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“Universities have never featured so high on the Commission’s agenda”

In his speech to the European University Association’s third Convention of European Higher Education Institutions on 2 April in Glasgow, UK, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso pledged support for the ongoing higher education reform process and called for increased dialogue between the Commission and Europe’s universities. EUA welcomes this new emphasis on higher education institutions and looks forward to working with the Commission in securing the future of European universities which the President cited as “unquestionably one of Europe’s top priorities”. Linking universities and the reform process underway to the refocused Lisbon strategy, President Barroso stressed the key part universities have to play in the development of the knowledge society and urged university leaders to engage with other stakeholders to ensure the ambitious goals are achieved.

Georg Wincker, Rector of the University of Vienna and newly elected in Glasgow as EUA president for the period 2005 - 2009, welcomed the Commission’s willingness to discuss new initiatives, such as the European Research Council and the European Institute of

Technology. EUA will follow these developments closely on behalf of its members. The Association looks forward with interest to the forthcoming Commission draft decision on the 7th Framework Programme as well as to a targeted Communication and an Action Plan on the universities. As the voice of over 750 higher education institutions in Europe, EUA is ready to work with policy makers to ensure that the views of its members are heard.

The next step for EUA is to prepare the Glasgow Declaration that will be presented to Ministers of Education meeting in Bergen in May to discuss the future of the Bologna Process. The 630 university leaders and partners gathered in Glasgow called for greater recognition of the vital cultural, social and economic role of Europe’s universities and underlined the importance of strong universities in responding to the growing and varied societal demands on universities. This requires institutions to be responsible rather than merely responsive and makes the development of diversified institutional strategies – based on autonomy, accountability and adequate financing – essential in order to exploit their full potential.

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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