

AT A GLANCE

Requested by the CULT Committee
Study in Focus



European Parliament

The European Universities Initiative: first lessons, main challenges and perspectives



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The study is an assessment of the **European Universities Initiative** (EUI) and the **European University alliances** (EUAs), at the request of the European Parliament's (EP) committee on Culture and Education.

The EUI started in the autumn of 2019. The study evaluates the outcome of the selection process and criteria, comparing participating **higher education institutes** (HEIs) with the total population of HEIs in the EU. It also assesses the benefits and challenges the EUAs have experienced in their first years. Based on a scenario study, it maps the future perspectives for the EUI and EUAs, taking into account the policy dynamics and innovations in education that will shape the future of higher education in Europe.

Main observations

The study

evaluates the selection procedures and assesses the experiences of the first years of the European Universities Initiative.

The EUI is a policy measure aimed at developing an innovative model of transnational cooperation at the institutional level. To fulfil this objective, participating HEIs need to have the **relevant operational capacity and resources**.

As a result, the first EUAs were dominated by older, larger, comprehensive universities, who are more experienced in managing international collaborations, and

able to comply with criteria and expected impacts. The mandatory criterion of including HEIs from at least three EU countries effectively addressed the importance of fair participation and ensured a geographical balance,

reflecting the potential of the EUI as an instrument for European integration.

The first experiences of the EUAs also signal the opportunity that the EUI holds to **innovate education, increase the attractiveness and quality of their educational offers, and improve transnational collaboration**.

When confronted with Covid-19 restrictions, the alliances created **new forms of blended mobility**, that attracted a larger, more inclusive student group. Alliances also developed **new educational offers to stimulate challenge-based learning**, reflecting the objective of the EUI to make higher education **more relevant for the green and digital transition**.



The experiences also showed that **the current model of operation of the alliances is unsustainable**. The funding from the EUI does not cover actual transaction costs and the options to use other funds are unclear. Transaction costs are also unnecessarily high due to incompatible regulatory frameworks. This is not restricted only to a European degree. The study makes clear that the scope of impacts expected from EUAs



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