

## POSITION ON EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES

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The universities of Science and Technology (S&T) united within CESAER have taken note with interest of the [selection of the first European Universities alliances](#). We recall our support for this pilot as an important step towards deepening strategic collaboration among higher education institutions, fostering excellence and quality, and promoting mobility. Complementing our first [position](#) on 'European Universities', with this position we present our findings on the pilot and recommendations for the further development of the initiative in order to successfully launch it under the new Erasmus programme by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

### PROVIDE GENEROUS FUNDING FOR EFFECTIVE COOPERATION

The call was accessible for universities of S&T and finding partners was easy for excellent institutions operating within existing networks. The guidelines of the call combined current European higher education policy objectives, while also allowing for creativity from the applicants. The universities had sufficient time and resources to prepare their proposals. However, the results of the first call indicate that the European Commission is funding innovative approaches to higher education cooperation rather than already established and functioning models. In our view, the networks do not necessarily need to be new, but must demonstrate excellence, effectiveness and efficiency.

Excellence-driven alliances can become future European Universities, but they must have adequate and generous financial resources to be able to meet the high ambitions set. Thus, the budget for European Universities must necessarily be increased. We also call for equity in the financial support offered across the pilot calls.

Although European Universities are implemented through the Erasmus programme, synergies with other EU funding instruments must be sought. The Commission should provide the alliances with additional co-funding possibilities under Horizon Europe and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) targeted at cooperation in research and innovation, scholarships for doctoral students and young researchers. If new funding opportunities for alliances are planned under the Erasmus, Horizon Europe and ESIF programmes, we urge them to be announced in due time before the full launch of the European Universities initiative in 2021.

### INCLUDE PARTNERS FROM ENTIRE EHEA

The concept of the European Universities is a work in progress. The Commission, higher education institutions and stakeholder organisations should continue working together on the further development of the programme, focusing on flexible study paths, virtual and blended mobility and European degrees.

We underline the need for the European Universities to be open and inclusive, thus the higher education institutions from all countries in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) should be eligible to participate in the programme. What is more, we feel that more clarity is needed about evaluation of geographical representation of the partners.

## IDENTIFY AND TACKLE OBSTACLES

The smooth implementation of European Universities proposals will depend on support and commitment to facilitate alliances at national, regional and European levels, and willingness to cooperate in tackling differences in the regulatory practices across member states.

In order to simplify procedures, we support the application of the [European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes](#) to European Universities. We also underline the need to clarify how the [General Data Protection Regulation](#) applies for the data collection on student and staff mobility.

## FIND RIGHT BALANCE IN SELECTION CRITERIA

The future evolution of the concept and the selection criteria of European Universities should be based on a comprehensive evaluation of the pilot calls and the experiences of the selected alliances. We underline that the alliances should be compared on an objective basis, through a standardised process. The right balance must be struck between qualitative and quantitative indicators.

We are committed to offering our expertise and cooperation in the evaluation of the pilot and the development of the concept and corresponding selection criteria.

For more information and enquiries, please contact our [Advisor for Higher Education](#).

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