



Attention: Education correspondents

For Immediate Release

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## Report Reveals University Mergers on the rise in Europe

The European University Association (EUA) has today (Friday) released a [new report](#) which maps and analyses university merger and concentration processes in 20 higher education systems.

'University mergers in Europe' is of an unprecedented scale and compiles the largest database of university mergers across Europe from 2000 until today. The report, which analyses these processes from an efficiency angle, explores the rationale for universities to merge and assesses the role of public authorities in these developments.

The document reflects on the costs and gains associated with mergers and highlights the following:

- Mergers are motivated by a variety of different drivers but it is clear that **cost-saving should not be the primary goal**. Transition and implementation costs are invariably considerable and easily underestimated; possible savings might only be achieved in the long-term.
- The academic mission must take precedence at all times, and any disruption to achieving academic objectives should be justified by the results of the process. It is important to consider the opportunity costs of the merger as well as possible alternatives, such as strategic cooperation models other than full-scale mergers.
- There is a general lack of evaluation whether before or after completion of the merger. The absence of analytical and comparable information on the topic is an additional difficulty for teams involved in managing a merger.

The report includes **a series of case studies** which detail success factors and challenges of the different merging processes. The analysis shows that the success of any merger process depends on elements such as:

- Sound pre-evaluation, good planning and implementation;
- Productive relationships with public authorities;
- Inspired leadership fostering trust among, and the involvement of, staff and the wider community.

**Thomas Estermann, Director of Governance and Funding at EUA said:**

"EUA has not only recorded merger cases since 2000, but also considers ongoing developments, such as in France, and newly announced initiatives, for instance in Norway. This work highlights the continuous growth of the phenomenon in Europe, in particular in the last five years. 2013 and 2014 are indeed record years in the field, not least as a consequence of the restructuring of the university sector in Flanders and France.

“With this report EUA provides key recommendations in order to support the strategic planning of a merger for university leaders and managers. It also addresses public authorities and policy makers regarding the question of system consolidation and offers advice and transferable good practice.”

**ENDS**

**Notes:**

1. “[University mergers in Europe](#)” is the second thematic report published by EUA as part of the DEFINE project. DEFINE explores strategies for efficient funding of universities in Europe, looking in particular at excellence initiatives, university mergers and performance-based funding mechanisms. A first report on funding for excellence was released in December 2014. The third thematic report focusing on performance-based funding will be published by summer.
2. EUA will further exploit the results of the study by developing a pilot **merger mapping tool**, to be released online later this year. The tool will enable users to identify merger cases that are relevant to their needs, enhancing benchmarking opportunities and contributing to continuous practice improvement in the field.

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*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.*