

POSITION

Research, innovation and education hold the key to Europe's long-term recovery and resilience

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This year will stand out in history like no other, a year in which a pandemic took the world by surprise and generated large-scale consequences for public health and global and societal interactions. It is also giving rise to an [unprecedented economic crisis](#). However, 2020 has the potential to be the year in which Europe takes the collective decision to massively invest in its future, creating and upscaling existing knowledge and capacities to recover from the crisis and become more resilient in facing the turbulences to come.

There is no shortage of priorities, and the European Commission in its new proposal for the next seven-year budget rightly seeks to address both short-term needs and long-term developments. Research, innovation and education are core policy areas in which support must be built to facilitate recovery and resilience in the next crisis, whatever shape it may take. The European Commission has therefore developed a more R&I-oriented narrative across the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the new Next Generation EU recovery plan. This includes the European Structural and Investment Funds, as well as a proposal to increase the budget of Horizon Europe to some extent through the recovery plan and Erasmus+ through the MFF, compared to amounts discussed in negotiations in February.

However, these figures do not meet Europe's needs. The EU's collective aspirations towards European R&I and education programmes have never been higher as they aim at fostering the green and digital transitions, piloting new forms of transnational collaboration, structuring the future of the European Research and Education Areas, and supporting reform development in the European Higher Education Area. Budgets allocated to these policy objectives should provide the means to deliver on those ambitions. The European University Association (EUA) therefore calls for the following measures to fulfil the assigned objectives:

HORIZON EUROPE

- ◆ Reinforce Horizon Europe within the MFF in addition to the funds distributed via the Next Generation EU scheme. The budget allocated to the programme within the MFF remains at the level proposed in February, which was already too low and far from the 120 billion euros considered necessary by the European Parliament and the sector before the crisis.
- ◆ Reinforce the full spectrum of research and innovation, acknowledging the urgency of upscaling funding for fundamental research. The EU cannot expect the next crisis to resemble the current one; it must enhance its knowledge and capacities by boosting support to fundamental research and new generations of scientists, notably through more funding to the European Research Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. This essential component to the EU's future resilience is inexplicably left out of the proposed reinforcement under Next Generation EU.

- ◆ Reinforce the EU's collective capacity for societal analysis by supporting social sciences and humanities (SSH). An improved understanding of societal dynamics is crucial to address the next crisis, whatever form this takes. Support to SSH has proven to be essential and is now more important than ever, also considering the role of SSH in supporting policymaking.
- ◆ Reinforce investment in system and institutional capacity building through Horizon Europe's transversal pillar, as sharing excellence is the best way to strengthen the resilience of European societies.

ERASMUS+

- ◆ Reinforce investment in higher education through the Erasmus+ programme, in a way that enables universities to fully contribute to the EU's policy objectives, notably in fostering the green and digital transitions, as well as social inclusion. This includes sufficient funding for higher education mobility, as well as cooperation actions and the [European Universities Initiative](#).
- ◆ Ensure that, through Erasmus+, appropriate funding is available for global higher education collaboration, including the EU Neighbourhood regions. This supports higher education reform and capacity building in partner countries. It also ensures that higher education institutions in Europe and partner countries can engage in dialogue and collaborate on priorities for academy and society, and that students and staff have an international outlook and experience. This is particularly important for the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis, and the disconnects and disruptions it caused globally.

Europe's universities have clearly demonstrated that they play a major role in the response to the crisis. They are ready to act as a strategic contributor in the recovery, harnessing the potential of the full R&I spectrum and their deeply rooted collaboration networks. Research, innovation and education hold the key to the long-term strategic resilience of the continent. Investing now – at the level of our ambitions – in upscaling our collective knowledge and capacities will lower the costs of responding to future crises. Adequate funding of the Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ programmes is the way forward for a sustainable European future.