

European Education Area: EUA welcomes latest proposals on cross-border cooperation and recognition

On 22 May, the European Commission launched the second part of its ambitious [education package](#) for the creation of a “European Education Area” by 2025.

EUA is pleased with the “strong consensus for the need to further step up mobility, accompanied by reinforced strategic partnerships and policy support, to drive more innovative and inclusive education, training and youth policies”, including the Erasmus + programme and a successor agenda for Education & Training 2020. EUA also welcomes an increased emphasis on lifelong learning, which should comprise both vocational and higher education and training systems.

Notably, the package includes:

- a [Communication about the role of youth, education and culture policies in building a stronger Europe](#), which provides the rationale for networks of “European Universities” and a “European Student Card”;
- a [proposal for a Council recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of diplomas and learning periods abroad](#);
- a [proposal to promote language learning](#).

EUA sees the package as supporting the education sector in contributing to “an inclusive, lifelong learning-based and innovation-driven approach to education and training”, which EUA has been advocating for notably through its [Learning & Teaching Initiative](#).

EUA also supports strengthening cross-border collaboration to improve educational provision and remove remaining obstacles to the free movement of learners across Europe. Cooperation develops and promotes the innovative approaches that tomorrow’s higher education will need. The “European Universities” would be one way to facilitate such intense cross-border collaboration. According to the Communication, these bottom-up networks of existing higher education institutions would develop long-term strategies for top quality education, research and innovation. However, the numerous more specific cooperation projects already supported by the Erasmus+ programme are equally important as they help enhance higher education quality across Europe on a broad basis. Furthermore, closer cooperation with other sectors and addressing linkages with other educational levels is indeed needed.

EUA also welcomes the proposal for a Council recommendation on promoting language-learning as part of compulsory education, as this would contribute to enhancing the quality of higher education mobility and open-up the possibility of studying abroad for more students.

Introducing a European Student Card could be another means to facilitate mobility and enable universities to handle an increasing number of mobile students. The European Commission would however have to provide further information on how this will be feasible “without creating further information technology” as stated in the Communication. While various projects and initiatives for inter-university data exchanges already exist, no feasibility study has been presented so far. Further consultation with institutions and students is needed to ensure it is designed to fit its purpose.

Lastly, EUA supports the Commission’s aim to simplify recognition procedures and to make them more efficient. This commitment is crucial as it will promote mobility within the EU. EUA is especially pleased that the Commission cited [points made in the Association’s response to the public consultation](#) in preparation for the proposal. These include the need for awareness-raising and capacity-building at the national level, with an emphasis on making NARICs better suited for their purpose, and the role of the Commission in supporting these efforts.

The document also discusses establishing “transparent criteria for recognition that are applied consistently throughout each” higher education institution. EUA stands behind this goal, which is also highlighted in the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#).

EUA has extensive expertise in this area backed by input from its many members. The Association will therefore continue to inform policy makers as the EU moves towards the formation of a European Education Area. It will also follow the process step-by-step, keeping members both up-to-date and involved.

With more than 800 members, the **European University Association** (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors’ conferences in 47 European countries.

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