



15 January 2010

EUA Response to EC Consultation on the future "EU 2020" Strategy

1. Introduction

EUA welcomes very much the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the "EU 2020" strategy which through the key priorities identified recognises the crucial role that universities play in advancing the European knowledge society. European Universities take this responsibility very seriously and have reflected extensively on how they can best fulfil this important role in the next decade.

EUA's Prague Declaration identifies European strategies for European universities addressing global challenges and suggests ways forward out of the current economic crisis based on increased investment in higher education and research (cf EUA Prague Declaration, March 2009 in Annex). The first part of the Declaration is a targeted message to political leaders with proposals for immediate measures to address the crisis. The second part sets out a long-term strategic agenda for universities. European Universities are committed to up-skilling the population by widening access and tapping unused potential, as well as to creating a Europe of excellence by increasing research potential and in particular improving career opportunities for young researchers.

Political leaders are called upon to support these efforts by increased national and European investments in higher education and research, and equally important, by creating the framework conditions for autonomous universities and facilitating international cooperation and mobility.

2. General remarks

- **EUA supports the thematic approach taken** and the three major priorities indicated. The first two topics have already been defined as priorities for universities and concrete proposals made on how to combat the global economic crisis through investment in higher education and research, as indicated above;
- **Creating a true European knowledge area will require effectively integrating the European Higher Education and Research Areas.** Improving synergies and creating stronger linkages between universities' education and research missions will increase their overall quality and performance. Further efforts by all partners to ensure the implementation of the modernisation agenda, and in particular to strengthen university autonomy (cf University Autonomy in Europe: EUA 2009) will furthermore allow universities to achieve their full potential as part of civil society.
- To ensure progress will be made **clear targets, in particular investment targets, are needed** to ensure the progress of all member states towards agreed objectives. One example of such targets are those identified in the 2009 report of the European Research Area Board: "Preparing Europe for a New Renaissance, A Strategic View of the European Research Area". Furthermore, it



15 January 2010

would be important to ensure that decisions taken on priorities set are reflected in budgets both at EU and national level. This would, for example, be particularly true for research budgets if the ambitious goals set are to be met and the required critical mass achieved.

- The experience of the past decade has also demonstrated that it will be crucial to ensure better coherence between EU and individual member state policies to ensure progress towards joint targets set and to avoid dissociation between the European level and actions at member state level. An example that relates to the mission of universities is that of immigration policies, another, the removal of obstacles to mobility.
- Concerning the **'making it happen' methodology** and the suggested 'new approach' EUA would like to emphasise that:
 - o not only is **a shared vision and a concrete agenda for all member states required but also one that embraces and can be shared by a broader range of societal actors.**
 - o thus interdependence means not just levels of government but in an ever more complex society requires a partnership approach involving civil society more broadly (e.g. professional associations and other representative bodies),
 - o broad stakeholder consultation should be part of the 'new approach' targeted to specific needs and topics addressed – and should allow time for feedback received to be considered seriously;
 - o this would be the way to ensure the broad ownership, acceptance and support for the implementation of the measures to be agreed, and that will be crucial to success. It is not sufficient to mention in the second last para on p11 that the vision will need active support of stakeholders such as the social partners and civil society. Autonomous universities are important actors in civil society.
- One successful example of such broad consultation over the last decade is the successful construction of the European Higher Education Area through the Bologna process which includes 46 European governments and representatives of the key stakeholders. This has built trust between the parties and allowed the most extensive reform of higher education in Europe ever undertaken, and one that is promoted by the entire higher education community.

3. Comments on the specific objectives proposed

i. Creating value by basing growth on knowledge:

EUA supports the European Commission in its ambition to promote excellence in education and research through investment and reform, and refers to its Prague Declaration (2009), mentioned above, that makes specific proposals on how to combat the economic and financial crisis through investment in higher education and research (cf. Annex 1).



15 January 2010

- The consultation paper suggests that to promote the necessary reform *“European universities should be benchmarked against the best universities in the world”* (pg.5).

EUA considers that the strength of European universities - in a system that has moved from an elite to a mass system of higher education – lies in the increasing diversification of institutional missions and profiles, and in the ambition of universities with different strengths, each to excel in relation to their own objectives. Europe needs its universities to pursue excellence in different directions, and must ensure equality of esteem for these different missions. Whilst one way of achieving excellence is certainly through improvement oriented benchmarking and comparing universities with similar profiles, policy makers should be particularly mindful that international benchmarking on a limited set of dimensions has the potential of excluding excellence achieved in other areas.

- *“Raising the quality of Europe's universities and of their research should go hand in hand with greater mobility of students to acquire new knowledge and languages, gaining experience living and studying abroad and building networks.”* (pg. 5)

EUA supports the need to, and is actively engaged in efforts to increase mobility. One lesson learned is that this can only be achieved by improving the *quality* of mobility. This in turn requires involving all partners in serious efforts to *remove the many obstacles to mobility* that have been well documented in recent years. This would further help increase the value of mobility in its various forms: inter-institutional, international, inter-sectoral, virtual, etc. This also means, for example, ensuring that the modern social security and pension schemes to which reference is made on P7 of the document are fully portable, and apply fairly to mobile students, researchers, administrative and academic staff.

Achieving the goal of increased mobility, and thus more open education systems and programmes also requires putting in place the framework conditions needed to facilitate migration and equitable access to higher education. This will ultimately create significant benefits for our societies by promoting greater cultural, historic and linguistic diversity in the programmes on offer, thus reflecting the increased diversity of our societies.

- *“The attractiveness and performance of Europe as a research location also depends on creating an internal market and attractive career prospects for researchers.”* (pg.5)

EUA welcomes the reference to the importance of improved research career prospects in promoting research excellence and would specifically like to underline the importance of investing in the present generation of young researchers, as indicated in the Prague Declaration. The Declaration suggests a Europe-wide stimulus programme to create opportunities and incentives to maintain young researchers across the continent in research careers, following the example of some programmes adopted at national level, e.g. in the Netherlands.

This requires substantially increasing funding opportunities available to researchers at all levels: through the European Research Council – that can play an even greater role in promoting excellence in European research providing its funding is increased; through the EC's Research Framework Programmes and through action at national and regional level, with guaranteed provision for pension and social security rights and transferability to allow career mobility across Europe. Other framework conditions that will increase the attractiveness of Europe as a career destination for researchers include: providing



15 January 2010

incentives to academic and non-academic organisations to ensure that researchers contracts offer good working conditions and are of a duration sufficient to foster both creativity and individual performance.

- *“The EU needs to increase its research efforts by pooling resources, jointly developing major research infrastructures across the EU and raising research quality to world leading standards.” (pg5):*

EUA supports fully the stated objective of increasing research efforts but considers that the key issue for universities is not that of raising quality as such but of *“fostering critical mass for top-quality research.”* and would like to suggest that the text is amended in this sense. This has budgetary implications, as mentioned above in our general remarks. In particular in relation to creating top quality research capacity, critical mass can only be achieved by capitalising on the complementary nature of national research investments and investments through particular European instruments and programmes, and creating the necessary synergies.

- *“it also needs to maximise and accelerate the practical benefits of research for Europe’s businesses and SMEs –including through major public-private partnerships” (pg5)*

From a university perspective EUA once more draws attention to the Prague Declaration in Annex: 10. “Developing partnerships” where we advocate for universities to engage in partnerships, particularly embracing the open innovation model of university/enterprise cooperation, which has already proven its effectiveness in translating knowledge into innovation when research is performed within high standards and the partnership properly managed.

- *“The aim for 2020 is to achieve a genuine European Knowledge Area, underpinned by a world-class knowledge infrastructure, in which all actors (students, teachers, researchers, education and research institutions and enterprises) benefit from the free circulation of people, knowledge and technology (the 5th freedom).” (pg 6):*

EUA would like to suggest including reference to the importance of open access in this context and to suggest that a proposal is made for the EU to take the lead in the development of a global system for Open Access as a means of enhancing the global circulation of knowledge.

Finally, EUA would like to underline once more its broad support for the development of a European Knowledge Area based on a strong interface between education and research. Through their diverse missions and profiles European universities are committed to building these linkages and to using their research competence and partnerships to deliver high quality educational programmes.

ii. Empowering people in inclusive societies:

“Lifelong learning is the key element to ensure good transition between jobs and occupations, and in avoiding long-term unemployment leading to loss of human capital.” (pg. 6)

EUA fully supports this objective and underlines European universities’ commitment to improving access to higher education for different groups, as well as to widening



15 January 2010

opportunities for participation in and successful completion of higher education. Attention is drawn to the association's 'European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning (2008) that clearly articulates commitments necessary on the part of universities and governments to make lifelong learning, and indeed lifelong access to knowledge for all citizens a reality.

Thus, we propose, as part of 'EU2020', asking governments and other relevant partners for their commitment and support to the commitments set out in the Charter on Lifelong Learning which would require universities working closely together with both governments and business to develop and fund appropriate incentive measures in the years to come.

iii. Setting EU 2020 in a global context:

The global agenda priorities should take account of the general priorities set, and particularly of the importance of 'basing growth on knowledge'. European universities are active throughout the world, and given the reforms of the last decade are more attractive than ever as global teaching and research partners. Consolidated European support is needed to promote the international outreach of European higher education and research rather than the highly fragmented approach pursued at present. Whilst international trade is an important driver for EU growth, the internationalisation of European higher education and research has the potential to make significant contributions to these developments if coherent and coordinated support at national and European level is provided. The recent European Research Area Board report provides a useful framework for the internationalisation of research and a good example of consolidated European support that could serve as a reference for future support for both European higher education and research. In this context, and in light of current demographic developments, EUA would specifically like to highlight the need for a consolidated European approach to migration policies to facilitate mobility and attract high quality students and researchers to Europe.

Brussels, 15 January 2010



15 January 2010

ANNEX 1:

EUA Prague Declaration

“European Universities -Looking forward with confidence”

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso told conference participants in his video message it would be a mistake to cut public and private spending on education and research during the present economic downturn as this could have a “direct negative impact” on future growth. “Investing more in education and research will help Europe emerge from recession faster and in better shape ... “

European Universities, met in Prague from 18-21 March 2009 to discuss the topic “Facing Global Challenges: European strategies for European universities. We also addressed the present financial and economic crisis and its impact. For this reason the first part of our Declaration is a targeted message to political leaders and decision makers in international donor organisation bodies with proposals for immediate measures to address the crisis. The second part of the Declaration sets out a long-term strategic agenda for universities identifying 10 factors that will determine our future success.

I. Message to political leaders - combat the global economic and financial crisis through investment in higher education and research

WHY?

1. **Universities - crucial for the future of Europe:** through knowledge creation and by fostering innovation, critical thinking, tolerance and open minds we prepare citizens for their role in society and the economy and respond to their expectations by providing opportunities for individual development and personal growth,. Through research based education at all levels we provide the high level skills and innovative thinking our modern societies need and on which future economic, social and cultural development depends. We strive for the long term in addition to assuming new tasks and providing solutions to current problems.

2. **Universities - motors for economic recovery:** by striving for excellence in teaching, research and innovation, by offering opportunities to diverse groups of learners, and by providing the optimal creative environment for the talented young researchers that Europe needs universities are increasingly central to future growth and to the consolidation of Europe’s knowledge society. With our reservoir of highly trained and flexible citizens able to respond to changing labour markets and with the research skills needed to make Europe more creative and innovative, and thus ultimately more competitive, we are well placed to find answers to the global challenges of the 21st century.



15 January 2010

3. **Higher education and research needs a European stimulus package** : As mainly public institutions serving the public good and educating almost half of Europe's populations, universities are, more than ever under the present circumstances, crucial for future European development. The same is true of public support for higher education and research: when private support weakens and business falters public funding is essential to guarantee continuity. Europe cannot afford to run the risk of losing a generation of talented people or of a serious decrease in research and innovation activity. This means redoubling efforts to reach the Barcelona target of 3% investment in research and development - signifying more than 700,000 additional researchers - and to invest at least 2% of GDP in higher education, as proposed by the European Commission.

WHAT?

4. **A European stimulus package through higher education and research:** Every talent counts and therefore EUA urges decision makers at national and European level to emulate the major investment in higher education and research that characterizes the US's economic stimulus package. It supports both high end research and students and families struggling to pay for higher education, thus underlining the need for support to both education and research to ensure that research and innovation remain the engine of future economic development and that wide participation in higher education is maintained. Such support is similarly crucial to underpin the continued dynamic development of the European Higher Education and Research Areas that drive the activities of European universities. It will underpin European solidarity and will work against the present increased risk of nationalism and protectionism in Europe, ensuring that Europe emerges strong, resilient and forward looking from the present crisis. As a sign of forward thinking, of commitment and of solidarity EUA recommends:

- **Investing in the present generation of young researchers:** Europe must not sacrifice a generation of young researchers: a Europe-wide stimulus programme is needed to create opportunities and incentives to maintain young researchers across the continent in research careers, following the example of programmes adopted at national level, e.g. in the Netherlands. This requires substantially increasing funding opportunities available to young researchers at all levels: through the European Research Council – that can play an even greater role in promoting excellence in European research providing its funding is increased; through the EC's Research Framework Programmes and through action at national and regional level, with guaranteed provision for pension and social security rights and transferability to allow balanced career mobility across Europe. In return, as universities, we commit to enhancing career opportunities for young researchers and to ensuring implementation of the issues addressed by the European Commission's Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

- **Tapping unused potential: through commitment, implementation and financing of lifelong learning across Europe** to meet the goals set out in the European Universities Charter on Lifelong Learning, to provide additional retraining and up-skilling while also reaching out to those who wish to enter higher education for the first time. This requires working together with both governments and business to develop and fund appropriate incentive measures, for example through redirecting unemployment benefits into covering



15 January 2010

the costs of people going back to universities. At European level structural/social funds should also be used to support such measures.

- Upgrading universities' facilities and campus infrastructure – to provide support to higher education and research while also stimulating the economy and providing employment in other sectors, e.g. construction. The proposed programme, with funding provided on a competitive basis at European level, should build on existing opportunities offered by the European Investment Bank (EIB), and be closely linked to the use of the structural funds as way of supporting the renewal and upgrading of teaching and research infrastructure in universities especially in the new member states.

II. 10 Success Factors for European Universities in the next decade

Preamble:

Our common vision is of autonomous universities as dynamic, flexible institutions promoting excellence and innovation in teaching, research, and knowledge transfer, at the same time responsive to the changing and sometimes exceptional needs of our societies and economies and cogniscent of contributing to finding answers to global problems.

This implies the continued existence and vigorous evolution of universities – defined by a commitment to offering research based education to increasingly diverse student bodies, to strengthening the links between teaching and research and to providing graduates with the competences needed to respond to rapidly changing labour markets. This requires universities with different traditions, mission mixes, and strengths in the context of a system of European higher education institutions incorporating progression routes from one institution to another, based on equality of esteem for diverse missions, and aware of the importance of balancing the need for competitiveness with that of enhanced cooperation, social cohesion and solidarity.

For inclusive and responsive universities pursuing their primary tasks of teaching and research this requires:

- 1. Widening opportunities for participation in and successful completion of higher education:** making lifelong learning a reality by expanding the range of those entering higher education, ensuring continuing possibilities for learners throughout their lives and paying close attention to successful attainment.
- 2. Improving researcher careers:** through transparency of recruitment and promotion procedures and granting greater independence for young researchers at postdoctoral stage, thus enhancing the overall quality and attractiveness of research careers and optimising the research performance of universities.
- 3. Providing relevant and innovative study programmes:** reinforcing the teaching mission of universities by maintaining curricular reform and renewal by introducing new approaches to teaching, offering flexible learning paths adapted to the needs of diverse learners and ensuring that to-morrow's graduates, also those entering the



15 January 2010

labour market at Bachelor level, have the skills and competences needed to make them employable on rapidly changing job markets.

4. **Developing distinctive institutional research profiles:** a rich variety of unique environments that stimulate interdisciplinary approaches to tackle 21st Century global challenges through (theme focused) project development, supported by competitive research funding enhancing quality, and strengthened by cooperation mechanisms through regional clustering and networking at the European level.

For strong and flexible universities pursuing excellence in their different missions this also requires:

5. **Shaping, reinforcing, and implementing autonomy:** universities need strengthened autonomy to better serve society and specifically to ensure favourable regulatory frameworks which allow university leaders to: design internal structures efficiently, select and train staff, shape academic programmes and use financial resources, all of these in line with their specific institutional missions and profiles
6. **Increasing and diversifying income:** to achieve financial sustainability, by implementing sound accounting practices that identify the full costs of all activities, diversifying the income portfolio and securing adequate public funding, thus providing the basis to fulfill the university's core missions over the long term.
7. **Enhancing quality and improving transparency:** by fully embracing the responsibilities derived from the commitment of universities to quality and by providing accurate information about institutional mission, activities, performance and results obtained to learners, employers and other stakeholders.
8. **Promoting internationalisation:** by enhancing global collaboration, partnership and presence beyond Europe as a priority for an ever greater number of universities with diverse missions, to ensure strategic presence and promote a more international outlook among students and staff alike, and, in particular in times of global financial and crisis, to demonstrate active solidarity and cooperation.
9. **Increasing and improving the quality of mobility:** by developing coherent institutional strategies, providing structured opportunities, and removing obstacles to the mobility of students, staff, including administrative staff and researchers at all stages in their careers; encompassing mobility between sectors, institutions and internationally as a way of enhancing personal, academic and professional development and improving transferable skills, including linguistic competence.
10. **Developing partnerships:** for strengthening the various missions of universities, taking account of the needs of partners in curriculum development, research collaboration and innovation activities, in particular embracing the open innovation model of university/enterprise cooperation based on sound project management and improved intellectual property management reflecting respective interests.