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## FOREWORD

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (ViA) is honoured to welcome you to the third international conference “SOCIETY. TECHNOLOGIES. SOLUTIONS” held on 8 April 2022 in Valmiera, Latvia. In the 26th year from its establishment, ViA thrives on the synergy between science and academic work. Our goal is to develop a knowledge society that is smart, ambitious, curious, and motivated to unlock new knowledge constantly, as well as willing to promote a democratic, free and safe world for all of us. The task of academics in this time is not only to make society aware of the value of science, and to appreciate the contribution of various fields of science in solving current challenges for society, but also to use the achievements of science. Hence, we are happy to open the abstract template of the conference introducing the diverse and exciting themes that will be presented and discussed at the event.

During the conference, we will analyse in depth the processes important for society in the age of technology, talk about the future knowledge society, knowledge exchange and innovation, sustainable development and security issues related to digital transformation. Seven conference panel discussions will offer the opportunity to explore the current issues related to various societal and technological challenges in detail. The keynote speaker and the first panel of today's conference will discuss the idea of creating a joint education area – a topic that is high on the European agenda. The panellists will ask whether this is just a matter of education, or something more, and why should universities from different countries come together and create a conceptually new offer in higher education, the ‘European University’? Among the other specific themes, you will find technological innovations, cybersecurity, advanced analytics, as well as student social responsibility, work productivity in specific production sectors, and business incubation in the context of the pandemic. A separate panel will be devoted to the current trends in the tourism sector: beach tourism, destination management, agricultural tourism, technology enhanced visitor experience in museums, as well as improvement of the tourism education. Socio-ecological challenges will be discussed through presentations on biodiversity issues, management of landscapes, nature conservation stakeholder analysis, and use of GIS technologies in identifying landscapes of national importance. Another conference panel will be devoted to the current trends in the circular economy field, and the related challenges: culinary education and development of the mindset needed for practising green business. Finally, one conference panel will focus on the timely topic of science literacy, science communication, discussing its state in the society and the role of schools in promoting scientific literacy.

I thank the organisers of the conference and especially my colleague, Oskars Java, from the Institute of Social, Economic and Humanities research at ViA, who brought us all together in these troubled and uneasy times.

Let the conference be a great inspiration for us all in our future work!

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