

Knowledge Futures: AI, Technology, and the New Business Paradigm

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS – IFKAD 2025

Special Track n.: 36

Thematic Area: KM, Organizational Systems and Innovation

European University Alliances: Collaborative Knowledge Creation and Innovation Across Borders

Description

The European University Initiative (EUI), a key initiative under the European Commission's strategy for higher education, aims to establish a novel organizational model for cross-border collaboration among universities called European University Alliances (EUAs) (*Charret & Chankseliani, 2023; Corazza et al., 2024*). After their first launch in 2019, these alliances seek to integrate higher education, research, and innovation on an unprecedented scale, transforming the way universities collaborate across national borders. Currently comprising 64 alliances involving over 560 universities from all across Europe, the initiative aims to establish "European universities" that operate on a cross-national, multi-institutional level, supporting student mobility, interdisciplinary learning, and knowledge co-creation. At the core of the EUI is the concept of the European inter-university campus, which fosters seamless mobility for students, researchers, and staff across partner institutions. These alliances are expected to develop joint curricula, encourage innovation in teaching and learning, and integrate knowledge creation with societal engagement through challenge-based learning approaches (*Stensaker et al., 2023*). The long-term objective is not only to enhance the academic quality and competitiveness of European higher education but also to address societal grand challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, and economic inequality. By pooling resources and expertise across institutions, the alliances aim to enhance Europe's global leadership in knowledge creation and innovation (*Fedak et al., 2022*).

Despite its ambitious goals, EUAs face several challenges that merit scholarly attention. The complexity of managing cross-border collaboration, differences in governance and regulatory frameworks, and the alignment of strategic objectives across diverse institutional and national contexts present significant barriers (*Marques & Graf, 2024*). Moreover, questions regarding the sustainability, governance, and effectiveness of these alliances remain open. What governance structures and management practices are necessary to ensure the long-term success of these alliances? And how can the knowledge created in these alliances translate into impactful innovation?

From an organizational perspective, European University Alliances can also be seen as meta-organizations (*Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008; Vukasovic & Stensaker, 2018*), a type of organization where other organizations, rather than individuals, form the membership. Meta-

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organizations, such as EUAs, play a significant role in shaping institutional environments by driving ideas, interests, and identities. In this context, EUAs function as mechanisms linking the macro-level policies of the European higher education area with the micro-level operations of individual universities (*Maassen et al., 2023*). Member universities, despite their varying statuses, histories, and resources, must operate on an equal footing within these alliances, which may require consensus-based decision-making and often lead to incremental rather than rapid change. Nonetheless, university alliances have the potential to introduce new institutional logics, foster organizational learning, and create innovative practices across the European higher education landscape. However, their success will depend on overcoming the challenges of governance, trust-building, and the coordination of multiple institutional objectives (*Corazza et al., 2024*).

This track seeks to explore the opportunities and challenges presented by European University Alliances in reshaping the knowledge and innovation landscape. Contributions are invited that investigate the strategic, organizational, and operational aspects of these alliances, as well as their broader societal implications.

The track welcomes theoretical and empirical papers, as well as case studies, that address themes such as:

- The role of European University Alliances in promoting knowledge co-creation and societal innovation
- Governance and management of transnational university alliances
- Strategic integration of education, research, and innovation across borders
- Organizational learning and knowledge management practices within multi-institutional collaborations
- The impact of university alliances on student mobility, curriculum development, and skills formation
- Knowledge management systems, data collection, and strategic information management for University Alliances
- Cross-sectoral partnerships within university alliances, including engagement with industry, civil society, and regional stakeholders
- Social impact of University alliances and their assessment and reporting

This track will provide a platform for academics, policymakers, and practitioners to engage in critical discussions about the future of higher education and the role of European University Alliances in driving knowledge-based innovation. By investigating how these alliances function and their potential to shape the new business and academic paradigms, the track will contribute to broader debates about the future of universities in the digital and knowledge-based economy.

Keywords

European University Alliances, knowledge management, transnational collaboration, higher education governance, interdisciplinary innovation, challenge-based learning

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Guidelines

Researchers wishing to contribute are invited to submit an **EXTENDED ABSTRACT** (in editable format) of **min 500 and max 1000 words** not later than **31 JANUARY 2025**, using the submission procedure available on the website. The abstract should address theoretical background, research objective, methodology, and results in terms of expected contribution to Knowledge Management theory and practice. Authors are required to follow the guidelines for both extended abstracts as well as full papers available on IFKAD site: www.ifkad.org

Important dates

31 January 2025	<i>Extended Abstract submission deadline</i>
24 February 2025	<i>Acceptance notification to authors</i>
20 April 2025	<i>Early-Bird registration cut off</i>
02 May 2025	<i>Full paper submission deadline</i>
31 May 2025	<i>Registration deadline</i>
2-4 July 2025	<i>Conference sessions</i>

For further information

For any information related to the event, please see the event website at www.ifkad.org or contact the conference manager at info@ifkad.org