

**Informal Council for Competitiveness  
4th May 2009, Prague, Czech Republic.**

**Block I. Discussion on “Connected and Functioning Knowledge  
Triangle – a condition for the achievement of Vision 2020”**

**Speech - Professor Jean-Marc Rapp, President of the European  
University Association (EUA), Brussels.**

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Minister Liska, Ministers, Commissioner, Ladies and Gentlemen,

*1. Introductory Remarks*

First of all, I would like to thank you for this invitation which marks the first occasion that the EUA has been asked to address the Informal Competitiveness Council. Your invitation has been welcomed warmly by the EUA's Board and Council and is seen as an important gesture in bringing forward Europe's Universities as stakeholders in the policy-making dialogue on creating an effective European Research Area.

The theme of today's discussion to which I have been invited to contribute is a crucial one – the building and deepening of the relationships between the main public and private actors, universities, research institutions, research funding agencies and industry/business enterprises. Since its establishment in 2001 in Brussels, EUA has been working actively to achieve a working dialogue with the main actors concerned with building both a European Higher Education and Research Area that is competitive as a global region. In fact, EUA's “raison d'être” has been to develop a strong and independent voice for Europe's universities as main actors in the policy dialogue at the European level.

Please allow me to provide you with a few facts about EUA. Its membership represents 34 European Rectors' Conferences and over 800 individual research based higher education institutions across the 46 countries. EUA works closely and actively also with several smaller university networks whose members are also individual members of EUA. As a non-governmental membership-based organisations (financed by membership subscriptions), it performs essentially two roles of (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.

## *2. From Leuven to Prague*

A major example of EUA's work in performing this dual role since its establishment has been its contribution as an independent stakeholder in the "Bologna Process" of European higher education reform. In fact, I come here to speak to you today after addressing the Inter-governmental meeting of Ministers of Higher Education last week in Leuven, Belgium, on the progress made, and challenges still to be tackled, by Europe's universities in implementing the reforms in line with their specific profiles and missions.

I would like to mention here that an important current aspect of EUA's contribution to the Bologna process has been its extensive work on the "Third Cycle" of the doctorate level through empirical evidence provided on the rapid development of doctoral programmes and schools seeking to offer greater critical mass, enhanced supervision and widened employment opportunities in both public and private sectors in research careers and highly skilled professions. The core message of EUA's work on the "Third Cycle" is that 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.

## *3. EUA Prague Declaration*

For EUA the city of Prague is clearly an important catalyst in building consultations between stakeholders. In addition to this invitation to the Informal Competitiveness Council, Prague hosted in March this year the EUA's 5<sup>th</sup> Convention of Higher Education Institutions which took place at Charles University and to which Minister Liska kindly addressed the opening session. The Prague Convention brought together over 500 university leaders and included plenary and parallel sessions involving stakeholders from industry discussing research careers and research collaboration with external partners. It resulted in the "Prague Declaration" entitled "European Universities – Looking Forward with Confidence" which identifies "10 Success Factors" for European Universities to strive towards in the next decade. I understand that copies of the Prague Declaration have been made available for delegations here at today's meeting. In the coming months, the EUA will continue its work in developing specific action plans for each of the 10 key factors identified in the Prague Declaration with recommendations at the university institutional, national and European level.

## *4. Financial and Economic Crisis: Implications*

In Prague, EUA discussed not only the future of the European Higher Education and Research Area but also the present financial and economic crisis and its impact. For this reason the first part of our 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. Universities have for many years sought to diversify their funding streams beyond their core public funding. This has been

particularly necessary in their research and development activities where external funding sources, both public and private, account for an ever greater proportion of their research budgets. As the “background note” for today’s meeting suggests, the effect of the present economic crisis may well lead to less private investment in education, research and development and hence calls for greater efficiency in spending as well as a higher allocation by the public sector.

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

Looking to the longer term strategic agenda for universities we see our successful future development in:

- 1) Commitment to our core missions taking account of the challenges facing us in the 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

EUA believes that taking forward these elements will enable universities to consolidate and shape the future development of the European Higher Education and Research Area.

#### *5. How EUA is working with other stakeholders on these strategic goals*

Drawing upon the “10 Success Factors” for Europe’s Universities that are listed in the Prague Declaration, I would like to focus on those factors that bear a strong relation to the subject of today’s discussion on the relationship between main actors and the development of human resources in research and development.

##### *(i) Developing Partnerships*

Firstly, 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. Since 2005, when EUA, together with the European Industrial Research Management Association (EIRMA), the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO), and ProtonEurope (the European Association of knowledge transfer offices) published “Responsible Partnering: A guide to better practices for collaborative research and knowledge transfer between science and industry”, this joint initiative has been disseminated through several conferences and workshops validating good practices and their take-up by universities and businesses both large and small.

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. The guidelines have been recognized as a pioneering European initiative in European Commission Communications and Recommendations on improving knowledge transfer and the management of intellectual property rights and were strongly recommended for further implementation by the Aho Report on “Creating an Innovative Europe”. The Responsible Partnering Guidelines are, therefore, a “living document” which is 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. The guidelines have provided a focused and practice-orientated approach to research collaboration for discussion and exchange with industry at key regional and European events such as the European Business Summit and the University-Business Forum.

*(ii) Opening the horizons of research careers and increasing the quality of mobility*

I would like to mention here two specific activities where EUA has been strengthening relationships with other main actors to seek to improve research careers. Firstly, building upon the framework of Responsible Partnering collaboration with EIRMA and with the support of the European Commission, DG Research, 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. With over 50% of doctorate holders in Europe moving into careers beyond the academic sector, the importance of such collaborative programmes are growing. 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.

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 – which is the second major EUA initiative aimed to improve the quality of research training and research careers that I would wish to draw your attention to. 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. Since its launch in 2008 the EUA/CDE has already attracted the membership of almost 150 universities who wish to develop and/or strengthen structured doctoral programmes as a strategic mission priority.

*(iii) Creating focused platforms for dialogue with other main actors*

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. The EUA/CDE offers also a framework for universities who wish to strengthen the international dimension of their doctoral schools by its dialogue already established with the CGS and other regional associations in Canada, China, Asia, Australia and Latin America through convening international events.

EUA has envisaged also that the CDE should be the key, visible meeting-place 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. The first CDE Conference in June 2008 involved a dialogue with Professor Fotis Kafatos, in his capacity as Chairman of the European Research Council (ERC), and next month, Professor John Wood, Chairman of the European Research Area Board (ERAB) is similarly invited to reflect on ERAB’s vision on future measures needed to improve research career prospects. CDE events also provide a platform for dialogue with industry, for example, with Nestlé and Renault discussing their recruitment policy towards doctoral holders and qualities and skills required. Finally, and importantly, the CDE has also been the framework for developing relations with EUROHORCS/ESF with EUA as a partner in the Member Organisations Forum on Research Careers which will present its recommendations later this year.

*(iv) 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. As its operational framework within the EERA, the 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 through the building of this new European Platform it can make a contribution to achieving the European policy goal of overcoming the fragmentation of research in this key field and furthermore to bringing

university-based research and postgraduate training programmes into the EERA. Most importantly also, the 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. The initial phase of establishing the European Platform has been achieved with National Rectors Conferences from 18 EU countries providing expert advisers on which EUA will build and expand in the coming months to tackle this exciting and demanding challenge.

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

As a final remark, I want to 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.

Prague, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009