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Cultural Center hosts European ambassadors' meeting



Diplomats meet with the academic community to discuss cooperation and integration

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The UFRGS' Cultural Center hosted, on December 6, 2019, the annual meeting of ambassadors of the European Union (EU) in Brazil. Along the morning, the panels reunited members of the UFRGS' academic community and diplomats of 18 countries to discuss themes such as the already existing academic partnerships, new cooperation opportunities, and incentives to the entrepreneurship culture.

The agreement between the EU and the Mercosul was the theme of the opening lecture, given by the EU ambassador in Brazil, Ignacio Ybáñez. For him, Brazil is today a strategical partner of the European block, and, with the cooperation agreement, the other countries of the Mercosul will also become. The ambassador highlighted the benefits of this partnership, such as the improvement of the Brazilian competitiveness at the global market, and explained the next implementation steps for the cooperation agreement, which has yet to be presented to the Council of the European Union, by the Block's Parliament and by the Legislative Assemblies of all the member countries.

President Rui Oppermann talked about the educational spaces in Latin America and the Caribbean and the existing collaborations with European countries. "Both Mercosul and the European Union are political blocks but also educational spaces. Here in Mercosul, we are more advanced in the educational integration than in the political integration," said Oppermann, who brought the Regional Conference of College Education (Conferência Regional de Educação Superior - CRES 2018), in Argentina, and the Association of Universities of the Montevideo Group as examples.

The theme of the morning's second panel was "Academic Partnerships between UFRGS-European Union". The Vice-Director of the Institute of Geosciences, Nelson Gruber, showed a historic account of multilateral projects in the areas of petroleum geology, studies about Antarctica and cryosphere, and coastal geology. Cláudia Lima Marques, professor of the Faculty of Law, presented the Center of European and German Studies (Centro de Estudos Europeus e Alemães - CDEA). Cláudia explained that the mission of CDEA is to ensure the continuity of the cooperation between Brazil and Germany, specifically in the human and social science areas. "In short, it is a center focused on globalization, sustainability, and cultural diversity," said Cláudia. Finishing the second panel, the ambassador of Germany in Brazil, Georg Witschel, highlighted the intensity of the cooperation agreements between the two countries. "This collaboration extends for almost five decades, and we currently have 614 agreements between Brazilian and German universities," declared Witschel.

Innovation and technology were the themes of the last panel, which had the UFRGS Senior Technological Development Officer, José Luis Duarte Ribeiro, the Executive Vice-President of Research, Rafael Roesler, and Finland's ambassador in Brazil, Jouko Leinonen, as lecturers. Ribeiro presented an overview, the mechanisms, and the technologic transference agents at UFRGS. "Today we have a solid research front at UFRGS, but in areas of development and innovation, that demand a strong interaction with enterprises, we still need to improve," declared Roesler. He also brought data about the science in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Southern Brazil, and examples of research projects developed at UFRGS, specifically in the biotechnology and health areas, that have an interface with innovation and technology and already have some type of cooperation with the EU. Leinonen, on the other hand, talked about the challenges that exist in his country for the interaction between enterprises and universities. The diplomat also listed some examples of departments with notable development in Finland such as the bioeconomy and the games industry. Lastly, finishing the morning's schedule, a group of undergraduate students of the International Affairs program made a presentation about the pact EU-Mercosul.

Dignitaries from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden attended the event. UFRGS' faculty members, administrative staff, and students also participated.

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