



EUA'S RESPONSE TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION CALL FOR IDEAS ON DESIGNING A EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL

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The European University Association (EUA) appreciates the European Commission's interest in fostering innovation in Europe and welcomes the discussion on ideas for a European Innovation Council (EIC). EUA believes that a comprehensive strategy for facilitating well-functioning regional, national and European innovation ecosystems, and for strategically addressing the barriers to investment in innovative business opportunities is, indeed, needed.

From EUA's perspective, an EIC should have as its main mission the enhancement of Europe's competitiveness and help to create jobs with high added-value for the benefit of society at large. It should take into account the strong relation between investment in research-based innovation, investment in the development of highly-skilled human resources and the resulting economic and social innovation. Education and training should be an integral part of European innovation policies.

The summary below represents a synopsis of the points outlined in more detail in the second part of the document, which are based on input from EUA members and its Research Policy Working Group (RPWG).

Summary of main views and recommendations

- An EIC would be **most useful as an advisory and coordinating body**, integrating all European Commission policies on innovation, and **streamlining existing instruments** to cover the whole bandwidth of innovation, while taking into account that often innovation emerges from non-linear processes. The obstacles to fully realising Europe's innovation potential should be addressed **with comprehensive policies**.
- **All forms of innovation are important** to address current and future societal challenges. An EIC should, therefore, take a **strategic role** in providing advice on the creation, sustainability and coordination of **European innovation ecosystems**. It should consider commercially viable innovation as well as social innovation. **An EIC should promote excellent, research-based innovation** to create or further develop markets, **for the benefit of society at large**.
- At a time of low public research investment in Europe, **it is essential that the funding allocated to research is preserved**, specifically the budget of Pillars 1 and 3 from Horizon 2020. EUA hence considers that an **EIC should not be designed as a funding body**.
- The **governance** of an EIC should be **characterised by the involvement of all relevant stakeholders** and by **transparent, swift consultations and decision-making processes**. An EIC should **complement other existing EU bodies**, avoiding overlap or duplication.
- An EIC could contribute to reinforcing the **strong links between education and training** of highly-skilled people, investment in **basic research and in innovation**. It should **build on existing good practices** within universities and in their collaborative research with large companies, SMEs and RTOs.

EUA's views and recommendation are based on the following rationale:

A. Innovation from a university perspective

- From a university perspective, innovation is a broad concept in which research and innovation are an integral part of the innovation value chain that generates societal well-being, i.e. research generates knowledge, and innovation creates value from this knowledge, which can be of economic, social, educational and cultural nature.
- Universities have played and continue to play a critical role in innovation, at regional, national and international levels. Universities educate the future workforce, are engines for the development of new ideas through both basic and applied research and connect to and collaborate with a variety of external actors in the innovation ecosystem (e.g. businesses, public and private organisations) to solve societal challenges.

B. Goals and objectives of an EIC

- An EIC should cover all areas of innovation, including all disciplinary fields and sectors, encompass education and training and promote an entrepreneurial culture across Europe. An EIC should identify and address bottlenecks for innovation that are related to legal frameworks and economic and social environments.
- The goal of an EIC should be to complement, and not overlap with or duplicate other existing EU bodies. An EIC should align existing support instruments for innovation in different EU funds (e.g. Horizon 2020, EFSI, ESIF, EIT, SME Fund, Joint Technology Initiatives).
- In order to accelerate the translation of research results into products and services, an EIC should foster closer cooperation between academia, industry and RTOs. It could provide strategic advice to regional and national authorities in developing and sustaining innovation ecosystems. It should encourage collaborative projects across Europe, to help close the gap between different European regions.

C. EIC's role in strengthening links between education, research and innovation

- Universities' crucial role in innovation ecosystems lies in their performance in basic and applied research and in educating and training students with high-level skills, who enter the job market and enrich the human resources of public and private organisations of all shapes and sizes.
- In order to fully exploit the potential of the innovative capacities of universities, an EIC should further foster mutual exchange of personnel between industry and academia and advocate for minimising existing legal and bureaucratic barriers.
- An EIC could help existing initiatives on university campuses that offer students opportunities to develop their innovative ideas with guidance from professors and entrepreneurs. More generally, it could encourage universities in augmenting entrepreneurial training in teaching curricula and research projects.

EUA has engaged in a consultation with its members and with its Research Policy Working Group (RPWG) to develop this position. The RPWG advises the EUA Board and Council on European research and innovation policy matters. The EUA Council is comprised of the President, the members of the Board, and of the presidents of Europe's national rectors' conferences (NRCs). EUA is the representative organisation of more than 800 universities in 47 European countries and 33 NRCs.