

A vision and strategy for Europe's universities and the European University Association

I. Strong European universities

1. The strength of Europe and its universities lies in the interplay of diverse cultural and multiple linguistic traditions and heritage. This diversity has sometimes led to violent conflict. But now that Europe is committed to peaceful collaboration and growing integration, its universities are a major source of creativity, achieved both through cooperation and productive competition. They are also equipping the peoples of Europe for a prosperous future¹.

2. Universities are able and willing to help to shape that future. They educate a large proportion – soon to be about half - of the peoples of Europe; their research underpins every European industry; they are the major employers in many towns and regions; they stimulate innovation and technological change; they question, criticize and form policy. They think, create and work for the long term, but also make a vital contribution to the short term.

3. Europe's universities have recently shown that they are able to respond rapidly to new challenges and new circumstances. Since the 1960s in western Europe, since the 1990s in eastern Europe, student numbers have grown enormously – sometimes by three or four times – transforming the system from one catering to a small segment of society to a mass system. Research output has grown markedly, while universities have assumed many new tasks such as knowledge transfer to society at large and industry in particular and increased support to the development of their regions. At the same time, universities have been at the forefront of the information technology revolution and contribute substantially to the innovative potential of a nation.

4. Europe's universities, as mainly public institutions serving the common good, therefore assert a grand aim: to support, for the benefit of all, the continued development of the culture, society, technology and economy of Europe. They are heirs to a tradition of enquiry which is rooted in several faiths and in the rationalism of the Enlightenment; it prizes fearless criticism of received ideas in order to advance knowledge. As international institutions by their very nature and basic discourse, Europe's universities welcome the globalization of knowledge and regard themselves as part of the world community of scholarship and research.

II. The public role of the European universities

5. Europe faces many challenges:

- The European Union must continue to develop its institutions and internal market, now the largest in the world, as well as to deepen its formal relations

¹ This document adopts a broad definition of universities as meaning all institutions engaged in higher education and research.

- with neighbouring European countries. Europe's countries must learn to work even better together.
- Europe must respond to increasing globalization and the development of economic competitors by increasing its own innovative potential and competitiveness, while also accepting a responsibility to assist other areas of the world to share in the fruits of economic progress which Europe now enjoys.
 - Demographic changes, in particular the ageing of many populations, are likely to foster further internal migration and immigration; at the same time, they will add to the emphasis on lifelong learning which is required by the rapid development of technology and extensions of working life.
 - Environmental issues, such as the interplay between climate change and the use of energy, require urgent action, scientific, technological and political.
 - As labour becomes relatively scarcer and more expensive, it will be ever more important to maintain living standards and foster economic growth through further technological innovation. Economic growth is at the foundation of the development of the European social model.
 - For the same reason, as well as for the good of society as a whole, Europe must overcome social exclusion and ensure that all its citizens play, to the full extent of their capacity, a role in society and the economy.²

6. Europe's universities and their staffs and students will engage in policy-making to meet all these challenges. Through their research and teaching in all fields of scholarship, universities will not only provide the evidence needed for sound policy formation but will use their expertise to contribute to discussion and debate in national and European policy-making³.

III. A European higher education system

7. As dynamic institutions universities promote excellence and innovation by teaching, research, and knowledge transfer and thus contribute crucially to the evolution of the whole of society. In the so-called "knowledge society" they are no longer the preserve of a small section of society instead, they are committed to ensuring access to all who can benefit from academic education.

8. Europe's universities will work with governments and student bodies to ensure that all Europeans who have the capacity to benefit from a university education also have the opportunity to access and complete that education. This implies adequate measures of support – both financial and educational – for students, as well as provision of counselling and educational and careers guidance. With sufficient funding, the universities commit themselves to develop and provide such support to underpin higher education and to fit students for the world of work.

9. The universities recognize that a mass system of higher education implies the existence of universities with different traditions, missions, and strengths. Some will continue to emphasise academic excellence and to aspire to rival the best research-based universities of the world, others will concentrate more on teaching or on knowledge transfer to their regions or local industries. Our vision of European universities of the future is that of a system of academic institutions with highly diversified profiles, providing a wide spectrum of graduate qualifications and

² European Commission 2005 "European values in the globalised world" COM (2005) 525 final, Brussels 20/10/2005.

³ This was the challenge posed by President Jose Manuel Barroso at the EUA Congress in Glasgow in March 2005.

facilitating mobility of staff and students. The European universities intend to further develop this European higher education system, in which institutional diversity will be made visible and recognisable, and in which universities are able to develop their own missions and profiles.

10. Challenging times imply challenges to established structures. Europe's universities have inherited, and sometimes welcomed, structures and hierarchies which divide higher education and research rather than encouraging institutions to work together. Such divisions have no place in a modern and inclusive Europe; Europe's universities – like those in the United States - will instead take their place in a system of higher education institutions, which incorporates progression routes from one institution to another but is based on equality of esteem for diverse missions.

11. Europe should not expect to get any of its universities on the cheap. The universities require adequate funding. Both public and private sources must be available, if universities are to carry out their work to the best international standards. Most European governments are unable or unwilling to finance, through taxation, the expansion of higher education that has recently occurred or that is to come. As expansion continues, it is inevitable that it will depend on an increase of private funds; universities must continue to ensure that this is compatible with fair access and social justice. Universities recognize, also, that they must demonstrate their efficiency and effectiveness in return for either public or private funding.

12. Mission diversity, strategic capability, and accountability can only be developed if universities have the freedom to do this. The higher education system must therefore be based on autonomous institutions, with freedom to control and manage their own resources and to compete as well as collaborate, accepting the responsibility to make the most efficient use possible of the resources which they command; this requires that universities are trusted to act responsibly. Old state bureaucratic systems which prefer control over trust must be swept away so that universities can respond rapidly and efficiently to the needs of society and the economy.

13. Diversity requires, also, close attention to the quality of teaching and learning and of research. Universities are the guardians of their quality – it is fundamental to their existence and their value – but they accept the need to demonstrate that quality exists, albeit in many different forms. It is very important, however, to avoid the reinvention of bureaucratic systems in the guise of regulation and quality control.

14. Universities perform a multiplicity of public roles, but their *raison d'être* is teaching, research and the transfer of knowledge.

Teaching and learning

15. The universities of Europe reaffirm their commitment to teaching and learning, to the Bologna process and the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA). They will prepare students for the labour market, for further competence building throughout their lives and for active citizenship. The Bologna process has set in motion a complex cultural and social transformation process; it is changing long-accepted notions of higher education and emphasising the importance of lifelong learning.

16. The Bologna process requires a fundamental reconsideration of the nature of the

curriculum and of pedagogic methods in every discipline, to ensure a student-centred approach and the achievement of appropriate learning outcomes at every level and in every subject. Universities commit themselves individually to the constant examination and reinvigoration of academic curricula through robust internal quality processes; collectively, they will continue working in partnership with external quality assurance agencies at European level to enhance accountability procedures that strengthen the overall quality of Europe's universities.

17. The Bologna process is only a start and Europe's universities expect to develop further – individually and together – after 2010. Universities and their staff will, in the next decade, adapt to a world in which most of the accumulated knowledge of centuries is available on every desktop and every mobile phone. Technological change has, as yet, hardly impinged on teaching methods. Traditional means of teaching – such as lectures to large inert audiences – will increasingly be enriched by interactive learning; textbooks will be supported by use of databases and other online tools; classes will be taught, wherever their physical location, by experts from across the world. Face-to-face tuition and learning has many virtues; it will survive, but as part of a wider armoury, in which the university as a physical presence will be blended with virtual means of tuition and access. At the same time the physical mobility of staff and students will continue to be an essential element of the European higher education landscape.

18. Because Europe's universities serve the countries of Europe and also the world, they must work to preserve a wide range of courses which provide for short- and long-term needs of the economy and of society. Europe will continue to need scientists and engineers, nurses and doctors, students of the languages of other continents, and students in the humanities and social sciences. Because universities think over centuries, they must collectively (and with the support of governments) accept responsibility for maintaining subjects even if they appear temporarily unattractive to students.

Research

19. Europe's universities believe that research, whether curiosity-driven or application oriented is the fundamental basis and companion of teaching. Even if governments, for short-term economic reasons, are increasingly selective in the allocation of funds for research, the universities will continue to assert the need for all university staff to engage in research, teaching and knowledge transfer, to the mutual benefit of each.

20. Europe's universities are determined to play their full part in the creation of a European Research Area (ERA) and to continue progress towards the full participation of the European Union's 'near neighbours' within that area. Universities welcome the realization by governments, and by the Union, that discovery, training and knowledge transfer are essential underpinnings for economic growth and for improving the competitiveness of Europe as a whole. They will strengthen their efforts to improve the doctoral programmes, postdoctoral provision, research training and career possibilities that they are uniquely placed to offer to young scientists, and to intensify not only their competition – recognizing that it is a powerful spur to discovery and innovation – but also their collaboration through formal and informal networks at institutional, faculty and individual levels.

21. Technological change will affect research as well as teaching. Open access to

research findings will diminish existing monopolies on knowledge. Virtual networks of researchers, physically located in many different countries, will develop as researchers seek out the best people with whom to work. It is important that facilities for research, as for teaching, are widely available throughout Europe so as to minimize the possible effects of unidirectional “brain-drain” while maximizing exchange of students and researchers within Europe.

The transfer of knowledge

22. Knowledge serves the world but it can also be “activated”⁴ to serve individual countries or regions, within a world in which barriers of different kinds to communication and trade in goods and services are reducing.

23. Many of Europe’s universities were created to serve their regions and local or regional business and industry and they welcome the opportunity to do this in modern conditions. European companies and universities have made less than optimal use of each other as potential partners. This is part of a general under-investment by Europe in knowledge creation and innovation.⁵ The universities must play their part in rectifying this position by becoming more responsive to the needs of their business, enterprise and other regional partners while at the same underlining that their main focus remains to produce highly qualified graduates. Universities will become more entrepreneurial, when and if they are given the freedom to do so. Industry, and the financial sector, must also learn to work with universities rather than simply taking their knowledge; in particular, they must pay a fair price for the expertise and ideas that they obtain.

IV. Europe’s universities in the world

24. Europe’s universities are part of the worldwide community of scholarship and research. The staff of European institutions collaborates with staff from universities throughout the world, in both research and teaching. Europe also welcomes hundreds of thousands of students from other parts of the world; most later return to their home countries but retain connections with their European university. Increasingly, Europe will export its expertise, for example by delivering programmes or setting up branches of European universities in countries around the world.

25. Such developments hold dangers but also opportunities and responsibilities. Already, Europe is importing many staff from less prosperous areas of the world. The movement of excellent staff, to wherever they will work best, must not be inhibited, but Europe shares a responsibility to develop the university systems of other countries. Just as joint degrees are developing within Europe, sharing the experience of different institutions, so joint teaching and research must develop, aided by information technology, over even longer distances.

⁴ Soete, Luc 2005 “Activating Knowledge”, a paper prepared for the UK Presidency of the EU.

⁵ Soete, Luc *op. cit.* 2005:6: “It is the dramatic difference between the US and our private funding investments which is actually most striking. Only Sweden attracts a similar amount of private funds into knowledge investment, primarily research as the US does. In the EU as a whole we fail to convince our firms and our citizens to invest in knowledge. It is a failure which is first and foremost a failure to ‘activate’, to open up higher education to private funding.”

V. The mission of Europe's universities

26. Given the vision and strategy presented above, the European universities see it as their mission to perform, as essential part of the knowledge society and economy, the tasks of invention, innovation, teaching, learning, research, knowledge transfer and the fearless criticism of ideas, in the service of Europe and the world.

VI. A strategic mission for the European University Association

27. In the context of the vision for Europe's universities the European University Association (EUA) formulates its strategic mission as follows: The European University Association (EUA) intends to be a strong voice for Europe's universities and to speak on behalf of the sector; it will serve their needs and ensure their full engagement in the development of the cultural and social dimension as well as the innovation potential and economy of Europe.

28. In order to fulfill this mission the EUA will assist the European universities to further develop their ideals, skills and capabilities in the context of the challenges that Europe is facing. The EUA sees it as its task to help the European universities to jointly work on the implementation of the strategy for Europe's universities as described in the first part of this paper. To be able to do so the EUA will design rolling work programmes and financial forecasts in which concrete actions will be formulated and budgets prepared on an annual basis.

29. The following issues will be addressed in these work programmes:

i) The EUA will develop its own strategy, in conjunction with its members, to become the central source of information on Europe's universities and their work and to articulate the voice of European universities at the highest level, so that policy-makers and others have access to well-informed advice on all matters of economic, social, scientific and technological development. EUA will also fulfil this function towards universities, university associations and other partners in other regions of the world.

ii) The EUA will examine its own membership criteria and structures. It will seek, in collaboration with other partners, to achieve an organisation which will create a strong voice for European higher education.

iii) The EUA will document the financial and other needs of students for study as well as academic and other support both in their own and other countries. EUA will establish the funding base and financial needs of Europe's universities, develop models of funding from diverse sources and urge governments and the private sector to implement such models.

iv) The EUA will encourage the implementation of a vigorous quality culture in institutions, while being mindful to respect the requirements of promoting diverse and innovative institutions, and will continue to participate actively in the development of European QA policies, in partnership with ENQA, ESIB and EURASHE.

v) The EUA will continue to participate actively in the governance of the Bologna process. It will reinforce its European dimension through cooperation based on a shared commitment to quality. It will encourage its implementation in institutions, in particular by encouragement of curricular change, and improvement of study programmes in all three cycles. The unique research training role of European

universities means that particular attention will be paid to the reform of doctoral programmes.

vi) The EUA will support the European Research Area. It will work with the responsible bodies to ensure appropriate structures and the efficient and effective working of future EU Framework Programmes. EUA will support the successful implementation of the European Research Council, underline the importance of the necessary infrastructure in universities across Europe, contribute to the strengthening of human resources and work to incorporate the ethical framework of the Code of Conduct for researchers. EUA furthermore emphasises that research and the integral link between teaching and research underpins the work of all universities, even if the intensity of research varies between them. The necessary concentration of research funding should not go so far as to damage scholarship and knowledge transfer and the research potential of Europe as a whole.

vii) The EUA will continue to develop and share knowledge of modes of industrial and regional partnership. It will encourage universities to explore networks and collaboration to serve such partnerships. It will work to increase mutual understanding between universities and business, at national, regional and local levels and to establish knowledge transfer as a third role of universities on a par with teaching and research.

viii) The EUA will support its members in addressing issues of institutional effectiveness, efficiency, and internal governance. It will develop strategic management approaches for increasing institutional effectiveness and improving the professionalisation of institutional management on a broad range of issues. And it will develop costing models that allow for efficiency and accountability.

ix) The EUA will work with the university associations of other continents to increase understanding of each other's systems and to ensure that freer trade in services does not diminish the quality of higher education and research.

EUA, 12 March 2006