

President Charles Michel
European Council

President Ursula von der Leyen
European Commission

President David Sassoli
European Parliament

Brussels, 17 February 2020

Subject: The right EU budget for the next seven years

Dear President,

I am addressing you on behalf of more than 800 universities across Europe, where every day we witness the positive impact of research, innovation and education and their role in addressing our common challenges.

European citizens want action on climate change and the energy challenge. They want social protection and economic growth. The European Union's next budget must be bold in addressing these issues; the roles of research and education must be central as they are at the centre of addressing our challenges in a smart and sustainable way.

The EU funding programmes for higher education and research, Erasmus and the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, are among the EU's strongest assets. However, both programmes are suffering from underfunding, and the current Parliament has rightly called for substantial increases for the next programme period (2021-2027), proposing €120bn for Horizon Europe and €46bn for Erasmus.

Investment in education, research and innovation have clear European added value. The EU programmes fund common initiatives that otherwise would not take place, and the results benefit the Union as a whole. Being frugal on these areas makes little sense: The Commission itself has reported that every €1 spent in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon 2020) leads to €13 in added value for industry. Yet, despite these impressive returns, Europe still has not closed the investment gap with the US and China. Europe will cede more ground to these countries in a competitive and globalised economy if investment falls further behind.

Research and innovation investment fuels competitiveness and contributes to job creation, energy and climate solutions, social inclusion and sustainability. Not only does it support the EU in leading the green transition, but it is key to retaining the global position of the Union and its member states.

Underfunding at the European level costs money for the member states: today, 75 percent of high-quality proposals submitted to Horizon 2020 go unfunded due to insufficient budget. This is a significant waste of money and loss of potential innovation for Europe, for its countries and for its regions. Only a serious increase in funding for the next programme will resolve this - and the payback will be big as pan-EU research empowers excellent ideas with global impact.

On top of this, the EU and its Member States have great expectations for research and education, and the upcoming Horizon Europe programme is tasked with additional ambitious goals and grand missions addressing global challenges. The EU has also reasserted its interest and trust in the added value of the Erasmus programme, which is envied around the world, proposing to considerably widen its outreach. If the European Union is to meet these goals and ensure that more than the current 1 in 10 applicants to an Erasmus-funded project are successful, then further funding increases are imperative.

In view of the special European Summit on 20 February, Europe's universities appeal to you for the necessary financial resources to be allocated to Horizon Europe and Erasmus+. The EU's ambitions deserve more than a reshuffling of resources between programmes. These ambitions will only be met by a strong budget for these programmes, which will drive Europe's economic prosperity and lead to solutions to challenges that touch the lives of every single European citizen.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Murphy, President of the European University Association (EUA)