

**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES
– LOOKING FORWARD
WITH CONFIDENCE**

PRAGUE DECLARATION 2009

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European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso told conference participants in his video message it would be a mistake to cut public and private spending on education and research during the present economic downturn as this could have a "direct negative impact" on future growth. "Investing more in education and research will help Europe emerge from recession faster and in better shape ... "

EUA PRAGUE DECLARATION

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES – LOOKING FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE

European universities met in Prague from 18-21 March 2009 to discuss the topic "Facing Global Challenges: European strategies for European universities". We also addressed the present financial and economic crisis and its impact. For this reason the first part of our Declaration is a targeted message to political leaders and decision makers in international donor organisations with proposals for immediate measures to address the crisis. The second part of the Declaration sets out a long-term strategic agenda for universities identifying 10 factors that will determine our future success.

I. MESSAGE TO POLITICAL LEADERS

– combat the global economic and financial crisis through investment in higher education and research

WHY?

1. **Universities – crucial for the future of Europe:** through knowledge creation and by fostering innovation, critical thinking, tolerance and open minds we prepare citizens for their role in society and the economy and respond to their expectations by providing opportunities for individual development and personal growth. Through research-based education at all levels we provide the high-level skills and innovative thinking our modern societies need and on which future economic, social and cultural development depends. We strive for the long-term in addition to assuming new tasks and providing solutions to current problems.
2. **Universities – motors for economic recovery:** by striving for excellence in teaching, research and innovation, by offering opportunities to diverse groups of learners, and by providing the optimal creative environment for the talented young researchers that Europe needs, universities are increasingly central to future growth and to the consolidation of Europe's knowledge society. With our reservoir of highly trained and flexible citizens able to respond to changing labour markets and with the research skills needed to make Europe more creative and innovative, and thus ultimately more competitive, we are well placed to find answers to the global challenges of the 21st century.
3. **Higher education and research needs a European stimulus package:** As mainly public institutions serving the public good and educating almost half of Europe's populations, universities are, more than ever under the present circumstances, crucial for future European development. The same is true of public support for higher education and research: when private support weakens and business falters public funding is essential to guarantee continuity. Europe cannot afford to run the risk of losing a generation of talented people or of a serious decrease in research and innovation activity. This means redoubling efforts to reach the Barcelona target of 3% investment in research and development – signifying more than 700,000 additional researchers – and to invest at least 2% of GDP in higher education, as proposed by the European Commission.

WHAT?

4. **A European stimulus package through higher education and research:** Every talent counts and therefore EUA urges decision makers at national and European level to emulate the major investment in higher education and research that characterises the US economic stimulus package. It supports both high end research and students and families struggling to pay for higher education, thus underlining the need for support to both education and research to ensure that research and innovation remain the engine of future economic development and that wide participation in higher education is maintained. Such support is similarly crucial to underpin the continued dynamic development of the European Higher Education and Research Areas that drive the activities of European universities. It will underpin European solidarity and will work against the present increased risk of nationalism and protectionism in Europe, ensuring that Europe emerges strong, resilient and forward-looking from the present crisis. As a sign of forward-thinking, of commitment and of solidarity EUA recommends:
 - **Investing in the present generation of young researchers:** Europe must not sacrifice a generation of young researchers; a Europe-wide stimulus programme is needed to create opportunities and incentives to maintain young researchers across the continent in research careers, following the example of programmes adopted at national level, e.g. in the Netherlands. This requires substantially increasing funding opportunities available to young researchers at all levels: through the European Research Council – that can play an even greater role in promoting excellence in European research providing its funding is increased; through the EC's Research Framework Programmes and through action at national and regional level, with guaranteed provision for pension and social security rights and transferability to allow balanced career mobility across Europe. In return, as universities, we commit to enhancing career opportunities for young researchers and to ensuring implementation of the issues addressed by the European Commission's Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

- **Tapping unused potential: through commitment, implementation and financing of lifelong learning across Europe** to meet the goals set out in the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning, to provide additional retraining and up-skilling while also reaching out to those who wish to enter higher education for the first time. This requires working together with both governments and business to develop and fund appropriate incentive measures, for example through redirecting unemployment benefits into covering the costs of people going back to universities. At European level structural/social funds should also be used to support such measures.
- **Upgrading universities' facilities and campus infrastructure** – to provide support to higher education and research while also stimulating the economy and providing employment in other sectors, e.g. construction. The proposed programme, with funding provided on a competitive basis at European level, should build on existing opportunities offered by the European Investment Bank (EIB), and be closely linked to the use of the structural funds as a way of supporting the renewal and upgrading of teaching and research infrastructure in universities especially in the new member states.

II. 10 SUCCESS FACTORS FOR EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE NEXT DECADE

PREAMBLE:

Our common vision is of autonomous universities as dynamic, flexible institutions promoting excellence and innovation in teaching, research, and knowledge transfer. At the same time universities are responsive to the changing and sometimes exceptional needs of our societies and economies and contribute to finding answers to global problems.

This implies the continued existence and vigorous evolution of universities – defined by a commitment to offering research-based education to increasingly diverse student bodies, to strengthening the links between teaching and research and to providing graduates with the competences needed to respond to rapidly changing labour markets. This requires universities with different traditions, mission mixes, and strengths in the context of a system of European higher education institutions incorporating progression routes from one institution to another, based on equality of esteem for diverse missions, and aware of the importance of balancing the need for competitiveness with that of enhanced cooperation, social cohesion and solidarity.

FOR INCLUSIVE AND RESPONSIVE UNIVERSITIES PURSUING THEIR PRIMARY TASKS OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH THIS REQUIRES:

- 1. Widening opportunities for participation in and successful completion of higher education:** making lifelong learning a reality by expanding the range of those entering higher education, ensuring continuing possibilities for learners throughout their lives and paying close attention to successful attainment.
- 2. Improving researcher careers:** through transparency of recruitment and promotion procedures and granting greater independence for young researchers at postdoctoral stage, thus enhancing the overall quality and attractiveness of research careers and optimising the research performance of universities.
- 3. Providing relevant and innovative study programmes:** reinforcing the teaching mission of universities by maintaining curricular reform and renewal by introducing new approaches to teaching, offering flexible learning paths adapted to the needs of diverse learners and ensuring that tomorrow's graduates, also those entering the labour market at Bachelor level, have the skills and competences needed to make them employable on rapidly changing job markets.
- 4. Developing distinctive institutional research profiles:** by stimulating a rich variety of unique environments that promote interdisciplinary approaches to tackle 21st century global challenges; enhanced through theme focused project development, supported by competitive research funding, and strengthened by cooperation mechanisms through regional clustering and networking at the European level.

FOR STRONG AND FLEXIBLE UNIVERSITIES PURSUING EXCELLENCE IN THEIR DIFFERENT MISSIONS THIS ALSO REQUIRES:

- 5. Shaping, reinforcing, and implementing autonomy:** universities need strengthened autonomy to better serve society and specifically to ensure favourable regulatory frameworks which allow university leaders to; design internal structures efficiently, select and train staff, shape academic programmes and use financial resources, all of these in line with their specific institutional missions and profiles.
- 6. Increasing and diversifying income:** to achieve financial sustainability, by implementing sound accounting practices that identify the full costs of all activities, diversifying the income portfolio and securing adequate public funding, thus providing the basis to fulfill the university's core missions over the long-term.
- 7. Enhancing quality and improving transparency:** by fully embracing the responsibilities derived from the commitment of universities to quality and by providing accurate information about institutional mission, activities, performance and results obtained to learners, employers and other stakeholders.
- 8. Promoting internationalisation:** by enhancing global collaboration, partnership and presence beyond Europe as a priority for an ever greater number of universities with diverse missions, to ensure strategic presence and promote a more international outlook among students and staff alike, and, in particular in times of global financial and crisis, to demonstrate active solidarity and cooperation.
- 9. Increasing and improving the quality of mobility:** by developing coherent institutional strategies, providing structured opportunities, and removing obstacles to the mobility of students, staff, including administrative staff and researchers at all stages in their careers; encompassing mobility between sectors, institutions and internationally as a way of enhancing personal, academic and professional development and improving transferable skills, including linguistic competence.
- 10. Developing partnerships:** for strengthening the various missions of universities, taking account of the needs of partners in curriculum development, research collaboration and innovation activities, in particular embracing the open innovation model of university/enterprise cooperation based on sound project management and improved intellectual property management reflecting respective interests.

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 46 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 its members and a range of other European and international organisations EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact on their activities.

The Association provides a 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, website and publications.

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