



Press release: 31 October 2014

EUA statement on EU budget discussions: “political rhetoric must be backed up by commitment and action”

The European University Association (EUA) has today published [a statement](#) with regard to the ongoing negotiations on the draft EU budget for 2015 and the problems posed by payment shortages for the EU budget.

In September, the Council of the European Union (EU member states) formally [approved its position](#) on the EU draft budget for 2015, which has been proposed by the European Commission. The Council position recommends making considerable cuts to payment appropriations, notably in the areas of research and innovation. By contrast, the European Parliament, which negotiates the EU budget with the Council and [approved its position](#) on the 2015 draft budget last week, is proposing in its position to reverse these cuts and further invest in priority areas. From the 28 October, three weeks of “conciliation” talks are due to take place between both EU institutions with the aim of agreeing a Council/Parliament deal by mid-November.

EUA’s statement reiterates its views outlined in a [press release in August](#) that the cuts proposed by member states are not in line with the EU’s objective to create a competitive European knowledge society or the commitments made by member states when agreeing the EU’s multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2014-2020.

It also highlights that the European Parliament and European Commission (EC) have also raised their concerns about the impact of reducing payments which are needed to meet the commitments that have already been made at EU-level and also the problems caused by rolling over “unpaid bills”. The [EC highlighted](#) in late September, for example, that the cuts proposed by the Council would further worsen the tight situation of payments. For Research (Horizon 2020), the current situation of payment shortages had already meant that the Commission had to reduce the level of pre-financing for new commitments, from 60% under FP7 to 35% under Horizon 2020. In terms of the Erasmus+ programme, the European Commission expected a disruption in the payment of grants to beneficiaries.

The EUA statement stresses that this situation is clearly a concern for universities across Europe, particularly as EUA’s latest Public Funding Observatory report notes that there is an expectation (either from governments or universities themselves) in some countries that universities will supplement shortfalls in public funding with increased European funding from the new EU programmes. Furthermore, the European Commission has, for example, also highlighted a sharp increase in the level of competition in the Horizon 2020 funding calls. This is also likely to impact universities seeking this competitive funding.

EUA’s statement therefore highlights that it supports the [views of the European Parliament](#) which proposes to reverse the cuts put forward by the Council and proposes additional funds in priority areas such as education and research.

EUA concludes that the frequently stated political rhetoric which places emphasis on the central role of research and education in Europe’s future competitiveness must now be backed up by real commitment and action by member states and the other EU institutions.

Download the EUA statement [here](#).

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.