

Mgr Magdalena Sikorska

„Collaborative strategies for consolidation of higher education institutions within European Universities Initiative Alliances”

Abstract

In this doctoral thesis, collaborative strategies for consolidation of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Europe within the framework of European Universities Initiative (EUI) were investigated. The study explored how EUI strategic alliances were structured, governed and developed, in response to ambitious and evolving policy objectives in European Higher Education Area (EHEA), as well as growing interest and need for cross-border collaboration among HEIs in Europe. The research problem focused on identification and development of strategy models that can support effective consolidation and long-term integration of HEIs in the context of European university alliances. The study was based on triangulated methodological approach, combining a systemic literature review, content analysis of documentation from 41 EUI alliances, in-depth interviews with alliance coordinators and Delphi method applied to proposed models' verification by experts. The analysis led to the development of three strategic models of alliance collaboration: Thematic model (focused on specific areas of education and research), Typological model (composed of institutions of similar type) and General (Transversal) model (characterized by broader strategic scope and institutional diversity). Each model was operationalized using Business Model Canvas, a strategic management tool, which offered structured visualization of value proposition, stakeholders relationships, key resources and revenue streams. The models were verified by selected experts who confirmed their applicability and strategic relevance. Key findings included the confirmation of significance of project-based management of strategic alliances, verification of various alliance governance models and inclusion of Associated Partners, as essential stakeholders in successful operationalization of EUI alliances.

In addition to theoretical and practical contributions, this doctoral thesis provided a set of EU strategic policy recommendations related to European Universities Initiative and intended for European policymakers. The recommendations emphasized, among others, the need for long term sustainable funding beyond project life-time, enhancing strategic partnerships with industry and other stakeholders, optimizing governance and legal frameworks as well as supporting alliances with shared infrastructure, regulatory coherence and transparent performance monitoring mechanisms.