

Towards the roll-out of the European Universities initiative

15 March 2021

This document follows from an informal discussion of the first 17 European Universities pilots on the roll-out of the European Universities initiative. It represents our contribution to the current policy discussions towards the future of European Universities, especially those at the level of the EU Member States in preparation of the Council conclusions foreseen on European Universities on 17-18 May 2021. This document has been endorsed by the 24 new European Universities

Global leadership and drivers of Europe's higher education transformation agenda

We welcome the prominence of the European Universities in the upcoming EU policy initiatives for education, research and innovation. Thanks to its essential focus on ambitious, in-depth transnational collaboration, the European Universities' initiative provides a unique opportunity for game changing leaps forward in the transformation of Europe's Higher Education sector. European Universities are key contributors to the world-leading role that Europe is seeking to play in education, research and innovation.

European Universities provide the long-term vision to drive forward the transformation agenda required to full harness the potential of Europe's Higher Education sector as global leader and to support the implementation of Europe's green and digital transition. To achieve this potential, adequate support - both financially and in terms of more flexible national legislation and frameworks for collaboration of Higher Education at European level – is required. Alignment between national authorities at European level is vital in this regard.

With their mission of steering education, research and innovation in a common direction that underpins Europe's knowledge as a foundation for democratic, resilient and inclusive societies and key European values of academic freedom, openness and scientific integrity,¹ European Universities are in a perfect position to drive sustainable impact on the Higher Education sector at large in Europe and the world.

Building on European Universities' commitment towards excellence, openness and inclusion - future instruments to support the roll-out of the initiative should be tailored to driving the global visibility of Europe's Higher Education sector. To ensure this outward looking approach to the rest of the world, we advocate that the roll-out of the European Universities initiative is also open and accessible to international partners beyond Erasmus+ Programme countries.

¹ [See Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research, adopted at the Ministerial Conference on the European Research Area on 20 October 2020 in Bonn](#)
[Rome Communiqué on the European Higher Education Areas, November 2020 \(eha2020rome.it\)](#)

From synergies to full integration of education, research and innovation for maximum impact

In their global mission to serve society - universities naturally integrate education, research and innovation. The missions of European Universities mirror this approach and brings it to transnational level. Adequate and integrated funding instruments are therefore required at European and national level to support this integration.

We welcome the fact that Horizon 2020 allocated dedicated budget to the European University pilots to top up the Erasmus+ funding and to kick-start their research and innovation dimension. Dealing with different instruments timelines and reporting structures for the two EU grants will – however - hamper efficiency and impact of European Universities in the longer run.

In this EU financial framework 2021-2027, the EU has a unique opportunity to promote true integration between education, research and innovation activities of European Universities - moving beyond simply encouraging synergies between them. In the short term, we call for ever closer coordination and co-development of the Erasmus and Horizon Europe programmes in support of European Universities. As European Universities, we advocate a single call for our roll-out that encompasses all missions of our activities.

To fulfil this integration between education, research and innovation in the current EU financial framework, the development, management and oversight of the EU funding instrument for the roll-out of European Universities should be carried out with a holistic overview of universities across all their missions. It is important to also ensure adequate investment at national level and encourage the alignment of these national cofunding measures at European level.

In the longer term, we advocate a move towards more sustainable block funding for European Universities to deliver all their activities across all their missions.

Call for co-creation with policy makers and stakeholders

We look forward to the upcoming Council conclusions on the European Universities initiative. EU Member States' commitment is required at the highest political level to ensure a successful follow-up from the European Universities' pilot phase. The European University Alliances look forward to be engaged in further discussions and processes.

The aim of the document is to provide our general input to the direction of the European Universities initiative. It represents a starting point for further discussion and co-creation with all actors on the future of the initiative - including the European Commission, Member States and the broader Higher Education stakeholder community.