

# **Leuven 2020: Europe's Knowledge Future**

Position Paper of the European Network for Universities of Applied Sciences (UASNET)



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## **Leuven 2020: Europe's Knowledge Future**

**The UAS of Europe are the key institutions for the transfer of top-knowledge and knowhow to society, economy and culture. Their mission and their work is now more relevant than ever in a time of economic, demographic and social transformations of Europe and the nations that are part of the Union.**

**The Ministers of Higher Education of 46 European nations meet in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve to set out the course of Europe as a global Higher Education area and centre of knowledge for the next decade. The UAS reach out to them as partners – and as source of inspiration – for concrete, successful examples of such a role for Europe.**

**The main priorities the Ministers have formulated for this next decade have the potential to give a strong impetus to Higher Education and UAS and its practice-oriented research and education. The UAS in Europe have formulated together what they will do themselves to realize this impetus, what they challenge the ministers to initiate and where they invite the ministers to join forces with them to involve the stakeholders of Higher Education in Europe.**

**At each of the following four priority-areas UAS will be active and take initiatives.**

### ***1. Widening participation and talent scouting***

We expect the Ministers to address the challenge of an ageing population in Europe. For a European Higher Education Area which shall contribute to a Europe of knowledge that is highly creative and innovative, it is vital that we maximise the talents and capacities of all European citizens. A focus on lifelong learning and widening participation is therefore crucial.

#### ***As a consequence the UAS in Europe will work towards:***

*-- unlocking of hidden potential*

The UAS will focus on their role as talent-scouts among the 'hidden' potential and non-traditional sources of educational achievement. The target will be: more HE-participation from these social backgrounds at 40 % in 2025.

*-- offering tailor made training*

UAS will work towards developing more tailor made training at HE-levels for professionals, in particular for those sectors of the labour market which go through deep transformations. A particular emphasis will be given to setting up of continuing education and training for 'first generation students' to optimize their career development into lifelong learning.

*-- educating excellent and directly employable professionals*

UAS will continue to offer study-programmes in close alignment with the demands of the labour market, both for initial and lifelong learning students, and will work towards European bodies of knowledge for the diverse professions.

***We challenge the Ministers gathered at Leuven to take initiatives for:***

*-- removing barriers in educational career paths*

Policy-development at national levels within the European context in order to remove barriers to widening participation in educational career paths, qualification-structures and selective mechanisms. The target will be: HE-participation from non-traditional backgrounds at 40 % in 2025. In this respect it is also important to ensure support for cost-intensive activities (e.g. offering of special transfer-courses).

*-- supporting multi-tasking by UAS*

Policy-development to strengthen the diversity of roles for UAS, in order for them to cope with the tasks to ensure an increase in total students, as well as an increase in overall quality and graduates.

***Together with the ministers the UAS in Europe will therefore invite the HE-stakeholders to take initiatives for:***

*-- mapping the skills-needs*

In consultation with the UAS sector, map the specific skills-needs in the professions and develop adequate programmes in all 3 cycles as an answer to these needs. Support the spreading of a European body of knowledge within the professions.

*-- flexibility*

The development of a flexible, training and knowledge-application friendly labour market and pay-structures

***2. Empowering competences for active citizenship***

We expect the Ministers to address the challenge of globalisation and accelerated technological developments. Student-centred learning therefore has to be a central element in HE, to empower them to become responsible citizens and to prepare them for the fast-changing labour market.

***As a consequence the UAS in Europe will work towards:***

*-- educating responsible world citizens*

Ensure that internationalization and professional mobility are a standard part of education programmes and partnerships.

***We challenge the Ministers gathered at Leuven to take initiatives for:***

*-- supporting the development of new mechanisms*

Policy-development to design and implement good ways of accreditation of prior education and learning.

***Together with the ministers the UAS in Europe will invite the HE-stakeholders to take initiatives for:***

*-- support for talent*

Reaching out to 'hidden potential' for HE-talent and to promote social cohesion by widening participation into HE from the workplace.

***3. Economic recovery through knowledge intensity***

We expect the Ministers to address the global financial and economic crisis. In this respect, a strong focus on the contribution HE can make towards sustainable economic recovery and development is vital. HE has a key role to play as linking pin between research and innovation. A good integration between education and applied research will contribute to the innovation needed.

***As a consequence the UAS in Europe will work towards:***

*-- continuing development and deepening of study programmes on the basis of applied research.*

UAS will adopt professional experiences and results from conducting applied research in working life into the curriculum of our future and working professionals. UAS will also offer a deeper focus on fast-changing and complex professional practices by Master and PhD programmes.

*-- a reduction of the 'European innovation paradox'*

UAS will strengthen their practice-oriented knowledge-applications through regional and professional networks. UAS will take on their role as catalyst for practical innovation and for the new impulses to counter the economic recession especially in the business, public and SME sector.

*-- harmonisation of applied research*

UAS will work towards building a framework for quality methods and control for UAS to take into account when conducting research.

*-- targeting at research with a real social, economic and cultural impact*

UAS will develop mechanisms for the output-measurement of applied research, in order to facilitate benchmarking on applied research results according to relevant and appropriate criteria.

*-- developing multiple funding*

UAS will intensify their traditional and well-established links with the business, public and SME sector, in order to collaborate in widening co-funding.

***We challenge the Ministers gathered at Leuven to take initiatives for:***

*-- a solid and sustainable research infrastructure and funding*

This will give an impetus for the accelerator role of UAS in the exchange between HE and business, and for their key-role in the knowledge-, innovation- and technology-transfer between research activities and regional SMEs, the business and public sector.

*-- investments in the quality development of the UAS human capital.*

Policy-development for higher education as the linking pin between research and innovation. In this way higher education can offer European professionals an up-to-date curriculum and can function as a catalyst to bring about applicable innovation for society at large. This should be done in close relation with the business, SME, public and government sector. This task means that all staff - not just academic staff - of higher education should be equipped to respond to the changing demands of the fast-evolving labour market.

***Together with the ministers the UAS in Europe will therefore invite the HE-stakeholders to take initiatives for:***

*-- intensify matching projects*

We invite stakeholders to intensify co-financing projects with UAS and their partners. This can be done through European networks of interdisciplinary knowledge-application and mobility focused on major social and economic challenges, with a practical, professional orientation.

#### ***4. Diversity in responsibility and participation***

We expect the Ministers to address the responsiveness of higher education institutes to the variety of needs in society. In this respect diversity in missions is a necessary precondition, as to develop education in line with the respective societal demands. This diversity should be adequately supported by offering sufficient resources to higher education institutes, as part of the public responsibility.

***As a consequence the UAS in Europe will work towards:***

*-- transparency of their mission*

UAS will increase transparency in order to help student's choice and to develop more partnerships with higher education institutions elsewhere in the world as well as organisations from the business, public and SME sector.

*-- transparency of their performance and activities*

UAS will be actively involved in quality-enhancing initiatives in order to ensure quality and output-measurement.

***We challenge the Ministers gathered at Leuven to take initiatives for:***

*-- level playing fields within the HE-structures*

Policy-development to stimulate the development of degree programs on Master and PhD level and of a focus on quality assurance-mechanisms and criteria which are relevant and appropriate for UAS.