

From Emergency to Ecosystem

Designing Belonging for Learners from Crisis Contexts

Friday, 20 March 2026

Venue: University of Lisbon (Reitoria – Alameda da Universidade, 1649-004)

DRAFT PROGRAMME (Subject to change)

08:30 – 09:00 | Arrival & Energising Coffee ☕

Gallery Walk: “Belonging Across the Student Journey”

A visual walk-through of learner pathways into, through, and beyond higher education — highlighting where belonging is enabled, and where systems fall out of alignment.

09:00 – 09:15 | Welcoming Remarks

Welcoming remarks by

- Luís Ferreira, Rector of the University of Lisbon
- Vera Egreja Barracho, Board member of AIMA (Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum)
- Joaquim Mourato – Director-General of Higher Education (DGES (tbc))
- Ana Santos Pinto, Chair of the Board of Nexus 3.0

09:15 – 09:35 | Opening Conversations

Designing Belonging: From Emergency to Ecosystem

Why this conversation now? Introductory remarks by

- António Vitorino, President of the National Council for Migration and Asylum

Short keynote reflections exploring the case of higher education

- What higher education has achieved in expanding access
- Why belonging is central to student success and retention
- Why progress toward 15by30 requires ecosystem design, not only expansion

By

- António Sampaio da Nóvoa, former Rector of the University of Lisbon (Portugal)
- Helen Maher, Vice-President for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion of the Galway University (Ireland)
- Svein Stolen, Chairman of Global University Academy (Norway)

Moderation by

09:35 – 10:30 | Perspectives from the Ecosystem


What Makes Belonging Possible — and What Makes It Hard

Lightning talks (6 × 6 minutes)

Each speaker responds to:

“What would make belonging easier to design and sustain?”

- Students & alumni from a crisis context – Anastasiia (Ukraine) and Aziza (Afghanistan)
- Higher Education Institution –
- Mental health and wellbeing specialist – José Carlos Rocha, CESPU
- Employer or private-sector partner – Sandra Aparício, GALP Foundation (tbc)
- Public or policy representative –
- International Cooperation – Annick Suzor-Weiner, Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie -AUF (France)

 No live Q&A — participants capture insights and questions on reflection cards (used later in labs)

10:30 – 11:00 | Break & Cross-Sector Connections

Participants receive colour-coded badges (sector + lived experience)

Facilitated prompts:

- “Who do you need to work with more closely?”
- “What do you control that others could build on?”

11:00 – 12:30 | Design Labs I

Designing Pathways to Belonging

Participants choose one lab (parallel sessions, up to 20 people each):

1) Inclusive Admissions & Recognition

Credentials, recognition, alternative evidence, flexible entry points, and bridging mechanisms

Facilitator and Co-Facilitator: Cati Jerez, University of Barcelona, Spain, and Inês Espada Vieira, Catholic University of Portugal (tbc)

2) Belonging as a Core Function

Language, peer connection, discrimination, participation, isolation, student voice

Facilitator and Co-Facilitator: Dalia Sendra, Nexus 3.0 & Alexandre Teixeira, Focus Humanitarian Assistance Portugal

3) Wellbeing Across the Student Journey

Beyond crisis response: long-term support, trust, cultural safety, continuity

Facilitator and Co-Facilitator: Olga Cunha, Nova University Lisbon (tbc) & Ana Nunes, Nexus 3.0

4) From Learning to Employment

Internships, employer engagement, skills recognition, transitions, bias, and access

Facilitator and Co-Facilitator: Sónia Pereira, Adviser to Nexus 3.0 & Carolina Monteiro, Portuguese Association for Diversity and Inclusion (APPDI)

5) Financing Pathways & Transitions

Who pays for access, continuity, and belonging — and how models can be sustained

Facilitator and Co-Facilitator: Andrew Flaus, University of Galway & Bárbara Borrego, IOM, Portugal (tbc)

6) Strengthening the Path to 15by30

Scaling access through systems of belonging: enrolment, retention, institutional capacity, sustainability.

Facilitator and Co-Facilitator: Marianne Kanrud, Global University Academy, Norway & representative of UNHCR

Each lab identifies:

- One practice to strengthen
- One system element to redesign
- One pilot idea with potential for testing within 12 months

12:30 – 13:30 | Lunch with Purpose

Optional themed tables for continued discussion and cross-sector connection

13:30 – 15:00 | Design Labs II

From Insights to Pilots

Participants return to labs to develop a concrete proposal, including:

- Target group and context
- What makes this approach different
- Who needs to be involved
- What can be tested within 12 months
- What commitment is needed today

Output format:

- 1-page proposal **or**
- 3-minute pitch

15:00 – 15:15 | Break & Proposal Gallery

Participants visit proposals across labs and leave comments/questions

15:15 – 16:15 | Plenary

Pilots for Belonging: Pitch, Build, Commit

Each lab presents (3 minutes)

Live responses and commitments from:

- universities
- funders
- policymakers
- employers
- partners

Commitment types may include:

- funding interest

- pilot hosting
- policy follow-up
- student co-design involvement
- partnership offers

16:15 – 17:00 | Closing Session

From Conversation to Ecosystem

Short closing reflections on

- What insight are you taking with you?
- What will you approach differently?
- What is one concrete commitment you can make?

By an inspiring speaker (tbc).

Flash wrap-up by

- Gabriela Agatiello, Share HERCoN Coordinator – ICMC Europe- Share Network (tbc)
- Ana Nunes, Vice-president of Nexus 3.0

Participants are invited to sign a Commitment Wall to capture next actions.

This Conference is part of the Share HERCoN project, which is dedicated to creating sustainable pathways for refugees to access higher education (HE) across the European Union. For further information, please see <https://nexus3.pt/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/HERCoN-Erasmus-project-Summary.pdf>.

