36th EURASHE Annual Conference

Call for contributions

Background

The 36th EURASHE Annual Conference provides an international platform to discuss the **latest policy developments** in the higher education sector. It attracts a diversity of delegates – institutional leaders, practitioners, policy-makers, researchers and students – from the education community across Europe and beyond. The 2027 theme **"Applied Sciences in a Changing World: Transforming education, research and innovation in the era of AI"** asks what role practice-based higher education and research should play as technological changes reshape work, learning, knowledge and society.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant prospect, but a working reality. AI systems are already changing how professionals design, build, teach, and decide, and how knowledge is produced, shared, and valued. For higher education, the question is no longer whether AI will matter, but **which knowledge, skills, and forms of judgement remain distinctively human and valuable** when information and routine analysis become abundant and inexpensive.

In this context, the defining strengths of applied higher education take on renewed significance. Universities of Applied Sciences and similar HEIs are known for work-based learning and close partnerships with employers and communities, and they conduct research that starts from real-world problems and is tested in practice. These are precisely the settings in which AI is adopted, adapted and evaluated – in workplaces, public services, laboratories and living labs, rather than in the abstract. Applied institutions are therefore well placed not only to **prepare graduates for AI-rich professions**, but also to **help regions, SMEs and public organisations use these technologies responsibly and productively**.

The transition also raises difficult questions. If AI can generate essays, code and analyses, how should competence be assessed, and what does academic integrity mean? How can we ensure that practical, embodied and tacit knowledge – developed through doing, reflection and supervised practice – is strengthened rather than hollowed out? How can applied research use AI to accelerate innovation while upholding ethics, transparency and a commitment to human-centric AI? And how can HEIs and regions with fewer resources avoid being left behind by a new digital divide?

Content of contributions

The conference starts from a simple proposition: **technology is changing more rapidly than ever, and higher education needs to respond**. In the era of AI, the value of higher education will increasingly be

measured by its capacity to connect knowledge with action – to develop graduates, research and innovation that make a demonstrable difference in professional practice and in society. Within this context, EURASHE is accepting **contributions to breakout sessions** addressing the key question of the Annual Conference:

How can practice-based education and applied research best respond to technological change, and how must applied higher education institutions themselves transform to remain relevant to learners, the world of work and society?

Contributions can be based on both theory and practice, and may address – but are not limited to – the following three strands:

Strand 1 – Transforming practice-based education

- Redesigning curricula, work-based learning and internships for AI-augmented professions;
- Developing AI literacy, critical judgement and ethical reasoning in students and staff;
- Strengthening the practical, interpersonal and tacit skills – care, craft, communication, collaboration – that technology cannot replace;
- Upskilling, reskilling, and micro-credentials for lifelong learners in a changing labour market.

Strand 2 – Applied research in the era of AI

- AI as a tool in practice-oriented research: opportunities, limitations and good practice;
- Co-creating research with enterprises, public authorities and communities to test and adapt AI in real settings (living labs, testbeds, pilots);
- Research ethics, data governance, transparency and trustworthy AI in applied research;
- Demonstrating the impact of practice-based research on professional practice, and feeding results back into teaching.

Strand 3 – Innovation, institutions and society

- HEIs as hubs for AI and digital transformation, particularly for SMEs and the public sector;
- Institutional strategies, leadership and governance for AI, including infrastructure, partnerships and investment;
- Inclusion, equity and access: preventing new digital divides between learners, HEIs and regions;
- Changing academic professions: staff roles, development and the lecturer-practitioner;
- Quality assurance, recognition and policy frameworks for AI-enabled applied higher education.

Session format

Proposed sessions should:

- Be a maximum of 45 minutes (including presentation and Q&A with the audience);

- Target an audience of higher education leaders and policy-makers;
- Be interactive and foster participant engagement (e.g. Mentimeter, Miro, Slido, …).

Selection process

Contributions are reviewed by a Programme Committee composed of representatives from EURASHE member institutions. The names of Committee members are published on the conference webpage. The Committee evaluates submitted contributions according to the following criteria:

- Quality of the submitted proposal (writing style, structure, ideas presented clearly, etc.);
- Relevance to the conference theme, research question and topics;
- Participant engagement.

Application

The lead presenter and applicant must be from a member of EURASHE, which if selected will benefit from a fee waiver and two nights paid accommodation in Vilnius. Other named presenters may be from non-member institutions and will benefit from a discount on the conference fee.

- Submission deadline: **15 December 2026 EOB**
- Successful applicants will be notified by: **22 January 2027**

To submit your contribution, download and complete the dedicated form. Send to events@eurashe.eu in **PDF format** with the subject **"AC36 Call for contributions"**. Questions about the call can be directed to the same email address. Incomplete forms will not be accepted.