



Press statement: 18 December 2014

EUA Press Statement on the European Commission's EU Investment Plan

*On 26 November, the European Commission (EC) presented details of a new “[Investment Plan](#)” which it said aimed to get “Europe growing again and get more people back to work” *. Following the EC announcement and the report of the [EU Task Force on Investment](#) published on 9 December, the European University Association (EUA) has today published the following statement:*

The European University Association welcomes the underlying aims of the initiative and in principal its goal to support projects in key areas such as infrastructure, education, research and innovation, but is nevertheless concerned about the intention to use substantial funding from the EU's Horizon 2020 programme.

In the course of the recent [discussions on the EU's annual budget](#) EUA has consistently highlighted the importance of maintaining the planned levels of EU investment in research and education (Horizon 2020 and Erasmus +) and for this reason reiterates that funding for Horizon 2020 must be protected. This is a message that has also been emphasised this week by a number of EUA's national rectors' conference members, in a [statement](#) published before the European Council meeting where the proposed Investment Plan is due to be discussed.

In particular, EUA would like to underline the importance of preserving the budget allocated to the “Excellent Science” Pillar of Horizon 2020, as it plays a crucial role in supporting basic research, the basis for developing competitive knowledge-based products and services. European-level funding for basic research should therefore not be “diverted”, as cuts in this Pillar could compromise the capacity of Europe to innovate in the years to come.

EUA's latest [Public Funding Observatory](#) report shows that in a number of member states, public investment for universities (for HE and research) has been reduced, which is of great concern. At the same time, EUA has pointed out that there is an expectation from some governments that universities should increasingly turn to funding from EU programmes, such as Horizon 2020 and the Structural Funds, to make up for these shortfalls.

For EUA, any attempt to incentivise investment from member states in projects involving universities could potentially be positive. Universities are key actors in relation to education, research and innovation in Europe, and therefore contribute to enhancing Europe's competitiveness, growth and employment. They should be at the heart of any initiative to boost investment in human resources and research-based knowledge development.

EUA understands that potential projects have been scanned by the ‘EU Task force on Investment’ and proposals put forward by member states. It considers that any future initiative should give special attention to developing clear and transparent guidelines concerning the nature of project proposals and the selection of projects under the new Investment Plan. Moreover, while EUA

understands the need to move forward rapidly it would be important that the university sector has the opportunity to participate in relevant projects through a structured and transparent process.

EUA understands the EC proposals are being discussed this week by the European Council and the European Parliament before further steps are taken.

Ends.

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The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.

Notes for editors:

- **The EC noted that the proposed “€315 billion Investment plan” was built on three main strands: the creation of a “new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)”, the establishment of a “project pipeline” coupled with an assistance programme to “channel investments where they are most needed”; and a roadmap to “make Europe more attractive for investment and remove regulatory bottlenecks”. A task force has also been set up by the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB), together with the Member States, to look into potential barriers to investments and screen potential projects. More information is available here: http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/plan/index_en.htm*
- *EUA's Public Funding Observatory can be accessed here: www.eua.be/publicfundingobservatory*
- *EUA's Statement from October 2014 on the EU annual budget discussions can be viewed here http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publication/EUA_Statement_web.sflb.ashx*