

Nomination of Sunniva Whittaker to the EUA Board

25.04.2025

On behalf of the Nordic university rectors' conferences, we are pleased to nominate Dr. Sunniva Whittaker, Chair of Universities Norway (UHR), for election to the Board of the European University Association (EUA).

Sunniva Whittaker brings to this role a strong commitment to the European university sector, coupled with extensive leadership experience at institutional, national, and European levels. She has served as rector of the University of Agder (UiA) since 2019 and was re-elected for the period 2023–2027. As rector, she chairs the university board and represents UiA in a broad range of national and international fora. She is regularly consulted by industry and government at local, regional, and national levels on matters related to higher education and research.

Under rector Whittaker's leadership, UiA joined the European University Alliance FORTHEN, enhancing the university's international collaboration and engagement within the European higher education landscape.

From 2021 to 2023, she served as Chair of Universities Norway (UHR), representing all Norwegian higher education institutions in national and European policy processes. She is now in her second term, which extends through 2025.

Sunniva Whittaker is currently a member of the EUA Advisory Board for the development of the Association's new strategic plan. Her contributions in this context reflect her deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing European universities and her commitment to EUA's long-term vision.

Throughout her academic and leadership career, Sunniva Whittaker has emphasized student engagement, high-quality research environments, and strong partnerships with society. Under her leadership, UiA has further developed its model of co-creating knowledge in collaboration with business and public institutions. She is a strong advocate for interdisciplinary collaboration and for strengthening the societal impact of research and higher education.

Trained as a linguist, she holds a PhD in French linguistics from the University of Bergen. She is fluent in several languages and also trained as a conference interpreter. Her academic background spans French, literature, Russian, and cultural studies, and she has held positions as dean, pro-rector, and head of department at UiA and the Norwegian School of Economics. Her broad disciplinary and institutional experience has given her a unique perspective on university leadership, knowledge production, and international collaboration.

In 2024 and 2025, Sunniva Whittaker is chairing the Nordic University Association (NUS). She has played a leading role in strengthening Nordic cooperation and has led initiatives such as the Nordic University Days in Brussels, which foster dialogue between Nordic universities and EU policymakers. Her cultural competence, strategic insight, and inclusive leadership style make her an outstanding candidate for the EUA Board.

We are confident that her experience and vision will contribute meaningfully to EUA's mission and to the collective advancement of European higher education and research.

We respectfully ask EUA members to support her candidacy.

Sincerely,

NUS Chair Hanne Leth Andersen, Universities Denmark

Chair Ilkka Niemelä, The Council of Rectors of Finnish Universities (Unifi)

Chair Jón Atli Benediktsson, The Icelandic Rectors' Conference

Chair Hans Adolfsson, The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF) Secretary

General Nina Sandberg, Universities Norway (UHR)