

Global Higher Education in a Time of Crisis

Workshop · Brussels, Maison Irène et Frédéric Joliot-Curie, 8 June 2026 · Organized by Programme DÉCRIPT (Inalco, Paris) and SIRIS Foundation (Barcelona)

Universities are no longer insulated from the pressures of a turbulent global order. Across the world, higher education has become a strategic arena in which states project influence, recruit talent, shape knowledge production, and advance civilizational narratives. From fellowship programs targeting the Global South, to the restructuring of curricula along nationalist lines, and the weaponization of university rankings, academia is increasingly a field - and a tool - of international competition.

This workshop brings together leading experts from Europe, North America, and beyond to map these developments and reflect on their implications for European higher education. Drawing on comparative case studies from the United States, China, Russia, India, and Turkey and the Arab world, it assembles expert knowledge on the political challenges facing global academia and situates Europe within this shifting landscape, opening a discussion on the context within which European institutions and policymakers are currently designing the next phase of European university alliances and academic institutions.

PROGRAMME

12:30 – 13:45 **Welcome Lunch and Coffee**

13:45 – 14:15 **Opening Remarks**

Jean-François Huchet, Professor of Chinese studies and Economics and President, Inalco

Sebastian Stride, SIRIS Foundation

Carle Bonafous-Murat, France Universités

14:15 – 15:00 **Keynote Lecture**

Global Trends and the Future of European Higher Education: Lessons for a Model Analysis

Liviu Matei, Professor of Higher Education and Public Policy, Head of the School of Education, Communication & Society, King's College London

15:15 – 17:00

The University and the State: Case Studies and Discussion
Chair: **Solange Chavel** (SIRIS Foundation) and **Delphine Allès** (DÉCRIPT - Inalco)

The United States – *From Magnet to Gatekeeper: Federal Intervention, Academic Nationalism, and the Retreat of American Higher Education Leadership*

Brendan Cantwell, Dr. Mildred B. Erickson Distinguished Chair in Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education, Michigan State University

China – *Knowledge Power and Technological Sovereignty: China's Science and Technology Strategy and its Global Implications*

Rebecca Arcesati, Head of the Science, Technology and Innovation Programme, Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS), Brussels

Russia – *Patriotic Science and Post-Soviet Influence: Russian Higher Education between Civilizationist Ideology and Global South Outreach*

Kåre Johan Mjør, Associate Professor, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL)

India – *Knowledge Politics, Saffronization and Nation-Building: The Historical and Contemporary Geopolitics of Indian Higher Education*

Lourens van Haaften, Assistant Professor of History of Education, University of Groningen

Turkey and the Arab World – *Islamic Civilizationism and Gulf Pragmatism: Competing Models of Academic Politics across the Muslim World*

Jan-Markus Vömel, Postdoctoral Researcher, Programme Décript, Inalco

17:00 – 18:00

Conclusions and Open Questions

Delphine Allès, Professor of Political Science and Vice-President, Inalco; Principal Investigator, Programme DÉCRIPT

18:00 – 19:30

Drinks

Organization: Jan-Markus Vömel, DÉCRIPT – Inalco, decript@inalco.fr
Further information on Programme DÉCRIPT: www.inalco.fr/en/decript
Further information on SIRIS Foundation: www.sirisfoundation.org



DÉCRIPT is a research program led by Inalco (Paris) and funded by France 2030. This workshop received government funding managed by the ANR, reference ANR-24-RSHS-0002.