

# Informal Council for Competitiveness

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## Introductory Remarks

- Czech Presidency invitation welcomed by the EUA's Board and Council as an important gesture in bringing forward Europe's Universities as stakeholders in the policy-making dialogue on creating an effective European Research Area.
- Since its establishment in 2001, EUA has been working actively to achieve a productive dialogue with the main actors, both public and private, concerned with building both a European Higher Education and Research Area that is competitive as a global region.

## EUA - A few facts

EUA membership represents 34 European Rectors' Conferences and over 800 individual research based higher education institutions across 46 countries.

- Dual-fold role:
  - I. providing a forum for debate and mutual-learning through conferences and workshops, projects and specific services for the membership, and
  - II. bringing empirical evidence from universities' experiences and activities across their missions to inform the policy-making process in developing new instruments that help their strategic development and enhance their performance in addressing social, economic and civil society needs and goals.

## From Leuven to Prague

- EUA's role as an independent stakeholder in the "Bologna Process" of European higher education reform.
- Input to Meeting of Ministers of Higher Education last week in Leuven, Belgium.
- EUA core message on the "Third Cycle", the doctoral level - it is the bridge linking the European Higher Education and Research Area, and that for doctoral level studies the high quality of the research environment, both in terms of human resources and research infrastructure, will be essential for Europe's competitiveness.
- As the first stage of a research career, excellent conditions for doctoral level work will be crucial in determining the attractiveness of the choice of staying in and coming to Europe.

## EUA Prague Declaration (I)

- In March 2009 EUA's 5<sup>th</sup> Convention of Higher Education Institutions took place at Charles University - over 500 university leaders including stakeholders from industry discussing research careers and research collaboration.
- "Prague Declaration" entitled "European Universities – Looking Forward with Confidence" identifies "10 Success Factors" for European Universities to strive towards in the next decade.
- In the coming months, the EUA will continue its work in developing specific action plans for each of the 10 key success factors identified in the Prague Declaration with recommendations at the university institutional, national and European level.

## EUA Prague Declaration (II)

Strategic agenda for European universities' successful future development:

- 1) Commitment to core missions taking account of challenges faced in 21<sup>st</sup> century, through:
  - ✓ Widening opportunities for participation in, and successful completion of higher education;
  - ✓ Improving researcher careers;
  - ✓ Providing relevant and innovative study programmes and
  - ✓ Continuing to develop distinctive institutional research profiles
- 2) Underlining the necessary preconditions for fulfilling these tasks which are:
  - ✓ Strengthened autonomy to better serve society and
  - ✓ Increased and diversified income streams for financial sustainability
- 3) Irrespective of institutional mission making sure that all universities:
  - ✓ Enhance quality and improve transparency
  - ✓ Promote internationalization
  - ✓ Increase and improve the quality of mobility, and
  - ✓ Develop partnerships for strengthening their various missions

## Financial and Economic Crisis: Implications

Crucially, the first part of EUA Prague Declaration is a message to political leaders with proposals for immediate measures to address the crisis. The current crisis has brought into focus more sharply the need for Europe to invest more in higher education and research.

EUA believes that to underpin the continued dynamic development of the European Higher Education and Research Areas a Europe wide stimulus package is necessary. As a sign of forward thinking, commitment and solidarity EUA urges:

- I. investing urgently to avoid losing the present generation of young researchers;
- II. tapping unused potential in our populations by increasing lifelong learning commitments,
- III. investing in the upgrading of university facilities and campus infrastructure.

## How EUA is working with other main actors on its strategic goals

### (I) “Developing Partnerships”

- Europe’s universities are increasingly developing partnerships in their research and innovation missions and embracing the “open innovation model” of university/business cooperation and seeking to embed this in sound project management and improved intellectual property management reflecting respective interests.
- The “**Responsible Partnering Guidelines**” cover core areas that are crucial to university/industry collaboration concerning aligning interests, professional training and skills, consortia-building, intellectual property rights and patents, and finally importantly, building lasting relationships in collaborative research.
- Recognized as a pioneering European initiative in European Commission Communications and Recommendations on improving knowledge transfer and the management of intellectual property rights, and strongly recommended for further implementation by the Aho Report on “Creating an Innovative Europe”.
- Responsible Partnering Guidelines - a “living document” currently being revised in the light of further evidence from good practices and to address new issues such as the implications of the application of the State Aid rules for university/business research collaboration.

## (II) Opening the horizons of research careers and increasing the quality of mobility

Two EUA initiatives aimed to improve quality of research training and careers

### Example 1

- EUA has been examining a range of collaborative doctoral programmes across Europe conducted by universities together with industry/ business partners which have the aim of training researchers for non-academic research careers.
- Entitled “**DOC-CAREERS**” the work explores the origins of the collaborative doctoral programmes, whether government, university or industry-led, and examines the perspectives, expectations and experiences of the partners from university and industry and, not least, the doctoral candidates themselves.
- The value of the promotion and dissemination of good practices in such collaborative doctoral programmes, in particular on the inter-sectoral mobility achieved, the transferable skill components developed and the wider employment horizons opened, cannot be over-estimated in strengthening universities’ innovative capacity in the building of a competitive European Research Area.

## Opening the horizons of research careers and increasing the quality of mobility

### Example 2

- The results of the “DOC-CAREERS” project will be presented at the second annual conference of the **EUA Council for Doctoral Education (CDE)** to be held in June this year
- The EUA/CDE is a major attempt in the European context to create a forum for the development of doctoral programmes and schools which performs a similar function to the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) in the United States.
- The EUA/CDE provides a forum for exchange and best practice on the full range of key issues and concerns such as enhancing quality of supervision, sharing information and data, building European clusters of collaboration across doctoral schools, creating exchange mechanisms and mobility for doctoral candidates, university staff both academic and administrative.
- EUA/CDE should be the key, visible platform for dialogue with partners from public funding bodies, European, national and regional, and private industry who could provide further financial and structural support to improve the conditions of doctoral candidates and their training and widened career prospects.

### (III) Mobilising universities as research institutions to address 21<sup>st</sup> Century global economic challenges -Energy

- The EUA has recently accepted the invitation by the European Commission, (DG Research), to join as an observer, together with EUROHORCS, in the new European Energy Research Alliance (EERA) which has been launched in the framework of the EU SET-Plan and comprises of major national research institutes in energy technology research.
- EUA has decided to create a **“European Platform of Universities Engaged in Energy Research”** as a parallel mechanism for consultation and engagement by universities to that already established by the national research institutes.
- EUA hopes that this new European Platform can make a contribution to achieving the European policy goal of overcoming the fragmentation of research in this key field through bringing university-based research and postgraduate training programmes into the framework of the EERA.
- EUA sees EERA as an important pilot action in the potential development of the new instrument of “joint programming” within the “Ljubljana Process” in which university-based research needs to contribute and be strengthened.

## **Conclusion: A Challenging Future requires innovative approaches by main actors**

Thank you again for this first opportunity to offer EUA's views and I hope that this dialogue will continue.

Greater cooperation is certainly needed between universities and government ministries (European, national and regional), research councils and other public and private actors in working for improvement of the public funding, grant and contract conditions to enhance the attractiveness of Europe's universities as strong and autonomous research institutions contributing fully to the creation of a globally competitive European Research Area.



**Thank you for your attention**

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