

SGROUP NEWSLETTER

Foreword

As summer – and the holiday season – is drawing to a close, we are delighted to share with you the August edition of our newsletter. This time of year serves as a natural milestone, inviting us to reflect on the activities accomplished within the SGroup network so far and to look ahead to the opportunities that await in the autumn.

We warmly invite you to take part, share and continue shaping our journey together. The months ahead promise many exciting opportunities – and we look forward to exploring them with you.

In this newsletter you will find information about:

- SGroup Annual Meetings 2025
- Engagements Session in October
- PHD Cup 2025
- SGroup Café in November
- TTA Summer Conference 2025
- SGroup Staff Week in Catania
- SGroup Café on Service Learning
- SGroup Café on EU Alliances

Contact us



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FUTURE EVENTS



Source: Google Images

ENGAGEMENTS SESSION

TTSMU Upcoming Sessions – join the conversation.

The highly successful Engagements sessions have already demonstrated our community's strong interest in such events. We are therefore delighted to invite you to join one more session, this time focusing on the topic of "Meeting Global Challenges".

- 📅 October 16th
- Speaker: Will be confirmed soon!
- 📍 Please register using this [link](#)

The session will be integrated into the Think Tank Academy Autumn Conference in Szeged University, Hungary, therefore the event will be hybrid. A Q&A session will be included – invite your colleagues to join it.

We look forward to seeing you there!

ANNUAL MEETINGS 2025

Be part of the Annual Meetings in Szeged, Hungary!

📅 October 14th–16th, 2025

We warmly invite you to join the key event of the year. Please confirm your attendance by completing the [registration form](#) as soon as possible.

This cornerstone gathering of our network will bring together members from Europe and beyond to exchange ideas, shape future strategy, and strengthen collaborations.

Agenda highlights include:

- General Assembly
- Internal Business Meeting
- Liaison Officers Meeting (updates on projects & initiatives)
- AI4Uni Project Workshop + new project opportunities
- Think Tank Academy Autumn Conference
- PhD CUP Final
- Think Tank for the Future session

The event will also feature a Gala Dinner, where the 2025 Lifetime Achievement & Impact Awards will be presented.

📍 [Register](#) today and secure your place!



Source: B.Paranhos

FUTURE EVENTS



Source: Canva Images

SGROUP CAFÉ

We are delighted that the sessions of all three SGroup Cafés held so far have received strong interest from our community. These events have provided a valuable space for sharing best practices and exploring new ideas within the network.

We are now pleased to announce that the final Café of this year will take place on **12 November** at **11h30 CET**, and will focus on the timely and transformative theme of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This session will go beyond general discussion: it will provide members with practical insights into how to successfully start integrating AI into their daily work and institutional strategies. Participants will:

- Learn about concrete use cases
- Explore accessible tools
- Gain guidance on how to apply AI responsibly & effectively in academic and administrative settings!

Don't miss this opportunity to strengthen your understanding of AI and to connect with colleagues across the network who are embarking on the same journey of digital transformation. More information will be sent soon!

Join the session and encourage your colleagues to participate!

[Zoom Link](#)

PHD CUP 2025

In April, 48 PhD students from 12 SGroup member universities kicked off their journey for the PhD Cup 2025 with two dynamic, hands-on online training sessions, led by communication expert Professor Guido Molina (Impulsplus, Germany). The sessions focused on sharpening pitching skills and boosting presentation confidence, setting the stage for an exciting competition ahead.

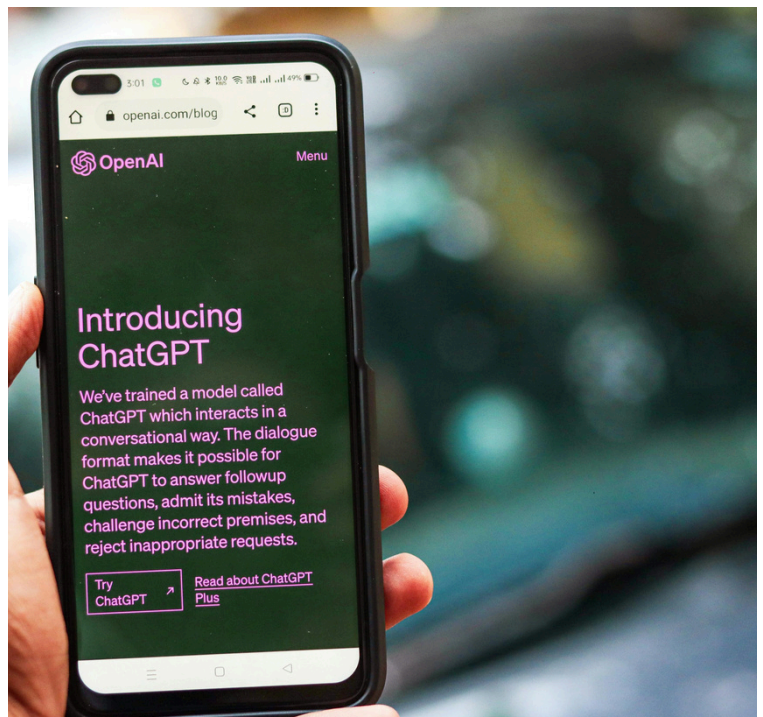
This year's video submissions were of exceptionally high quality, making the Jury's task especially challenging. After careful evaluation, the Top 5 were selected and will be invited to present at the General Assembly in Szeged, Hungary.

Nominees for the final prize of €1,000:

- Eiya Ayed (University of Lille)
- Emma Cieslak-Jones (University of Lille)
- Aurora Gasparello (University of Liège)
- Fabian Puga (University of Lille)
- Felix Lizalde (University of Valladolid)

We greatly appreciate the ongoing support from our member institutions, which is crucial to keeping this initiative alive, and we hope all top five PhD students will be able to make their trip to Szeged.

We look forward to hearing the finalists' pitch presentations in October.



Source: Canva Images

PAST EVENTS



Source: L.Rodrigues



Source: L.Rodrigues

SGROUP STAFF WEEK

♥ This year's SGroup Staff Week was both inspiring and deeply moving. We began in memoriam of our host, Valentina Barbagallo, whose tragic passing marked the event. Her dedication and flawless organization will remain a lasting legacy for our community.

Despite this profound loss, colleagues rallied together, and the week went ahead as planned, addressing numerous important topics.

The programme offered a rich set of workshops and discussions on themes ranging from service learning to artificial intelligence, complemented by extra-curricular activities that strengthened collaboration and exchange among participants.

All insights have been gathered and, with the support of the Executive Committee, will be translated into concrete actions for SGroup's future.

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce that the next Staff Week will take place in Ostrava, Slovakia, in 2026.

TTA SUMMER CONFERENCE 2025

The SGroup community came together in London and online for this year's Think Tank Academy Summer Conference, a hybrid event that gathered participants from across our network. Representatives from numerous universities joined us, both physically and virtually, to exchange ideas, share practices, and co-create strategies for the future.

The programme featured a rich variety of workshops and discussions, including:

- TTIde – marking the first-ever meeting of SGroup's Doctoral Schools, a milestone in our shared commitment to doctoral education.
- TTSMU – exploring "Social Mission and Higher Education Engagement with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)". This session featured an inspiring keynote by Prof. Dibyesh Anand, Deputy Vice Chancellor Global Engagement and Employability at the University of Westminster, in conversation with Professor Alex Hughes, SGroup TTSMU.
- TT Africa – focusing on partnerships and opportunities for deepened collaboration with African institutions.
- TT Americas – highlighting initiatives and cooperation with partners across the Americas.

The sessions concluded with a set of actionable outcomes that SGroup will continue to develop and implement across its Think Tanks, ensuring that the dialogue leads to practical impact and long-term collaboration.

We extend our warmest thanks to our host, the University of Westminster, for their generosity and support in welcoming us and creating such an engaging environment for the event.



Source: B.Paranhos

PAST EVENTS



Source: B.Paranhos

CAFÉ ON SERVICE LEARNING

Although 18 July fell during the summer holiday period at some universities, the SGroup Café on Service Learning and Community Engagement attracted an impressive 32 participants from across SGroup.

We were delighted to welcome Dr. Nives Mikelić Preradović from the European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE) as the featured speaker. With her extensive expertise in service learning, Dr. Mikelić Preradović offered valuable perspectives on the state of the field in Europe, touched upon opportunities linked to EU projects and policy frameworks, and discussed the challenges and opportunities that institutions face when building impactful university–community partnerships.

This Café also carried special significance, as it marked the final meeting of the ECEM Project's Community of Practice (CoP). The ECEM project has focused on strengthening the role of service learning and community engagement in higher education institutions, while creating spaces for exchange and collaboration.

We extend our thanks to all who joined the session and contributed to the discussion.

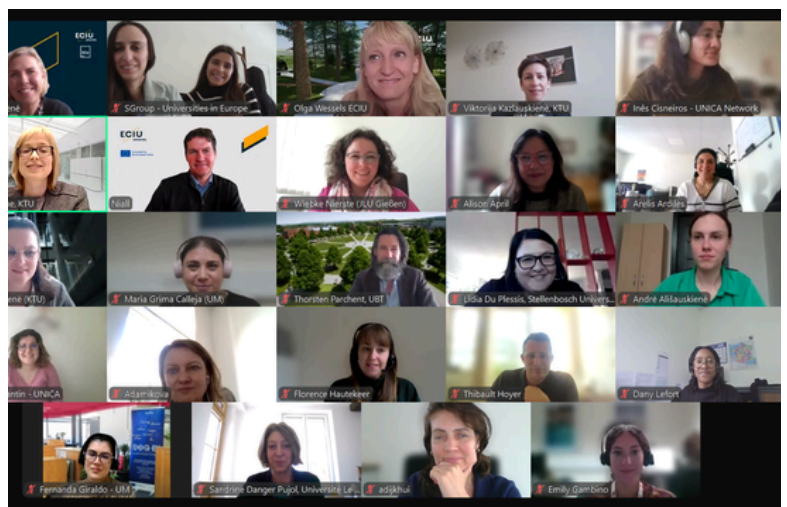
CAFÉ ON EU ALLIANCES

On 16 April we were delighted to organise the Online Café, a best practice-sharing initiative dedicated to European University Alliances. This inspiring session was hosted by Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), an active member of the SGroup network as well as the ECIU University, brought together colleagues from over 10 countries, with 34 participants actively engaging in dialogue on shaping the future of higher education in Europe.

A special highlight was the presentation of the ECIU University experience, delivered by four insightful speakers:

- Olga Wessels, Head of the ECIU Brussels Office, shared the latest EU developments and how ECIU is working closely with policymakers to shape future educational initiatives and frameworks.
- Niall Power, ECIU University Director (University of Aveiro, Portugal), took us through the evolving story of the ECIU University—its vision, governance, challenges, and the pursuit of innovation across borders.
- Asta Daunorienė, Head of the EDU_Lab Center at KTU, highlighted how flexible learning pathways are reshaping education to meet rapidly changing labour market and societal needs.
- Vilma Karoblienė, Head of the Research and Innovation Projects Centre at KTU, shared valuable insights into research collaboration within the ECIU network, with a focus on the SMART-ER project and its sustainability.

A big thank you to all colleagues for their active participation, many insightful comments and questions.



Source: B.Paranhos

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