

Mr Donald Tusk
President of the European Council
European Council
Rue de la Loi, 175
1048 Brussels, Belgium

Brussels, 22 June 2018

Subject: There is no better investment than the European Research, Innovation and Education programmes

Dear President Tusk,

As university leaders, every day we witness the positive impact of European support on research, innovation and education. It is first and foremost an investment in people – in particular, Europe's youth. This is a fundamental requirement if we are to turn the European Union into a world leader in research and innovation-driven growth and competitiveness.

When we invest together, we empower our societies to tackle common challenges and reach shared objectives of competitive innovation, sustainable economic growth, job creation, environmental protection and social inclusion.

It is also about efficiency. Research, innovation and education are a European public good. Investing in them creates synergies, economies of scale and a very high return. We know that every euro invested in research and innovation generates on average €13 in value added for business. Yet, despite these impressive returns, Europe still has not closed the investment gap with the US and China. Europe risks ceding more ground to these countries in a competitive and globalised economy if investment falls further behind.

As the European Council has acknowledged on multiple occasions, even at a time of tightened budgets, investment in education and research is the most effective long-term, future-oriented commitment that the EU can make towards its citizens. Furthermore, investing in research and education reinforces European awareness and identity through transnational collaboration and mobility. The EU's current Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ are unique in this respect.

Moreover, investing in education, research and innovation is Europe's best foreign policy instrument. Beyond academic exchanges, what we have developed, and must further strengthen, is a reliable space for dialogue with partners around the world. We create concrete ties enabling scientists, educators, students and innovators to work across borders, tackling together global challenges.

However, European research funding fails to support up to 75% of the excellent ideas that are brought forward. Today, we lack the money at the EU level and the mechanisms at the national level to support such ideas, in particular when they are developed by international project teams, a prerequisite for research excellence. This is unsustainable and not in Europe's best interest. In March, we called for a doubling of EU spending on research and innovation: €160 billion is essential to realise the ambitions of Horizon Europe.

In addition, the European Parliament's request to triple the Erasmus+ budget recognises the important contribution of this programme to underpin the future European Education Area and to support the European Universities initiative. Our reports demonstrate the enthusiasm and commitment of the European higher education community towards Erasmus+ and the new EU strategic goals in higher education. If the European Union is to meet those goals and ensure that more than the current 1 in 10 applicants to an Erasmus funded project is successful, then further funding increases are needed.

In view of the EU Summit on 28-29 June, we respectfully ask the European Council to allocate the necessary financial resources to Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ that will truly allow these programmes to deliver to their full potential. Such a decision will contribute to Europe's future economic prosperity and will have a direct impact on the daily lives of European citizens.

Yours sincerely,



Rolf Tarrach, President

On behalf of the EUA Board and over 800 member universities