



## **EUA Response to the EU Consultation Document on the Future Development of The European Union Education, Training and Youth Programmes after 2006**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The EUA, on behalf of both its **national representatives (34 National Rectors Conferences)** and its **over 600 individual institutional members** welcomes the opportunity to comment on the future of European Union education and training programmes after 2006.

2. Europe's universities have been key players in the first and second generation of EU programmes and believe that in the future, taking into account

- the strategic goals for Europe agreed at the Councils held in Lisbon and Barcelona and the recognised importance of education, training and research in reaching these goals
- the particular role of the universities in creating a Europe of knowledge as clearly underlined in the Commission Communication on "The role of universities in the Europe of knowledge"<sup>1</sup>
- the widely recognised importance of the Bologna Process and the EU support already provided towards reaching the goal of realising a European Higher Education by 2010
- the unique characteristic of higher education institutions as organisations with a European mission fulfilling multiples functions across all countries and regions of Europe

future EU programme should recognise, and build on more widely than in the past, their pivotal function as institutions at the centre of the development of a knowledge society in Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION, The role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge (COM(2003) 58 final)

## II. A new generation of EU programmes – one framework programme

3. EUA believes that consistent with the move from a myriad of small programmes in the late 1980's to a structuring and concentration exercise with the introduction of SOCRATES, LEONARDO and YOUTH, the opportune moment has come to create an overarching 'framework programme for education and training' complimenting the existing research framework programme, and providing the 'second pillar' of support to the development of a European area of knowledge.

4. We propose that a framework programme for education and training be based on common horizontal thematic objectives, as well as a number of cross-cutting actions. The programme should target first and foremost those institutions/organisations (and their students) responsible for delivering education and training (universities, schools, colleges etc..) across the EU.

### II. 1 Structure and Types of Action

5. In order to encompass all levels of education and training the new programme should support European cooperation activities taking a matrix approach and including a range of thematic actions for support, which draw on the future objectives of education and training systems that have been agreed by Member States, and include at the same time a series of cross-cutting actions.

6. From a higher education perspective, and EUA as the representative body of European universities limits itself to commenting on those actions which concern higher education, the general thematic priorities/objectives should include: innovation, knowledge transfer, lifelong learning, elearning, language/diversity, quality enhancement/governance & management and the European dimension. The main cross cutting/transversal actions should relate to cooperation, networking and mobility as well as to cooperation with Third Countries.

### II.2 Principles for action in higher education

7. *We believe that the goal of creating a Europe of knowledge requires investing more significantly than in the past in higher education*, and suggest designing programmes and actions based upon the following principles:

- **based on the Bologna Process:** higher education actions should take account of the agreed Bologna Process Action Lines (which includes lifelong learning and therefore also the need to link up to the Copenhagen process for vocational education and training)
- **bridging the divide to research:** ensure complementarity of action, and where appropriate concrete links/permeability with Framework Programme actions, e.g. in respect of mobility as within the Marie Curie Programme and in Networks of Excellence; make use of the fact that new programmes in both education and research will start in 2006/2007 - it would make sense to design two

complementary and interactive framework programmes which could create a real momentum for progress

- **bringing in Third Countries:** actions with third countries should also be linked into this context, bearing in mind the objectives set for the Bologna process, and more generally, in terms of attractivity and competitiveness (cf ERASMUSWORLD proposals), and the need to support reform and development with near neighbours as in TEMPUS which should therefore continue in the future. The aim should also be for complementarity with other initiatives such as Alban or Asia Link as they all involve university networks. It should be possible for institutions in 'near neighbouring' countries, ie TEMPUS countries, both to participate as partners in European networks and to benefit from developmental support as appropriate.
- **Building on institutions:** actions should target institutions and their students as the key actors in the system without which it cannot function properly

### **III. Programme design, organisation and action lines for Higher Education**

#### **III.1 Design and organisation**

8. EUA thus believes that future EU actions should be targeted towards and thus organised around the core institutions without which the Union's educational systems cannot function, namely its institutions: schools, vocational training establishments of all kinds, colleges, universities and other higher education institutions and their students. Thus, within an overall framework programme, with its thematic priorities and crosscutting actions, one key component should be support for higher education institutions in the framework of the Bologna Process and the creation of the European Higher Education Area.

#### **III. 2 Key Actions**

9. We believe that the type of actions proposed by the present programmes can broadly be continued in the new framework, i.e. information actions, pilot projects, networking and mobility actions. However, future priorities should be closely linked in each component to furthering Bologna Process objectives at European level.

10. Given the continuing commitment to widened access to higher education across Europe we believe that the **promotion of mobility and the improvement of the structures for mobility** should remain a major focus of European support. Given the fact that physical mobility will always remain a prerogative of a minority of students EUA believes that greater attention than in the past should be paid to reducing barriers to, and therefore enhancing staff mobility. This question will become ever more important given the huge turnover in staff in European universities over the next few years: the generation that supported the introduction of ERASMUS will gradually leave, and the commitment to Europe passed to a new generation.

A more differentiated approach to mobility will most certainly also be required to ensure that in an enlarged Europe the limited funds available are channeled into the areas of greatest need. Specific actions to try to balance incoming and outgoing mobility as well as to reduce brain drain inside and outside Europe and to attract the best students back to Europe should also be considered.

11. As far as other activities are concerned, support to **pilot projects and networking activities should concentrate on promoting innovation and/or examples or best practice** in key Bologna process Action Lines. Even although we are discussing programme beginning in 2006 we believe this will mean continued support for the consolidation of ECTS and the wide dissemination of the Diploma Supplement, for Quality Assurance questions, and for the development of Joint Programmes at all levels. **It will also be necessary to ensure the further development of links to higher education stakeholders in a more structured manner than until now.** However, it is also clear that flexibility is necessary in order to support new objectives or activities which might develop during the period from 2006 to 2010.

12. In an enlarged Europe we also believe that **up-to-date information** on existing situations across a large number of countries and **constant monitoring of progress** and problems is essential, and that more attention than in the past should be paid to ensuring that such information is available at European level as a necessary basis for policy development and for adapting to changes that may arise.

13. **European added value:** while it is clear that at the level of implementation the management of mobility actions needs to be decentralised to a large degree to take account of local situations, the EUA suggests that it is also important for European universities to keep a structured link to and institutional involvement at the European level as a necessary point of common reference for their activities.

#### **IV Concluding Remarks**

14. EUA welcomes this consultation process, and would like to be further involved in the follow-up. We therefore suggest that this process is followed by a more interactive phase at a time when the structure of the new programmes has become clearer. At this time we propose that as key stakeholders Europe's universities be asked to arrange a number of seminars at the national, regional and European level in order to engage in a constructive debate on future direction.

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