

EUA Policy Position on the European Commission’s “Communication to the European Council on the European Institute of Technology (EIT)”

The European University Association:

Underlines the importance of the rationale presented for the establishment of the EIT, namely the need to help create a better environment in Europe for maximizing the benefits from public and private investment in research and development

Supports the overall objective set of creating a new space for creativity in research and training in Europe that is uninhibited by restrictive national regulations and administrative barriers and hence able to achieve greater potential in terms of fostering public private partnerships, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Believes that the proposed legal construction for the “knowledge communities”, as presently defined, is the wrong mechanism for reaching the goals behind the creation of the EIT: knowledge communities of university departments, faculties and laboratories - rather than universities as institutions – together with companies and research institutions, and established as separate legal entities will not achieve the synergetic effects intended but rather contribute to the institutional and intellectual fragmentation of Europe’s universities at a time when strong, autonomous and accountable institutions are crucial if universities are to play their role as the “locus where education, research and innovation meet”.

Considers that universities’ legitimate interests as Europe’s core institutions in the “Knowledge Triangle” must be brought into the centre of the further development of the concept, and that it is the responsibility of universities to engage firmly in the further debate on the EIT that in a relatively short period has become a major EU policy priority.

EUA undertakes:

- ***to reiterate the preconditions already set out in its earlier submission to the EIT public consultation,***
 - establishment of the European Research Council with an annual budget of €1.5 billion
 - securing fresh money outside of Category 1A, preferably with matching contributions from public and private funding sources
- ***to investigate solutions*** that
 - strengthen existing institutions and avoid fragmentation of Europe’s universities including in relation to the granting of degree awarding powers
 - demonstrate added value in relation to proposed FP7 instruments and hence clarify where the “substantial core public funding” is coming from in relation to “other competitive Community funding sources”
 - ensure that relevant national experiences of business enterprise collaboration are taken into account
 - explore alternative, innovative and European approaches to achieving the overall objectives identified in the EIT proposal if the legal and financial problems involved with the current EU Communication cannot be resolved
- ***to engage actively in the further EU discussions of the EIT Communication on behalf of its university membership.***

Recommends in parallel that the EC Communication on the Universities - under discussion since the Hampton Court summit and addressing the key issues important for maximising the potential of universities and reinforcing their position - is presented to the European Council in the near future and urges **maximum synergy between this process and further work on the EIT, as a further means of reinforcing the position of Europe's universities rather than increasing the risk of fragmentation.**

Adopted by the EUA Council (Hamburg, 30 March 2006)