

LEAD FOR RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND INNOVATION IN RECOVERY AND TO BUILD RESILIENCE

POSITION DATED 9 JUNE 2020

The leading universities of science and technology united within [CESAER](#) welcome the European Commission's proposal for the [recovery plan for Europe](#) and corresponding [new proposal](#) for the [EU long-term budget from 2021 to 2027](#). The extraordinary challenges to Europe and beyond following the global spread of the novel coronavirus indeed deserve unprecedented vision and actions at EU-level for the cultural, economic and societal recovery, and to build resilience in pursuit of ecological, economic and social sustainability ([European Green Deal](#)) and digitalisation ([Europe fit for the digital age](#)).

The past months have demonstrated the vital role of science and technology in contributing to tackling global challenges such as pandemics and major others that loom behind this current one. In short, the past months have strongly reconfirmed the vital importance of research, innovation and education as global public goods to lead recovery and to build resilience in Europe and beyond.

However, we agree with the European University Association ([EUA](#)) that the [EU seven-year budget proposal falls short of urgently needed education and R&I investment](#) and with the League of European Research Universities ([LERU](#)) that the [European Commission budget proposals are good, but not good enough](#).

KNOWLEDGE VITAL FOR RECOVERY AND TO BUILD RESILIENCE

Research and innovation are essential to understand diseases, their impact and to develop and refine treatments and responses. This includes the [world-leading frontier research which is today supporting the response to the Covid-19 outbreak](#). Excellent science and technology are indispensable for pushing the boundaries of our knowledge, and for the development of new ideas and solutions urgently needed for recovery and building resilience. We welcome more European coordination, action and leadership as demonstrated through the [ERAvsCorona action plan](#) and the #EUvsVirus initiative (where we are a [partner](#)).

We further emphasise the need to support education and training in the recovery plans. We must empower all citizens to fully engage with education, learning and teaching to meet challenges in these rapidly changing times.

- We call upon the European institutions and member states to ensure that the EU long-term budget, including the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), provides the strongest support for knowledge and the budgets for Horizon Europe and Erasmus.
- We caution against disturbing the balance between bottom-up and top-down approaches by unilaterally introducing additional top-down funding (e.g. increased 'directionality'). As the envisioned €13.5 billion from [Next Generation EU](#) for Horizon Europe is proposed to focus on Pillars 2 and 3 ('Clusters' and European Innovation Council), it is vital to add funding for 'excellence' in the 'Excellent Science' (Pillar 1).
- Moreover, and recalling our [position Research Talent Circulation within the European Research Area](#) which outlines the need for (i) effective framework conditions for research talent circulation, (ii) a new funding instrument and (iii) boosting the science management at research performing and funding organisations in lesser performing countries, we also plea for additional funding for the cross-cutting part 'Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area (ERA)'.
- We encourage the European institutions to intensify their efforts and explore new paths to facilitate cooperation between the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and support and fund the linking thereof.

Recalling our positions on the [Future of the ERA](#), [Vision for the European Education Area \(EEA\)](#) and [Sustainable funding for universities of the future in Europe](#), now is the right time to fully acknowledge the vital importance of research, education and innovation and their value as global public goods.

- We call upon the European institutions to: (i) put European knowledge societies at the heart of the [future of Europe](#), (ii) establish them as communities safeguarding generic values and ethical frameworks (such as democracy, rule of law, transparency and human rights); and (iii) safeguard academic freedom (to be promoted like freedom of speech and freedom of press) and institutional autonomy.
- We urge European institutions to facilitate a leading role of European research, education and innovation making genuine contributions to the world.
- We call upon the European institutions, the member states and associated countries to commit to new percentages of gross domestic product targets for private and for public expenditures for (i) research and innovation, and for (ii) higher education in line with the best performers in the world. We reiterate our call for the formal inclusion of these targets in the European Semester to monitor progress and to effectuate achieving them.

EMPOWER UNIVERSITIES TO ASSUME LEADERSHIP

As universities combine research, education and innovation in their missions, they are essential to recovery, building resilience and tackling global challenges. To enable universities to assume their vital role as leaders in research, as foundations for advanced learning and teaching and [as engines of innovation](#), Europe must urgently remove the barriers and obstacles to the free circulation of scientific knowledge, technology and their bearers, and ensure that the recovery plans - at the European and national levels - adopt the highest ambitions when shaping the ERA and EEA.

- When developing a vision 2030 for the future of universities in Europe and beyond, we urge the European institutions to depart from the needs of and challenges facing universities to enable them to release unprecedented forces to contribute to ecological, social and economic sustainability, and to act as autonomous agents of great transformation.

For more information and enquiries, please contact our Secretary General [David Bohmert](#).

[CESAER](#) is the European association of leading specialised and comprehensive universities of science and technology that: champion excellence in higher education, training, research and innovation; influence debate; contribute to the realisation of open knowledge societies; and, deliver significant scientific, social, economic, and societal impact.



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