UNIVERSITIES IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF EUA

EUA Input Statement to the Bologna Ministerial Conference, Bucharest, Romania, 26-27 April 2012

EUA
European University Association

I. INTRODUCTION

Europe's strength is that it has a large number of universities and other higher education institutions with different traditions, missions, and specific profiles. Universities are 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 is a competitive advantage for Europe and affords universities the opportunity to become strategic motors of local and regional development across the continent through their key role in the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation, and their potential to attract both domestic and international researchers, staff and students.

At the same time, Europe's universities are increasingly both European and international in their missions and activities, in response to societal demand for new knowledge, generated through education, research and innovation, and the need to tackle the "grand challenges", whose nature, causes and effects go beyond national boundaries. European and national policy frameworks, funding schemes and instruments for higher education and research need both to reflect and support this reality, and to enable European and global responses and solutions. Renewed efforts to make the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) a reality for students, teachers and administrators in universities across Europe are particularly important in these challenging times.

This statement sets out EUA's priorities for the consolidation of the EHEA (Part II), drawing on the action undertaken by the Association in recent years (Part III).

II. PRIORITES FOR THE FUTURE

EUA considers that ensuring the successful development of the EHEA in the coming years requires:

1. Enhancing partnership between governments and stakeholders

In the present economic climate, partnership and shared commitment between governments and stakeholders are essential to ensure that objectives are met and implementation on the ground takes place in all key policy areas for the EHEA, be it lifelong learning, improved and diversified access and attainment or enhancing quality in European higher education.

2. Addressing governance and funding in the EHEA

Europe's diverse higher education institutions need both sufficient resources and a long-term planning horizon to invest in their future academic and research activities. Financial sustainability depends on reliable, sufficient public funding and on universities being able to explore successfully complementary funding options in line with their different missions and profiles.

Europe's universities also need sufficient autonomy in terms of their internal organisational structures, academic affairs, finances and staffing to be able to implement successfully the ambitious goals set. This requires further consolidation of the national reforms undertaken in many countries over the last decade that have seen increased autonomy and delegation of strategic and financial responsibility to universities.

The way higher education funding systems are structured and financed is likely to have a significant impact on a wide range of issues, as mentioned already in the Bologna Implementation Report. EUA therefore proposes opening a dialogue on the governance and funding of higher education in the EHEA through the sharing of good practice in the interests of all, for example, on priority topics such as discussion of funding incentives to improve access.

3. Promoting the 'engaged' university

Europe's universities are increasingly acting as strategic motors of regional development, collaborating with a range of stakeholders including business and industry, local communities, national and regional administrations. It is crucial to provide further encouragement to universities to become fully involved in the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation, as well as in promoting interdisciplinarity and entrepreneurship. The resulting improvement in skills and competences is essential for enhancing the employment prospects of both traditional students and lifelong learners. In this context, EUA underlines the importance to universities of being able to track the progress of their students and graduates as part of their institutional impact assessment procedures in order to promote better learning, as well as provide improved and more targeted management and services.

4. Consolidating the Bologna stakeholder model in the revision of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) in the EHEA

EUA, along with its E4 partners, believes that it is critical that the ownership of the ESG remains with the stakeholders, and thus that ministers give a mandate to the E4 group to present proposals for the revision of the ESG. This should be done in full consultation with the broader stakeholder community and the representatives of the EHEA governments. Building upon and making full use of the experience of universities,

students and quality assurance agencies with the implementation of the ESG since 2005 is the only means of arriving at a European consensus on the way forward, fully discussed with all partners and which also respects the stakeholder model developed and promoted through the Bologna Process. Equally important, this is also the only way of ensuring that the ESG are embedded in institutional realities and have broad ownership among those who have the institutional responsibility for their operational implementation.

5. Increasing synergies between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA)

Doctoral education and training remains the key link between the EHEA and the ERA. The ongoing development of doctoral schools will contribute to improving quality and transparency in research training and to sustainable collaborations with international partners and the non-academic sectors. At the same time there is still much to be done to enhance further the quality of doctoral programmes and improve career opportunities for young researchers. The point of departure for future action must be the common understanding of the nature of doctoral education in universities across Europe as reflected in the 2010 "Salzburg II Recommendations".

6. Building a European higher education identity in the world

The growing internationalisation of European universities and the need to address together the global 'grand challenges' facing our societies make it essential to develop further the global dimension of the EHEA. Europe has a responsibility not only to share both its positive and negative experiences with global partners, but to learn from the experience, approaches and solutions offered by other world regions. Moreover, the synergies between the wider internationalisation strategies of European universities and their commitment to collaboration and exchange within Europe have not yet been fully explored.

7. Promoting and increasing the added value of mobility

Mobility of students, teachers and researchers, is important for realising several of the core objectives of the EHEA and the proposal to establish an overall mobility target for the EHEA sends an important signal. It is essential that the role of HEIs in driving mobility is both recognised and supported, and that governments and institutions work together to remove the many obstacles to mobility that still exist. In order to be effective the targets set must also take account of different institutional missions and ensure that individual institutions have both the scope and the means to develop strategies adapted to their varied needs and student populations.

III. EUA ACTION IN SUPPORT OF THE FURTHER MODERNISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND OF INDIVIDUAL UNIVERSITIES

As a European organisation representing universities, EUA addresses teaching and learning mainly through focusing on the strategies and processes needed at institutional level to promote student-centred learning and ensure the proper implementation of the Bologna reforms. This requires that the framework conditions related to autonomy and funding are in place. On this basis it is up to each institution to manage the teaching and learning process in relation to its own mission and profile.

EUA also advocates for the necessary inter-linkage of the Bologna tools and action lines, precisely because this has not necessarily been clear to all institutional actors and students. EUA's present work focuses on encouraging member institutions to build strategies for lifelong learning and to improve employability, on enhancing quality assurance and transparency, on promoting internationalisation and mobility, and on building bridges between the EHEA and the ERA through a continued focus on doctoral education.

1. Support for mission diversification and increased institutional autonomy

The outcomes of EUA's 2010 Annual Conference – "Diversities and Commonalities – the changing face of Europe's universities" – demonstrated the progress universities are making in introducing more flexible and diverse career opportunities for staff; developing and sustaining a wider range of research portfolios and partnerships; diversifying funding sources; and ensuring increased capacity to respond to the needs of more diverse student populations.

University autonomy is crucial in this context and in 2011 EUA published its second study "University Autonomy in Europe II – The Scorecard"[1] on this topic. This new study includes scorecards ranking and rating 28 European higher education systems in each of four distinct areas of autonomy: organisational, financial, staffing and academic autonomy. The intention is to engage all higher education stakeholders in debate in order to improve national higher education systems.

2. Promoting adequate and sustainable funding for higher education

EUA regularly monitors developments in the public funding of higher education across Europe, via a public funding observatory webpage[2] that includes a "monitoring map" where HE systems are grouped according to the data collected, and the evolution of their public funding since 2008. 2011 also saw the publication of a major new study entitled, "Financially Sustainable Universities II: European Universities Diversifying Income Streams" (EUDIS)[3]. This report underlines that universities need both sufficient resources and a long-term planning horizon to invest in their future academic and research activities, and thus to continue fulfilling their role in society. It also highlights that financial sustainability depends on reliable, sufficient public funding, and on the autonomy and support necessary to explore successfully complementary funding options.

EUA believes that the Bologna Process should take account of the importance of, and engage in, further dialogue on institutional diversification, of increased institutional autonomy and of sustainable funding for universities as these are all crucial to the successful development of the EHEA.

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[1] www.eua.be/university-autonomy-in-europe
[2] www.eua.be/public-funding-observatory
[3] www.eua.be/eudis

3. Broad ownership of the change process

EUA participates actively on behalf of universities in the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), the BFUG Board and in all major working groups established to follow up on key topics identified by Ministers, and ensures that the outcomes are widely disseminated to its members.

EUA believes that broad ownership of the change process among stakeholders at all levels is crucial to the successful further implementation of the Bologna reforms and thus to the development of the EHEA. Therefore, due attention should be paid to establishing and consolidating stakeholder buy-in at institutional, national and European levels in the years to come.

4. Lifelong learning and employability

EUA's "Charter on Lifelong Learning"[4] in 2008 underlines that meeting the objectives set requires a shared commitment and support from governments, HEIs, social partners and other relevant stakeholders. For its part, EUA has focused on investigating the diversity of elements that can be subsumed under the term 'Lifelong Learning' (LLL) and on contributing to institutional strategic development. The results of the most recent EUA project (SIRUS)[5] on this topic have recently been published.

The results of the SIRUS project demonstrate the progress being made by universities on LLL. Institutions from all over Europe are developing dedicated strategic approaches that correspond to their specific needs. Increasingly, such strategies are also being embedded in the broader concept of the "engaged university", thus ensuring increased impact both for society and for the institutions themselves.

The growing demand for higher education-related lifelong learning, as a result of both labour market and demographic change opens up considerable potential for further socio-economic development. At the same time, providing opportunities for lifelong learning also contributes significantly to the personal and professional development of citizens, enhancing quality of life and thus also helping to attract and retain talent. However, extending provision also requires the appropriate policy frameworks and funding as indicated in the 2008 Charter.

EUA believes that the development of European, national and institutional frameworks and incentives allowing universities to engage with society and to provide accessible and attractive lifelong learning opportunities should be further explored through the Bologna Process. This can only be realised through a shared commitment and support from governments, HEIs, social partners and other relevant stakeholders. Joint European approaches will enhance the quality and success of this endeavour, and render it internationally attractive.

EUA is also carrying out a project, entitled "TRACKIT"[6] which is investigating how far it is possible to follow students' progress and graduates' success on the labour market. As yet, there appears to have been little significant discussion on this topic, despite the Bologna reforms or efforts made in the context of the EU Modernisation Agenda. For this reason, EUA, together with its partners, is carrying out a survey in 31 European countries, with a view to identifying a broad range of different "tracking" approaches. First findings confirm that, in addition to national data being collected, it would be important for universities to develop the means to track their students and graduates, in order to promote better learning, improved management and services.

More generally, EUA is encouraging universities to consider how they can improve their collaboration with a range of stakeholders including employers, local communities, national and regional administrations, in order to improve the skills and competences, and thus the employment prospects of their graduates, including their PhD holders. This will require careful monitoring of such partnerships through the collection of the necessary data and information in particular on student and graduate performance.

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[4] http://www.eua.be/typo3conf/ext/bzb_securelink/pushFile.php?cuid=2715&file=fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/EUA_Charter_Eng_LY.pdf
[5] Shaping Inclusive and Responsive University Strategies (SIRUS), http://www.eua.be/pubs/Engaging_in_Lifelong_Learning.pdf
[6] Tracking Learners' and Graduates' Progression Paths, www.eua.be/trackit

5. Quality assurance and transparency

Quality is at the heart of the EHEA, with all countries having committed to supporting the development of quality assurance (QA) at institutional, national and European level. The Berlin Ministerial Conference in 2003 concluded that the main responsibility for QA lies at institutional level, and, in 2005 in Bergen, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) were adopted, on the basis of a report and proposals presented by the E4 group.

Commitment to enhancing quality is central to EUA's work in support of institutional development and improvement, and to its role as the representative body for universities at European level. Thus EUA is active in the field both as an Association on behalf of its members and through the E4 partnership – with quality assurance agencies (ENQA), students' unions (ESU) and other higher education institutions (EURASHE) – that has developed over the years as an informal platform of the main stakeholders in quality assurance at European level. EUA was one of the founding members of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) and continues to support its operation as a member of EQAR, through its representative in the Executive Board and by nominating two members for the Register Committee.

In 2011 the E4 carried out a major project[7] mapping the implementation of the ESG from the perspective of each organisation, with a view to reaching a common opinion on the need for an update or revision of the ESG in the coming years. The outcomes of the report were presented in January 2012 and resulted in a joint recommendation of the E4 to governments for the revision of the ESG. EUA members, along with the other E4 partners, concluded the ESG have served their purpose well and contributed to the development of a European framework for quality, but that there is room for clarification and updating to take account of developments since 2005, and propose to address this task together in the next few years.

EUA, along with its E4 partners, believes that it is critical that ownership of the ESG remains with the stakeholders, as this is the only means of arriving at a European consensus, fully discussed with all partners, thus also respecting the stakeholder model developed and promoted through the Bologna Process. It is also the only way of ensuring that the ESG are embedded in institutional realities and have broad ownership among those who have the ultimate institutional responsibility for ensuring their implementation.

EUA also supports members in developing internal quality systems and provides multiple opportunities for peer-learning among members. There have been many projects on this crucial topic over the years, the latest of which has resulted in a report published in 2011 – Examining Quality Culture in European Higher Education Institutions[8] – that identifies the key factors that help to create a "quality culture" in Europe's universities as well as taking stock of existing practices in internal QA. The lessons learnt from EUA's work in QA show that the most effective internal QA is: context-sensitive taking account of different organisational cultures, closely linked to institutional strategic priorities, effective internal decision-making processes and structures, and uses a combination of several tools to triangulate information on quality.

Further to this, the European Quality Assurance Forum[9] (EQAF), which EUA organises with the E4 group, has become a landmark event in European QA as it provides a unique platform for all stakeholders to discuss the latest developments and trends in QA. The 2011 meeting was hosted by the University of Antwerp and Artesis University College Antwerp, Belgium, and brought together more than 400 experts in the field from across Europe and beyond.

This was also an opportunity for EUA to present the results of its work on transparency tools/rankings to an international QA audience. In response to demand from its members, EUA set up a project in 2009 to review the methodologies of the main international university rankings and other ongoing projects seeking to measure university performance. In June 2011, the first EUA report on "Global University Rankings and Their Impact"[10] was published. This was an occasion for EUA to clarify the methodologies used by existing rankings, some of their "unwanted consequences", and possibilities for improving the transparency of such initiatives. The results of the review were presented at a special rankings seminar in Brussels and were widely picked up by the international media. A second report will be published at the end of 2012.

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[7] www.eua.be/map-esg
[8] www.eua.be/eqc
[9] www.eua.be/qa-forum
[10] http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications_homepage_list/Global_University_Rankings_and_Their_Impact.sflb.ashx

6. Developing and supporting mobility

Mobility is important both for the development of the EHEA and for its global linkages. International cooperation and exchange have always been important for universities, and hence the importance of mobility of teachers, researchers and students. For the EHEA, increasing mobility is both a goal in itself and a means to increase the skills, competences and employability of graduates and young researchers. The increased focus on mobility underlines the need for institutions to develop coherent institutional strategies adapted to their specific missions and to address the many existing barriers to mobility, in particular the continued problems concerning the recognition of the study abroad period. For this reason EUA is participating in a project to develop a 'Manual for the Higher Education Institutions' that is being co-ordinated by the Dutch NARIC.

EUA is addressing these issues through an EC-funded project, entitled "MAUNIMO"[11] that is exploring the challenges faced by institutions not only in collecting data but in generating a strategic vision for mobility. Together with its national rectors' conference members, EUA is also looking at how (national) political agendas are influencing the ways in which institutions promote and support mobility. It emerges that mobility is a multi-faceted concept, and that the drivers and effects of short-term student mobility, degree mobility, or staff mobility, for example, are varied. The initial lessons learned from MAUNIMO demonstrate the importance universities attach to being able to develop a clearer institutional view of the different types of mobility taking place across the institution, how they interrelate, and their different purposes.

This work has highlighted the following issues that need to be addressed as a matter of priority:

- There are major concerns that mobility, and thus the vast range of learning and personal development benefits it brings, still depends, to a large extent, on students' individual economic and social backgrounds, thus resulting in unequal learning opportunities.
- Related to this, the availability of mobility grants and other funding opportunities are severely limited in some countries.
- While ideally mobility should be balanced between countries this should not stifle or hamper mobility.
- Any mobility target set for incoming international students should be applied cautiously, taking account of the message it sends to international partners. In other words, increasing mobility should not only be seen as a means to attract the best and the brightest, but also to promote mutual exchange and to contribute to global development and partnership.
- There are still significant difficulties in measuring and assessing staff mobility, which suggests that while statistics can be enhanced, a stronger emphasis should be placed on sharing initiatives and good practice at national and institutional level.

Professional recognition and mobility

EUA is contributing to the ongoing discussions on the amendment of Directive 2005/36/EC, which regulates the recognition of professional qualifications in the EU's internal market. EUA contributed the university viewpoint during the consultation process which preceded the publication of draft legislation in December 2011 with the aim, throughout this process, of trying to ensure a better alignment between the EHEA and the EU Directive on professional recognition.

EUA welcomes the explicit inclusion of ECTS in the proposal now on the table as well as the commitment to putting in place conditions that will allow a learning-outcomes approach to be adopted in the medium term. EUA will continue to collaborate with all partners in this process, given the importance for EUA members of ensuring a better alignment between the EU regulation governing professional recognition and the frameworks and tools introduced as part of the ongoing Bologna reforms.

Researchers' mobility

EUA is also actively engaged as a European stakeholder in the current EC-level expert groups and policy-learning activities established as part of the creation of the ERA, and specifically to achieve an internal market for researchers, more freedom of career movement for researchers, greater portability of grants and the creation of supplementary pension funds. EUA welcomes these initiatives, and also believes that a

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[11] Mapping University Mobility of Staff and Students, www.maunimo.eu

deeper understanding of mobility in the university environment is also required. This should address the link between mobility and capacity building, related to both European and international recruitment, as well as the link to human resource development more generally, and to the specific career-related mobility needs of all staff.

In conclusion, mobility is important in relation to many of the core elements of the EHEA. It is critical that the role of HEIs in driving mobility is both recognised and supported. There is a need for interaction/joint commitment with governments to remove the many obstacles that still exist. Progress on mobility targets will have to rely ultimately on institutional strategies and concrete initiatives.

7. Bridging the EHEA and the ERA – the role of doctoral education

Linking the EHEA and the ERA is crucial from the perspective of universities. From the outset, the key linking element has been that of doctoral education and the related question of young researchers' careers. It is an area where universities have led enormous change over the last decade. The quality of doctoral programmes and the improvement of young researchers' careers are central to universities and critically important in building synergies between the EHEA and the ERA.

Doctoral education was formally incorporated in the Bologna Process as the 'Third Cycle' in 2003, building upon the results of an EUA project on this topic that identified the need for change. This led to the identification of common principles in 2005 (Salzburg Principles[12]) that were included in the Bergen Communiqué. In 2010 EUA launched a new project to take forward these principles in the light of developments since 2005, building on best practice. The "Salzburg II Recommendations" were adopted in 2010 and have also been endorsed by the European Commission. Hence the focus for EUA in 2011 was on their implementation in universities.

EUA's ongoing work, in particular through its Council for Doctoral Education[13] (EUA-CDE), shows that the expansion of doctoral schools throughout the EHEA, and their critical diversity, takes into account different national contexts and institutional goals and orientations, as well as being a sign of increased institutional engagement in doctoral education. The ongoing development of doctoral schools contributes to quality and transparency in research training and to sustainable collaborations with international partners and the non-academic sectors.

The continued reforms over the last decade have resulted in a common understanding of the nature of doctoral education across Europe; this common understanding must be the point of departure for any further discussions. There is also a broad consensus that doctoral candidates should be recognised as professionals within their institutions regardless of their contractual status.

EUA has also focused specifically on the role of accountability in the new structures being established for doctoral education in a project entitled 'Accountable Research Environments for Doctoral Education' (ARDE)[14]. Initial outcomes confirm once more the strong pace of reform in doctoral education across Europe and the close attention being paid by universities to assuring the quality of doctoral programmes. The ARDE project also illustrates how quality assurance for doctoral education is necessarily different to that of the first and second cycles, given the central role of original research and the limited taught components.

Furthermore, evidence both from the work of the EUA-CDE and from the findings of EUA's project – "DOC-CAREERS Collaborative University-Industry Doctoral Education recommendations"[15] – points to the substantial progress being made in overcoming the remaining "bottlenecks" identified in relation to doctoral education. These include the one-to-one doctoral candidate-supervisor relationship and the weak emphasis on the role of mentorship; lack of open recruitment procedures and incentives to move between the academic and the private sector.

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[12] http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Salzburg_Conclusions.1108990538850.pdf
[13] www.eua.be/cde
[14] www.eua.be/arde
[15] http://www.eua.be/eua-work-and-policy-area/research-and-innovation/doctoral-education/doc-careers-ii/

8. Global Engagement

European universities are increasingly global in their outlook and activities and the trend toward regionalisation in higher education is accelerating around the world, from Asia to Africa to Latin America. There is no doubt that Europe and the EHEA have been an inspiration in this sense and, in many ways, a reference point.

EUA, through its extensive interregional dialogue and project work with other regions, has acquired a sound understanding of how different regions respond to Bologna and of the continued need for dialogue between different stakeholders. EUA has also learned that the Bologna reforms are context-specific; and while practice can be shared with partners in Africa, Asia, North and Latin America, these regions have their own particularities and needs. Hence the EHEA is not for export, but rather a fascinating and still-developing case study for regional higher education convergence in response to globalisation.

EUA is sharing European experience with Bologna through various dialogues and projects:

- ALFA PUENTES[16]: a project to support the capacity of Latin American university associations to contribute to regional integration processes, particularly in a sub-regional context, where the focus is on qualifications frameworks, regional QA procedures and a mobility strategy;
- Europe-Africa Quality Connect[17]: where EUA is entertaining a dialogue about quality assurance with the Association of African Universities and their members. This is underpinned by institutional evaluations to African universities based on EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme;
- CODOC[18]: Cooperation on doctoral education between Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia, a project to explore reform in doctoral education in different regions, fostering partnerships and collaboration in the context of an emerging global knowledge and research community, driven by national competition and funding provision, but focused on developing shared responses to global challenges;
- Transatlantic Dialogue: EUA with its counterparts in the USA (ACE) and Canada (AUCC) holds a Transatlantic Dialogue every two years, bringing together university leaders from Europe, the US and Canada. The 2012 Dialogue will be held in Salzburg, Austria, and address the question of "Leading the globally-engaged institution – new Directions, Dilemmas and Pitfalls".

In addition, EUA seeks active participation in interregional dialogue processes launched by the European Commission and partner regions, such as the ASEM Education Process and the Africa-EU Partnership, in order to ensure that, as in the Bologna Process, the voice of universities is heard.

At the same time the concept of internationalisation is evolving, requiring institutions to keep pace with and respond strategically to the rapid changes affecting their teaching and research missions. This changing reality has been addressed by EUA in particular in the context of its 'Access to Success' project[19] that focused on Europe-Africa cooperation and resulted in a White Paper focusing on the role of universities in balancing development cooperation for mutual benefit and maintaining a competitive edge. On the basis of experience hitherto, EUA will, in the course of 2012, reconsider its own strategy for 'European internationalisation' so as to be able to contribute to strategic policy development and to improved institutional practice.

In conclusion, EUA attaches great importance to the further development of the Global Dimension Strategy for the EHEA. Europe has a responsibility not only to share its experiences with global partners, but to learn from experiences, different approaches and solutions offered by other world regions in their endeavour to serve society, at local and global level.

Brussels, 3 April 2012

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[16] Building Capacity of University Associations in fostering Latin American regional integration, http://alfapuentes.org/portal
[17] www.qaconnect-africa.eu
[18] www.codoc-project.eu
[19] www.eua.be/access-to-success

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 47 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 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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Education and Culture DG
Lifelong Learning Programme