

3rd. European Universities
Conference

**SHAPING THE FUTURE OF
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES
- INTEGRATED
KNOWLEDGE, CAPACITY
AND SKILLS**

**How Innovative
European
Universities
Can Shape the
Future in a World
of Crisis and
Power Play**

Welcome



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

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1.

**Where does Europe stand today,
nine years after Emmanuel Macron's
2017 Sorbonne speech?**



2.

**What specific contributions can the European
Universities make in the three areas
1. Education, 2. Research and Innovation, and
3. Responsible Internationalization—to address
these challenges and achieve our goals?**



3.

**What kind of future should we —and should
European universities—prepare for?**



Where does Europe stand today, nine years after Emmanuel Macron's 2017 Sorbonne speech?



Brexit vote in the
United Kingdom



Populist movements
gaining ground



social media increasingly
fueling division and
fragmentation within
societies



Macrons vision of a
“new initiative for Europe”



creation of European
Universities: more than
65 European Universities
have been established,
bringing together over
570 institutions across
35 countries.





External Challenges:



- Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.



- New nature of conflict: drones and hybrid warfare, AI on the battlefield



- Long-standing alliances are being tested



- New rivalries are emerging:



- Conflicts in far regions now have direct consequences for Europe



- Europe's role and relevance in the world is being challenged.



Internal challenges:



- Polarization and fragmentation of our societies.



- Public discourse becoming confrontational, open and respectful debate becomes difficult



The reality for Europe today: a world of heightened external threats, intensifying global competition, and rapid technological change—combined with internal pressures that test the cohesion of our societies.



What specific contributions can the European universities make? First, Education:

Equipping students—our future decision-makers—with the skills needed to make Europe more resilient and responsive to crises:



- To analyze complex systems, ability to recognize early warning signs



- Critical thinking—the rigorous reflection on knowledge, information, and opinions, including critical self-reflection, as an effective means against disinformation



- Harnessing the intellectual strength embedded in the diversity of our languages, cultures, and traditions.



Use of AI:



Risk:

To let AI take over the process of learning languages and acquiring and applying knowledge



Opportunity:

Use AI as a new tool to expand our knowledge and skills, including European languages



What specific contributions can European universities make?

Second, Research and Innovation.

- The EU's investment in Research and Innovation (R&D) per capita remains below that of the United States, while China has been rapidly closing the gap.
- Industry investment in R&D is stronger in the United States and growing quickly in China.



Much depends on universities with regard to R&D spending:

- Universities can play a decisive role by strengthening collaboration with industry and embedding entrepreneurial thinking and startup culture into their missions and study programs.



Mindset at US universities:

- US technology companies are often founded by students or graduates.
- US universities encourage an early drive to turn ideas into business models.



Goals for European universities:

- Across European campuses, a new generation is eager to bring their ideas to life.
- Students need institutions and networks that actively encourage them — an important role for European universities.





What specific contributions can European universities make?

Third, Responsible Internationalization



Research Security

- A balance between openness and security
- Expanding the approach by combining both: openness and security



The relation of openness and security

- Openness is a prerequisite for scientific innovation
- Innovation is essential to our strength in terms of security and economic competitiveness.
- If our security is compromised we also risk losing the openness that enables scientific exchange and progress.



Looking back: the Sputnik crisis of 1957

- In 1957 the Soviet Union launched the first satellite into space
- In response, the United States established DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency)
- DARPA projects involve a large number of universities and brought the U.S. back to the forefront of security-related technologies
- This approach also generated many civilian innovations such as the internet and GPS and speech recognition.



Lessons for today



- European Universities are founded on the European Idea



- This makes European Universities well suited to contribute to research and innovation serving the security of Europe



What kind of future should we—and should European universities—prepare for?



Danish physicist Niels Bohr:
*“Prediction is very difficult,
especially if it’s about the future.”*



However, there is also
some empirical evidence:



- The behavior of people followed similar patterns since the ancient world.



- Human virtues and weaknesses continue



- The future depends on parameters that have not yet occurred:



- Uncertainties: Development of artificial intelligence, geopolitical constellations of the future.



European universities can make a decisive contribution to the future

- The best path to unleash Europe’s potential for the future is to focus on the people of Europe:



- by equipping students with the best skills of critical thinking and innovation



- Our European superpower lies in our languages, traditions, and cultures—and in the creativity of our future generations!



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**Thank you for
your attention**



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