda, although it is a concept that has been framed for many years, for instance see the Manhattan Principles on “One World One Health” [2004]. One Health is closely related to several of the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations for 2030. With the establishment of the European Health Union (EHU) and the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), with the implementation of the Green Deal, inc. the Farm-to-Fork strategy, and with the allocation of a substantial amount of RTD-funding within its Horizon Europe programme, the European Commission is recognizing the importance and urgency of ensuring One Health in the EU and the world.

The Rectors, Deans and Senior Management of the Association for European Life Science Universities (ICA) at our annual Forum, held in Lille, France on 19 and 20 October 2023, addressed the challenges for academia to contribute effectively in achieving healthy people and healthy animals in a healthy shared environment. This was undertaken by recognising:

- The intrinsic links of the One Health challenge with the themes that ICA covered in its previous fora, i.e. food systems and the climate crisis addressed in 2021 and the alarming loss of biodiversity in agro- and ecosystems which was addressed in 2022;
- That university education, research and innovation are vital pillars for the transition to societies for which One Health is guaranteed, the climate is stabilised and the biodiversity loss is reversed.

I, Maria Knutson Wedel, President of ICA, on behalf of our Members pledge to political leaders, societal influencers, businesses, and the general public that:

- We will share our understanding of the components of One Health, their interrelationships inc. those with climate and biodiversity, their trends and dynamics and their functional significance for the sustainability of the global and local societies;
- We will combine fundamental research on One Health with a quest for nature-based solutions, contributing to health of people and animals, to the conservation, restoration

and enhancement of biodiversity along with climate neutrality and sustainable food production in a circular bioeconomy;

- We will offer to our students – the professionals and decision makers of the future – interdisciplinary education so that they can internalise available understanding of the need, means and paths for society to achieve One Health, to stabilise the climate and restore biodiversity in terrestrial and marine ecosystems;
- We will continue to protect and enhance the environmental health and biodiversity of our own life science university grounds, campuses and other estates, for them to become enlightening examples and teaching tools for One Health, climate neutrality, biodiversity and nature-based solutions;
- We will continue and enhance active collaboration with WHO, WAHO, FAO, UNEP, IPBES, IPPC, EC and with economic and societal sectors and actors in our regions across Europe. We will engage with the marine, agrifood, forestry, and biobased industries, to stimulate and implement concrete behavioural and institutional changes to effectively advance the transition to healthy, biodiverse and climate neutral societies.

Signed by

Maria Knutson Wedel, President of ICA and Rector of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden

2 February 2024

The **Association for European Life Science Universities (ICA)** has a membership of more than 50 European universities or faculties from more than 29 European countries, whose main interests are in the areas of primary production (crop and animal husbandry, forestry), food production and consumption, food safety and security, the bio-based sector, natural resources, climate change, biodiversity and the environment, rural development and, increasingly, human health. ICA and its members aim to jointly play an essential role in transitioning to a European and global sustainable bioeconomy and society.

(see www.ica-europe.info)

For more information contact Dr Rasa Pakeltiene, ICA Secretary General and Dr Simon Heath, ICA Deputy Secretary General

ICASecretariat@ica-europe.org