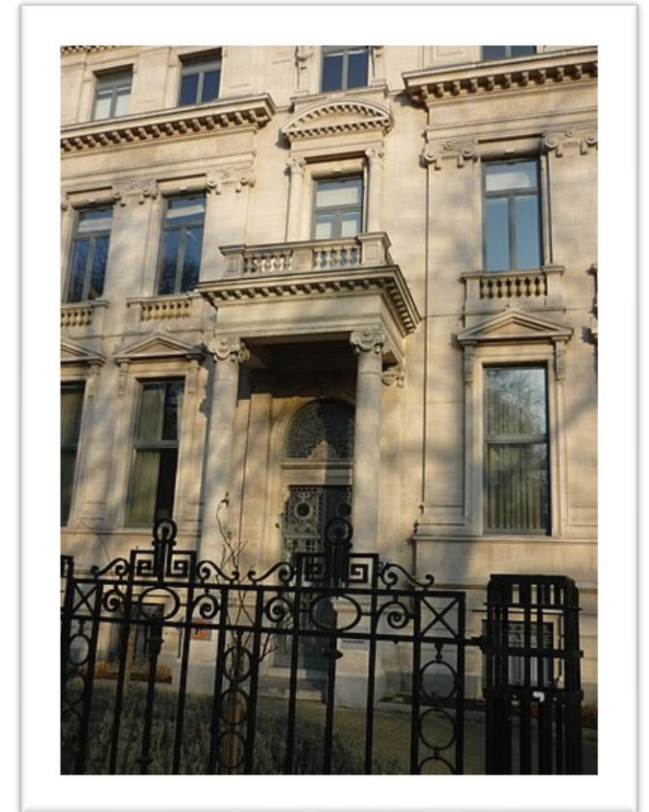# European Universities - promoting and linking education, research, and innovation

Dr Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, European University Association

Brief Profile of EUA

- **Established in 2001**

- **Non-governmental membership organisation**

- **More than 800 individual university members**

- **34 National Rectors' Conferences Members**

- **47 countries**

- **Independent voice of the university sector**

- **Forum for exchange, peer learning for members**

EUA
European University Association

Challenges

- Labour markets are changing at a fast pace

- Digitalisation is giving new possibilities for learning (including distance and lifelong learning)

- Globalisation requires specific skills and an international mindset

- Universities and their context are changing

Changes in European labour markets 1995-2015 (OECD)

Low skills +2.3% ↗

Medium skills -7.4% ↘

High skills +5.2% ↗

EUROPEAN LEARNING FORUM & TEACHING

KEY CONTEXTUAL FIGURES

39% of 30-34 year olds had a **tertiary education qualification** in 2015, compared to 28% ten years earlier (Eurostat, 2016)

Employment rate of graduates age 20-34 in the EU in 2016 was 82.8% (72.6% equiv. with upper secondary or post-secondary, non-tertiary qualifications) (Eurostat, 2017)

16.3 million jobs will be created in the EU for tertiary graduates in the run up to 2025. Low skilled jobs are in decline (CEDEFOP, 2016)

62% of European universities report **enrolment growth** in the past five years and for 42% "it has increased by more than 10%" (EUA Trends Survey, 2015)

Universities strength and added value lies in research-based education

Advantages:

- Equips students with transversal skills such as creativity, resilience, autonomy, and academic rigour

    → responds to changing labour markets

    → fosters innovation

- Often has a strong international component (as research is increasingly international)

- Education and research have strong potential synergies – both are better when mixed

Europe has a unique potential to make use of these synergies

- The EU is a world leader in research

- This research excellence is uniquely spread across many institutions – as opposed to other continents with few research-intensive universities

- Europe also has a unique framework for multilateral cooperation through the EU and the EHEA

University networks could be a way to promote the use of these advantages

- Networks that develop innovative research-based education
  - → Support for change – not a prize for what is already done
  - → Curriculum development and joint research projects

- Networks that can work across borders
  - → Staff and student exchanges
  - → Joint delivery (programmes and research projects)

- Networks that can spread good ideas and practice across Europe
  - → Not an exclusive club

How do we know that it can work?

- Models already exist across Europe:
  - → Border region cooperation (EUCOR; University of the Greater Region; Franco-German University)
  - → Cooperation of institutions with similar profiles (EuroTech; YERUN; ECIU; CELSA)
  - → ... and many others
  - They are all different, and they do not always have a focused, systemic impact

A European scheme could take the best practices from these <u>and</u> provide the multilateral framework that is needed to have a real, European-wide impact to meet our common education challenges.

Issues to consider & food for thought:

- If a new funding scheme was to be established, it should only be done with **additional money** and **not divert resources** from well-working actions;

- Need to clearly **define the purpose** before establishing a funding scheme, look at existing collaborations to **see what works** and then design it accordingly;

- Make it **as simple as possible** for consortia: one funding scheme, centrally managed (e.g. under future Erasmus programme);

- Take **advantage of the diversity** of European universities and foster **new collaborations;**

- **Provide a framework**, but do **not prescribe a linear model** from closer collaboration to fully-fledged mergers;

- Common vision, academic project and added value should be in the centre of the cooperation, not financial considerations → **favour bottom-up approaches**;

- Need to **remove administrative and legal obstacles** at national/sub-national levels to enable the establishment of the network; accreditation of joint programmes; recognition; mobility etc.

Dr Thomas Ekman Jørgensen | Senior Policy Coordinator

@Thomas_E_Jorgen

thomas.jorgensen@eua.eu