

Panel 4: Continuities, Changes and Challenges for European Higher Education Landscape – Five Years of the European Universities Initiative.

Convenor Antonin Charrett

In 2019, the European Commission launched the European Universities Initiative (EUI) as its flagship higher education programme to foster closer cooperation among European higher education institutions (HEIs) to enhance their international competitiveness and global impact. In five years, sixty four European University alliances have been created, assembling nearly 600 higher education institutions spread out throughout the entire European Union and participating Erasmus+ countries. EUI alliances offer opportunities to develop innovative transnational educational programmes, expand international networks and collaborate on research projects. However, their progress is often stalled by institutional inertia, incompatibility of national laws in higher education and increasingly protectionist national agendas. Is the initiative a significant enough counterweight to these developments and does it have the potential to ‘transform the higher education landscape in the European Union’?

This panel offers to reflect on the continuities, changes and challenges that the development of the European Universities Initiative has posed to the European Higher Education landscape of the last five years. The panel will draw on the findings from higher education researchers and practitioners engaged in the implementation of the initiative that will be assembled in the first edited volume on the EUI. The editors of this book will present its five sections that reflect on a) How the European Commission is using the European Universities Initiative to achieve its supranational policy goals b) The dynamics of alliance formation and relationship of the EUI towards existing practices in HE internationalisation c) What tools the alliances are developing to overcome challenges with transnational collaboration in the EU d) The impact of the EUI on national education systems and societies and the interrelationship between universities and their respective geographical, administrative and societal surroundings e) Has the initiative managed to achieve (some of) the ambitious and transformative objectives that had been set and what are the possible paths towards the long-term sustainability of the EUI?

Speakers:

Agata A. Lambrechts, Swiss Observatory of Vocational Education and Training, Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training and Institute of Communication and Public Policy, Università della Svizzera italiana (CH)

Alina J. Felder-Stindt, School of Economics and Political Science, Universität St. Gallen (CH)

Antonin Charret, University of Oxford, Department of Education (UK)

Daniela Craciun, University of Twente, Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (NL)

Nadia Manzoni, Central European University, Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy and International Relations (AT)