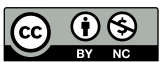


**POLICY INPUT**

# Towards an EU strategy in support of universities

June 2021



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## 1. Context

After the Communications on the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area (ERA), the updated Digital Education Action Plan and the renewed Skills Agenda in 2020, the European Commission has set a new ambitious target for 2021, the development of a European strategy for universities.

The declared aim of this endeavour is to foster synergies in European policies and programmes between university missions. The specific objectives are to develop with member states and stakeholders a vision of Europe's universities of the future; identify the needs for support and priority areas for change; as well as define a roadmap for actions at the European level in synergy with national reforms.

## 2. EUA's take in a nutshell

EUA welcomes the aim of the European Commission to develop an EU strategy that would support Europe's universities in all their missions. The overall goals of such a strategy should be to contribute to improving the framework conditions for universities to enhance their missions and thus best serve society. Such a strategy should also foster cohesion and better the compatibility of higher education and research systems across Europe to increase attractiveness, long-term resilience and sustainability.

The focus of the strategy must be system transformation to enable universities across Europe to continuously develop as institutions based on the principles of institutional autonomy and accountability to society. This aim of supporting and enabling universities must also be reflected in the title of the strategy.

EUA has set out the sector's ambition for the future in "[Universities without walls – A vision for 2030](#)" with learning and teaching, research, innovation and culture in service to society as integrated and mutually enhancing missions. This vision sets out the goals universities wish to achieve by 2030: to be open, transformative and transnational; sustainable, diverse and engaged in society; strong, autonomous and accountable; working based on the core values of institutional autonomy, academic freedom, scientific rigour, integrity and ethics. For universities to achieve these goals, they need enabling regulatory and funding frameworks, adequate investments and strong, transparent and inclusive leadership.

The university landscape in Europe is diverse, and necessary reforms need to be made at the national level by member states in dialogue with stakeholders and according to the specific needs and situations of the sector in each country. However, European cooperation has become a strategic priority of universities and the EU has an important supporting role in helping further strengthen such cooperation and coordination between member states. The EU should provide a multilateral framework for cooperation and exchange both at the policy level with member states and at the institutional level through the EU funding programmes.

This framework should be used more effectively to support universities as key drivers in a Europe of knowledge. An EU strategy must embrace the diversity of institutional profiles and strengths spread across Europe, help connect them better and build capacity on this basis. EU-level exchange and cooperation can help to initiate, inspire and support reform processes.

### 3. How an EU strategy can have added value

Universities with their different and intertwined missions can uniquely contribute to EU policies and, therefore, the further development of universities should also be embedded in overarching EU policies. An EU strategy in support of universities should become the guiding document for EU support action and reform dialogue with member states and the university sector regarding the European Education and Research Areas, the future European Innovation Area and other relevant EU policies. It should also help frame the support provided through the EU programmes such as Horizon Europe, Erasmus+ and others. It should also be the place to highlight EU policy fields beyond research and higher education policy where EU regulation can have an impact on universities and therefore must be considered from the beginning (e.g. regulation regarding data).

#### **CONNECTING THE DOTS, CREATING SYNERGIES AND FOSTERING BETTER ALIGNMENT**

Fostering synergies between the different European frameworks and initiatives, as well as national reform processes and instruments, is crucial. Currently, research, innovation, education and culture are discussed in different policy processes at the European level. In part, this comes from the fact that the EU has different competences in these fields and it also relates to the still prevailing separation of these policies at the national level. From a university perspective, it is important to bring policies regarding these missions. This entails creating links and exploring synergies and possibilities of better alignment as certain cross-cutting topics cannot be dealt with from the perspective of single missions.

Rather than adding another layer to the already complex picture of higher education and research policy processes at the European level, a new EU strategy should cut through this complexity and connect the dots. The added value of an EU strategy would be in linking the relevant dimensions of the European Education and Research Areas, as well as the Bologna Process and the future European Innovation Area, focusing on cross-cutting issues from a holistic perspective.

This means, for instance, that rather than simply considering a reform of research careers, the strategy should expand the scope to academic careers; rather than focusing on gender equality in research and education separately, a broader perspective of diversity and inclusion from students to staff should be adopted across the university missions. Other examples include, promoting interdisciplinarity throughout the missions and rather than focusing mostly on technological innovation through research, also looking at the role of students

and citizens in innovation, with universities as focal points of social innovation, open innovation and innovative learning and teaching. The EU strategy should support international engagement in a flexible way, taking into consideration the role of Europe's universities as global and local actors, which is also important regarding EU and national policies and actions, as well as the EU's cultural and economic relations. These are only a few examples of the many areas that would benefit from a cross-cutting, transversal and holistic EU policy approach.

## **RECOGNISING AND PROMOTING CORE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES**

Such a strategy should start with restating the basic principles and values of Europe's universities to reinforce their importance and renew the EU's commitment to them. These principles and values include institutional autonomy, which enables universities to make strategic decisions on organisational, financial, staffing and academic matters, as framed by the [EUA University Autonomy Scorecard](#). They also include [academic freedom](#), which guarantees freedom of learning, thought and inquiry to advance knowledge, the freedom to communicate this knowledge and educate the next generation of critical thinkers based on accepted standards of academic ethics and integrity. As these values are being threatened to differing degrees, both in the EU and beyond, an EU strategy in support of universities must highlight their essential nature.

## **FOCUSING ON IMPROVING FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS, ENHANCING COMPATIBILITY AND FOSTERING COHESION**

Enabling regulatory and funding frameworks are key success factors for Europe's universities as they head towards 2030. An EU strategy would have high value in promoting a more efficient regulatory and funding landscape for universities at the EU-level and particularly at the member-state level where most of the framework conditions are shaped. This should be supported by fostering synergies in the implementation of EU funding programmes, as well as by incentivising the creation of better links between EU, national and regional funding programmes. This effort also includes impactful simplification of funding schemes and the mainstreaming of the principles of efficiency, effectiveness and value for money. While regulation falls within the scope of national or regional authorities, policy makers should develop enabling frameworks that safeguard institutional autonomy as a key principle and foster collaboration for greater efficiency and effectiveness. Supporting leadership development and professionalisation will help the sustainable implementation of empowering frameworks.

The new EU strategy should build on and take advantage of the policies, key commitments and tools of the European Higher education Area (EHEA) and the Bologna Process, for example regarding its approaches towards recognition and quality assurance. They have been developed through longstanding efforts involving governments and stakeholders, are at the heart of national and institutional reforms across Europe, and are widely known and recognised internationally. Beyond enhanced implementation, the strategy could also contribute to the further advancement of the Bologna Process. Through the

continued commitment of the EU and its member states to the EHEA, also through funding support for policy development and strategic projects, new developments in the EEA could form synergies with and bring in new energy to the development of the Bologna Process. The EU already plays an important role in the Bologna Process, notably through facilitating dialogue and the exchange and upscaling of good practices through the Erasmus+ programme.

Likewise, the ERA has the potential to further excellence through cooperation between European universities, promoting Open Science and fostering a balanced mobility of researchers. It will also require reforms in national research systems, especially regarding academic career assessment. The new strategy should ensure that there is a systematic dialogue between the ERA, the EEA and the EHEA.

### **RECOGNISING INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY AS A STRENGTH AND PROVIDING FLEXIBLE SUPPORT**

Europe has different university traditions and unites institutions with different profiles. This represents a unique strength in serving society. An EU-level strategy in support of universities should focus on the EU added value that lies in providing a framework for exchange and collaboration at the policy level, setting common goals for enhancing Europe's higher education and research systems. It should also give opportunities for joint projects, strategic collaboration between institutions and student and staff mobility. Such European-level policies need to take into consideration the diversity of institutions, systems and collaboration models across Europe and provide flexible support.

### **ENABLING UNIVERSITIES TO BE INNOVATIVE**

Universities are striving for continuous improvement and enhancement of their missions. They adapt and develop new innovative approaches to further integrate their missions, enhance learning and teaching - including digital and blended formats -, move forward with Open Science and interdisciplinarity, to name a few.

It is essential that universities have the resources and an enabling framework for continuous improvement. Evaluations of universities must be done in a flexible way with focus on each institution's particular profile. Overall, institutions must have the framework conditions to be innovative, which includes the possibility of investing in professional staff and strong and inclusive leadership with the autonomy to take strategic decisions and flexible frameworks.

The EU strategy should aim to create a common European ambition for universities that are enabled to innovate.

## 4. What an EU strategy should refrain from

### **TAKING A TOP-DOWN APPROACH**

Putting universities as institutions at the core of an EU strategy must not translate into telling them what to do regarding their institutional development, staffing, financial or academic matters, what they teach or the way they teach, how and which type of research they conduct or how they engage in innovation. These matters must be decided by the university community based on the principle of institutional autonomy and accountability, ensured through adequate governance, internal and external quality assurance. Approaches across Europe differ as do institutional profiles and there is no one-size-fits-all model. An EU strategy should support good practice exchange and collaboration among institutions as this can inspire and help bring about innovation, but universities themselves must decide how they adapt and develop approaches that fit with their specific context and communities, and how they respond to today's global challenges.

### **ADDING FURTHER LAYERS OF COMPLEXITY**

An EU strategy must avoid the duplication of structures, processes and tools. Instead, it should build on and improve what already exists, notably in the EHEA and ERA. For a successful public policy strategy for universities, it is essential that universities and other stakeholders have a formal and systematic role to play in these governance structures. The value of such an approach has been proven in the Bologna Process, where the involvement of stakeholders in the whole process has ensured that issues are addressed in the preparatory phase in a way that brings added value and broad ownership of initiatives.

Communication between the different processes will be key for coherence, for example through the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) Task Force to Increase Synergies Between the European Higher Education Area, the Higher Education Dimension of the European Education Area and the European Research Area.

### **USING THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVE AS THE MAIN TOOL**

Alliances created under the European Universities Initiative have been put forward as testbeds and role models for higher education transformation across Europe by the European Commission, as well as most recently by EU member state education ministers in their [Council Conclusions on the future of the initiative](#). EUA supports the European Universities Initiative and currently 215 of its more than 800 members are participating in the pilot phase. The Association [reiterates its call for a balanced and focused approach](#) in the initiative's future development.



However, an EU strategy in support of universities is meant for the sector as a whole, including all different types and institutional profiles and ways of collaboration. This also means that the evidence on the sector's needs and existing good practices must come from the sector as a whole and reflect its diversity, which also needs to be taken into account when shaping support mechanisms and frameworks.

Deepening transnational university collaboration in its various formats has great potential to strengthen European higher education and research and its international competitiveness, as well as European cooperation. Mutual exchange of experiences and practices between all universities is important in this regard as innovation happens also beyond the alliances. Further flexibility in legislative and funding frameworks must benefit transnational university collaboration beyond the European Universities Initiative and be accessible to all universities that wish to make use of it.

## 5. Concluding remarks

The development of an EU strategy in support of universities is a great opportunity to gear EU support towards unleashing the potential of the university sector as a whole and giving another push to member states towards system-level reform. EUA very much welcomes the efforts of the European Commission to include university stakeholder organisations in the consultation process from the start alongside member states as this is necessary to ensure fit-for-purpose policies.

## 6. Important elements to be considered for focus areas of an EU strategy in support of universities

EUA is looking forward to further engaging in the discussions and proposes the following elements for consideration in the further development of possible focus areas of a new EU strategy.

In the current discussions on possible focus areas of a new EU strategy, the European Commission takes as a point of departure the areas mentioned under the higher education priority of the [Council Resolution](#) on “a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)” (26 February 2021, see Annex III of the Council Resolution-Priority 4-Higher Education-iii). These are valid and include important points.

Based on EUA’s “[Universities without walls – A vision for 2030](#)”, the Association proposes further elements to be considered when developing the focus areas of an EU strategy in support of universities with a holistic approach to university missions:

### **PROMOTING CORE PRINCIPLES AND ACADEMIC VALUES**

Institutional autonomy and academic freedom are core principles and values of Europe’s universities. They need to be protected, both by law and in practice, to enable higher education institutions to advance knowledge, develop innovative and evidence-based solutions to current and future challenges and engage with society. Despite their key importance, institutional autonomy and academic freedom are under pressure in Europe and beyond: attempts to limit or undermine them are frequent and take many forms, a fact that is increasingly recognised by the university community and policy makers.

In addition to renewed political commitments, it is essential that institutional autonomy and academic freedom become integral to higher education development in Europe and are realised and actively promoted as lived realities at European universities.

Governments and universities must protect academic freedom and institutional autonomy together: governments and public authorities must safeguard the institutional autonomy of universities by avoiding interference in their internal affairs and providing them with clear and consistent regulatory frameworks. At the same time, they must guarantee the academic community the rights that constitute academic freedom, including the rights to freedom of expression, opinion, thought, information and assembly, as well as the rights to education and teaching. Universities on their part must ensure that researchers, teachers and students are guaranteed academic freedom, by fostering a culture in which free expression and the open and tolerant exchange of opinion are valued.

## **STRENGTHENING UNIVERSITY CORE FUNDING AND FOSTERING COHESION**

Adequate and sustainable core public funding for universities is key to fulfilling their missions. This is needed for universities to contribute to the digital and green transitions and master their own sustainability in these areas, and more broadly to address the investment gap throughout Europe in higher education, research and innovation. It is crucial that investment in the sector is maintained and further boosted in the fallout of the Covid-19 crisis, to support the long-term recovery of the continent.

The EU and its member states should commit to sustainable funding for higher education and research and innovation. This includes striking an adequate balance between competitive and non-competitive funding, integrating focus areas such as the green and digital transitions, as well as sustainability, into the broader perspective of higher education and research. EU and member states should equally commit to targets for public and private efforts. This means investing in higher education, as well as across national and EU-level funding programmes, in both investigator-driven and mission-oriented R&I, acknowledging them as mutually reinforcing contributors to both short-term solutions and long-term, sustainable development. The investment targets of 2% of EU GDP for higher education and 3% for research and development, as well as the new 1.25% public effort target to be achieved by member states by 2030, are essential to match the ambitions of the EEA and ERA, as well as to help build capacity and foster cohesion.

Stepping-up capacity in regions that are currently lagging behind is also needed to counter brain drain. When it comes to developing and attracting talent, it is important to foster a balanced talent circulation within Europe and help build capacity where it is most needed while striving for a more cohesive development across Europe.

## **REFORMING ACADEMIC CAREERS AND ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT**

This has been identified in EUA's "Universities without walls – A vision for 2030" as one of the three priorities for action. There is broad consensus among universities across Europe that a reform of academic careers and academic assessment is needed to recognise the contribution of academics to all university missions and make academic careers more attractive, more flexible and less precarious. Universities, policy makers and funders must develop new frameworks together in a concerted dialogue. There is a strong and urgent need for investment in academic staff training and in responding to the issue of precarious research careers.

## SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE UNIVERSITIES

Sustainability is the most significant global challenge. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a holistic agenda addressing this challenge by balancing economic, social and environmental needs.

The [results of a recent EUA survey](#) show that universities across Europe increasingly consider greening and sustainability as part of their missions, and develop strategies to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and the more recent EU Green Deal (16% of higher education institutions consider this in their strategy). This frames their missions of research, education, innovation and culture, and brings change and transformation to their governance, funding and to physical campuses and their management. Exploring new, greener and more sustainable approaches is also articulated through local and global collaboration and partnerships with other higher education institutions, as well as with other partners such as in industry, local and regional communities and citizens. This represents an important contribution to Europe's green transition, as universities lead by example, learn from and co-create with others, develop knowledge and innovation. This has economic, financial, social and moral implications. Contributing to sustainability is becoming a quality criterion for universities, impacting their ability to attract students and staff and international partners.

Interdisciplinarity based on a proficient command of disciplinary research and education is important in addressing the sustainability challenge. Many new discoveries will happen at the interface between disciplines and will be crucial for meeting global challenges.

An EU strategy should support university collaboration and exchange about strategies and approaches towards greening and the broader goal of sustainable development, including through EU funding programmes. It would also be a place to highlight the need for member states to see where there are still barriers towards interdisciplinarity that should be addressed at the national level (such as rigid legislation about how study programmes have to be designed to be accredited or rigid disciplinary research assessment).

## FOSTERING HOLISTIC APPROACHES TOWARDS HYBRID CAMPUSES

Digitalisation is a means to enhance university missions - not an end in itself. The aim must be to develop holistic approaches towards hybrid campuses, digital and physical.

Over the past five years, [the digital transformation in learning and teaching has made gradual, but solid progress](#), leading to institutional skills and capacity building with more mainstreamed use and more strategic approaches, supported by institutional structures and services, often with different levels of maturity among institutions. This enabled the sector to respond to the pandemic relatively fast and to pivot to remote provision. Beyond Covid-19, however, approaches and purposes for digitally enhanced learning will be entirely different: blended and hybrid approaches will focus on quality, inclusion, greening, outreach and international exchange and collaboration. An important issue will be funding staff, staff development and material resources and infrastructure. Building hybrid

campuses in a holistic way will be the key task, with implications across the institution, from governance and management, pedagogics and the changed role of students and teachers, to mobility and cooperation.

Also in the digital area, universities need the resources and capacity to train professional staff in particular for data management and curation.

A new EU strategy should support collaboration and exchange among universities on digitally enhanced provision and innovative approaches towards building hybrid campuses.

Universities, as all other sectors, are heavily impacted by the digital transformation. It is important that EU digital policy and regulation take into account the impact that, for example, data regulation or investments in digital infrastructure can have on universities. This is relevant when it comes for example to regulating copyright and data in the digital space – as is the case in the currently debated Digital Services Act. It is important that such regulation takes account of the universities role as knowledge producers whose research data should be accessible to society and supports them in this.

## **WORKING TOWARDS OPEN SCIENCE AS THE NORM**

An EU strategy for universities should foster the mainstreaming of Open Science practices across institutions, with supportive measures to build capacity and infrastructure. Openness and transparency are key elements in accelerating the research process and in supporting the uptake of its results, as well as in strengthening research integrity, cooperation and knowledge sharing. Supporting the transition to Open Science means addressing a diverse set of dimensions. Open Access envisions the possibility of free and unrestrained access to research publications, leading to increased research efficiency and excellence.

The European Commission and EU member states must continue to support universities in the development and implementation of Open Access policies and open infrastructures. This vision cannot be realised without the simultaneous development of a more open, transparent and sustainable scholarly publishing system, wherein authors and institutions retain their rights when deciding to openly share their research outputs. As an integral part of the research process, widespread data sharing and re-use are also critical to develop a more open and interconnected research system, under the broader umbrella of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) and following the Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR) data principles. Fostering a FAIR research culture will be a long-term, collective effort uniting different stakeholders and communities, ranging from building interconnected digital infrastructures, training researchers and staff and developing policies. European institutions and EU member states have a key role to play, as actions taken at the institutional level cannot exist in isolation. Instead, they should be anchored to a wider and sound framework to foster and promote the systemic, cultural and technical reforms needed to make Open Science the standard way of producing knowledge. For Open

Science in all its dimensions to become the norm, it is crucial that it becomes an integral part of renewed academic career assessment systems (see also [EUA policy input to the new European Research Area](#), page 20).

## **ENABLING INTERDISCIPLINARITY**

Interdisciplinarity is key to solving grand challenges and contributing to sustainable development. However, in some places the development of interdisciplinary study programmes and research is still hampered by rigid legislation prescribing what a study programme can look like and rigid discipline-based research assessment. Academic staff must have the opportunity for professional development that enables them to work in interdisciplinary projects and teams, and learners must have the opportunity and the incentive to be exposed to different disciplines. Governance structures of universities should facilitate cooperation and cross-fertilisation between different units, departments and faculties.

A new EU strategy should promote interdisciplinarity and foster exchange at the policy level about how to overcome regulatory and other obstacles to interdisciplinarity. Furthermore, it should support university collaboration and exchange of good practices towards interdisciplinarity.

## **IMPROVING COMPATIBILITY AND ENABLING DEEPER COOPERATION**

Obstacles to transnational collaboration remain an issue for universities across Europe. While progress has been made on the higher education side through the Bologna Process, implementation is fragmented. The ERA has great potential to overcome fragmentation between Europe's research systems by having common instruments, including for infrastructures and joint programming between research funders. More is needed. Because of the increasingly data intensive nature of research, this process of integration must be closely linked with the facilitation of access to digital resources and services for research. Scientific benefits should be driving the prioritisation at the pan-European level.

A new EU strategy should support the systematic identification of barriers and obstacles to transnational university collaboration across the missions and promote the use of existing tools to improve compatibility (such as those developed in the framework of the Bologna Process), before proposing new ones.

## **ENSURING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

Inclusiveness is becoming an important topic for many universities across Europe and several have developed dedicated initiatives, strategies and projects in recent years. However, the [EUA INVITED project survey](#) in 2019 showed the persisting challenges in making progress, such as a lack of awareness in the university community, followed by a lack of funding and other resources, as well as the difficulty in identifying the affected groups. Staff training is required, both for administrative staff as well as teaching and research staff, to raise the level of awareness and provide concrete tools and approaches for addressing diversity. Besides this, system-level reforms both in higher education and research systems are needed to help overcome systemic barriers towards diversity, equity and inclusion. Inclusiveness must be dealt with across the university and its missions.

The “[Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area](#)” developed in the context of the Bologna Process and endorsed by education ministers in 2020, provide a useful framework for policy dialogue and could serve as inspiration also for the research side (see also [EUA policy input to the new European Research Area](#), page 15).

## **SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL OPENNESS**

An EU strategy for universities should support the important international role of universities. European universities are globally networked institutions and international actors in their own right, maintaining strategic partnerships with other institutions around the world. EU and national frameworks need to protect this through responsible and reciprocal openness towards global partners, recognising the value of universities as a main provider of people-to-people contact, and enabling universities to engage responsibly with international partners according to their own goals and purposes, as outlined in the EUA input to the Commission’s Global Approach to Research and Innovation.

To strengthen its attractiveness to global partners, Europe needs to strengthen its own capacity. Fit-for-purpose European Research, Education and Higher Education Areas and robust European programmes are a precondition for global engagement. This also means adequate investments in these areas and a better alignment between EU and national-level funding programmes. Universities should be supported in attracting global talent, while working towards a more balanced talent circulation both within Europe and between Europe and other parts of the world.

## **ENABLING UNIVERSITIES TO ENHANCE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO LIFELONG LEARNING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT WHILE RECOGNISING THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Recent years have seen major changes in learning and teaching, regarding pedagogics and teaching approaches, technology use and diversification of learning spaces, as well as the attention dedicated to the education mission at institutional and national levels. It will be important to maintain and use the momentum, enabling more systematic exchanges and mutual learning within and between different systems, including all major stakeholders.

Universities provide the education for jobs, even those that are not yet existent. Social, economic and technological changes are happening with increased speed. Participation in higher education is growing. With this, universities are also strengthening their role as places for continued professional development, re- and upskilling, and the broad range of lifelong learning that labour markets, citizens and societies require. Digital, green, circular economies and societies will require diverse skills developed through interdisciplinary research education, learning and experiences in different social contexts, strong social and personal and entrepreneurial competences. For the majority of school leavers, this would be achieved through degree study programmes, enriched with physical and

virtual mobility stays, internships, and sufficient scope for individual learning needs, among others, also through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), micro-credentials.

Beyond employability, Europe's universities have an important role in promoting democratic values and European culture. For many, European university cooperation is also driven by the wish of universities to critically contribute to a European identity. In the face of a scepticism towards values of enlightenment and democracy and an increasingly fast-changing society, higher education is challenged to provide people with a cultural compass, as well as the ability for critical thinking. Universities have an important task in equipping people to independently acquire new knowledge and develop problem solving skills for future challenges.

Furthermore, universities provide a considerable contribution to lifelong learning and continued professional development. They do this often in cooperation with each other, or with partners from different education sectors and levels, and employers. But this contribution is not sufficiently visible and accessible and would require better recognition in order to develop and grow. The goal must be to provide flexible pathways and forms of delivery for people from diverse backgrounds, reaching from professional skills to high-end research-informed instruction. This should enable returning to higher education, whenever possible and needed.

This will require support through comprehensive lifelong learning policies, at the EU level and the level of individual EU member states, aligned with flexible and supportive frameworks in terms of regulation, investment and trans-European dialogue. Initiatives should focus on fostering coordination and synergies and embracing diverse and inclusive education systems. This would also help to promote a systemic integration of the concrete initiatives already foreseen by the European Commission, such as micro-credentials, and individual learning accounts.



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.