



EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES – CRITICAL FUTURES

Report on the workshop and integrated PhD course themed:

The Roles of Universities in European Integration

14-16 December 2020

Organisers:

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Over three days, participants in this combined workshop and PhD course critically examined the strategies for integrating higher education and research in Europe and explored alternatives for the future. This was the second in a series of workshop/PhD courses that are part of the ‘European Universities – Critical Futures’ project.

Doctoral students also got to see the workings of this wider European project of which the workshop was a part. This included sessions by the working groups of European colleagues and students on the mandates, organisation and practices of European universities, including access of refugees to higher education, gender inequalities and precarity and reimagining internationalisation. It also included ten country teams planning a study of the impact of the pandemic on higher education.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the event was held online via Zoom instead of the planned programme in Copenhagen. The organisers were Krystian Szadkowski, Amélia Veiga and Susan Wright and, throughout the three days, Matej Zitnansky managed the technical aspects and provided support.

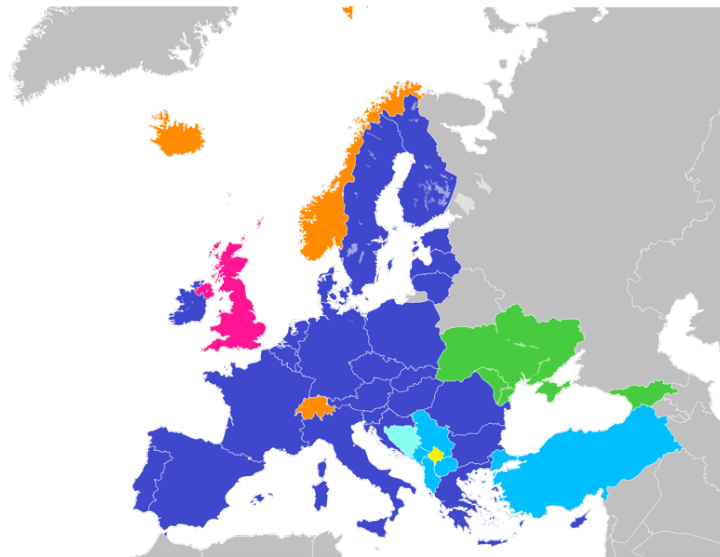


Figure 1: Map of the integration into the European Union:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Further_European_Union_Enlargement.svg



Day 1:

The first workshop **European Integration through the logic of standardisation and metrics** was held by Krystian Szadkowski and PhD student Jakub Krzeski from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. In this workshop, themes were presented and explained: the logic of abstraction, integration through quantification, political and economic technologies of quantification in academia resulting in evaluative homogeneity. In later group-work participants were asked to discuss and create potential alternatives to the system of metrics and standardization. The working group ‘Trust beyond metrics’ is closely connected to the topic of this workshop.

After lunch, guest speaker Bo Stråth from the Department of World Cultures and Centre of Nordic Studies (CENS) of University of Helsinki gave a keynote speech titled: **The Changing Preconditions of Knowledge Production: From the Humboldt University to the Market University**. The entire speech has been videorecorded and is available in an online archive: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gmUEwkJ_f4&t=594s

In the afternoon, the participants broke into smaller Zoom break-out groups in order to discuss PhD students' projects. Each student who had submitted an abstract had 30 minutes devoted to their work and received detailed feedback from a senior academic and one of their peers.

Day 2:

Amélia Veiga from the University of Porto, Portugal held a workshop entitled **Challenging the governance system coordinating the EHEA: Alternative future roles of universities**.

Her introductory lecture highlighted the governance system coordinating higher education and focused on the Bologna Process and the effects of 'differentiated integration' on knowledge policies. After theorising the concept of 'difference,' participants were asked to imagine alternative futures of the higher education. They worked in four small groups, each associated with one of the four OECD scenarios positing future relationships between European societies, knowledge and higher education.

The presentation and a summary of the discussion have been video recorded and are available on the CHEF YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=490GAesHNNw> .

Before lunch, Guest speaker Katja Brøgger, from Aarhus University, Denmark gave a lecture titled **'Re-nationalizing European higher education?'** This was based on the Danish case of reducing the number of study programmes with English-medium instruction with the aim of restricting EU students' access to Danish study grants. The neo-nationalist tendencies that are observable in Europe were discussed passionately among participants.

The afternoon show-cased the working groups that are part of the 'European Universities – Critical Futures'. Five existing groups presented their work and three new ones set out their ideas and plans. Here is the list of the eight working groups:

1. Trust beyond metrics. Alternative trust-building practices of European Universities
2. Changing dynamics between administrators and academics in European universities
3. Refugee Access to Higher Education
4. Gender and precarity
5. Re-imagining internationalization
6. Sustainable universities and higher education
7. Academic freedom's 'silent spring'
8. Higher Education access for underrepresented groups: characteristics of effective programmes, policies, and practices

After the presentations, working groups 1-5-held events in separate rooms. PhD students and other participants chose which working group to join for the afternoon and were welcome to continue their involvement throughout the duration of the project. Information about the working groups is available here:

<https://projects.au.dk/european-universities-critical-futures/working-groups/>

Day 3:

In the morning, research teams from nine countries met to finalise the design of a comparative study on the effects of the pandemic on European universities and higher education. This was

an opportunity for PhD students to witness a complex and often messy (although ultimately successful) process of organizing an international comparative study.

The workshop ended with a concluding plenary and evaluation. The feedback made clear that the Zoom format had worked well. Even on Zoom, the project had achieved its aim of involving PhD students and senior academics equally in a learning community to explore critical research about the mandate, organisation and integration of European universities and think about future alternatives. In addition to the lectures and workshop sessions, PhD students said they valued the opportunity to see inside the workings of an international project. Participants made a number of constructive suggestions for improvements in the next workshop/PhD course, to be held in June 2021.

Matej Zitnansky and Susan Wright, 25 January 2021