

Response to the Communication from the Commission

I. Introduction

The European University Association (EUA) is responding to the Communication on behalf of its members, 34 National Rectors Conferences and 630 individual institutions from 45 European countries. EUA welcomes the Communication as an opportunity for critical self reflection, and a clear acknowledgement by the Commission, for the first time, of the unique role of universities in shaping the European knowledge society.

Europe's universities are ready to play a decisive role in achieving the goals set

for 2010. However, moving beyond the Lisbon Agenda that is driven by considerations of economic and technological development, EUA would like to highlight the role of the universities in the wider debate on the construction of Europe, and the promotion of European values, culture and linguistic diversity which we consider particularly important in the present international environment. When it comes to building Europe and ensuring the wellbeing of its citizens, we firmly believe that promoting cultural and social innovation is as important as the purely scientific and technical progress emphasised in the Communication.

II. Universities in Europe

II.1 Preliminary Remarks: Defining the term 'University'

EUA uses the term "university" to refer to institutions "with full power to award doctoral degrees". With their "twofold traditional vocation of research and teaching", universities defined in terms of this integral link form our core constituency. This understanding of the term "universities" underlies all further comments made.

In the European higher education landscape we are therefore speaking of a maximum of 1000 institutions across the continent, rather than the 4000 institutions mentioned in the Communication. While all higher education institutions have an important role in fulfilling some of the processes essential for creating the European knowledge society, only the universities have a central role to play in terms of all four of the different but interdependent elements described in the Communication as being at the centre of the developing European knowledge society, namely the production of knowledge, its transmission, its dissemination and its use in technical innovation.

II.2 A European Agenda for Europe's Universities

International comparisons are always very difficult, and while there are lessons to be learned from other continents (e.g. in terms of institutional management techniques or the dynamic division of undergraduate/postgraduate



studies in the US), Europe needs to analyse its own strengths and weaknesses, develop a specific European approach, and its own framework and models for its universities. This means:

- valuing diversity as a strength and developing a new "European model" which draws maximum benefit from these differences;

- building upon and transmitting a heritage of shared European values and culture, as well as a tradition of openness to the international environment;

- strengthening public responsibility for higher education systems across Europe;

- promoting equity and access on the basis of merit;

β demonstrating and further maintaining the integral link between teaching and research while accepting increased differentiation of mission in response to societal needs;

β delivering excellence at local, regional, national and international level and improving the quality of all universities across the continent;

- developing a European approach and dimension to QA;

- ensuring strong links between universities and other higher education institutions;

- stepping up targeted networking between institutions at European level as well as joint programme development at all levels as a means of offering a wide range of study programmes and reaching critical mass in research.

III. Prerequisites for meeting the Challenges

III. 1 Agreeing on a long term vision

EUA believes that the different stakeholders need to agree on a shared long term vision of the role of the university in European society. All partners need to be convinced of the importance both of the construction of Europe, and of the European mission of the universities, while being aware that we

are building Europe in an increasingly global context. For the academic community this means pursuing European objectives while at the same time strengthening international cooperation with partners worldwide.

The present consultation process is an important first step in this direction. Further progress requires that:

governments (and other partners) continue to support higher education in terms of a public responsibility requiring long term commitment, and

institutions demonstrate that they have understood the need for change through strengthening their capacity for, and the implementation of strategic reform.

III. 2 Improving the dialogue between universities and society

Universities need to:

- Work in a long term perspective in order to counterbalance the predominant tendency to short-term thinking in our societies. By promoting critical thinking through teaching and research, and demonstrating respect for diversity, universities are essential elements in upholding sustainable democratic societies across Europe;

- Communicate the key role of research in underpinning university autonomy and guaranteeing academic freedom, as an essential element in undergraduate curricula contributing to high quality teaching, improved employability and enhancement in knowledge transmission;

- Consolidate links to different stakeholders: stakeholders include students as key members of the academic community, government at all levels, enterprise and business, (both large firms and SMEs), different social and cultural actors. Universities must respond to their needs through teaching, research and dissemination of results and knowledge transfer activities which serve to:

- ensure wide and democratic access to higher education on the basis of merit;

- promote Life long Learning and the direct involvement of stakeholders;

- respond to key social issues through promoting targeted interdisciplinary research;

- promote economic growth and competitiveness through creating and exploiting new knowledge;

- Strengthen links at local/regional level where the importance of universities in the life of their communities is growing rapidly. Universities are major employers in many cases. They support local partners in teaching, updating, research and transfer activities, thus improving the competitiveness of local industry, contributing to social cohesion and more generally providing a high return on investment.

III.3 Building Strong Universities

Europe needs strong universities in terms of their organisation and their ability to act at different levels:

at university level: to promote open and responsive institutions which at the same time are able to function efficiently;

at system level: to promote excellence, in particular through different forms of targeted networking activities.

Institutional missions should become more differentiated in order to meet the needs of a variety of learners and maximise the use of limited funds available. EUA welcomes this development while at the same time drawing attention to the limits of differentiation and the need to uphold the following principles:

the integral link between teaching and research: teaching is defined, supported and underpinned by the essential link to research, and, conversely research benefits from teaching and working with students;

equity and openness of institutions to all on the basis of merit;

the need for an equitable geographical distribution of universities across Europe offering a wide range of teaching and research options.

These principles are fundamental. While accepting that not every institution can carry out top level research across all disciplines, the goal in Europe should be to increase the number of universities which are excellent in what they do in specific areas, and not merely to concentrate more resources on an increasingly limited number of institutions at the expense of the others.

III.4 Europe needs properly funded institutions

(...)

IV. Key Issues

IV.1 Strengthening the Role of the Universities in Research

In defining the role of the universities in the knowledge society EUA accords a particular priority to strengthening European universities' research capacity. The universities have a unique contribution to make to improving Europe's research capacity because of:

the intellectual 'buzz' of university based research – only possible through the interaction of the generations and the disciplines provided by the university environment;

the focus on research training and the universities' monopoly in awarding of PhD degrees and thus in producing future generations of young scientists;

the provision of research based training for ever larger numbers of young people.

the opportunities provided for the pursuit of interdisciplinary research;

the multiple possibilities for developing links to society through structured contacts to different stakeholder groups.

This means that universities need to further develop their research poten-

tial and the benefits that this would bring, to concentrate on networking and partnerships based on their research strengths, in order to reach the critical mass needed for top quality research, and to provide a stimulating research environment able to attract the most talented young researchers. Particular challenges lie in:

- establishing the true cost of university research across Europe with a view

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to: (1) developing a common approach and principles in respect of the financial management of research and (2) examining if European agreement on these issues is possible;

- raising awareness of the importance of blue-sky research for a European knowledge society,

- demonstrating the importance of research in the social sciences and humanities,

- promoting university/industry cooperation underlining the importance of mutual trust and not overstating the financial value;

- developing pragmatic models for IPR as well as clear and transparent rules at national and institutional level;

- ensuring a stable legal environment that enables universities to be flexible in defining and implementing their mission and objectives.

IV.2 Consolidating the European dimension and projecting a coherent image to the outside world

EUA believes that coherent European policies and implementation mechanisms allowing more co-operation, and not just increased competitiveness need to be put in place, as a means of strengthening Europe, and that these policies should cover the teaching, research and knowledge transfer functions of the university.

This means:

- Encouraging coherent development and implementation of higher education and research policies at all levels;

- At European level improving the articulation between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area in particular through emphasising common concerns related to enhancing scientific training and the need to encourage more talented young people to enter research careers. EUA believes that a concerted effort is needed by universities, national and European funding bodies to secure real progress in improving career opportunities for young researchers and women in science and suggests promoting exchange of good practice and envisaging coordinated action in the framework of the European Higher Education and Research Areas;

- Ensuring that the link between teaching and research is fully recognised within the Bologna Process, in particular through the inclusion of doctoral studies. EUA believes that the provision of high quality doctoral and post-doctoral training across Europe is an important element of the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area and that in order to maintain and enhance this quality the universities should take responsibility for sharing examples of good practice and for further defining structured means of working together at doctoral and post-doctoral level in Europe;

- Rethinking the next generation of EU education programmes in terms

of a framework programme for education and training which would increase investment in higher education as a key thematic objective, through a number of cross cutting actions, based upon the Bologna Process priorities, bridging the divide to research, including cooperation with third countries, and targeting support to universities and their students as the key actors in the system;

- Rethinking the approach to mobility and strengthening European co-operation at the doctoral and postdoctoral level, bearing in mind the unique role of the universities in providing a research environment allowing established scientists and young researchers to work together creatively. This means redoubling efforts at all levels to tackle barriers to mobility, in particular in order to ensure more coherence of the systems of social insurance throughout Europe;

- Concentrating additional resources on support to networks of European universities working together in both teaching and research contexts. Such support must include specific provision for the development and running of joint programmes, doctoral programmes and schools, as well as collaboration with different partners.

IV. Conclusions

In summary, EUA's position is:

We are convinced of the unique role universities have to play in building Europe and that it is in the interests of society to ensure that universities can fulfil their potential if Europe is to advance;

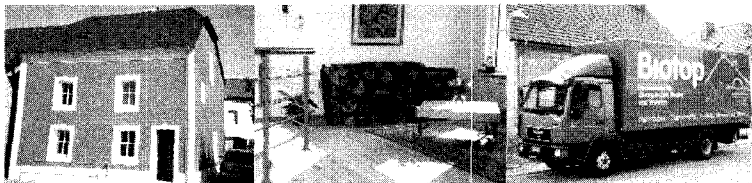
We are ready to 'contract with governments' at European level on this basis

bearing in mind that this implies significant additional resources for universities - that should not only come from private stakeholders - and which should be allocated on the basis of demonstrated capacity for strategic planning and management, quality assurance and development;

We urge the Commission to facilitate debate between universities and their stakeholders at the highest level in order to arrive at a framework agreement and operational plans for future development;

We believe that European universities, the European University Association and the European student bodies should be fully involved in the planning and development of further European initiatives resulting from the present Communication.

Wohlfühlen in den eigenen vier Wänden...



- Naturfarben
- Tapeten und Wandbeläge
- Naturdämmstoffe
- Parkett, Teppichböden
- Türen
- Innenausbau
- Maschinenverleih

Öffnungszeiten:

Dienstag - Freitag
9 - 12 14 - 18 Uhr
Samstag 9 - 12 14 - 17 Uhr
Montag geschlossen

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