

Farewell Manfred Horvat, crp Coordinator 1981-2022

The conference was initiated by a small group of rectors in 1980 because they found that a special forum for universities of technology was necessary as the general European Rectors Conference (CRE) was not the adequate frame for discussing the specific problems of universities of technology. At that time, universities of technology were confronted with the conflict around nuclear energy and the problems of technology acceptance by the general public. In connection with these issues universities of technology faced a substantial reduction in the numbers of young people choosing engineering studies.

The conference was established as an informal forum without administrative structure and it kept that characteristic over the years¹.

Since 1980, the conference took place at host universities of technology located in seventeen European countries – forty EU member states and Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

Over the years, the focus of the conference changed in accordance with new developments and challenges. A rough clustering of the conference topics provides an overview about priority issues that were addressed over the years:

- Different aspects of complex challenges and interdisciplinarity: 9 conferences;
- University leadership, structural changes, performance evaluation: 6 conferences;
- European and international cooperation, university alliances: 6 conferences;
- Education, life-long learning, research: 5 conferences;
- University-industry cooperation, innovation: 5 conferences;
- Technology assessment, ethics: 2 conferences;
- Digitalization, the networked university: 2 conferences;
- The university and regional development, the university in the political arena: 1 conference each.

The conference's long-term viability as a totally informal institution provides evidence of the interest of university leaders in appropriate spaces for "loading their batteries" by expert input, nurturing individual contacts, communication and exchange, joining for reflection and brainstorming, and mutual learning.

The format of the conference has proven successful: keynote lectures by topical experts, presentations of university leaders, and an attractive social programme supporting individual interaction and exchange.

¹ The acronym "crp" was proposed by former ETH Rector Konrad Osterwalder in 2007.

Networks of university rectors and presidents are the backbone of the European Research and Higher Education Area. The conference supports strengthening existing contacts as well as forging new cooperation and institutional alliances, - building the Europe of knowledge, ideas and common values. In that context, the European RTD Framework Programmes had an enormous impact. The conference started in 1980 some years before the 1st Research Framework Programme (FP1) was launched. European cooperation in research and innovation and also in education became a recurrent topic accompanying the conference directly or indirectly.

Transnational collaboration between universities and between universities and industry and other societal actors is one of Europe's unique strengths and competitive advantages on a global scale. University rectors and presidents play key roles developing and safeguarding appropriate personal and institutional environments supporting these collaborations.

It has been a great pleasure and honor for me to serve the community of rectors and presidents of European universities of technology for more than forty years since 1981. I highly appreciate the long-term interest of university leaders in the conference. After forty years and after the retirement of the long-term coordinator, there are clear signals from conference participants supporting the continuation of the conference and welcoming the new crp coordinator.

The new crp Coordinator is
Prof. Harald Kainz, TU Austria:
harald.kainz@tuaustria.ac.at

The new crp website is:
<https://www.tuaustria.ac.at/crp>

With best wishes,
Prof. Manfred Horvat, TU Wien, Austria
crp Coordinator 1981-2022