

EUA Aarhus Declaration 2011

“Investing Today in Talent for Tomorrow”

European Commission President José Manuel Barroso told conference participants that universities have a key role to play in helping Europe exit the financial crisis. He underlined that the Commission’s plans for fiscal consolidation have singled out education, research and innovation as “growth friendly expenditure” and also as a key element in upcoming discussions on the EU budget post 2013.

European universities met in Aarhus from 12-15 April 2011 to discuss the centrality of nurturing greater numbers of talented individuals to the mission of universities and to securing Europe’s future as a dynamic competitive global region. In the context of the present financial and economic crisis, EUA underlines that developing talent depends on sustained investment in universities. For this reason conference participants reiterated our 2009 appeal to political leaders and decision makers to invest in education, research and innovation in the future EU budget for the period after 2013.

I. Combatting the global economic and financial crisis through investment in higher education and research

Reiterating EUA’s 2009 appeal to political leaders and decision makers

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.

The changed context 2011: Meeting the challenges of the EU 2020 agenda

3. **Universities – central to the success of the EU2020 agenda:** Europe cannot afford to run the risk of losing a generation of talented people, or of a serious decrease in research and innovation activity while our competitors are investing heavily in universities and the next generation of young people who will be the innovators of tomorrow. Europe's universities collectively add value to European society and the European economy. Looking forward to the discussion on the EU budget post 2013, the considerable achievements of the last decade should not be wasted. They need to be consolidated in future by prioritising higher education, research and innovation as every Euro spent at European level on universities will add value by bringing people together, pooling knowledge and creating synergies that could not be achieved at national level alone.

4. **Universities – addressing complex problems that need innovative solutions:** Higher education and research hold the key to the future. The world is facing unprecedented global challenges. These grand societal challenges, be it climate change, energy consumption, sustainability or combatting poverty, affect all aspects of our lives and are not contained by geographical borders or specific scientific disciplines. They require urgent attention, and European universities, working within a global research community, have a crucial role to play in addressing these challenges through their contribution to new knowledge, and to educating talented individuals to be creative and search for innovative solutions.

5. **Universities - smart people for smart growth requires long-term commitment:** universities need to be able to continue to invest in their future academic and research activities. Financial sustainability is conditional on reliable and sufficient public funding. This means redoubling overall efforts to reach the target of 3% investment in research and development and to invest at least 2% of GDP in higher education, as proposed by the European Commission. Such support will not only underpin the continued dynamic development of the European Higher Education Area and European Research Area that drive the activities of European universities, it will support 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.

6. **Universities – need financial sustainability to be able to keep investing in their future academic and research activities,** and thus to continue fulfilling their role in society. Financial sustainability is crucial and conditional on reliable, sufficient public funding, and the required autonomy to be able to explore additional funding options. Because public funding provides $\frac{3}{4}$ of the income structure of universities on average across Europe, complementary funding sources, even combined, do not have the potential to fully replace it. Therefore, public funding should be viewed as more than a

basis on which universities may develop additional income streams but rather as a condition for sustainability.

7. Universities - European commitment and added value: not only do universities in Europe cooperate among themselves, they are also united in the context of a common European project, and the ongoing construction of the European Higher Education Area and European Research Area. This means a common commitment, in an increasingly global context, to creating new knowledge and training people to be creative in terms of their personal development, their contribution to the economy and as global citizens. This is a common European endeavour and Europe's future will depend largely upon its capacity to increase substantially the number of highly-trained people across the continent and to attract others from abroad. The impact of demographic change in Europe in the years to come make this all the more urgent.

II. Investing today in talent for tomorrow

Preamble:

Nurturing talented individuals has always been central to the mission of universities and becomes ever more vital as knowledge becomes central to social and economic development, and as global competition for talent increases.

As European universities develop their own specific profiles, this requires renewed commitment to a 'community of purpose' that encompasses all elements of the university mission – teaching, research & service to society - and unites European universities in a common European system of higher education and research, balancing the need for competitiveness with that of enhanced cooperation, social cohesion and solidarity.

Making European universities attractive for talented individuals and being able to offer them the appropriate career opportunities also requires strengthened autonomy. It is essential to ensure that university leaders are able to take the necessary decisions, especially in financial and staffing matters, to attract, remunerate, motivate and retain talented individuals at all levels.

An action agenda:

Continued commitment to the strengthening of autonomy and specific institutional profiles:

1. ***Widening access and increasing capacity to respond to the needs of more diverse student populations:*** so that all learners with the potential to do so are able to benefit from higher education and that tomorrow's graduates from all three cycles have the skills and competences needed to make them employable in rapidly changing job markets. A starting point should be broad, flexible and adaptable Bachelor programmes that, for most disciplines provide a suitable entry point to the labour market and to all further learning.

2. ***Developing distinctive research portfolios***: a rich variety of unique environments that stimulate interdisciplinary approaches through project development, that are supported by competitive research funding, and strengthened by cooperation mechanisms through regional clustering and networking at the European level and by contributing to the creation of a global research community that takes account of the challenges facing all world regions.
3. ***Ensuring that university staff and students identify with the university and its specific mission*** as a basis for generating and maintaining a vibrant university environment, built on core university values, promoting the social responsibility of staff, researchers and students, balancing cooperation and competition, and open to the world thus fostering an all encompassing 'community of purpose'.

Clear institutional strategies that promote talent from an early stage

4. ***Strengthening the links between teaching and research from an early stage and building research capacity from the undergraduate level***: by breaking down barriers, making sure that teaching and research are connected in the curriculum. This also means thinking differently and starting early to attract children and young people, and also encouraging the further integration of lifelong learning into university missions and strategies in the years to come in order to ensure that universities and societies do not miss out on a huge pool of readily available talent.
5. ***Building attractive and transparent career structures, tracks and opportunities for all staff*** as well as appropriate and supportive working environments: through reconsidering traditional academic and administrative career paths and promoting interest in academic and scientific careers from an early age, promoting family-friendly policies and specific incentives to increase the number of women in academic, research and leadership positions, and, more generally, to identify and support future leaders.
6. ***Placing a special focus on doctoral education and training and prioritising the development of career opportunities for early stage researchers***, through further strengthening institutional support to structured doctoral education, thus assuming institutional responsibility for training through research, ensuring transparency of recruitment and promotion procedures, granting greater independence for post-doctoral researchers, and improving working conditions, in particular pension provision and other employee benefits adapted to researchers' careers.

7. **Developing and promoting the circulation of talent in order to enhance research capacity and bring new knowledge developed through contact with different cultures and ways of thinking:** mobility schemes and inter-institutional collaboration contribute to improving excellence and quality; mobility should include not only researchers, academic staff and students but also administrative staff so as to facilitate their communication with international researchers and include mobility between sectors, institutions and internationally. Structured opportunities should be provided, and efforts made to remove obstacles to the mobility of students, staff, and researchers at all stages in their careers, with a particular focus on improving the portability of grants.

Crosscutting policies underpinning talent development

8. **Strong leadership is required:** to ensure that coherent institutional policies are put in place and implemented across the university to promote talent development in all its dimensions. This requires engaging the university community to ensure its broad support and strategic plans that target the long-term development of the institution as well as the necessary political and financial stability.
9. **A clear internationalisation strategy:** enhancing collaboration, partnership and presence both within Europe and at global level is of particular importance in attracting and retaining talented individuals, in promoting a more international outlook among students and staff alike, and in promoting active solidarity and cooperation.
10. **An overall commitment to a quality culture and to transparency:** underpinning all institutional strategies for talent development there must be a strong and shared commitment to quality and openness at all levels, with the appropriate institutional processes and procedures in place.
11. **Understanding the importance of partnerships:** promoting dialogue with, and engaging a variety of stakeholders at different levels, ensures impact on society, and the development and dissemination of local knowledge in an international context. It contributes to talent development by offering benefits to the individual, the university community and society. It requires particular efforts being made to facilitate more and better interaction between the university and its local community. Knowledge moves with people, and thus increasing the exchange of young researchers and promoting mixed career profiles between academia and industry is of particular importance.