eua **EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION**

A global approach to research, innovation, education and youth

EUA input to the European Commission Communication

European University Association asbl

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Context

This EUA policy input aims to inform the upcoming European Commission Communication on a global approach to research, education, innovation and youth. Expected in April, the Communication is intended to give direction to the EU's international academic collaborations as the new generation of EU funding programmes such as Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ are launched and negotiations on the association of third countries continue.

In light of the changed geopolitical context, EUA welcomes the preparation of the Communication, which will speak broadly to the spectrum of university missions. Furthermore, EUA seeks to ensure that academic cooperation is considered in the evolving concept of EU open strategic autonomy.

The policy input was developed by the members of the EUA European Global Strategy Response Group and approved by the EUA Council, representing the national rectors' conferences.

Key points

Global academic cooperation has a place in the evolving concept of EU open strategic autonomy, understood as the "capacity to act autonomously when and where necessary and with partners wherever possible". Originally coming from security and defence policy, it has recently been widened to new fields including technology, research and innovation.[1]
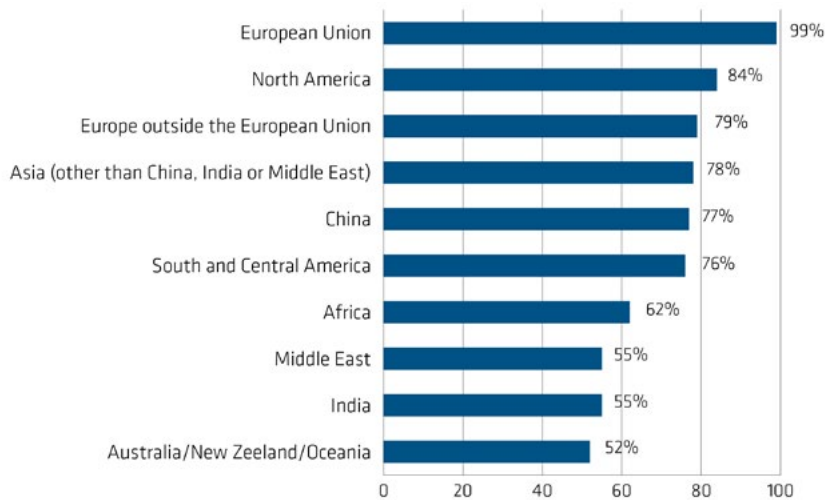
However, this spill-over raises three key dilemmas for the EU's international engagement, as well as for Europe's universities, the European Research Area (ERA), the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA),

◈ How can the EU strengthen its own research, technology and innovation capacity to become more independent whilst engaging in international collaboration to advance the frontiers of knowledge and develop solutions to solve global challenges?

◈ How can the EU and Europe's universities strive to fulfil the fundamental need for openness and a free flow of knowledge and ideas while addressing legitimate concerns over security, values and strategic interests?

◈ How can European political goals be achieved without interfering with the principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom?

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1   Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy and European Commission Vice-President from 3 December 2020, 'Why European strategic autonomy matters'

Europe's universities as autonomous institutions make their own choices about their international collaborations and are driven by institutional strategies, as well as the bottom-up engagement of individual academics. They are truly global actors with partners in several world regions, as evidenced by the results of an EUA survey from early 2020 (see graph 1).

International partners' location

Graph 1 EUA Survey Q15: Where are your institution's partners located? Please tick all applicable.

THREE LINES OF ACTION

This EUA input argues that collaboration and openness are the leading principles for universities to contribute to solving global challenges by shifting the frontiers of knowledge. Globalisation and the quest for sustainability are key drivers for more, rather than less, global collaboration in research, innovation and education. European universities are guided by their values, as stated in documents like the Magna Charta Universitatum, the Bonn Declaration and, broader, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are aware of the opportunities and risks when seeking collaboration, also when interacting with partners from differing value systems. Responsible and reciprocal openness should be at the basis of any collaboration. A common European global strategy can support universities and academics in their global collaboration, bring solutions to global challenges closer and contribute to a stronger Europe.

EUA advises the European Commission to enhance responsible and reciprocal openness and international collaboration in research, innovation and education along three lines of action:

1. **Engaging** with the world through more common goals, common programmes, common funding and Open Science. There are various drivers for collaboration, hence the approach is differentiated for diverse regions. What is needed is the openness to engage with anyone willing to jointly advance knowledge and solve societal challenges, as well as special attention to the EU's neighbourhood.

2. **Empowering** Europe's research, education and innovation to be effective in the global scene. This can be achieved by strengthening the ERA and EHEA, especially through competitive policies and achieving the 3% GDP investment in (inter)disciplinary research in key priority areas, as well as in fundamental, curiosity-driven research, flexible academic career paths, innovation ecosystems, and developing a European Data Strategy.

3. **Bracing** for risks in order to build the resilience of Europe's research, innovation and education and promoting a global level playing field. This can be achieved by systematic and strategic risk assessment and risk mitigation measures. Further, it requires clear guidance and tools at the disposal of individual researchers, and pro-activeness in promoting values and common bilateral and multilateral rules of engagement for global cooperation. Europe should strive for setting the pace in global structures of governance in areas, such as data, technology and intellectual property, that help create a global level playing field, whilst safeguarding academic freedom and universities' institutional autonomy.

This approach will help foster a stronger, more independent EU that is at the same time open, international and cooperative. Europe's universities, as strong, open and autonomous institutions, play a crucial role in these developments.

Responsible and reciprocal openness and collaboration in a quest for global sustainability

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The goal of global cooperation in research, education, innovation and culture should be a sustainable future as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals, agreed to by all UN countries. The urgency of this agenda demands that Europe as a whole focuses on its contribution to this common global quest and sees this as a part of its own self-interest. In order to achieve this, the EU should strive for trusted partnerships built on reciprocal openness with countries and regions around the globe. It also includes strengthening the EU's Green Deal.

RESPONSIBLE AND RECIPROCAL OPENNESS AND COLLABORATION

Openness to collaboration is the default principle for universities to solve global challenges. Openness means the acknowledgement that challenges need to be met in cooperation with diverse partners; it is a principle that needs to be applied responsibly, and with the expectation of reciprocal openness from partners. Responsible and reciprocal openness should be the general guide for the EU's global approach to research, innovation, education and youth.

Responsibility in this context entails a fundamentally open, but risk-aware approach to cooperation, where risk is assessed systematically and in various dimensions (see the section on Bracing). Reciprocity can encompass areas such as reciprocal access to funding programmes, reciprocal conditions for circulation of academics and students, reciprocal access to data and results depending on the scale and depth of cooperation, as well as the overall assessment of risks.

UNIVERSITY VALUES IN COLLABORATION

The European Research and Education Areas offer major opportunities for collaboration and coordination among EU member states, and with international partners.

As a part of this contribution, the EU, Europe's universities, and individual countries, seek through partnerships, to promote, respect and protect core academic and societal values and the values embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. At the same time, however, the academic engagement of the EU with global partners should take into account the autonomy of

knowledge institutions and the principles of academic freedom, democracy and human dignity, including the independence, responsibility and impartiality of researchers.[2]

Protecting core academic values means awareness about the risks and limitations of certain partnerships, not exclusion of partners from societies built on different value systems. The European Union should also promote values within Europe, as well as through partnerships in contexts where they are not upheld by the political system.

Engaging, empowering, bracing – three dimensions of a global approach

For the EU's global approach to research, innovation, education and youth, the EUA advises to enhance collaboration and responsible and reciprocal openness along three lines of action.[3]

ENGAGING

Main principles

The EU's global engagement in research, education and innovation should be imbedded in the Global sustainability agenda and the EU's contribution to it, as well as linking this engagement to EU policies and priorities of a socially just green and digital transition.

There can be different drivers for cooperation and global engagement:

- to contribute to building the capacity for research, education and innovation forsolutions for global challenges;
- to boost the knowledge creation and competitiveness of Europe;
- to enhance the EU's strategic autonomy and relative geopolitical position;
- to strengthen diplomacy and intercultural relations.

Hence, the geographical focus of a new EU global approach can be differentiated and must be flexible in order to be able to respond to different and changing drivers for engagement and to geopolitical change. However, the EU's Neighbourhood, both to the eastern and southern borders, should remain a priority due to the close existing ties within the EHEA.

How to achieve these principles

- Develop a **differentiated approach** to cooperation based on the purpose of the institutional partnerships.
- Ensure **better alignment** between EU and national funding programmes and better connections with funding programmes from international partners. This will also require the EU to make use of the possibility for association of third countries and for participation of non-associated third countries in a manner that gives flexibility to these countries to contribute. The EU should also be instrumental and ready to create global funding programmes.

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2   At the end of 2020, in the framework of the EU and the European Higher Education Area, these sets of values were defined more clearly. See the Bonn Declaration, as well as the Annex to the Rome Communiqué of the Ministers of the European Higher Education Area.

3   This framework is adapted from the European Policy Centre article "Fostering Europe's Strategic Autonomy - A question of purpose and action" by Giovanni Grevi.

◈ Build **long-lasting partnerships** based on common values and agreed principles of a level playing field and with the shared goal of achieving sustainability. This can be built through academic exchange, being mindful of brain circulation. At the same time, ground-breaking discoveries that expand the frontiers of knowledge also need to be facilitated through global cooperation. These shared commitments should be supported by facilitating and enabling strategic investment.

◈ Promote **Open Science practices** globally to promote the sharing of data and research results.

Measures of success

These principles and policies are successful when:

◈ the EU and its partners take ground-breaking, tangible steps towards common goals, such as common strategies to address major challenges.

◈ countries and regions establish joint programming to contribute to sustainability;

◈ global partnerships that allow all participants to build capacity and grow are established, enhancing quality of research and education, as well as contributing to building capacity globally;

◈ academic cooperation contributes to the building of trust and common values between individuals, institutions and countries;

◈ Open Science and open innovation expand globally;

◈ there is global adherence to and engagement in the implementation of common goals, for instance through the Berlin Open Access Declaration or Plan S.

EMPOWERING

Main principles

Europe must be strong internally to contribute on the global scene. Fit-for-purpose European Research and (Higher) Education Areas and robust European programmes are a precondition for global engagement, as laid out in EUA's input to the [European Research Area](#) (ERA), the [European Education Area](#) (EEA) and the [future of the Bologna Process](#). Europe's strength and soft power also depends on its own adherence to core values, including democracy, rule of law and academic freedom.

How to achieve this principle

◈ Increase **investment in research and innovation** to the 3% of GDP required to address global challenges and boost competitiveness.

◈ Recognise **the role of curiosity-driven research** in strategic autonomy; and ensure adequate funding. Without basic research, Europe cannot generate new, disruptive discoveries and innovation, and will be dependent on applying knowledge developed and controlled by other global players.

◈ Allocate **long-term resources** to priority areas such as the green and digital transitions. This will require attention to interdisciplinarity, cooperation between different sectors and flexibility to produce new ideas and approaches. Investments in skills and lifelong learning will be an important part of this focus.

◈ **Simplify EU funding programmes** and mechanisms and strengthen the governance of the ERA, the EHEA and EEA.

◈ Support **sectoral and place-based innovation ecosystems**, including the focus on a strengthened entrepreneurial mindset.

◈ **Academic careers and research assessment** should entail incentives for engaging in collaborative research with partners from other sectors and countries, as well as recognising activities that go beyond bibliometric indicators.

◈ Sustain **cooperation in relation to infrastructures and prioritise the European Data Strategy**, including the creation of common European spaces for data sharing and processing according to the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) and abiding by the principle of "as open as possible, as closed as necessary" and the development of the European Open Science Cloud. The research community must be systematically and closely involved in the development and governance of the data spaces from the start to maximise their potential. The use and purpose of each data space should be clear, including responsibilities and subsidiarity of all concerned parties.

Measures of success

These principles and policies are successful when:

◈ the target of 3% investment in research and innovation with a public share at 1.25% is reached;

◈ Europe achieves global leadership in key priority areas of research and innovation, including areas needed for the green and digital transitions;

◈ Horizon Europe becomes the global benchmark programme for research and innovation excellence;

◈ Europe becomes the most important research cooperation partner in the world;

◈ Europe becomes the most important study and research destination, while achieving equitable global brain circulation;

◈ innovation ecosystems, sectorial and place-based, are developed across Europe supporting key strategic areas of knowledge and innovation;

◈ European innovation-driven companies are successful, competing in the global market;

◈ European data spaces and FAIR data governance are established;

◈ European stakeholders, the EU and the member states carry out a reform of academic careers and assessment.

BRACING

Main principles

Distorting practices in cooperation in research, innovation and education should be countered by identifying risks and building resilience at all levels in the face of global competition and challenges. Coming from different value systems does not preclude collaboration, however it does require awareness of risks and clear rules of engagement before and throughout the cooperation. European approaches for guidance to risk assessment and risk mitigation should be developed to make European universities and academics, both individually and collectively, more resilient. To mitigate risks and facilitate collaboration, European and global structures of governance in areas such as data, technology and intellectual property are an important element in creating the basis for a global level playing field. However, in the end it is about people seeking the opportunity to interact and work together, and it is EUA's belief that shared values and responsible and reciprocal openness are at the basis of any successful collaboration.

How to achieve these principles

◈ Develop **systematic and strategic risk assessment** for cooperation, for example in relation to intellectual property, the use of data and results, finances or ethics, as well as unbalanced brain circulation. Responsible openness includes knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the European partner, as well as the objectives of the partnership. Such risk assessment should be done at the appropriate levels and should be based on experience and existing good practices.

◈ Have clear **guidance and tools** at the disposal of individual academics, including the EU guidelines concerning foreign interference; and protocols that include:

   ◆ clarity about who is participating in the cooperation, the affiliation of partners and possible third

parties (such as military, government or academia) and the reasons why they cooperate and what their broader agenda is;

◆ common understanding of practices regarding ethics and integrity;

◆ agreement on data management, as well as the intended use of data and research results (specifically as regards health data);

◆ safeguards for academic freedom and freedom of speech of participants, including knowledge of the risks and limits in partners' contexts.

◈ As a result of the risk assessment, identify and ensure **protection of key European physical and digital knowledge infrastructures**, e.g. research facilities and data.

◈ Pro-actively **promote common rules and values** through global governance structures in areas such as data, technology and intellectual property and protect European intellectual property rights. In particular, the EU should continue to pioneer a governance approach to artificial intelligence based on fundamental human rights, transparency and accountability. Moreover, Europe should promote a resolution on academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the United Nations.

◈ Address **reciprocity** in terms of access to funding programmes, and in Open Science.

◈ To demonstrate commitment to its core values, the EU should actively support **academics at risk** through a scholarship programme.

Measures for success

These principles and policies are successful when:

◈ the EU and its international partners adopt and promote common value statements, such as the Bonn Declaration and the Magna Charta Universitatum;

◈ a UN resolution on academic freedom and institutional autonomy is adopted;

◈ transparent and clear rules and norms for engagement for academics are developed, including approaches for risk assessment and mitigation, and governance structures for data, technology and intellectual property;

◈ Europe builds its independence in key infrastructure for research and communication. This entails both physical and digital infrastructure, ensuring connectivity and access to digital learning and research;

◈ the EU takes an active role in promoting core values through its programmes and its regulatory power.

EUA is looking forward to contributing to this crucial discussion, promoting responsible and reciprocal openness, contributing to our common goal of a sustainable world.

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The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact their activities.

The Association provides unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, websites and publications.