

Opnunarávarp rektors Háskóla Íslands, Jóns Atla Benediktsson, forseta Aurora, á þingi Aurora í Tarragona, 16. nóvember 2021

myndband – birt á fundi Aurora í Tarragona, Spáni

Dear academics, students, colleagues and friends,

As the President of Aurora and rector of the University of Iceland it is my pleasure to send you this message for the opening of the 11th Aurora biannual hosted by our partners at the University of Rovira I Virgili.

Unfortunately, I am not able to be with you there in person due to the COVID situation in Iceland, but I am thrilled that so many of Aurora's students and staff and associated partners are attending this important conference both physically as well as virtually.

I am very excited about the programme that our colleagues in Tarragona have prepared for us these next two days and I am certain that this will be a fruitful biannual that will allow us to further shape and implement our shared vision and strategy.

We are now one year into the EU funded Aurora European Universities programme and we should take this moment in time to celebrate what we have collectively achieved this first year, both within the alliance as well as within the wider Aurora community.

But let's face it – paving the way for a new type of cooperation between universities in the global higher education landscape with ambitious and complex deliverables is not easy - even in normal circumstances where day to day decisions are not made in the context of a global pandemic.

The hard work and dedication I have witnessed from the staff and students working in Aurora during these challenging times makes me absolutely convinced that the Aurora cooperation will continue to thrive and create more opportunities for the benefit of our students and staff as well as wider society.

This is also the right time to take stock of where we are and the lessons learnt this past year, identify the main challenges ahead of us and proactively address them by enhancing and aligning our strategies across Aurora Universities.

I am grateful that representatives from the European Commission have agreed to support us in this endeavour during the Presidents Strategy Session and I hope that the various working groups and task teams will also take the opportunity during the next two days to have discussions across the different groups and Aurora themes and to find ways to further align their efforts and strategies.

We should of course keep in mind that Aurora goes beyond the three-year EU funds we have been awarded to us so far.

Aurora is about creating a new paradigm for higher education, research and innovation focusing on how we can best serve our societies that are going through fundamental changes and facing complicated challenges.

I welcome the high-level debate with experts and students on defining the characteristics of the Aurora Graduate of the future.

Additionally, I welcome the dedicated sessions where students will share their vision and ideas for what the universities of the future should look like which they have crafted together during the Aurora Student Design Jam over the weekend.

I truly believe that the high level of involvement of students in the work of Aurora is a critical factor in ensuring our long-term success.

Finally, I am very proud that our EU funded Research and Innovation cooperation strand, which is being led by the University of Iceland, is formally kicking-off here in Tarragona.

This gives Aurora a significant boost as a cooperation platform that truly embodies the knowledge “square”: Education, Research, Innovation and Service to Society.

Dear Aurora partners, I wish you an excellent Biannual with useful discussions, constructive debates and new ideas on how we move forward together – with the friendly and fun atmosphere that has always characterized Aurora since the founding of the Network back in 2016.