

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY NETWORKS AND IMAGINARIES OF LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURES

Carlos Cuevas Garcia

Technical University of Munich

Lukas Fuchs

Eindhoven University of Technology

Gunter Bombaerts

Eindhoven University of Technology

Monamie Bhadra Haines

Technical University of Denmark

Sebastian Pfothhauer

Technical University of Munich

Abstract:

In September 2017, French president Emmanuel Macron resuscitated an old idea that leaders of a nascent and re-configuring European community had envisioned in the postwar years (Gunn, 2021): the founding of a European university. The European Commission rapidly took up the idea and launched the European Universities Initiative, dedicating a budget of €287 million to establish nearly 40 European university networks. The networks have the goal of enhancing “the quality, inclusion, digitalisation and attractiveness of European higher education” (European Commission, 2020) and of serving as a mechanism to tackle challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change. More specifically, they intend to facilitate the adoption of co-creation, challenge-based education, lifelong learning, and responsible research and innovation (RRI) in participating universities, while at the same time creating virtual campuses, joint curricula, and further developing the European identity of staff and students.

The European Universities Initiative thus represents a key site of STS inquiry. How are these future communities similarly or differently imagined within and across different consortia and hosting states? What is the historical precedence of this form of community building? How are they mobilising and infrastructuring STS knowledge and RRI practices, and what constraints are encountered by practitioners? What are the changing perceptions of the role of universities in society? How are pan-European learning infrastructures ideated, implemented and maintained? What is the role of STS in contributing to the formation of European and other socio-technical identities and what normative implications does this involve?

This panel aims at addressing these and related questions by bringing together scholars involved in one way or another in the European Universities Initiative and those who can provide critical insights drawing on their understanding of other European research and innovation infrastructures. The panel welcomes submissions from scholars who have studied other traveling concepts ideated by the European Commission such as co-creation, RRI, Digital Innovation Hubs, EIT, Competence Centers, ECTS, etc.

References

European Commission (2020). '24 new European Universities reinforce the European Education Area'. Press release, 9 July. Available at:
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1264

Gunn, A. (2021). 'Assessing the potential of the European Universities Initiative'. LSE European Politics and Policy Blog, 14 May. Available at:
<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2021/05/14/assessing-the-potential-of-the-european-universities-initiative/>

Key words:

European Universities Initiative, Responsible Research and Innovation