

2026 EUA FUNDING FORUM

A university of value

Hosted by Brno University of Technology
15-16 October 2026 | Brno, Czechia

DRAFT MAY 2026

Value for society, value for money, academic values: how do these concepts permeate funding models and strategic choices? Together, the higher education and research community will explore how to support and sustain a university of value for Europe: one that is equipped to meet the demands of the present and shape the possibilities of the future.

Wednesday 14 October 2026

18.00 – 19.00 *Welcome reception*

Thursday 15 October 2026

09.00 – 09.30 **Welcome address**

- Josep M. Garrell, President, European University Association
- Ladislav Janíček, Rector, Brno University of Technology, Czechia

09.30 – 10.30 **Plenary session I**

How do we deliver 'a university of value' when the coordinates we rely on keep on changing?

European universities face a paradox. Society expects them to contribute to addressing increasingly complex challenges such as skills shortages, democratic resilience, economic competitiveness and technological disruption, while the financial and political conditions needed to meet those expectations are eroding.

Public funding is tightening, costs are rising and international collaboration is now entangled with geopolitics and uneven financial commitments. So what does it mean to steer a university toward *value* in this environment?

This panel brings together leaders who are navigating these tensions in real time and must manage the trade-offs behind financial sustainability:

- What missions can we still afford?
- What missions can we *not* afford to abandon?
- And how do we make strategic choices when every choice has a cost?

We will also look to the future of international collaboration. If partnerships are essential but expensive, how do we build models that are resilient, equitable and worth the investment?

Panellists:

- Hester Bijl, Rector Magnificus, TU Delft, Netherlands
- Bernhard Fügenschuh, Rector, University of Salzburg, Austria
- Alessandra Petrucci, Rector, University of Florence, Italy

10.30 – 11.15 *Networking break*

11.15 – 12.30 **Parallel sessions I**

In this first round, participants may choose among different sessions, focusing on topics such as institutional resilience, experience in alliances, funding schemes etc.

*A full description of each session will be made available soon.

12.30 – 14:00 *Lunch & networking*

14.00 – 15.30 **Parallel sessions II**

In this second round, participants may choose among different sessions, focusing on system steering, data management, financial strategies etc.

*A full description of each session will be made available soon.

15.30 – 16.15 *Networking break*

16.15 – 17.30 **Plenary session II**

Funding, values and value: how funder priorities shape the university of the future

This plenary session brings funders to the centre of the conversation. Their decisions determine not only the resources available to universities, but also the frameworks within which universities define priorities, manage risks and navigate trade-offs.

The discussion will examine how different funding actors interpret *value* and how their models support or impede the academic values that underpin high-quality research, teaching and societal engagement. It will explore tensions between economic value and academic autonomy, between short-term performance metrics and long-term capacity building and between national strategic interests and the openness essential to knowledge creation.

With perspectives from different types of funding bodies, the panel will illuminate how funding choices shape the future of Europe's universities and what it would take to align funding models with a vision of universities as enduring public value institutions.

19.30 – 22.00 *Networking dinner*

Friday 16 October 2026

09.00 – 10.00 **Plenary session III**

University funding: international benchmarking

A global round-up of the latest international studies in university finances, featuring EUA, the European Student's Union, the OECD.

Panellists:

- Enora Bennetot Pruvot, Deputy Director, Governance, Funding & Public Policy Development, European University Association
- Simon Roy, Team Lead, Higher Education Policy Team, Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD
- Alex Usher, President, Higher Education Strategy Associates, Canada
- Executive Committee representative, European Students' Union

10.00 – 11.10 **Parallel sessions III**

In this final round, participants may choose among different sessions, focusing on philanthropy, funding of student mobility, exclusive interactive workshops etc.

*A full description of each session will be made available soon.

11.10 – 11.45 *Networking break*

11.45 – 13.00 **Final plenary session**

Alliances & partnerships: from financial assemblage to strategy

As Europe looks toward the next phase of the European Universities Initiative, the question on everyone's mind is no longer whether alliances matter, but how they can be sustainably financed. Universities already face a pressing reality: the intensity of effort required to build and maintain deep transnational cooperation is growing faster than the resources available to support it.

Alliances were created to generate value in academic, societal and strategic terms. But as highlighted in EUA's recent briefing on 'Strategies for the financial sustainability of European Universities alliances', sustainable cooperation requires a clear understanding of full costs, diversified income streams, efficiency and effectiveness and strong leadership and governance. Above all, it requires that alliances remain anchored in institutional purpose and added value, rather than being driven by a short-term project logic.

This session will focus on the institutional purpose of international partnerships in general and European Universities alliances in particular, the added value they generate and the shared responsibility of European, national and university leaders to ensure their financial viability.

It will also address an uncomfortable but necessary question: what level of ambition can alliances realistically sustain under current funding conditions and what must change to close the gap between expectations and resources?

Panellists:

- Ioana Dewandeler, Policy Officer for Higher Education – European Universities Initiative coordination, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission
- Margareth Hagen, Rector, University of Bergen, Norway
- Jens Schneider, Rector, TU Wien, Austria

Concluding remarks

- Thomas Estermann, Director, Governance, Funding & Public Policy Development, European University Association
- Manuel Tunon de Lara, Board member, European University Association

13.00

Lunch & departure