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EUA and the European Parliament to form a “strategic alliance” to fight for the FP7 budget

In his conclusions to the EUA Conference "Research in Universities: Strategies and Funding" (20-22 Oct, Uppsala, Sweden) EUA President Professor Georg Winckler stressed the university sector's full support for the European Commission proposals on the enhanced funding levels for the 7th Research Framework Programme (FP7). EUA, as the voice of universities in Europe, should join forces with the European Parliament to ensure that this crucial objective is met. An inadequate level of funding "would send the wrong signal" to Europe's higher education and research community as it works to build a Europe of Knowledge.

One key new instrument of great importance to universities is the European Research Council (ERC). The governing board (Scientific Council) of the future ERC met just days before the Uppsala conference and EUA was pleased to welcome one of its members, Professor Michal Kleiber, to address the opening session. He challenged the university sector to be at the forefront in presenting high quality project proposals to the ERC, emphasising that it was the universities who had "to move this new funding instrument in the right direction" in creating a globally competitive research environment in Europe.

With the Scientific Council now in existence, Prof. Winckler called for a dialogue between EUA and the future ERC in order to ensure that the views of universities are taken into account as it moves into operational activities. Europe's universities need the ERC to become "a strong voice for research at European level, promoting excellence and not driven by purely national interests".

The President's comments came in response also to the closing address by Jerzy Buzek, Member of the European Parliament and Rapporteur for FP7, who urged the university sector to strengthen its efforts through EUA in taking a firm position on the FP7 proposals.

Mr Buzek stressed the constructive approach of EUA and urged the Association to continue this work, calling for "universities to play an active part" in influencing national governments to support the budget increase which is essential to fulfilling the ambitious Lisbon goals.

Mr Buzek also recognised that Europe's universities are the key players in connecting the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area and as such institutions have a pivotal role in promoting "maximum synergy" between the two areas as they continue to develop.

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.

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Attended by over 300 participants from 34 countries, the EUA conference focused on the new dynamics and structure of funding systems, interacting at European, national and regional level, and the need for universities to align their research strategies to meet these new realities. It provided a timely opportunity for universities, as key stakeholders in the European science policy debate on FP7 and the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, to explore the strategic development of university-based research.

The theme of university financing will continue to be examined, in relation to both teaching and research activities, at the next EUA conference "Funding Strong Universities: Diversification, Student Support and Good Governance" Hamburg, Germany, 30 March – 1 April 2006.

- [EUA responds to European Commission on the future European research policy](#)
- [EU Research budget under threat - EUA calls on its members for action](#)
- [EUA Conference "Research in European Universities: Strategies and Funding"](#)