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French Prime Minister and European University Association to hold debate on the role of universities in Society

Following the recent adoption of the French university law, Prime Minister, François Fillon has invited university leaders from the European University Association (EUA) to take part in a high-level debate on the future role of universities in society. The meeting at the Sorbonne, Paris on the 14 December 2007 will be used to help the French government develop its higher education priorities for its Presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2008.

The focus of the meeting will be on the contribution of universities to the development of the European labour market and society. This broad theme will cover a wide range of issues from the growing diversity of student populations to the role of universities in the validation of qualifications (including professional qualifications, prior and informal learning, skills & competences etc.). It will also look at the impact of increasing professional, not only student mobility, and the need for agreement on ways to ensure that professional experience and qualifications gained in one country/sector are recognized in others.

The French Prime Minister and the Minister for Higher Education and Research Valérie Pécresse will both present at the debate, as will the President of the European University Association, Professor Georg Winckler. Equally, the French government has invited the Presidents of the 34 National Rectors Conferences that are members of the EUA to take part in the debate.

The organization of this meeting underlines that the French government recognizes the crucial role of Europe's universities in the development of a knowledge society.

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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