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**Abstract**

This article contributes to the understanding of how different actors in the academic field perceive the challenges that Brexit poses for European higher education. Based on a narrative analysis of 28 interviews, this paper highlights how actors' narratives convene discursive elements stemming from competing discourses on cooperation and competition. In doing so, the exploratory study focuses on two countries, Portugal and Germany, which correspond to distinct cases regarding their performance in the European research and higher education landscape. The analysis highlights that there are national differences between the perceptions of Brexit and allows identifying commonalities in the narratives in both countries. In addition, we identify the presence of a pragmatic managerial attitude in response to Brexit. The three overarching narratives are the narrative of concerns, the narrative of hopes, and the narrative of beliefs. These narratives reflect the struggle of the cooperation and the

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competition discourses in ascribing meaning to Brexit. The competition discourse has assumed a dominant role in the perceptions of Brexit and cooperation is mainly fueled through the academics and their professional ethos. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)