EUA
European University Association

EUA's Response to the Consultation on the Revision of the EU's Modernisation Agenda

Summary Statement

EUA considers this revision timely given the progress made by universities since 2011, and in the light of new challenges facing Europe and European universities. This short document summarises EUA's suggestions on the EC's three priorities and highlights four additional priorities that EUA considers indispensable to the success of the Modernisation Agenda. It complements and accompanies a more in-depth working paper, which provides the rationale, context and background information on EUA's response.

EC Priorities

1. Relevance of learning and teaching

A European-wide prioritisation of the relevance of learning and teaching is essential to the development, dissemination and adoption of innovative approaches and good practices. Priority should be given to:

- reaching a more precise and shared understanding of how to prepare graduates for diverse careers, including exposure to research, entrepreneurship and self-employment
- including the teaching of active European citizenship and social skills in the mission of higher education
- boosting the contribution of higher education to lifelong learning, including continued professional development and reorientation
- developing a stronger European approach to ICTs and digitalisation, encouraging greater convergence of structures and collaboration across boundaries
- providing European support for structures dedicated to these issues, such as platforms and regular conferences, to promote new developments and facilitate exchange among stakeholders.

2. HEIs as strong regional innovators

Universities can have a significant and diverse effect on regional innovation in terms of promoting enterprise, developing human resources, businesses and growth, and enhancing social equality. In order to further leverage this impact, priority should be given to:

- fostering human talent as the core component and fundamental, long-term driver of innovation
- ensuring political support to continuous dialogue, by bringing together universities, public authorities and other stakeholders at national and regional levels
- encouraging an integrated and combined use of diverse funding mechanisms

- facilitating good practice exchange and evidence-based and transparent decision-making processes
- driving further policy development based on impact assessments that use diverse approaches and multi-dimensional measures.

3. Mutually reinforcing education and research activities

Universities combine research and teaching, educating students to become independent knowledge producers, innovators and contributors to society and the economy. In order to strengthen this unique profile, priority should be given to:

- continuing support for implementation of reforms in doctoral education as indicated in the Salzburg Principles and Recommendations, as well as promoting the MSCA Innovative Training Networks as a benchmark for excellent doctoral education
- supporting collaborative research activities at an early stage, thus providing access to the evolving needs of the labour market and contributing to maximising the employability of graduates
- ensuring that students at all levels are exposed to, and able to engage in research, and benefit from research based teaching, essential for becoming independent knowledge producers and innovators
- making certain that given the importance for Europe of linking teaching, research and innovation, the development of the ERA goes hand in hand with that of the EHEA.

EUA Priorities

1. Strengthen universities for Europe

The Modernisation Agenda can only be successful if institutions are in a position to act, at local and national levels, and in cooperation with European and global partners. To strengthen universities and ensure high quality, priority should be given to:

- improving regulatory and financial frameworks at the national level and making sure that sufficient public funding is delivered in an efficient way, balancing accountability, and the crucial importance of institutional autonomy
- ensuring that national governments and institutions set up appropriate processes for supporting the professionalisation of staff that requires better defined and more attractive career paths
- fostering the exchange of good practices and policy dialogue at the EU level with regard to funding models, efficiency and system governance
- simplifying and improving EU funding programmes, notably by reducing administrative procedures and taking national and institutional accounting practices and costing methodologies into consideration
- creating joint efforts between the EC, Parliament and Council to protect EU funding programmes from cuts or transformation into loans.

2. Maintain and develop open higher education and research

Open higher education and research are hallmarks of the Union and a condition for quality and for facilitating Europe-wide collaboration. This requires a strong lead at the EU level to avert fragmentation by national regulations and protocols. Priority should be given to:

- further developing common legal frameworks by building on the "Opening up Education" communication and the copyright directive, as well as existing frameworks for open access to research publications and data as well as educational resources
- stimulating exchange on the development of national and institutional digitalisation strategies in order to facilitate the development of compatible structures across borders

- creating measures that take into account the rapid progress of Science 2.0/Open Science and pedagogical innovation, and their impact on how universities function in terms of teaching and research, administrative structures and staff profiles
- following up on EC-commissioned studies and reports on teaching and learning through discussions with national governments and the higher education community.

3. Foster inclusiveness and societal relevance

Europe's political stability and economic growth also depend on its ability to offer education and employment to people of diverse backgrounds, including intra-European migrants and international migrants and refugees. Priority should be given to:

- enhancing access to higher education, training teachers and other multipliers, collaborating with local communities, and conducting research to inform policy makers and society
- providing information on educational opportunities, language, foundation and bridging courses, and flexible approaches to recognition, entry and study requirements for refugee students
- offering adequate support from national and European funding sources, as well as through data collection, good practice exchange and sound policies
- fostering capacity building at the system and institutional level
- engaging in consultation and collaboration across sectors, both at the EC and national level.

4. Collaborate with Europe's neighbours and international partners

Over the past two decades, Europe has become a model for structured system-level internationalisation and regional convergence in education and research. To build on this track record, priority should be given to:

- ensuring that higher education and science diplomacy, as integral parts of EU foreign policy, are clearly reflected in the Modernisation Agenda, and safeguarding adequate funding for international exchange
- supporting interregional dialogue between universities to promote people-to-people exchange, build links for collaboration in research and education, and feed into EU policy dialogue, particularly in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy
- fostering a better understanding of different partner needs inside and outside the EU in order to make third-country mobility and collaboration in Erasmus+ a success, notably through closer inter-agency collaboration and active support from member states.

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