

2024 EUA FUNDING FORUM

Sense & sustainability: future paths for university finances

Hosted by the University of Helsinki
3-4 October 2024 | Helsinki, Finland

Draft programme as of 16 September 2024

The question of what will be funded tomorrow, and how, hinges on society's and policy makers' expectations of universities. We will explore the competing visions for the future of higher education amidst increasing competition from alternative providers and career paths.

As the funding landscape becomes more complex, universities face new demands and priorities. They must navigate and contribute to global transformations such as the green and digital transitions. Additionally, universities are strategically experimenting with new forms of international collaboration, such as the European Universities alliances. These evolving trends impact every dimension of university funding: who provides funding, what gets funded, how and at what scale.

Is innovation in funding possible? How can European Universities alliances achieve long-term sustainability? What investment priorities are crucial to future-proof university activities?

The 2024 EUA Funding Forum will breathe new life into the discussion of what makes sense and what is sustainable in university finances.

Wednesday 2 October 2024

18.00 – 19.00 *Welcome reception*

Thursday 3 October 2024

09.15 – 09.45 **Opening session**
Welcome address and scene-setting

Do current funding models empower universities to tackle the big challenges of sustainability, the digital transition and changing demographics, which are redefining the social contract between universities and society? This conversation will set the stage for the Forum's discussions by exploring how universities can meet growing and diverse expectations, all while staying true to their core values and missions.

- Josep M. Garrell, President, European University Association
 - Sari Lindblom, Rector, University of Helsinki, Finland
- Facilitated by Thomas Estermann, Director, EUA*

09.45 – 10.45

Plenary session I

Where we are, where we're heading: the future of university funding

The future of higher education funding will be shaped by a multitude of trends, which vary across Europe and worldwide. The session will offer a European and global round-up of funding trends, and consider how universities may respond. Maintaining the financial sustainability of universities indeed becomes increasingly challenging in an unstable environment. Two separate studies will provide evidence-based insights that will kickstart discussions.

The panel will also explore the leadership and governance angle of university finances: how do university leaders address the unstable funding landscape? Where do they see opportunities? Do they have fit-for-purpose governance to meet the significant funding challenges?

- Enora Bennetot Pruvot, Deputy Director, EUA
 - Isabel Gil, Rector, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Portugal
 - Alex Usher, President, Higher Education Strategy Associates, Canada
- Facilitated by Thomas Estermann, Director, EUA*

10.45 – 11.30

Networking break

11.30 – 12:30

Parallel sessions I

Participants can personalise their experience at the Forum by selecting parallel sessions that delve into policies and frameworks or offer peer-learning exchange.

- *The quest for future proof funding models and the promise of dialogue-based funding*
- *The strategic sextant: positioning your institution for success in a sea of opportunities and constraints*
- *Stronger together: acceleration & upscaling of financial strategies*
- *Public funding policy choices: spotlight on universities of applied sciences and private higher education*

*A full description of each session is available at the end of this programme.

12:30 – 14:00

Lunch & networking

14.00 – 15.30

Parallel sessions II

In this second round, participants may choose among the following sessions:

- *The state of university finances: in-depth analysis*
- *Exploring a sustainable funding perspective for European Universities alliances*
- *Workshop: What does the future hold for your university's finances?*
- *More than bricks: tensions and opportunities in real estate management*

*A full description of each session is available at the end of this programme.

15.30 – 16.15

Networking break

16.15 – 17.15

Plenary session II

Making sense of the funding toolbox

What kind of higher education landscape are we promoting through the funding model? This session will explore the tensions between competition and cooperation, the promotion of territorial ecosystems and world-class excellence, and how these choices connect to the roles universities are expected to fulfil in the future. As the funding ecosystem grows in complexity, where does steering capacity really lie, among regulators, funding agencies, European institutions? How is the relationship between public authorities and universities changing? The panel will focus on identifying shifts in steering power in the funding ecosystem. With one lingering question: with more fragmented steering capacity among actors, do universities get more autonomy?

- Anita Lehtikoinen, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland
- Elmar Pichl, Head of Higher Education Section, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Austria
- Milena Žic Fuchs, Member of the ERC Scientific Council
Facilitated by Enora Bennetot Pruvot, Deputy Director, EUA

19.30 – 22.00

Networking dinner

Friday 4 October 2024

09.00 – 10.00

Plenary session III

Sense & sustainability of university alliances

Seed funding for the European Universities Initiative has fostered new, deep, mission-driven collaborations across borders that go beyond traditional partnerships. National funding, be it targeted or through block grants, for these partnerships varies greatly, with universities often heavily investing themselves. This session will explore how these multilateral cross-system collaborations can thrive in the long term. Is there a set 'path' for investment or do we need various solutions? The panel will reflect on the future of the European Universities Initiative and other forms of interinstitutional cooperation. Special focus will be given to the financial sustainability of these partnerships: together, panellists and participants will consider different scenarios, projecting partnerships into the future.

- Tine Delva, Deputy Head of Unit Higher Education, Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission
 - Gregor Halff, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands
 - Eric Tschirhart, Special advisor to the Rector, University of Luxembourg
- Facilitated by Thomas Estermann, Director, EUA*

10.00 – 10.10

Transfer to parallel sessions

10.10 – 11.10

Parallel sessions III

In this final round, participants may choose among the following sessions:

- *International insights: navigating performance-based funding*
- *Towards a sustainable funding base: shaping policy narratives*
- *Workshop: What does the future hold for your university's finances?*
- *Paving the road for successful partnerships*

*A full description of each session is available at the end of this programme.

11.10 – 11.45

Networking break

11.45 – 13.00

Final plenary session
Financially sustainable universities?

Where do we go from here? How do Europe’s universities secure financial sustainability in an increasingly unstable environment? The final session of the Forum will dive into the perspectives of students and sector representatives. Guest speakers will be asked to reflect on different scenarios for universities and the consequences for how we fund the sector. Future financial pathways must indeed consider increased competition from other providers, technological transformation, mounting pressures and a volatile geopolitical landscape. Who gets funding from the public purse? And for which purposes? In this final discussion, we will seek to identify a common thread among contrasting visions and expectations for the financial sustainability of universities.

- Ilkka Niemelä, Chair of the UNIFI Board of Directors and Rector, Aalto University, Finland
 - Iris Kimizoglou, President, European Students’ Union
- Facilitated by Amanda Crowfoot, Secretary General, EUA*

Concluding remarks

- Esa Hämäläinen, Head of Administration, University of Helsinki, Finland
- Thomas Estermann, Director, EUA

13.00

Lunch & departure

Parallel sessions are described in full below. The following icons indicate six key Forum topics:



System analysis / funding model



University experience
(case study)



Sustainability / green & digital
transitions



European funding





Financial management










Collaboration / Alliances





Parallel sessions I (Thursday 3 October, 11.30-12.30)

<p>I.A</p>  	<p>The quest for future proof funding models and the promise of dialogue-based funding</p> <p>Traditional funding models – often formula-based - struggle to address the increasingly diverse needs of students and labour markets , let alone the need for higher education providers to become more green and inclusive. Designing future-proof models requires a holistic approach that considers external trends, acknowledges institutional diversity, and draws inspiration from international best practices. This session builds on a Dutch foresight study exploring different future scenarios for post-secondary education and their associated funding models – including models that specifically address the grand societal challenges like sustainability. It will delve into how distinctive funding and governance approaches can best support the ambitions of the higher education sector.</p> <p>Ben Jongbloed, drawing on extensive research, will offer in addition to the Dutch study a comparative perspective on dialogue-based funding in Europe, including experiences from Austria, Denmark, Finland, and Flanders. He will explore how this approach fosters institutional diversity and caters to diverse needs, challenging the current discourse on competitive and performance-based funding models. Participants will have the opportunity to share their experiences and engage in a rich discussion about designing future-proof funding models.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ben Jongbloed, Associate Professor Knowledge, Transformation & Society, University of Twente, Netherlands
<p>I.B</p>  	<p>The strategic sextant: positioning your institution for success in a sea of opportunities and constraints</p> <p>Universities build their strategies integrating incentives set by the funding model and wider ecosystem in which they operate. When parameters shift, universities must revise and adapt their own approaches. In this session, we will explore the internal processes of universities that have strategically responded to changing environments in Scotland and Hungary, assessing the constraints as well as the opportunities that characterize possible development scenarios. University leaders will dive into how their institution has established priorities and seized opportunities in challenging contexts. The conversation will address how the change of model affects the strategy-making process from a financial point of view, as well as the identification and prioritisation of opportunities for income diversification. Whether they have been confronted with an eroding funding base, shifting revenue streams or increased costs, or a full-scale change of funding model, these universities have stepped up to the mark.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ákos Domahidi, Chancellor, Corvinus University, Hungary • Ester Ruskuc, Vice-Principal (Strategy, Policy and Planning), University of Saint Andrews, United Kingdom

<p>I.C</p>    	<p>Stronger together: acceleration & upscaling of financial strategies</p> <p>This session focuses on the experiences of two higher education institutions that have leveraged resources and expertise in their networks to drive their financial strategies. In Ireland, University College Cork, as part of the University's strategy, has been experimenting with 'Living Labs' to co-design pathways with their research community and external stakeholders towards sustainable research funding. It has developed a European community of practice in this area, building an evidence base that is helping the institution position itself strategically in its partnership and funding ecosystem. In France, the Institut Mines-Telecom has developed a multi-level, multi-actors strategy to fund its innovation activities. With the experience gained, it is currently exploring with its European alliance partners ways to upscale this approach, by pooling resources and developing Europe-wide networks of investors.</p> <p>Both institutions will share how they have sought to accelerate the learning curve in developing sustainable financial strategies to support their core missions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marc Delage, Head of European & International R&D Affairs, Institut Mines-Telecom, France (EULiST alliance) • Martin Galvin, Head of Research Culture, Engagement and Impact; and David O'Connell, Director of Research, University College Cork, Ireland (UNIC alliance)
<p>I.D</p>  	<p>Public funding policy choices: Spotlight on universities of applied sciences and private higher education</p> <p>This session is dedicated to exploring two important constituencies within the higher education sector, with specific financial profiles.</p> <p>A comparative analysis of the funding models for universities of applied sciences in Finland and Germany (Hessen) will underline the different policy approaches towards the sector and reflect on the strategic autonomy of institutions in terms of priorities and financial development.</p> <p>Public funding policy choices towards private higher education are also diverse throughout Europe, from targeted support to overall financing of student grants. The second part of the session will explore the evolution of the private sector in Portugal and will discuss to what extent public money can be used to strengthen the system. What is the role and responsibility of the state in supporting private education? Should the state subsidise the study for students at private universities, or should subsidies be reserved only for the public sector? What opportunities exist for the private sector to diversify their income streams?</p> <p>Participants in this session will discuss likely futures for the funding of an increasingly diverse landscape of higher education providers, reflecting the multiple expectations and perceptions of society towards the sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna Arsova-Odrich, Head of Department University Strategy & Governance, Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany • Vuokko Kohtamaki, Senior Lecturer, Tampere University, Finland • Teresa Damasio, Head of Board, ISG Business & Economics School, Portugal




Parallel sessions II (Thursday 3 October, 14.00-15.30)

<p>II.A</p>   	<p>The state of university finances: in-depth analysis</p> <p>Over the past five years, the world has experienced a profound transformation driven by external crises and factors, such as COVID-19, green and digital transition, inflation, demographic changes, and geopolitical tensions. These forces have significantly influenced the modus operandi of higher education institutions.</p> <p>The Funding Forum participants will have the unique possibility to delve into EUA’s latest study on university finances before its official release in 2025. This parallel session will address the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How have income and expenditure evolved over time? - What are the expectations in terms of future funding? - Where do the bottlenecks and prospects lie for European HEIs? - How do institutions diversify funding sources? - Which external forces have shaped the strategies of European HEIs? - What role do European funding and alliance play in the current ecosystem? <p>These and other takeaways, trends, and tendencies will be presented during this session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enora Bennetot Pruvot, Deputy Director – Governance, Funding and Public Policy Development, European University Association • Nino Popkhadze, Policy & Project Officer – Governance, Funding and Public Policy Development, European University Association
<p>II.B</p>    	<p>Exploring a sustainable funding perspective for European Universities alliances</p> <p>European Universities alliances are new and innovative types of transnational collaboration that are going beyond previously tested models by building connected European inter-university environments in education, research & innovation and societal outreach. To date, they are navigating a complex funding landscape at regional, national, European and international levels that still needs to develop further to support alliances in their ambition to become flagships of the European Higher Education Area and European Research Area. As the European Higher Education landscape is continuously evolving to accommodate new and ever-changing needs and priorities, so must funding structures at all levels.</p> <p>This session, facilitated by Una Europa, build on the alliance’s experiences on the range of possibilities that different funding sources provide, be it at national, European or international levels. The session sets out to i) introduce participants to three complementary aspects that are integral to building a sustainable funding perspective and ii) facilitate a mutual learning exercise on these three elements of national co-funding, institutional investment and EU programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Séverine Bortot, Director (projects & prospective), Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University • Sophia Karner, Senior Policy Officer, Una Europa • Anna Stina Sinisalo, Head of Development, International Affairs, University of Helsinki • Mariet Vriens, Policy Adviser Una Europa, KU Leuven

<p>II.C</p>   	<p>Workshop: What does the future hold for your university's finances?</p> <p>Ten years from now, where would you want to see your institution, financially? What will you have achieved, in terms of income generation, partnerships, savings? Will your student population have changed significantly? Will your institution develop new activities? How will your collaborations play into the overall financial picture? In this 'futures thinking' session, we will collectively work on our visions, the challenges to address and the stepstones we need to achieve the future we want. Based on futures thinking and foresight methodologies, participants of the workshop will explore different possible futures and sense into the direction to take for their institution's strategic development, enabling them to progress from foresight to insight.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik, Deputy Director for Policy Coordination & Foresight, European University Association
<p>II.D</p>   	<p>More than bricks: tensions and opportunities in real estate management</p> <p>Investing in the future of universities requires responsible, long-term real estate management. Across Europe, the capacity of higher education institutions to make decisions on their campus and real estate varies. Finland made universities owners of their facilities around 2010, while France has engaged in a process of transfer of ownership over the last years. What has this meant, and what could this mean, for the universities' financial strategy? Do funding models support, or impede, long-term investment in campuses? What are the options for universities to tackle the maintenance challenge, and to start implementing the twin transitions on their campuses? With higher education engaged in hybrid modes of delivery, how do we envisage the future of the university's physical space, and how do we invest in its flexibility?</p> <p>This session features two experts with in-depth knowledge of funding mechanisms as well as university real estate. Participants will join a rich discussion exploring the connections between funding model incentives, institutional autonomy and strategic financial management. The issue of sustainability will be at the core of the session: can we set a path where campuses support and empower universities both in terms of green & digital transitions, but also become a strategic asset?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frédéric Forest, General Inspector for Education, Sport and Research, Ministry of Higher Education and Research, France • Hannu Vartiainen, Professor, University of Helsinki, Finland

Parallel sessions III (Friday 4th October, 10.10-11.10)

<p>III.A</p> 	<p>International insights: navigating performance-based funding</p> <p>Many European higher education systems incorporate performance-based funding (PBF) into their funding models, though the degrees, forms, and purposes vary widely. Recent studies have also explored the effects and unintended consequences of PBF implementation. This session goes beyond the usual European discourse, exploring interesting approaches from Japan and Ukraine, both of which have recently implemented PBF systems. Despite their distinct approaches (Japan introduced its system in 2010, while Ukraine's began in 2019 but paused due to the war and started again in 2024), Japan and Ukraine share interesting similarities in their PBF reforms. Expert speakers will present their latest research on these reforms and explore potential connections and learning points for existing European models. Participants will delve into the policy frameworks of each country and see how universities are navigating this new funding landscape. They will also have the opportunity to share their experiences, discuss what works and what needs improvement to pave the way for a more diversified and effective approach to university funding in Europe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kateryna Suprun, Doctoral candidate, Tampere University, Finland • Yutaro Tsuji, Doctoral candidate, University of Tokyo, Japan
<p>III.B</p> 	<p>Towards a sustainable funding base: shaping policy narratives</p> <p>Referencing turbulences and external shocks affecting higher education over the past decade could be seen as common place. Exactly how these have shaped an evolving policy narrative around higher education is less often considered. This session will approach the topic in a concrete way, working out the impact that specific challenges have had on universities in the UK and in Czechia. Whether global (economic crisis, covid-19), regional (war in Ukraine, energy crisis) or domestic (immigration policies, Brexit), external factors alter the parameters of university funding models and their finances. How we have arrived to the current state of affairs, and what are the options forward, will be at the core of the discussion. Contributors will also focus on how the sector has engaged with policymakers to support the universities' financial sustainability, and how they coordinate their action as we reach a critical juncture for the sector in both countries. Competing visions, evolving needs and priorities towards universities make it all the more to invest in the resilience and coordination among institutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harry Anderson, Deputy Director, Policy & Global Engagement; and Dajana Dzanovic, Head of Global Research and Innovation Policy, Universities UK International, UK • Ladislav Janíček, Rector, Brno University of Technology, Czechia

<p>III.C</p>   	<p>Workshop: What does the future hold for your university's finances?</p> <p>Ten years from now, where would you want to see your institution, financially? What will you have achieved, in terms of income generation, partnerships, savings? Will your student population have changed significantly? Will your institution develop new activities? How will your collaborations play into the overall financial picture? In this 'futures thinking' session, we will collectively work on our visions, the challenges to address and the stepstones we need to achieve the future we want. Based on futures thinking and foresight methodologies, participants of the workshop will explore different possible futures and sense into the direction to take for their institution's strategic development, enabling them to progress from foresight to insight.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik, Deputy Director for Policy Coordination & Foresight, European University Association
<p>III.D</p>  	<p>Paving the road for successful partnerships</p> <p>This session will explore the question of networks from inside, seeking to pin down what makes a collaboration sustainable. Combining research insights with university experiences, the contributors will critically assess why networks flourish or fail and identify the key ingredients for their financial sustainability. The role of funding and outreach strategies in strengthening networks will be a focus of attention, as well as the extent to which these networks influence institutional strategies and behaviours.</p> <p>Participants will hear first-hand from institutions that have either recently joined a pre-existing alliance or have recently applied as a new consortium. The session will assess both the challenges and motivation of belonging to alliances from a fresh perspective.</p> <p>Participants will be encouraged to actively engage in the discussion through dynamic peer learning methods. The discussion will be of particular interest to colleagues whose institutions are engaged in among others large-scale, cross-cutting partnerships such as European university alliances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francisco Mendes-Palma, Institutional Coordinator and Outreach Leader; and Aline Villas Boas, Project Manager, Transform4Europe, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Portugal • Liliya Terzieva, Professor Designing Value Networks, The Hague University of Applied Sciences • Pavlina Vujović, Head of Internationalisation, University of Applied Sciences Munich, Germany