



Press statement: 7 September 2014

EUA comments on next European commissioner portfolios

*Euractiv** has recently published details of a draft organigram relating to proposals for the portfolios of the next College of European Commissioners (who are due to serve from later this year until 2019). The European University Association (EUA) understands that this draft highlights that “education” is no longer listed as a part of a Commissioner’s portfolio but instead the term “skills” is used.

Commenting on the draft proposals, EUA Secretary General Lesley Wilson said: “The European University Association would be deeply concerned if education was no longer explicitly referred to in part of a Commissioner’s portfolio. We believe that a portfolio for skills, youth and multilingualism, which is mentioned, would not be in line with the vision of the European Higher Education Area. Moreover, we think that it would compromise the ambitious objectives set for the European Research Area as the former is the basis for the latter.

EUA, whilst underlining the crucial importance of skills, has not ceased to emphasise the broader importance of “education” beyond skills in Europe. In times of economic and also geopolitical crisis, Europe will more than ever have to rely not only on skills, but also on education, in order to build a strong knowledge society.

The Commission itself has also put education at the heart of its 2020 strategy, as it has been identified as one of the key foundations for a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. The exclusion of the term education from the list of commissioners portfolios would not only deprive a multifaceted stakeholder community from having a direct representative and spokesperson at European level, but would also signal that one of the ambitious 2020 objectives, namely education, has already been given up upon.

It would thus confirm a concern of many, that the Union might forgo its cultural and civic goals, and only serve economic interests, and could thus support the Euro-critical and hostile trends that have recently gained more political weight.

EUA is concerned that there is a lack of ambition on this issue, that is crucial for the future of the European Union. We appeal therefore to the EU institutions to ensure that education is specifically mentioned in the portfolio of the next college of Commissioners.”

*More information on the Euractiv articles is available here:

- <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/eu-priorities-2020/exclusive-juncker-team-revealed-308203>
- <http://reuniting-europe.blogactiv.eu/2014/09/03/i-was-leaked-the-juncker-commission/#.VAmN5PmSx8G>

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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.