



## International Days

4-6 december 2019



Dear partners,  
 Dear guest speakers,  
 Dear visitors, students and staff,

Welcome to the 2nd edition of the Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences International Days.

Welcome to Cine Palace. A movie theatre. Where happy endings rule. Can you imagine a better place to dream up a brighter future for the world?

Indeed, the topic we have chosen for this year's edition will shape that future. The quest for sustainability cuts across all disciplines. It shouldn't stop at national borders. And above all, it should result in solutions built to last.

Precisely because this debate has to be carried across nations and generations, I am pleased with your presence here today:

- the presence of 90 guest lecturers representing partner institutions from 20 different countries.
- the presence of students and staff, always keen on gathering and sharing knowledge.

Thank you all for being here; welcome.

Sustainability is all about today and tomorrow. But it emerged on the public agenda yesterday. The concept dates back to 1968 and the Club of Rome, a foundation of scientists who shouted out their concerns for the downsides of economic growth.

The Club of Rome marked the birth of more holistic approaches to investigate the state of the world. It aims to:

- unify quantitative and qualitative points of view.
- reveal the interconnectedness of global evolutions and challenges.
- raise awareness for social, cultural and environmental consequences of economic growth. Because, how do you measure or judge 'progress' without looking at that bigger picture?

Many of us have come to know this philosophy as 'people, planet, profit' - or 'people, planet, prosperity'.

To alter the way billions of people look at the planet, the way we interact with it and with each other, is a daunting task. Perhaps the biggest in history. Not many systems or tools are up to it.

But there is one in particular which fits the part: education.

Education is the biggest incubator in the world. It creates, upgrades and disseminates ideas, skills and values from small communities to vast continents.

Precisely because of this vast potential for change, we must think before we act. With great power comes great responsibility. Yes, the education community needs to get into the action. Yet, we must remain independent and true to scientific approaches. That is the path we must follow to exercise impact on contemporary issues, such as social injustice, poverty and environmental degradation.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), adopted in 2015, may serve as a compass on this path. In a way, they carry the heritage of the Club of Rome.

The framework of 17 specific yet interrelated goals to be realized by 2030, includes climate action, decent work and economic growth strategies.

SDG 4 focuses on the objective to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

But it is clear that the success of all 17 SDG's depends on the ability to break through borders of existing knowledge and walls between disciplines.

Let me briefly point out 5 keys in which we at the Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences believe to make a difference to drive the SDG's forward:

1. **Inclusive education:** more than any other of our colleagues in Flanders, we excel in offering youngsters from vulnerable social backgrounds opportunities to rise above themselves. Personal coaching, language support and a strong commitment to quality are key to achieving this. Still, much talent falls through the mazes for so many reasons, as we will see later on in the opening ceremony.

2. **Community Service Learning:** learning by doing good, is learning by experiencing the difference your educational program can make out there. This approach lays out a pragmatic path to the development of people and society. The diverse Brussels region is well suited for this blend of theory and practice.
3. **Fostering interdisciplinary culture:** our day and age is marked by so-called 'wicked problems'. These complex problems transcend classical scientific disciplines, so they need to be tackled through the joined force of many perspectives, including art. With our two Schools of Arts, the Royal Institute for Theatre, Cinema and Sound and the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, we aim at developing as much crossovers as possible with the exact, health and social sciences.
4. **Public engagement:** the ivory tower is not for us. We engage with community based organizations and the business sector to define and optimize the societal relevance and impact of our applied research agenda.
5. **Sow small seeds:** more informally designed projects, such as the launch of an ECO-team, composed of students, teachers and staff, leads to incremental but significant progress in the sustainability of processes in our organisation.

What holds at the organizational level, is all the more true at the international level. Nobody is going to solve everything on his or her one.

The lonely scientist in his or her laboratory still exists perhaps, but he or she needs all the other scientists - and artists as you have heard me proclaim.

This is the main *raison d'être* for these International Days. To strengthen partnerships and involvement. I am proud that you are all here.

And I am proud to present you our keynote speaker. He has been fascinating generations of people: as a writer, a politician and as an opinion leader.

- He was Minister of Economic Affairs and vice prime minister of the Dutch government from 1981 to 1982.
- His books have been read by millions of youngsters and adults.
- One of his most recent appearances on a famous Dutch talk show resulted in a monologue that went viral all over social media. You may guess twice what the topic was.

Ladies and gentlemen, your warm and sustained applause for Dr. Jan Terlouw.