

Special Issue Call for Papers

Journal: *Triple Helix*

Call for papers — “The New Social Contract for HEIs: Exploring their Role in European Innovation Ecosystems”

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“The New Social Contract for HEIs: Exploring their Role in European Innovation Ecosystems”

This Special Issue (SI) is a collaboration of the Triple Helix Journal with the [Start for Future Alliance](#), the fastest growing university-ecosystem to drive responsible entrepreneurship and systemic innovation. In recent years, we have witnessed a radical shift in the perception of universities as mere knowledge producers and providers. Today, universities are recognized as catalysts for social, economic, and technological development, and as key drivers of innovation and progress. The road forward for universities to become truly essential actors in driving deep tech innovation and sustainable transformation within their ecosystems requires pathways that are open to influences and exchanges within institutions, between institutions and between entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems. Accordingly, universities and HEIs need to take on a new role - one in which they lead the navigation of these pathways. This Special Issue will bring together state-of-the-art research that delves into the multifaceted dimensions of this new role.

From examining university-industry collaborations and entrepreneurship ecosystems to investigating the societal impact of academic research and education, the contributions in this SI will offer valuable insights into the transformative power of universities in shaping our collective future. Thematically entitled “The New Social Contract for HEIs: Exploring their Role in European Innovation Ecosystems”, the SI will address the new role of Higher Education Institutions within the triple helix model in the face of challenges posed by climate change, disruptive digitalization and demographic changes. By focussing on the role of HEIs in the knowledge triangle, we will offer empirical evidence for the transition towards a “sustainable entrepreneurial university” (Cai & Ahmad, 2023) from the perspective of HEIs. By opening a space for scholarly discussion to further evidence university-led societal transformation, we

will present readers with different perspectives on how to implement transformative processes within their institutions. In this SI, we offer theoretical models and evidence of effective practices that have led to such transformations.

This SI will address a range of issues relevant to the theme of the new social contract for HEIs and their role in European innovation ecosystems. We invite both conceptual and empirical research papers that contribute to advancing knowledge about how this new social contract can be operationalised and how universities and HEIs can effectively engage their regional innovation ecosystem. The SI addresses content in line with the approach defined in the Partnerships for Regional Innovation (PRI), where universities have a unique position at the crossroads of education, research, innovation, serving society and economy, through knowledge transfer and sharing in their innovation ecosystems, by localising SDG-related challenges and embedding them in Smart Specialisation Strategies (Pontikakis et al., 2022). Thus, open educational practices play an essential role, creating a communication route between what is produced ‘inside the university’ to the world ‘out there’; this includes businesses, local authorities and citizens (Pontikakis et al., 2022).

Accordingly, we invite papers covering, but not limited to, the following topics:

- The move away from education toward sustainable innovation
- Defining innovation ecosystems from the perspective of HEIs
- Pathways to HEI transformation - in developed and underdeveloped regions
- The role of academia in supporting the exploration of new and emerging technologies within their ecosystem
- Exploring the influence of HEIs’ internal governance models on their ecosystem activities and impact
- Institutional and contextual influences on HEI’s new social contract and their role within their ecosystem
- The HEI’s new role in addressing SDG challenges, and in their S3/S4, in line with the PRI approach
- Measuring the social and environmental impact of HEIs within and beyond their ecosystem
- The complexity of internal and external challenges to the new social contract agenda
- The entrepreneurial university - its entrepreneurial journey, activities and challenges
- The role of entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial staff members
- Stakeholder engagement - stakeholders’ role in the innovation ecosystem
- Drivers of innovation

The SI guest editors welcome robust qualitative or quantitative studies that cover individual universities/HEIs and their specific geographic context/innovation ecosystem, as well as those dealing with multiple contexts/ecosystems or those critically comparing different universities/HEIs in different contexts/countries. Papers adopting novel empirical methodological approaches or systematic literature review techniques are especially welcome, as are those offering insights into regions typically underrepresented in published scholarship within this field. Papers should clearly articulate their core research question and theoretical lens, as well as their intended contribution to the field.

Submitted papers should not have been previously published nor be currently under consideration for publication elsewhere. The timeline of the special issue is as follows.

- Sep 30, 2023: Expression of interest, abstract (optional) (around 500 words) submission by email to the guest editors for consideration in the special issues.

- Nov 15, 2023: Acceptances/Rejections, Guest editors provide recommendations for further paper development.
- Jun 30, 2024: Submission of the full article manuscript. The final submission will be managed through the standard submission systems for external review of the journal. The finally accepted paper will be first published online.
- Late 2024/early 2025: Publication of the special issue.

References (Further Readings)

Cai, Y., & Ahmad, I. (2023) From an Entrepreneurial University to a Sustainable Entrepreneurial University: Conceptualization and Evidence in the Contexts of European University Reforms. *Higher Education Policy* 36, 20–52. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-021-00243-z>

Pontikakis, D., Vazquez, I., Bianchi, G., (2022) Partnerships for Regional Innovation Playbook, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2760/775610>