

14-15th September 2023

# II FORUM of European Universities Alliances

## Plenary session I

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September 10:00h-11:30h

European Universities  
initiative: Transformative  
Potential & Challenges for  
National Governments and  
institutions

## INTRODUCTION

The European Universities Initiative has had a clear impact on the European university system and Member States. Since 2017 and through four calls under the Erasmus+ Programme, the European Commission has funded the creation of 50 alliances of higher education institutions involving more than 430 universities and almost 1700 associated partners. Although the percentage of European universities that are not integrated in any alliance is very significant and will continue to be so when the 60 alliances projected by the Commission are reached in 2024, the creation of these alliances made possible to strengthen strategic partnerships between higher education institutions in all Member States and to move towards universities that are closer to the challenges of today's society, to the needs of students in a global world, as well as to European values. The commitment to improve the quality and competitiveness of European universities is clear and involves a recognition of diversity, university autonomy and the need to try out activities and formulas for cooperation that are not predefined.

The European Universities Initiative is being developed in an area of distribution of competences between the European Union and the Member States in which the latter continue to hold most of the competences in higher education, while the European Union supports, coordinates and complements, where appropriate, the action of the Member States. While the construction of the European Higher Education Area and processes such as the Bologna process has contributed to the approximation and harmonization of important aspects of national legal systems, the European Universities Initiative has developed itself within the framework of an unchanged distribution of competences.

## PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

In this context, the development of the European Universities Initiative and the creation of the European University Alliances have a transformative potential and pose major challenges to university systems and their constituent institutions. The purpose of the session is, however, to focus on Member States and governments with higher education competences, whether national or sub-state. The creation, driven by Erasmus Plus funds, of long-term strategic supra-state partnerships and the active involvement of higher education institutions in many Member States has presented state governments with a number of challenges, but also a potential for transformation of their own university systems, which will be discussed in this session by representatives of Member States with heterogeneous regulatory systems and historical and geographical contexts.

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

One of the main **challenges** for Member States is to **adapt their legal framework** to the new reality of European Alliances. In an area where national traditions and regulations are very heterogeneous, where university autonomy is the starting point and where very detailed and dispersed regulations exist, the need to accommodate supra-territorial alliances with a desire for permanence poses a first obvious challenge. On one hand, the question arises as to whether the administrative organization of governments is adapted to the evolution of the alliances themselves and the needs that arise. On the other, it seems that a reality with such an important transformative potential as that of European Alliances also requires collaboration mechanisms between national authorities and the universities themselves in order to analyze the challenges and needs that emerge. In the area of relations with the European Commission, it can also be questioned whether the current ministerial teams are in a position to provide adequate follow-up. In the field of cooperation between Member States, mechanisms or forums also seem necessary to facilitate the adaptation of national legislation to the reality of European alliances. In this respect, it should be borne in mind that the problems of a university or a Member State in relation to a specific issue affect the alliance itself and, therefore, all the universities that make up the alliance.

Another challenge for Member States is the **financing** of Alliances. The creation of stable and long-term partnerships with such an ambitious purpose as the European University Initiative requires sufficient and adequate financial resources. Although this issue will be discussed in one of the Forum's thematic sessions, the funding of Alliances by national authorities differs substantially from one Member State to another and can be discussed from various perspectives: strictly quantitative, periodicity, the legal regime applicable to national funds, as well as their coherence with other funding instruments in the university field.

In the area of Alliances funding, another challenge is how to ensure sufficient resources in research, especially considering that up to now the European Commission's funding has come from the Erasmus Plus Programme. Although one of the thematic sessions of the Forum will address the issue of the adequacy and coherence of funding mechanisms at the European Union level, it is also interesting to analyze how partnerships can participate in the research funds allocated by the Member States.

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

Finally, another challenge that arises from the perspective of the Member States is the need to **continue to support and accompany universities that do not join the current alliances**. Moreover, the fact that the majority of universities will not join the 60 Alliances planned for 2024 force Member States to take into account other realities in terms of both policy and funding. While it is possible and desirable that all universities should be able to benefit from the experience of European alliances, and formulas should be sought to make this possible, support for all higher education institutions within national university systems is a requirement of all national authorities that cannot be neglected. Alongside these and other challenges, the European Universities Initiative also has a **transformative potential** for Member State governments that will be discussed at the session. On one hand, the regulatory changes required by such an ambitious project need not be limited to European alliances and may be extended to other forms of inter-institutional cooperation, as well as to the legal regime applicable to universities in the respective countries. On the other, aspects relating to the language of instruction, the issuing of electronic degrees or the quality assurance system, developed to support European Alliances, can be generalized and applied to national university systems. Subjects such as the challenge-based approach, the stronger connection with external actors, innovations in the field of learning, research or knowledge transfer that are being tested in the Alliances, can also be used to improve the situation at national level. Ultimately, the Initiative goes far beyond the universities directly involved and reaches out to the European and Member State university systems themselves. In this context, national authorities also have the opportunity to draw on the experience of European Alliances to transform those elements of their university systems that are in need of transformation. The session will address the extent to which the Initiative can facilitate changes in an area such as universities, where transformations are not usually easy..

## PARTICIPANTS

### MODERATOR

**Josep Maria Garrell**, President EUA

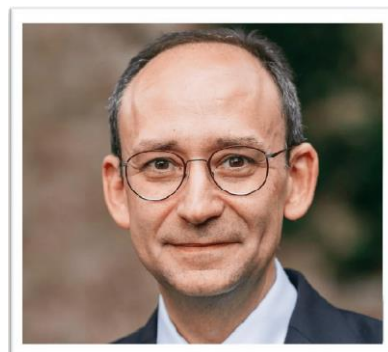
Josep M. Garrell is former Rector of Ramon Llull University (Universitat Ramon Llull), Spain. He was elected EUA President in 2023, having served on the Association's Board since 2019.

In 2012, Professor Garrell was appointed Rector of Ramon Llull University, where he went on to serve a second four-year term in (2016-2020) and a third two-year term (2020-2022). In 2015, he was appointed as a member of the Standing Committee of the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE), whom he also represented at the EUA Council and General Assembly from 2016 to 2019.

Prior to his terms as rector, he held several leadership positions at Ramon Llull University, such as Delegate of the Rector for ICT (2000-2002), Vice-Rector for Research and Innovation (2002-2010), Secretary General (2006-2010) and Vice-Rector for University Policy (2010-2012).

Professor Garrell graduated in Computer Engineering from Polytechnical University of Catalonia (UPC), he holds a Doctorate in Electronic Engineering from Ramon Llull University. As a faculty member and researcher at Ramon Llull University (URL), he specialised in artificial intelligence and machine learning. He co-founded the Intelligent Systems Research Group at the university's La Salle campus and conducted research at Carnegie's Mellon University's Pittsburgh Supercomputing Center.

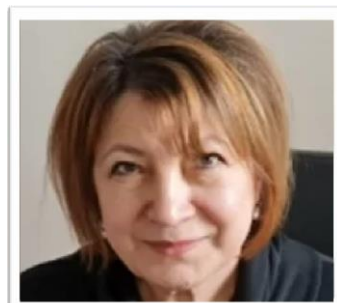
Professor Garrell was formerly President of the Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities (SACRU). From 2014 to 2018, he was a member of the Catalan Parliament's Advisory Council on Science and Technology (CAPCIT), as the representative of Catalan private non-profit universities.



## PARTICIPANTS

### Prof. Guenka Petrova

Prof. Genka Petrova-Tashkova is a pharmacist and pharmacoeconomist, Professor and Head Secretary at the Medical University - Sofia. She was a Deputy Minister of Education and Science in the Governments of Kiril Petkov and Stefan Yanev.



She graduated in Pharmacy at the Medical Academy - Sofia in 1984 and in Economics and Labor Organization at the University of National and World Economy - Sofia in 1991. She is a Doctor of Pharmacy with a thesis on "Drug needs and usage - analysis and forecasting" (1994).

She majored in Health Economics at Canterbury Business School. She is a Doctor of Pharmaceutical Sciences with a thesis on "A model of the reform of the pharmaceutical sector in countries in transition from the Balkan region - an analysis of the application of theoretical concepts."

From 2008 to 2016, she was Vice-rector for scientific activities of the Medical University - Sofia. For two mandates, she headed the "Organization and Economics of Pharmacy" Department at the Faculty of Pharmacy of the MU-Sofia, she was scientific supervisor of 16 doctoral students. She is an external expert at the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research.

She is a guest lecturer at the Institute of Business Management of the University of Nantes, France, at the University of Belgrade, Serbia, at the University of Sarajevo and the University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as at the Carol Davila University in Bucharest. In 2010, she was among the founders of the Bulgarian Association for Drug Information.

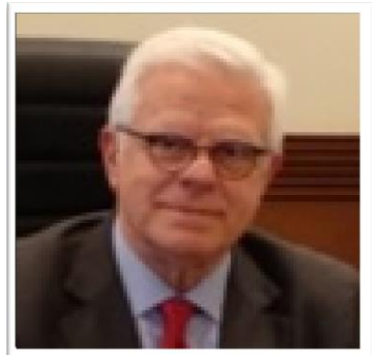
She has over 400 publications in refereed and indexed journals and 15 monographs and textbooks, four of them outside Bulgaria.

## PARTICIPANTS

### Odysseas-Ioannis Zoras

Odysseas – Ioannis Zoras is the General Secretary for Higher Education of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports. He is Emeritus Professor of the University of Crete in the field of Surgical Oncology while he is an honorary PhD of both the School of Health Sciences of Frederick University of Cyprus and of the School of Health Sciences of National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He has performed over 4000 major surgical procedures surgeries of surgical oncology and Hyperthermic Isolated Limb Perfusions, while he has published over 180 peer reviewed articles in scientific journals, gaining about 4300 citations and an h factor of 36. He has been invited in more than 600 national and international congresses. Also, he is the editor of the textbook of surgical oncology entitled “Regional Oncotherapies” and of the Greek version of the book “Anatomic Basis of Tumor Surgery” from Parisianou editions while he is a co-author in the textbooks of Surgical Anatomy of “Surgical Oncology”, and in the book of “Surgery for pelvic malignancies”.

Furthermore, Odysseas – Ioannis Zoras is the former President of the Hellenic Open University and former Rector of the University of Crete. Thus, he has been awarded by the President of the Italian Republic “Ufficiale dell’ordine della Stella della Repubblica Italiana” and he is a Guest Professor of Shanxi Medical University of China.





## PARTICIPANTS

### **Richard Bodrogi**

Richárd Bodrogi is the Director-General of Tempus Public Foundation, the National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme in Hungary.



## PARTICIPANTS

### **Pedro Nuno Teixeira**

Pedro Nuno Teixeira was born in Porto in 1972 and since March 2022 he has been the Secretary of State for Higher Education - XXIII constitutional government of Portugal.

He is Full Professor at the University of Porto - Faculty of Economics (on leave) and former Director of CIPES – Centre for Research in Higher Education Policies (2009-2022). He is a member of the Europaea Academy since 2021.

He was special advisor to the President of Portugal for Higher Education and Science (2016-2021) and Higher Education and Economic Recovery (2021-2022). Furthermore, between 2014-2018 he was Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs of the University of Porto.

He graduated in Economics from the University of Porto - Faculty of Economics (1995), he holds a master's degree in Higher Education from Twente University - Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (1998) and a PhD in Economics from Exeter University – Department of Economics (2003). He was researcher or visiting professor at Oxford University, the University of California-Berkeley, and New York State University– Albany (Fulbright New Century Scholars). Since 2003 he has been research Fellow at IZA – Institute for the Study of Labor.

His research has focused on the economics of education, notably higher education policies, and the history of economic thought. He is author of several publications in books and academic journals to these research fields.



## PARTICIPANTS

### PANELISTS

#### José Manuel Pingarrón

José M. Pingarrón obtained his Ph.D. (1981) from Complutense University of Madrid. Between 1982 and 1983, he did postdoctoral training at the École Nationale Supérieure de Chimie de Paris. Since 1994, he is a full Professor of Analytical Chemistry at the Complutense University of Madrid and in 1997 he was Visiting Professor at Cornell University, USA.

José M. Pingarrón headed the Department of Analytical Chemistry at the Faculty of Chemistry between 1998 and 2006 and he was the President of the Spanish Society of Analytical Chemistry between 1998 and 2001.

His research interests focus on analytical electrochemistry, nanostructured electrochemical interfaces, nanomaterials and electrochemical sensors and biosensors. He is author or co-author of over 500 peer-reviewed papers, 38 book chapters and 2 textbooks as well as 12 invention patents. He was Vice-President of the Spanish Royal Society of Chemistry 2015-2019.

Between 2008 and 2015, he was member of the Management team of the programme on Basic Chemistry of the National Plan of Research in the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Innovation (MINECO). Vice-Chancellor for Transfer of Knowledge and Entrepreneurship in Complutense University of Madrid (2015-2018). Executive Secretary of the R&D&I division of CRUE (Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities) 2016-2018. Moreover, Professor Pingarrón is a founder member of the Forum of Innovative Companies (FEI) and co-founder of the “spin-off” company Inbea Biosensores S.L. Since June 2018, he is the Secretary General for Universities in the Ministry of Universities in the Government of Spain.



## PARTICIPANTS

### Michael Gerber

Michael Gerber joined the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) in June 2023 as a member of the Executive Board of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), where he assumes the function of Director General of the International Programmes and Organisations Division.

Previously, he held senior leadership positions in the Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP (2018-2023) as well as the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA (2002-2023). From 2012 to 2018, Ambassador Michael Gerber was the Swiss Federal Council's Special Envoy for Global Sustainable Development, leading Switzerland's international engagement on the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as Financing for Development as chief negotiator and coordinator. From 2002 to 2012 he had different functions at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's (SDC) and various project assignments in Ecuador, Colombia and Mexico.

Michael Gerber holds a Master's degree in political philosophy, ethics, history and social anthropology from the University of Bern (MA, 2006), a Certificate of Advanced Studies for Developing Countries (NADEL) from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology ETH Zurich (CAS, 2009) as well as an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA, 2023) from the University of St. Gallen (HSG) and ETH Zurich. he

