Press Release

EUPRIO Conference at the University of Mannheim: 180 higher education communications specialists from across Europe exchanged know-how on the role of universities in cities and society

From June 29 to July 2, 2017, 180 public relations and communications staff from universities across Europe attended the annual conference of the “European Universities Public Relations and Information Officers” (EUPRIO) association at the University of Mannheim. The 2017 conference centred on the topic “Networking for a Better Future: Universities, Cities, Companies and Regions”. For the first time in twenty years, the conference took place in Germany: a participant from New Caledonia in the South Pacific travelled the furthest to attend.

Universities network on multiple levels with their environment – with cities, regions and businesses. Research alliances with companies, service learning for communities or the crucial role universities play in city development are only few examples of how universities shape society, politics and the economy. The growing number of collaborations with external partners, however, poses new challenges to the strategy, communication, organization and structure of universities.

In workshops and lectures, more than 30 speakers passed on their experience to the conference participants. For example the renowned architect Prof. Antti Ahlava of Aalto University near Helsinki illustrated how a university campus can open up to its city. With “Aalto City”, the Finnish university created an innovation hub in which over 100 creative businesspeople, founders and partners are developing projects and start-up activities across disciplines.

Jan Dries, Head of Communications at the University of Antwerp, spoke about Antwerp’s city marketing campaign „Brains, Business, Bevolking (population) and Bezoekers (visitors)“ and the positive effects of the close cooperation on both city and university. The workshops of the speakers from Lyon (France), Utrecht (Netherlands), Västra Götaland (Sweden), Galway (Ireland), Bochum, Paderborn and Heidelberg also focused on the joint activities of universities and cities. The conclusion was that only together will cities, universities and companies be able to attract and keep the students best-suited for them.

The annual EUPRIO Award for Higher Communication went to the communications team of the Brno University of Technology, Czech Republic, which developed a creative and
successful campaign to reduce the prejudices of girls and young women towards technical study programs.