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## Research and Innovation in Europe

### Universities ready for more responsibility

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*EUA was intensively involved in the European Commission's "The Europe of Knowledge 2020" conference, Liège, 26-28 April 2004 and presented two major documents:*

- *A Statement on the Research Role of Europe's Universities*
- *The preliminary findings of the EUA Study on the Financing of Research and Innovation in Europe's Universities*

#### **Universities as key players for research and innovation in Europe**

EUA firmly believes that within the new European Union of 25 countries, universities hold the key to the development of research and innovation, and hence to the realisation of the Lisbon objectives.

They train the researchers that are so vitally needed, provide an environment which facilitates creative inter-disciplinary research, and are main motors for regional development.

As Eric Froment, president of EUA stressed during the conference: "It is therefore essential that all European research policy discussions take the views of Europe's universities into account."

#### **Support for a European Research Area**

EUA supports the latest proposals from the European Commission to establish a European Research Council and provide a new mechanism to fund individual project grants.

However, a European Research Area will only materialise if universities have the capacity to manage themselves in a dynamic way. To reach this goal, governments must provide stable legal and funding environments to ensure universities' autonomy.

#### **Changing research environment**

Universities are facing contradictory challenges: growing competition for research funding on one hand and an increased necessity for inter-institutional cooperation to undertake research projects on the other.

To respond proactively, institutional strategies underpinning research activities are now essential. In its statement, EUA proposes a set of principles upon which such strategies and policies should be built.

#### **Financing University-based research**

The question of funding is as important as that of strategy. Since January 2004, EUA has undertaken a study on the financing of university research and innovation in order to provide an overview of central issues and challenges facing universities in Europe.

The enthusiastic response of universities to participate in this study indicates that Europe's institutions are aware of their key role and responsibility and are ready to commit to developing research, innovation and excellence. However, in many cases they still require the autonomy and means to develop their strengths.

A summary of preliminary findings is available now. A more detailed report will follow.

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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.

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You can also visit our website at [www.eua.be](http://www.eua.be)

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## **EUA Statement on the Research Role of Europe's Universities**

*Prepared for the EC Conference on "The Europe of Knowledge 2020: A Vision for University based Research and Innovation", Liège, 26- 28 April 2004.*

### **I. Purpose: the Research Role of Europe's Universities**

1. *The Graz Declaration*<sup>1</sup> underlines that "Universities advocate a Europe of knowledge, based on a strong research capacity and research-based education in universities – singly and in partnership – across the continent. *European universities* are active on a global scale, contributing to innovation and sustainable economic development. Competitiveness and excellence must be balanced with social cohesion and access."

2. As "multi-actors" in the research process, through their teaching, training, research and innovation activities at regional, national and European/International level, Europe's universities have an essential role to play and are key actors in the debate on future research policies for Europe. This is the message that EUA wishes to deliver to the Liège Conference on behalf of its 680 individual members and 34 National Rectors Conferences.

### **II. Context**

3. The Lisbon Process objectives and the Barcelona 3% target are becoming the reference framework not only for research policy discussions but also for the development of the European Higher Education Area. The European Higher Education and Research Areas are converging, linked by the central role of universities in the training of researchers. EUA is committed to reinforcing synergies between the two processes at all levels.

4. EUA's recently adopted Action Plan for 2004/2005 indicates the growing importance of the "research profile" of the Association. In the interests of its members, EUA is likewise committed to full engagement in the debate on research policies for Europe. Europe's universities support the European Commission's recent proposals for a new mechanism to fund individual project grants, and the establishment of a European Research Council, provided that the necessary funding is secured.

5. As the date of 1 May approaches, and the extension of EU membership to 25, it becomes all the more important for Europe to ensure the successful participation of universities from the new Member States in the development of the European Higher Education and Research Areas. Universities in the new Member States have played an important role in social and economic transition; the intensification of their research efforts needs particular support.

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted by EUA in July 2003 and presented by EUA in September 2003 to European Higher Education Ministers meeting in Berlin to discuss next steps in the Bologna process

### III. University strategies and policies: principles for action

6. Universities are aware of the need to overcome their fragmentation and to develop institutional strategies underpinning their action. EUA has formulated a set of principles on which strategies and policies should be built. These reflect the unique research role of universities as institutions without which there would be no research and no researchers, and seek to identify a “European way” of fostering and utilising high quality research.

7. In formulating these principles, EUA acknowledges the importance of two phenomena that are increasingly and simultaneously shaping the landscape and character of Europe’s universities: on the one hand growing competition between universities that is resulting in increased differentiation, and on the other increased cooperation and interdependence between institutions that serve to create both focus and critical mass in research on a European scale.

8. The principles upon which Europe’s universities will build the research and innovation strategies and policies needed to meet the challenges of the Europe of Knowledge are:

- universities provide a *unique space for basic research*;
- universities play a *crucial role in the training of researchers* thus ensuring the continuity of the “research pipeline”;
- universities are research institutions *based upon the integral link between teaching and research*;
- universities pursue excellence in disciplinary research, and provide environments that enable the *cross-fertilisation of ideas across disciplines*;
- universities are knowledge centres that *create, safeguard and transmit knowledge vital for social and economic welfare*, locally, regionally and globally;
- universities are engaged in knowledge transfer as *full partners in the innovative process*;
- universities’ willingness to *focus and concentrate their efforts through enhanced cooperation* and networking among themselves and with business, industry and other partners.

### IV. Key Challenges for university based research and innovation

9. Growing *competition between universities* is leading to certain degrees of specialisation as universities increasingly play to their strengths rather than maintain strong research profiles in every research field, thus also enhancing their capacity to compete globally. The proposed European Research Council, by funding the best basic research wherever it is found, should support this process. One result of growing competition is an increasing trend towards *differentiation* of mission between universities. Europe needs a diverse spectrum of research institutions, all of which are based upon the link between teaching and research and fulfill key research training and knowledge transfer functions.

10. As a result of more focusing of mission *the role of networks of institutions* at local, regional, national and European levels is growing, for research, research training and the provision of infrastructural support. Based upon complementarity of different interests, these networks foster enhanced cooperation and efficiencies of scale.

11. The structure and performance of university research communities are related strongly to *attracting and retaining the most talented young people* and to the existence of appropriate career opportunities in both the public and private sectors.

12. Mobility is an important element of research training and career development and is not designed to promote brain drain inside or outside Europe; within Europe, universities should seek to contribute to the development of the continent as a whole by promoting mobility while *seeking to discourage long term 'brain drain' from one part of the continent to another*.

13. A comprehensive vision of university based research and innovation requires both the promotion of excellence in basic research and *the fostering of a research agenda that links more effectively research with innovation processes*, and better manages the ways in which the research base is used to benefit society in relation to both economic and social development and cultural engagement.

## **V. Realising the goals: financial independence, autonomy and responsibility**

14. In order to realise these ambitious goals it is important to ensure that universities, as a unique space for basic research, are able to work in a long-term perspective. *Governments and universities alike must be committed to the long-term vision of a Europe of Knowledge based upon university based research and innovation*.

15. While universities need to be encouraged to develop in different forms and to generate funds from a variety of sources, *governments* must empower institutions and strengthen their essential autonomy by providing stable legal and funding environments thus ensuring that universities have the capability to manage themselves in a dynamic way and the freedom to act to seize the opportunities that are offered to them.

16. Universities accept accountability and assume the responsibility of fostering leadership, a quality culture and strategic management capacity in each institution as well as greater transparency, also in relation to the costing of research and innovation activities.

17. EUA is debating these issues with its members across Europe and has accepted the challenge of carrying out an analysis of issues related to the difficult and complicated question of the financing of university research. This question is of paramount importance in any debate on promoting research and innovation at European level and EUA looks forward to a broad discussion on the issues resulting from this study.

EUA 21.04.2004

## **EUA Study on the Financing of Research and Innovation in Europe's Universities**

### **Summary of preliminary findings**

principal researchers: Bernadette Conraths and Hanne Smidt Sødergård

*Prepared for the EC Conference on "The Europe of Knowledge 2020: A vision for University based Research and Innovation", Liège, 26-28 April 2004*

#### **Background & Objectives**

*This EUA study has been undertaken since January 2004, and was conceived with the need for European policy discussion to be informed by an overview of the main trends and developments in the financing of university research and innovation. The study has been made possible by a grant from DG Research - Science and Society.*

*EUA has drawn upon the national Rectors Conferences of the 25 countries of the soon-to-be-enlarged European Union who have performed two key tasks: firstly to provide access to national information sources on financing university research and innovation; and secondly to recommend a sample of research-active universities willing and interested in providing information for the study. EUA is deeply grateful to these universities listed below, all individual members of EUA, for providing valuable information both through detailed questionnaires and follow-up interviews.*

#### **Preliminary Findings (21 April 2004)**

1. The willingness of Europe's universities to participate in this study and provide institutional information - despite the extreme time pressure and burden of data-gathering - is **evidence of the importance attached by universities to these key research and innovation funding issues**. Universities recognise that they have the major role and responsibility for developing Europe's research and its researchers, and therefore feel strongly that their voice - as *institutions* - needs to be heard in European policy discussions.
2. The **enormous diversity in national funding structures** has been confirmed by the study, as have the considerable **institutional differences in methods of data collection, management and budget allocation**. This poses major challenges in comparing the research environments of universities across Europe.
3. While national R&I expenditure has not greatly increased between 1995 and 2001, **total institutional expenditure on R&I in this period has significantly increased** in all but two institutions in this sample (range = 0.92 to 6.11, mean = 2.2907). The implications of these findings require further examination.
4. Irrespective of trends in financing, **human resource development issues within institutions will remain critical:**
  - a. Training and development of academic staff/researchers through doctoral programmes is perceived as an important strategy for supporting an institution's research policy and strengthening research capacity. This is particularly needed as seeking and managing external research funds has led to a greater workload for (junior) researchers - as there is currently little management training for researchers or professional staff to assume these tasks.
  - b. All these trends point to the need for greater "professionalisation" of university research management, taking account of the particular context and culture of institutions.
  - c. Universities in Central and Eastern Europe have been particularly active in addressing future human resource capacity issues through developing Doctoral programmes.

5. From the evidence of this sample, many universities are in a **period of development regarding innovation structures and activities**. Initial steps have been taken to integrate innovation into mainstream university research activities where technical transfer offices and university-industry partnerships are becoming increasingly commonplace. Even if at the moment **innovation remains a relatively marginal issue in comprehensive universities**, many institutions perceive a danger that over-reliance upon external funds for short term applied research projects may be detrimental to basic research in the long term.
6. There is a general expectation that **funding sources will diversify** in the future, as well as an awareness that this trend towards increasing diversification of external funding sources, and in particular the shift towards more competitive and performance related project funding, is slowly creating a culture change in many parts of the universities. Individual researchers, departments and institutions have to develop a more competitive and entrepreneurial attitude and be more accountable for their performance.
7. **Particular challenges face accession countries** where core research funding is practically non-existent. However, in these countries academic staff development initiatives are at the forefront of institutional strategy, providing evidence that many institutions are well prepared for the forthcoming challenges of a European Research Area.
8. Universities are increasingly placing **emphasis on the European level to develop their research activities**, despite the relatively small amount of funding received from this source compared to national sources. In particular, high expectations are placed by many universities in Central and Eastern Europe on access to European Structural Funds. Inter-institutional cooperation, interdisciplinary research, centres of excellence, and doctoral education are considered to be the main future priorities to develop at the European level.
9. In preparing the final project report the **EUA will address both its own members and governments**. On the basis of analysis carried out until now it seems clear that the report will include recommendations:
  - to governments at national and at European level on the need **to address the lack of comparable national data on R&I**,
  - to universities on the need **for centralised and coordinated data on R&I at institutional level**.
  - to governments and universities together to take up the difficult question **of the costing on research** without which it will be difficult to strengthen Europe's research capacity, and last but not least, **to develop appropriate methodologies and a common understanding of terminology**.

EUA is indebted to the following universities for providing their valuable time and information for this study:

University of Vienna, AT  
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 University of Franche-Comté, Besançon, FR  
 Technical University of Aachen, DE  
 Hamburg University, DE  
 Heidelberg University, DE  
 University of Crete, GR

University of Pécs, HU  
 University of Iceland, IS  
 University College Dublin, IR  
 University of Trento, IT  
 University of Siena, IT  
 University of Messina, IT  
 University of Latvia, Riga, LV  
 University of Twente, NL  
 Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, PL  
 Technical University of Lodz, PL  
 University of Porto, PT  
 Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iasi, RO  
 Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, SK  
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 Autonomous University of Madrid, ES  
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 University of Bristol, UK  
 Heriot-Watt University, UK