

Strengthening ties between Europe and its neighbours by supporting universities

On the occasion of the Eastern Partnership Summit on 24 November 2017, the European University Association (EUA) would like to underline the importance of higher education and research in fostering cooperation between the European Union and its neighbours.

Higher education and research are central in creating people-to-people contact. As shown in the [EUA infographic](#) on universities and the EU neighbourhood, student mobility alone counts for more than 250,000 people crossing borders between the European Economic Area (EEA) and neighbouring countries in one year. In addition, thousands of institutional partnerships have been formed across the EU's eastern border and across the Mediterranean.

The structures provided by the EU and the European Higher Education Area build ties between Europe and the Mediterranean and present a platform for intercultural connections on a big scale. As stated in the [EUA response](#) to the public consultation "Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy", cooperation in higher education and research furthers the reform of systems and institutions, generates political and social benefits beyond the higher education sector, and helps in responding to political and technological changes.

It is important to keep in mind that mobility and cooperation do not happen by themselves; they need strong institutions and a level playing field. Mobility is heavily skewed towards the EEA, and research collaborations between Europe and its neighbours are still underdeveloped. There is great potential, but a comprehensive vision is needed that includes capacity building measures and especially platforms that can promote reforms through the sharing of good practices between all countries in Europe and around the Mediterranean, as set out in the [Rabat Statement](#) on Euro-Arab cooperation.

EUA welcomes initiatives between the EU and its neighbours through the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean, among others, and the recognition of the role of higher education and research in these contexts. Universities as institutions must be a key part of this work as an essential source of people-to-people contact. They must be enabled to build their capacity and strengthen their cooperation.

To learn more about EUA's work in the European neighbourhood, please see the [EUA website](#).

The **European University Association** (EUA) is the representative organisation of more than 800 universities in 47 European countries and 33 national rectors' conferences. EUA works closely with its members to ensure that the voice of European universities is heard.

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