

EUA Study on the Financing of Research and Innovation in Europe's Universities

Summary of preliminary findings

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Background & Objectives

This EUA study has been undertaken since January 2004, and was conceived with the need for European policy discussion to be informed by an overview of the main trends and developments in the financing of university research and innovation. The study has been made possible by a grant from DG Research - Science and Society.

EUA has drawn upon the national Rectors Conferences of the 25 countries of the soon-to-be-enlarged European Union who have performed two key tasks: firstly to provide access to national information sources on financing university research and innovation; and secondly to recommend a sample of research-active universities willing and interested in providing information for the study. EUA is deeply grateful to these universities listed below, all individual members of EUA, for providing valuable information both through detailed questionnaires and follow-up interviews.

Preliminary Findings (21 April 2004)

1. The willingness of Europe's universities to participate in this study and provide institutional information - despite the extreme time pressure and burden of data-gathering - is **evidence of the importance attached by universities to these key research and innovation funding issues**. Universities recognise that they have the major role and responsibility for developing Europe's research and its researchers, and therefore feel strongly that their voice - as *institutions* - needs to be heard in European policy discussions.
2. The **enormous diversity in national funding structures** has been confirmed by the study, as have the considerable **institutional differences in methods of data collection, management and budget allocation**. This poses major challenges in comparing the research environments of universities across Europe.
3. While national R&I expenditure has not greatly increased between 1995 and 2001, **total institutional expenditure on R&I in this period has significantly increased** in all but two institutions in this sample (range = 0.92 to 6.11, mean = 2.2907). The implications of these findings require further examination.
4. Irrespective of trends in financing, **human resource development issues within institutions will remain critical:**
 - a. Training and development of academic staff/researchers through doctoral programmes is perceived as an important strategy for supporting an institution's research policy and strengthening research capacity. This is particularly needed as seeking and managing external research funds has led to a greater workload for (junior) researchers - as there is currently little management training for researchers or professional staff to assume these tasks.
 - b. All these trends point to the need for greater "professionalisation" of university research management, taking account of the particular context and culture of institutions.
 - c. Universities in Central and Eastern Europe have been particularly active in addressing future human resource capacity issues through developing Doctoral programmes.

5. From the evidence of this sample, many universities are in a **period of development regarding innovation structures and activities**. Initial steps have been taken to integrate innovation into mainstream university research activities where technical transfer offices and university-industry partnerships are becoming increasingly commonplace. Even if at the moment **innovation remains a relatively marginal issue in comprehensive universities**, many institutions perceive a danger that over-reliance upon external funds for short term applied research projects may be detrimental to basic research in the long term.
6. There is a general expectation that **funding sources will diversify** in the future, as well as an awareness that this trend towards increasing diversification of external funding sources, and in particular the shift towards more competitive and performance related project funding, is slowly creating a culture change in many parts of the universities. Individual researchers, departments and institutions have to develop a more competitive and entrepreneurial attitude and be more accountable for their performance.
7. **Particular challenges face accession countries** where core research funding is practically non-existent. However, in these countries academic staff development initiatives are at the forefront of institutional strategy, providing evidence that many institutions are well prepared for the forthcoming challenges of a European Research Area.
8. Universities are increasingly placing **emphasis on the European level to develop their research activities**, despite the relatively small amount of funding received from this source compared to national sources. In particular, high expectations are placed by many universities in Central and Eastern Europe on access to European Structural Funds. Inter-institutional cooperation, interdisciplinary research, centres of excellence, and doctoral education are considered to be the main future priorities to develop at the European level.
9. In preparing the final project report the **EUA will address both its own members and governments**. On the basis of analysis carried out until now it seems clear that the report will include recommendations:
 - to governments at national and at European level on the need **to address the lack of comparable national data on R&I**,
 - to universities on the need **for centralised and coordinated data on R&I at institutional level**.
 - to governments and universities together to take up the difficult question **of the costing on research** without which it will be difficult to strengthen Europe's research capacity, and last but not least, **to develop appropriate methodologies and a common understanding of terminology**.

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