



EUA ANTWERP DECLARATION

"A strategic agenda for universities: Developing strong institutions to advance the knowledge-based society"

European Universities met in Antwerp on 16-17 April 2015 to discuss the role of European universities in research and innovation around three main axes: "People, Policies and Partnerships". Discussion focused on ways in which European universities can enhance their research and innovation capacity and maximise its benefit to society at a crucial time for Europe and its competitiveness. Other parts of the world are investing heavily in research and development, the number of patents and publications in Europe is decreasing compared to other regions in the world, and the divide amongst European countries in relation to their R&D-to-GDP targets is widening. For Europe to remain competitive in innovation and future economic performance, more and sustained investment in research is needed now. In addition, universities need to continue to adapt more swiftly to the ever-changing circumstances and get more involved in supporting governments and society in tackling our many societal challenges.

For this reason, Part 1 of our Declaration, 'Europe's long term growth and competitiveness depends upon long terms and reliable research funding for universities', is a message targeted to policy makers, political leaders and decision makers at all levels – regional, national, European – setting out four priorities from the perspective of universities to address the situation. Part 2 of the Declaration, 'Agenda for universities: leading from the front', sets out a long-term strategic agenda for universities identifying seven main factors that will determine our future success as research and innovation leaders. Part 3 of the Declaration highlights the 'Preconditions for the success of universities in contributing to Europe's competitiveness'.

I. MESSAGE TO POLITICAL LEADERS – EUROPE'S LONG TERM GROWTH AND COMPETITIVENESS DEPENDS UPON LONG TERM AND RELIABLE RESEARCH FUNDING FOR UNIVERSITIES

1. Stable funding and long term policies are a precondition for universities to be able to continue to provide high quality education and research across Europe: Universities are unique in combining

education, research and innovation as components of their core mission, instilled in scholarly knowledge and respecting scientific integrity and ethics. Universities prepare citizens for their role in society and the economy based on creating new knowledge through research, stimulating critical thinking, promoting dialogue, and fostering innovation. A long term perspective is crucial to meet growing societal challenges, and universities have to educate people who are able to understand and analyse complex problems and provide solutions. The diversity of Europe's universities is a major asset and unparalleled in the world. Maintaining this rich and diverse intellectual eco-system provides the basis upon which our future economic, social and cultural development depends.

2. Universities as motors for economic recovery: By contributing to technological and social innovation, as well as by providing the optimal creative environment for talented young researchers, universities actively promote the creation of new enterprises and more jobs across Europe. Universities are also engaging actively in productive collaboration with businesses and other stakeholders, as well as fostering innumerable spin-outs and early-stage companies to support European growth and competitiveness. Through such forward-looking research and innovation activities they contribute to the 'new knowledge economy'. Facilitating long-term structured dialogue between universities and other societal actors is of major importance for the future in enabling universities to respond to rapid changes in their regional and global environments. Governments need to provide the necessary conditions to generate sustainable labour markets where the increasing numbers of highly skilled and educated people can best contribute to society.

3. Universities are a key stakeholder in meeting Europe's education, research and innovation objectives: Making a difference requires greater and continuous engagement at regional, national and European level. Europe's universities have already demonstrated their commitment to building strong European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Research Areas (ERA), and will continue to do so to achieve the goals set for Horizon 2020. In this respect, EUA reiterates its call to protect and prioritise Horizon 2020 funding rather than diverting funds away from the research and innovation budget to the newly created European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI). Research activity as funded by Horizon 2020 supports universities in pooling their resources, talent and infrastructure to conduct excellent research and to enhance its impact.

4. Precondition for a strong and united Europe: Minimising discrepancies in the EU 28. The financial and economic crisis has had a major impact on university budgets, and has increased the differences between member states in terms of R&D performance (e.g. R&D expenditure, tertiary education, business R&D investment). EUA's work has shown an ever-increasing disparity between the highest and lowest funded higher education systems in Europe, confirming a growing geographical divide. Whilst there are notable exceptions, countries in Eastern and Southern Europe still appear to be more affected by the crisis than countries in Northern and Western Europe. This situation represents a major challenge for Europe as a whole and it hinders European competitiveness. Increasing investment in higher education and research while striving for excellence and working towards minimising discrepancies in the EU 28 should therefore be a key goal for both national governments and EU institutions.

II. AGENDA FOR UNIVERSITIES: LEADING FROM THE FRONT

1. University Research Benefitting Society

The immense quantity and quality of research delivered by our universities produces new knowledge and develops talents which underpin the new economy of Europe. University-based research provides the necessary background knowledge to stimulate and to generate technological and social innovation, e.g. innovative technologies contributing to the greater well-being of the population, improved public policy development and the preservation of cultural heritage. Countless successful research-driven companies in all sectors of the economy are testimony to the fact that there is a high return on investment in people who are able to create new knowledge as a result of research activity.

2. Strength in Diversity - No "One-Size-Fits All"

The diversity of Europe is reflected in its universities and forms the basis for the emerging new European research and innovation eco-system. European universities are characterised by a variety of profiles and research portfolios – a strength that is unparalleled worldwide – and act as catalysts for innovation and growth. Some universities have a regional focus of intervention, while others have a national character and/or strong international outreach. Investment in universities should respect this diversity as an asset and provide further support in building a successful European knowledge economy.

3. New Skills for Employment in an ever changing labour market

Universities in Europe constitute one of the largest reservoirs of knowledge in the world, with a huge potential that needs to be further mobilised. New academic knowledge is produced at a much greater speed than ever before, and breakthrough discoveries enabling innovation can emerge at any time and in any discipline. Hence universities need to foster new disciplines but at the same time have the means to preserve other ones – even those seen as less relevant today. At the same time, changing societal demands along with rapid technological change requires new research-based education for our students enabling them to acquire new and innovative skills. Importantly, universities are the only stakeholder responsible for providing advanced education and training to the professionals and leaders of tomorrow. Universities are already establishing new programmes and study tracks and increasingly organising themselves to tackle societal challenges through multidisciplinary approaches, which is also a way for them to attract the brightest and best minds that Europe needs for the future.

4. Doctoral Education – connecting education and research

Doctoral studies form the crucial link between education, science and society, and need research environments with permeable disciplinary frameworks. Over the past decade, European universities have undertaken what has been called a “quiet revolution” in doctoral education, by re-structuring doctoral programmes, developing professional management structures and fostering multidisciplinary research environments. The added-value of doctorates beyond academic careers

is being demonstrated by the increasing number of collaborative doctoral programmes between universities, businesses and other external partners, and the increasing employability rates of doctorates in the non-academic sector. Beyond the specific education and training related to research foci, scientific rigour and methodologies, the challenge is to embed other values in the doctoral process that can enhance doctorate career options, be they in or outside academia. These include, for example, the ability to move between disciplines, entrepreneurship, and the ability to grasp the "breadth and depth" of a problem. Improving the gender balance with respect to female researchers and university leadership continues to be an issue of concern but is being addressed actively.

5. Building and Strengthening Partnerships

Universities provide new knowledge and skills to society through the establishment of partnerships with external organisations, nationally and internationally – other universities, research institutions, businesses and society at large. Partnerships are built on trust between people and organisations, which needs to be nurtured over time, and needs to be supported strategically by the leadership of all organisations involved. Partnerships also increasingly have a multidisciplinary characteristic, which is essential to tackle the 21st century challenges such as energy, climate change, disease prevention and the enhancement of healthy lifestyles.

6. The "Open World" – new trends in the way research and teaching are conducted, accessed, disseminated and used

The rapid pace of technological evolution is facilitating a variety of activities based on principles of scholarly sharing and collaboration assisted by information and communication technologies (ICT), often referred to as 'Science 2.0', 'Open Science' and 'Big Data'. These movements involve, among others, greater access to research publications, text and data mining and open access to data. They have the potential to speed up knowledge transfer among scientists and scientific disciplines, to foster the growth of new types of scientific cooperation and to stimulate collaborative research. In addition, Science 2.0 approaches can also have a beneficial impact in higher education teaching and learning practices, enabling innovative and transformative instructional/teaching approaches, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) or other new methods of e-learning still to come. These movements can therefore facilitate the take-up of research data and results which can be useful to tackle complex research issues and societal challenges, and can raise the competitiveness of the European research system. However, the great potential of Science 2.0 for scientific development and knowledge exchange and transfer also comes with big challenges. These mainly refer to legal constraints, confidentiality issues, intellectual property rights, scientific recognition systems and individual career progression, and quality assurance of non-traditional research outputs.

7. Strengthening International Collaboration and Global Outreach

Universities are striving to fulfil their mission in an increasingly challenging international context. In order to sustain Europe's competitiveness at the global level, it is necessary to invest in universities expanding their international cooperation efforts, supporting them to fulfil their missions in research

and educational collaboration with other regions of the world. We are in a new global era of international research and graduate education given shifting demographics and high growth of universities and students elsewhere in the world, hence the need for more international cooperation. Nowadays the trend is towards fewer, better resourced and supported institutional partnerships, resulting from strategic consultations between researchers and university leadership. Often partnerships are driven by opportunities for greater geographical outreach and also the matching of diverse or complementary institutional profiles according to the strategic goals of the partners.

III. PRECONDITIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF UNIVERSITIES IN CONTRIBUTING TO EUROPE'S COMPETITIVENESS

1. The importance of Academic Freedom and Autonomy

An essential prerequisite for the effective and efficient operation of European universities is to reinforce university autonomy and academic freedom so as to better serve society at a time when expectations are growing and universities are being asked 'to do more with less'. European universities have shown themselves to be adaptable and flexible institutions, both responding to, and shaping, social, economic and cultural change while maintaining the core academic values of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Precisely for these reasons, universities have always been central to society and remain fundamental to the development of knowledge societies and economies in the future.

2. The Importance of Financial Sustainability

In the 21st century Europe's universities are both public and private entities with their income streams in many countries balanced in varying proportions between public and private sources. All universities face the challenge of financial sustainability. Both, the economic crisis as well as reduced investment capacity, have had a significant impact on higher education and research at a time of growing awareness of the increasing costs of research. The freedom to allocate and manage financial resources and raise income from the private sector is thus crucial in contributing to universities' long-term financial health. The present combination of regulations, incentives and accountability requirements is worrisome as not only underinvestment but also overregulation hinder universities in the proper implementation of their mission. Last but not least, financial sustainability is conditional on reliable and sufficient public funding as well as on the autonomy to explore additional funding options. This financial sustainability should go hand in hand with coherent political and policy objectives which Europe's societies have decided democratically.

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