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**Macron's Idea of European  
Universities**

From Vision to Reality

**Discussion Paper**

**C249  
2018**

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## **Macron's Idea of European Universities**

### **From Vision to Reality**

#### ***I.***

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2017, French President Emmanuel Macron gave a speech on Europe's future, the "Initiative for Europe," at Paris' oldest university, the prestigious Sorbonne.<sup>1</sup> To the audience of students from Europe and throughout the world, he provided an ambitious and at the same time detailed plan on how to reform and change Europe. "The Europe of today," he said, "is too slow, too weak, too ineffective, but Europe alone can enable us to take action in the world, in the face of the big contemporary challenges."<sup>2</sup> The global challenges he mentioned, such as climate change, digital transition, migration and terrorism, can be solved only within the union of Europe, not by individual inward-facing countries themselves. Moreover, the various counterproductive elements that Europe has had to increasingly face in recent years, such as nationalism, identitarianism, protectionism and isolationist sovereignism, reveal the need for a "European sovereignty." For this to be achieved, the rebuilding

1 For the original version in French, see Macron, Emmanuel (2017): Initiative pour l'Europe. Retrieved from <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/initiative-pour-l-europe-discours-d-emmanuel-macron-pour-une-europe-souveraine-unie-democratique/> (10/01/2018). For the English version, see Macron, Emmanuel (2017): Initiative for Europe. Speech by M. Emmanuel Macron. President of the French Republic, pp. 1-26. Retrieved from [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/english\\_version\\_transcript\\_-\\_initiative\\_for\\_europe\\_-\\_speech\\_by\\_the\\_president\\_of\\_the\\_french\\_republic\\_cle8de628.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/english_version_transcript_-_initiative_for_europe_-_speech_by_the_president_of_the_french_republic_cle8de628.pdf) (10/01/2018).

2 Macron 2017b: 4.

of a strong, “sovereign, united and democratic Europe“<sup>3</sup> is necessary. To reach that goal, President Macron highlighted “the six keys to sovereignty essential for success.”<sup>4</sup>

The first key addresses aspects of security, more precisely, the fight against terrorism, cybersecurity and defence. He encouraged the establishment of a common intervention force and a common defence budget. In addition, he called for a common doctrine for action as well as a European Intelligence Academy and a common civil protection force.<sup>5</sup> First steps toward establishing a common security and defence policy have already occurred: 25 of the 28 members of the European Union established the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), initiated for the first time in September 2017<sup>6</sup> and launched by 25 of the 28 European member states in December 2017.<sup>7</sup> A European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) also became effective at the same time. By August 2018, 22 members of the European Union were cooperating.<sup>8</sup>

The other keys to sovereignty emphasize the long-lasting challenge posed by migration, which Macron refers to and which binds Europe to the Middle East as well as to Africa. This makes it necessary to construct “a common area for borders, asylum and migrations”<sup>9</sup> as well as integration. The challenge Germany is presently facing is crucial to preventing great

3 Macron 2017b: 4.

4 Macron 2017b: 4.

5 Cf. Macron 2017b: 4-5.

6 Cf. European Union External Action (2017): Permanent Structured Cooperation on defence could be launched by end 2017. Retrieved from [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage\\_en/31832/Permanent%20Structured%20Cooperation%20on%20defence%20could%20be%20launched%20by%20end%202017](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/31832/Permanent%20Structured%20Cooperation%20on%20defence%20could%20be%20launched%20by%20end%202017) (10/01/2018).

7 Cf. Council of the European Union (2017): Council Decision Establishing Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and determining the list of Participating Member States. Retrieved from <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32000/st14866en17.pdf> (10/01/2018).

8 Cf. Official Journal of the European Union (2018): Commission Decision (EU) 2018/1103 of 7 August 2018 confirming the participation of Malta in the enhanced cooperation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor’s Office. Retrieved from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2018/1103/oj> (10/01/2018).

9 Macron 2017b: 6.

## Macron's Idea of European Universities

domestic political instability. Further, he addressed foreign policy by focusing on a partnership with Africa based on education, health and energy transition. Germany's Grand Coalition supports cooperation with Africa and framed an Africa strategy in its Coalition Agreement of 2018.<sup>10</sup> The next key according to Macron refers to an ecological transition, mainly in the energy and agriculture sector. It is his aim to have a shared European energy market with a fair carbon price.<sup>11</sup> The fifth key concerns digital technology and seeks to make Europe a digital continent. Europe has to lead the digital transformation with radical innovations, which will also have an impact on the transformation of European economies and societies.<sup>12</sup> The final key regards Europe's economic, industrial and monetary power. The goal is to create a strong and powerful eurozone as well as a European Economic and Monetary Union. A long-term economic and political strategy is needed to make Europe a competitive economic power.<sup>13</sup> Although Macron details six keys to sovereignty in his speech, a further, seventh key suggests itself regarding culture and knowledge, which Macron mentions as the two elements that hold Europe together. He proposes a communal life that values culture, education, research and science. Thus, he favours a multilingual Europe and European universities that have the role of "drivers of educational innovation and the quest for excellence."<sup>14</sup>

Although the Initiative for Europe would seem to be a highly ambitious and forward-looking initiative for Europe that is worthy of support (for most points at least), it failed to garner the reactions it needs to become the fundamental groundwork for a strong and united Europe. The responses to the speech have been cautious at best. While the reactions of the EU and Italy, for example, were positive and supportive, those of many European conservatives and the member states of Central Europe were deeply skeptical and dismissive. Even reviews in the French press were critical. However, Macron continues to cherish his idea and keeps suggesting his

10 Cf. Macron 2017b: 7.

11 Cf. Macron 2017b: 7-10.

12 Cf. Macron 2017b: 10-12.

13 Cf. Macron 2017b: 13-14.

14 Macron 2017b: 17.

concept of Europe on different occasions – for example, during his speech at the European Parliament in April of this year.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the keys and visions he foresees in a European future, it was of great importance to President Macron to appeal to Germany to establish “a new partnership”<sup>16</sup> for the renewal of another Élysée Treaty. A renewed and strengthened partnership between these two leading countries would be the moving power behind the Initiative for Europe.

## **II.**

Yet, Germany’s reactions were divided from the beginning and were certainly not as enthusiastic as had been hoped for. Although Germany shares this ambition of a united and sovereign Europe with its partner France, it failed to support Macron’s visions right away: On the one hand were the difficulties stemming from coalition negotiations after the federal elections in September 2017, just 2 days before Macron’s speech. Also, the political future of Germany was ambiguous for a long time. On the other hand was the rebellion by Bavarian conservatives that Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel had to face shortly after the formation of the Grand Coalition, which brought many difficulties to the government make-up. Although both countries insist on the importance of the French-German partnership, vast differences remain between the two governments’ vision. Nevertheless, the most important issues in the coalition agreement of the German Grand Coalition referring to Europe (altogether it refers to Europe 298 times) close match Macron’s demands. Thus, Germany is willing to support most of Macron’s ideas and the close cooperation with France and the aims of a Europe, namely, “solidarity and democracy,” “competing powers and investments,” “prospects and justice” as well as “freedom and global responsibility” in the coalition agreement (2018). Indeed the Coalition Agreement states that “[f]or Germany, a strong and united

15 European Parliament Press Releases (2018): Macron defends the idea of European sovereignty. Retrieved from <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180411IPR01517/macron-defends-the-idea-of-european-sovereignty> (09/28/18).

16 Macron 2017b: 23.

## Macron's Idea of European Universities

Europe is the best guarantor of a good future in peace, freedom and prosperity.<sup>17</sup> Only in June 2018 did the cabinets of Germany and France come together in Meseberg, Germany, to shape a Franco-German declaration that formed the groundwork for a new “Élysée Treaty” planned to be finalised by the end of 2018. It should anchor the European cooperation in a strong bilateral relation, “with the ambition to foster their economic, social and fiscal convergence, to develop new tools for their cross-border cooperation and to renew their commitment to support and facilitate the learning of the language of the partner.”<sup>18</sup> With the Meseberg declaration – given the title “Renewing Europe’s Promises of Security and Prosperity” – the leaders and ministers of both countries presented a catalogue of reforms to shape Europe’s future. In particular, this catalogue reflects aspects mentioned in Macron’s speech, such as foreign and economic policy, a Migration Agenda, taxation and climate. Both parties also agreed on a budget for the Euro zone to be funded by national contributions as well as European resources.

### III.

Regarding research, innovation and higher education, Germany and France agreed, among other things, “[t]o work to quickly set up the first ‘European universities,’ initially consisting in bottom-up networks of universities across the EU.”<sup>19</sup> Before the Franco-German agreement, EU leaders had

17 Bundesregierung (2018): Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa. Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland. Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land. Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD. 19. Legislaturperiode, I. 93-94. Retrieved from [https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/\\_Anlagen/2018/03/2018-03-14-koalitionsvertrag.pdf;jsessionid=87F25216A9B8BD6381C0E73EC8E8156B.s7t2?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=6](https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/_Anlagen/2018/03/2018-03-14-koalitionsvertrag.pdf;jsessionid=87F25216A9B8BD6381C0E73EC8E8156B.s7t2?__blob=publicationFile&v=6) (09/28/18).

18 Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung (2018): Erklärung von Meseberg. Retrieved from <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Pressemitteilungen/BPA/2018/06/2018-06-19-erklaerung-meseberg.html> (09/28/18).

19 Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung (2018): Erklärung von Meseberg. Retrieved from <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Pressemitteilungen/BPA/2018/06/2018-06-19-erklaerung-meseberg.html> (09/28/18).

already outlined an Initiative for European Universities at the 2017 Gothenburg Summit and are now proceeding according to Macron's idea of building a European university network. This initiative intends to "... strengthen strategic partnerships across the EU between higher education institutions and encourage the emergence by 2024 of some twenty 'European Universities,' ... which will enable students to obtain a degree by combining studies in several EU countries and contribute to the international competitiveness of European universities,"<sup>20</sup> to quote the European Commission on the European Universities Initiative.

However, it was the French president's intention to build independent universities with a newly conceived concept of European standards – universities with a European degree that would be acknowledged in every other European university and in all countries of the continent. What is developing instead are networks of various universities located throughout Europe. Besides uniting Europe on an educational platform and thereby strengthening the European identity, "[t]he aim behind this initiative," so the European Commission, "is to bring together a new generation of creative Europeans who are able to cooperate in different languages, across borders and disciplines, to address the big societal challenges and skill shortages that Europe faces. This initiative must be a game changer in higher education. Building on excellent examples such as Erasmus Mundus, Maria Skłodowska-Curie Actions and the European Institute of Innovation & Technology, Europe must make a leap forward. Driven by high quality, these European Universities would attract the best students, teachers and researchers, making use of the most innovative pedagogies and digital technologies. They would act as role models for other higher education institutions, progressively increasing the international competitiveness of European higher education."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, by 2024, 20 of these university networks should be established. Although this European

20 European Commission (2017): European Universities Initiative. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/european-universities-initiative\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/european-universities-initiative_en) (10/01/18).

21 European Commission (2017): European Universities Initiative. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/european-universities-initiative\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/european-universities-initiative_en) (10/01/18).



## Macron's Idea of European Universities

University Network was not directly intended by the French president, Macron did inspire European higher education to cooperate and to unite.

Various institutions have already published concept papers on their idea of the European University Initiative.<sup>22</sup> In these papers they present their individual positions on European Universities as well as new suggestions and recommendations. At the same time, most of these papers agree on numerous aspects such as the funding or the idea of strong and common structures, with “clear strategic objectives and committed leadership.”<sup>23</sup> Based on the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the fourth of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>24</sup> most of the position papers follow and promote the idea of lifelong learning – which is necessary more than ever in our fast-changing world and in competition with machines and constantly developing technologies.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, it is “essential for the competitiveness of the knowledge-based economy. This applies to all levels of education and training and concerns all stages of life as well as the different forms of learning.”<sup>26</sup> This should also include the development of

22 For example, the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA), conférence des présidents d’université (cpu), the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU), the European University Foundation (EUF), the EuroTech Universities, the German Rectors’ Conference, the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU), the Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences for Europe (UAS4Europe), the European Campus (EUCOR), the University of the Greater Region (UniGR). Cf. European Commission (2017): European Universities Initiative. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/european-universities-initiative\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/european-universities-initiative_en) (10/01/18).

23 The Guild (2018): Shaping European Universities of the Future. The Guild’s recommendations for the European University Initiative, p. 2. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/the\\_guild\\_position\\_paper\\_on\\_european\\_universities\\_initiative.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/the_guild_position_paper_on_european_universities_initiative.pdf) (10/01/18).

24 Cf. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2018): Quality Education: Why it Matters. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Goal-4.pdf> (10/09/18).

25 Cf., for example, Taddei, François (2018): Europe as a campus to allow every European citizen to become a lifelong student, p. 1. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/cri\\_position\\_paper\\_on\\_european\\_universities\\_initiative.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/cri_position_paper_on_european_universities_initiative.pdf) (10/09/18).

26 Conférence des présidents d’université (2018): European Universities CPU Proposal, p. 2. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/cpu\\_on\\_european\\_universities\\_initiative.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/cpu_on_european_universities_initiative.pdf) (10/09/18).

“critical thinking among students, starting at Bachelor level”<sup>27</sup> as the Conference des presidents d’université promotes. According to the majority of the concept papers, the basis of the European Universities cooperation model should be a triangle of knowledge – research, education and innovation– and function as bridge between these three fields.<sup>28</sup> More than just strengthening the links between research, education and innovation,<sup>29</sup> these networks should also aim to promote “European integration in the areas science, culture and society.”<sup>30</sup>

Universities that want to apply are called to take this into account, though a balance between these three pillars is not necessarily stipulated.<sup>31</sup> However, the main intention of this initiative is to support students, researchers and staff mobility, and to establish a new understanding and quality in a close cooperation among research, education and administration within Europe. Students of the European Universities should be able to study in multiple locations, in a comprehensive curriculum, taught by European professors

27 Conférence des presidents d’université (2018): European Universities CPU Proposal, p. 1. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/cpu\\_on\\_european\\_universities\\_initiative.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/cpu_on_european_universities_initiative.pdf) (10/09/18).

28 Cf. among others HRK German Rector’s Conference (2018): Developing “European Universities” as Excellence Networks of Universities, p. 1. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/hrk\\_concept\\_paper\\_on\\_european\\_universities\\_initiative.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/hrk_concept_paper_on_european_universities_initiative.pdf) (10/09/18) and The Guild (2018): Shaping European Universities of the Future. The Guild’s recommendations for the European University Initiative, p. 5. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/the\\_guild\\_position\\_paper\\_on\\_european\\_universities\\_initiative.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/the_guild_position_paper_on_european_universities_initiative.pdf) (10/01/18).

29 Cf. conférence des presidents d’université (2018): European Universities CPU Proposal, p. 1. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/cpu\\_on\\_european\\_universities\\_initiative.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/cpu_on_european_universities_initiative.pdf) (10/09/18).

30 Eucor (2018): Concept paper. Universités Européennes, p. 2. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/eucor\\_concept\\_paper\\_on\\_european\\_universities\\_initiative.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/eucor_concept_paper_on_european_universities_initiative.pdf) (10/08/18). See also HRK German Rector’s Conference (2018): Developing “European Universities” as Excellence Networks of Universities, p. 2. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/hrk\\_concept\\_paper\\_on\\_european\\_universities\\_initiative.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/hrk_concept_paper_on_european_universities_initiative.pdf) (10/09/18).

31 Cf. European University Foundation (2018): Position Paper on European Universities, p. 4. Retrieved from [http://uni-foundation.eu/system/files/position\\_paper\\_on\\_european\\_universities.pdf](http://uni-foundation.eu/system/files/position_paper_on_european_universities.pdf) (09/28/18).

## Macron's Idea of European Universities

and receive a recognized European degree at the end. Cultural diversity and European multilingualism would be other important goals. Thus, this project is planned to be framed within the Erasmus+ program that already elevates the quality and quantity of exchange. This alliance would consist of at least four to six universities from EU member states, though geographical balances have also been recommended in order “to ensure that all EU member states are represented in these future initiatives.”<sup>32</sup> As mentioned before, there will be provisions for funding the European Universities within the Erasmus+ budget, but because the initiative is being heavily supported by the EU, financial funding by the European Commission has already been arranged as well. Also, EU member states will be encouraged to support the European University Alliance financially.<sup>33</sup>

### **IV.**

What challenges might have to be faced? Taking the Viadrina European University in Frankfurt Oder (Germany) as a first example of a European higher-education network, we can outline some of the difficulties that might occur in such a multilateral, cross-border university network. The Viadrina European University was founded in 1991, and since then a significant number of the student body comes from Poland or East Europe, that is, the multinational and multicultural student body is already successfully interacting. In 1996, the university established a close cooperation with the Polish Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan when both universities decided to mutually operate the Collegium Polonicum.<sup>34</sup> In 2013, they considered extending their cooperation by planning a joint

32 European University Foundation (2018): Position Paper on European Universities, p. 4. Retrieved from [http://uni-foundation.eu/system/files/position\\_paper\\_on\\_european\\_universities.pdf](http://uni-foundation.eu/system/files/position_paper_on_european_universities.pdf) (09/28/18).

33 European Commission (2017): European Universities Initiative. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/european-universities-initiative\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/european-universities-initiative_en) (10/01/18).

34 Cf. Collegium Polonicum (2018): Über uns. Retrieved from [http://www.cp.edu.pl/de/o\\_nas/index.html](http://www.cp.edu.pl/de/o_nas/index.html) (09/28/18).

faculty, a faculty for digital studies located in Poznan.<sup>35</sup> This suggests that the two universities were foreseeing even then what the French President would enthusiastically initiate four years later. Shortly after the concept was drawn up, however, the director of Viadrina resigned in the face of strong resistance against these plans. The university staff members were concerned about their salary, and the idea of digitalization was not accepted.<sup>36</sup> These objections seem unfounded but were nevertheless decisive factors for this project's being cancelled for now. Although the plan of a jointly operating faculty was revived years later (and by now a successful development could be assumed), there are still some critical objections to this idea and the plan of a European University Alliance of 20 educational networks by 2024. The former president of Viadrina, for example, states that university structures are highly linked to national mechanisms.<sup>37</sup> Further, they are bound to a national education system, to national university policies, etc. These restrictions need to be loosened since, in the context of a European University Alliance, mutual strategic concepts as well as common guidelines would be necessary. Especially with regard to incipient and strengthening nationalization trends, it would be important that social attitudes be removed from national thinking to enable open, trustful European ones, and that the communication within the European community improves – not only with respect of ability but also regarding openness.

35 Cf. Burchard, Amory: Macrons Plan für 20 europäische Universitäten. Über die Oder nach Europa? In: Der Tagesspiegel (01/08/2018). Retrieved from <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/macrons-plan-fuer-20-europaeische-universitaeten-ueber-die-oder-nach-europa/20820844.html> (10/01/18).

36 Cf. Burchard, Amory: Macrons Plan für 20 europäische Universitäten. Über die Oder nach Europa? In: Der Tagesspiegel (01/08/2018). Retrieved from <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/macrons-plan-fuer-20-europaeische-universitaeten-ueber-die-oder-nach-europa/20820844.html> (10/01/18).

37 Cf. Burchard, Amory: Macrons Plan für 20 europäische Universitäten. Über die Oder nach Europa? In: Der Tagesspiegel (01/08/2018). Retrieved from <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/macrons-plan-fuer-20-europaeische-universitaeten-ueber-die-oder-nach-europa/20820844.html> (10/01/18).

## Macron's Idea of European Universities

In the Position Paper of the University of the Greater Region (UniGR)<sup>38</sup>, we also find some components or challenges for the future European Universities worthy of consideration:

- *An integrated development strategy*: The quality of the partnership is defined by its ability to develop common potentials in teaching (including lifelong learning), research and innovation by focussing on disciplines with high development potential for universities and their territories
- *The establishment of effective governance*: The counterpart of an integrated strategy is the establishment of cooperation structures – or even common legal structures – involving the relevant decision-making and operational bodies of partner universities.
- *The development of mobility* for all university audiences (students, teachers, researchers, and administrative staff) must be the cornerstone of the joint strategy.
- *The multiplication of joint plurilingual study programmes*.
- *The development of innovative teaching and learning methods* (including virtual mobility).
- *The question of critical size*: Beyond the issue of the quality of cooperation and the choice of truly promising areas of cooperation for institutions, one difficulty in creating genuine "European universities" will be to ensure the participation of a sufficient number of universities in the consortium, but also a sufficient number of students, teachers and researchers. Their collaboration dynamic should have a trigger effect on the consortium as a whole.

38 The Greater Region comprises Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the French region of Lorraine as well as Belgian Wallonia with its French- and German-speaking communities. It consists of six universities: the University of Luxembourg, Saarland University, the University of Liège, the University of Lorraine, the University of Kaiserslautern and Trier University.

- *A single financial instrument* (with a one-stop shop) funded by training (ERASMUS+), research (FP9) and structural (regional policy) funds to structure partnerships. This would complement existing funding for final beneficiaries. (...)
- *A sustainable financing system*: The relative short duration of existing financing (3 or 4 years in general) is not compatible with the time needed to structure the partnership, on the one hand, and federate it around a common strategy, on the other.
- *The recognition of cooperation structures* (cross-border association, EGTC, etc.) in funding programmes (e.g., mentioning membership of the university network in the ERASMUS+ charter). This includes the creation of financial instruments dedicated to these cooperation structures; recognition of joint degrees as European University degrees; the establishment of systems to facilitate the creation of joint professorships; the simplification of the system for the recognition of diplomas (internal to the European University).
- *The introduction of genuine European diplomas.*<sup>39</sup>

Shortly after Macron's speech, the first of several expected cross-border networks was founded:

- (1) The "4EU" alliance between Sorbonne/France, Heidelberg/Germany, Charles/Czech Republic and Warsaw/Poland was signed in Heidelberg in March of 2018.<sup>40</sup> However, it should be mentioned that this network had been in preparation for 2 years and is based on existing academic relations. Therefore, the alliance cannot be seen as having been motivated by Macron's initiative. Nevertheless, the

39 University of the Greater Region – UniGR: Position Paper "European University" (2018), pp. 3-4. Retrieved from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/unigr\\_position\\_paper\\_on\\_european\\_universities\\_initiative.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/unigr_position_paper_on_european_universities_initiative.pdf) (10/01/18).

40 Charles University (et al.) (2018): Press Release. The Formation of the European University Alliance "4EU." Retrieved from <http://en.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/4eu-press-release.pdf> (10/01/18).

## Macron's Idea of European Universities

heads of the four universities emphasized that they would approve of this project a pilot project for the planned network of 20 European universities.

- (2) Besides this new 4EU alliance, a network of five universities, the so-called EUCOR – The European Campus, a cooperation of the Universities of Basel/Switzerland, Freiburg/Germany, Haute-Alsace/France, Strasbourg/France and the Karlsruhe Institute for Technology/Germany, was already established in 2015. Following Macron's speech, the representatives of these five universities came together in April this year to sign a memorandum of declaration that states the intention to extend the European Campus to the European University programme with a focus on a close and balanced connection of research and education. For a successful progress of this project, they emphasize that not only a common commitment of the five universities is needed, but also dedication on a regional and national level as well as from the European Union.<sup>41</sup>
- (3) An even older – and probably the first strategic – European university network is the so called U4, established in 2008 by the Ghent University/Belgium, the University of Göttingen/Germany, the University of Groningen/Netherlands and Uppsala University/Sweden with the aim “[t]o strengthen the international position of the individual institutions through intensive cooperation in Education, Research and University Management.”<sup>42</sup> These universities also have already expressed their interest in applying for the status of a European University.

41 Cf. Eucor (2018): Auf dem Weg zur Europäischen Universität. Forschung und Lehre im trinationalen Universitätsverbund Eucor – The European Campus. Retrieved from [https://www.eucor-uni.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/DE\\_duzSPECIAL\\_AufDemWegZurEuropaeischenUniversitaet.pdf](https://www.eucor-uni.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/DE_duzSPECIAL_AufDemWegZurEuropaeischenUniversitaet.pdf) (09/28/18). Cf. Eucor (2018): Concept paper. Universités Européennes. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/eucor\\_concept\\_paper\\_on\\_european\\_universities\\_initiative.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/eucor_concept_paper_on_european_universities_initiative.pdf) (10/08/18).

42 Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (n.y.): U4 Network. Retrieved from <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/200350.html> (10/03/18).

- (4) In April 2018, six universities from six countries in the European Union – Freie Universität Berlin (Germany), Università di Bologna (Italy), KU Leuven (Belgium), Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain), Uniwersytet Jagielloński (Krakow, Poland) and Université Paris Panthéon-Sorbonne (France) – met to intensify their collaboration. This consortium wants to apply for the implementation of a European University as well.<sup>43</sup>
- (5) Last, but not least, in May 2018, Maastricht University (The Netherlands) and six other young European universities agreed on a proposal to form an alliance as part of the European University initiative. Apart from Maastricht University, the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) alliance consists of six universities from the YERUN network (Young European Research Universities Network): the University of Antwerp (Belgium), the University of Bremen (Germany), the University of Rome Tor Vergata (Italy), the University of Eastern Finland (Finland), the University Carlos III of Madrid (Spain), and the University of Essex (UK).<sup>44</sup>

Today, one year after Macron's talk on the Initiative for Europe, five years remain to reach the goal of a twenty-count European University Network. Three possible cooperations already exist, and other universities have applied at the EU level. It is difficult to say whether the objective will be successful, but the motivation is clearly present, although all of the existing partnerships were established or planned before Macron's call. However, an ambitious speech is encouraging, but not enough to guarantee the success of this project. Although Macron's vision did not get launched as foreseen, France did inspire European higher education to come together and to create a union – even if only in networks and not as single European universities. This recent development still represents a chance for European higher education to progress, interact and to create even higher education.

43 Retrieved from [https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/presse/informationen/fup/2018/fup\\_18\\_075-allianz-universitaeten-europa/index.html](https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/presse/informationen/fup/2018/fup_18_075-allianz-universitaeten-europa/index.html) (10/01/18).

44 Retrieved from <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/news/um-leads-young-universities-future-europe-alliance> (10/01/18)-



## Macron's Idea of European Universities

Nevertheless, to make this project a successful one, we need clear structures and concrete concepts as well as sufficient and reliable funding. In addition to this, it is imperative, not only with regard to an equal distribution of the university networks within Europe, but overall, that nationalism and identitarianism within Europe be stopped and disabled.

So, what does this all mean for the University of Bonn? The university has developed guidelines pertaining to the establishment of strategic international partnerships. These guidelines serve to expand both the scientific and political profile of the university as well strengthen the overall quality of its international cooperations, including increasing its options and broadening the scope of its teaching and research activities. In addition to a small number of partner universities, key countries will be chosen for next-level international cooperation. The goal is to identify particularly excellent institutions that would best serve the international profile of the university, albeit not as comprehensively as with the strategic partner universities. Further, this programme serves to establish stronger university cooperative networks than was the case in the past. Macron's initiative provides an excellent opportunity for taking concrete action to create a viable network of European universities.

The University of Bonn is wholly committed to its particular location. In the past, the provisional capital of Germany played a major role in the reconciliation process between Germany and France and a united Europe. Against this background, the university authorities welcome and support the development of scientific cooperation with its French partners. Furthermore, the existing university partnership with the neighboring Benelux countries (Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg), which has enjoyed continual support by the State of Northrhein-Westfalia, continues to be held in high esteem as an essential component of its overall strategy to internationalise relations. Thus, it would appear to be imperative that the University of Bonn establishes a European University Alliance in 2019 to reflect these rich regional strengths.

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ISSN 1435-3288

ISBN 978-3-941928-92-3