



EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES – CRITICAL FUTURES

Report on Kassel Workshop

26-27 August 2019

“Roles of universities for social and political integration”

The theme of the workshop organized by INCHER Kassel as part of the project “European universities – critical futures” put a focus on the role of universities for social and political integration and offered a forum to determine the role of universities in the knowledge society.



The aim of the workshop was to facilitate exchange and provide opportunities especially for younger researcher networks to emerge focusing on specific topics that are not sufficiently covered in higher education research today. Hence, the workshop was intended to act as a catalyst for the ideas and initiatives of the participants. To this end, it offered an environment to discuss existing research with regard to at least three major challenges, and from this develop ideas for new avenues of future research, which then could lead to new collaborative networks. The three major challenges for European universities identified by the project are:

Challenge 1: The universities’ role for social and political integration (e.g. ensuring social mobility, integrating refugees, sustaining democratic values),

Challenge 2: The role of universities for the integration of European research and higher education (e.g. universities in the global knowledge economy, the role of the ERA or the EHEA)

Challenge 3: the role of universities in Europe in the context of a shifting global context (e.g. China's and other countries' competing global strategies).



On day 1 of the workshop we collected research questions from the participants that represent specific ideas within the wider topic of the workshop. In a second step in the workshop each participant chose one research question on which she or he would want to contribute during the workshop. After clustering research questions, four working groups, each focusing on one specific question emerged. The four topics addressed were:

Topic 1: Critical perspectives on internationalization

Topic 2: Academic freedom, criticality, and the role of universities in contemporary political developments

Topic 3: Trust in universities and the role of metrics

Topic 4: Programs to increase participation of underrepresented groups in higher education



After forming these working groups, the workshop provided space to develop further the ideas and topics. At this stage, researchers agreed on how to frame their topics and clarified their questions. After creating a common understanding, research questions were articulated and from that, a one page outline was developed and presented at the end of the first day.

The second day started with a keynote given by Gaële Goastellec from the University of Lausanne. She presented results from her very insightful research on the role of higher education institutions and the interaction between higher education and social policy for the integration of refugees in a country-comparative perspective.

After the keynote, the working groups continued their work on the four selected issues. While the research questions and the general focus on how to tackle the topic had already been developed on day one, day two offered time to discuss the empirical focus, the methods, and a timeline on how to work on the issue after the end of the workshop. Again, the results of this work were presented in the closing session to all participants.

In the closing session, there was also a report from a working group formed at the earlier Copenhagen kick-off conference, to explore reasons for, and possible solutions to, tensions in universities between academics and administrators. The aims and methods of this proposed project were discussed, with very useful feedback.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank all the participants for coming to Kassel and for contributing with their ideas and creativity

Jens Jungblut j.p.w.jungblut@stv.uio.no

Tim Seidenschnur tim.seidenschnur@uni-kassel.de

August 2019