European University Association (EUA): Main initiatives, events and publications in Autumn 2019

1. Autonomy
2. Learning and Teaching
3. Quality assurance
4. Internationalisation
5. Inclusiveness
6. University finances & EU funding
7. Research & Innovation
8. Doctoral Education

1. Autonomy & governance

TRUNAK project: university autonomy in Kazakhstan

The Autonomy Scorecard methodology supports the implementation of the Erasmus+ TRUNAK project that focuses on improving the regulatory framework for universities in Kazakhstan (2017-2020). In 2019, the consortium built on EUA's analysis of the state of play of the Kazakh regulatory framework to develop its own recommendations for a future model of university governance, in connection with the ongoing reform in the country. A milestone seminar was held in Atyrau, Kazakhstan, in May 2019 to discuss the proposals. TRUNAK recommendations were further included in the national conference on the societal dimension of higher education held in Nur-Sultan in October 2019.

University mergers

In Spring 2019, EUA carried out an update of its University merger tool, which records over 120 merger/clustering processes over 21 countries in the period 2000-2019. Data collected includes type of founding institutions, number of students, location, etc. A briefing presenting the data was released in Spring 2019, together with the launch of a survey addressed to the merged institutions to generate feedback on the change process. In Summer and Autumn 2019 survey data was analysed and complemented with a series of in-depth interviews. A final report will be released during Winter 2019/2020.

2. Learning and Teaching

EUA Learning and Teaching Activities

Following the successful conclusion of the 2018 EUA Learning & Teaching Thematic Peer Groups, whose reports were published in January 2019, the 2019 European Learning and Teaching Forum was hosted by the University of Warsaw, Poland, from 14 to 15 February 2019. The reports of the 2018 Thematic Peer Groups, whose work fed into the Forum programme, are concerned with promoting active learning in universities, career paths in teaching, continuous development of teaching competences, and evaluation of learning and teaching. EUA has since initiated a new round of Thematic Peer Groups, which meet several times throughout 2019 to discuss topics concerning internationalisation in learning and teaching, evidence-based approaches to teaching, student assessment and curriculum design. These four Thematic Peer Groups will meet for a pre-Forum workshop in Utrecht on 12 February 2020 with the objective of exchanging and discussing the challenges and potential recommendations identified during the previous, group-internal meetings. This workshop is followed by the 2020 European Learning & Teaching Forum, which will be held in Utrecht, the Netherlands on 13-14 February 2020. As in the previous years, there will be reports summarising the work of these groups, including recommendations brought forward by them.

Paper presentations and workshops selected through a call for contributions for the 2020 European Learning & Teaching Forum, which closed on 1 October, as well as focus groups based on the work of the Learning & Teaching Thematic Peer Groups, will constitute the breakout sessions during the Forum. Registrations for the event are open until end of January 2020.

DIGI-HE

EUA was granted funding for a new project- DIGI-HE (Erasmus+ KA3). The project aims to develop a self-reflection tool that will help European higher education institutions to develop and enhance their strategic approaches for digitalisation. The project consortium consists of the European University Association (EUA – coordinator) Dublin City University (DCU); Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg (DHBW); Jÿvaskyla University (JYU); Vytautas Magnus University (VMU). Associate partners are the European Distance and E-learning Network (EDEN); the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and Irish Universities Association (IUA). DIGI-HE will be launched in January 2020.

3. Quality assurance

European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF)

The 2019 EQAF will be held on 21-23 November 2019, hosted by TU Berlin (Technical University of Berlin). This annual event is co-organised by the E4 group (ENQA, ESU, EURASHE and EUA) and the theme of the 2019 Forum is 'Supporting societal engagement of higher education'. This edition of EQAF will explore how external and internal QA processes can support engaged higher education institutions in developing activities that meet the expectations and needs of all stakeholders and demonstrate their value to society. Presentations and papers from the forum will be available on the EQAF website after the event.

Student-centred learning: approaches to quality assurance

In September 2019 EUA published a new report 'Student-centred learning: approaches to quality assurance'. Ample evidence suggests that even though student-centred learning is a topic of great interest and benefit to universities across Europe and beyond, there are widespread difficulties in addressing the concept in practice, mostly due to its broad scope.

The report presents the status of student-centred learning in Europe's universities and offers considerations for the role of quality assurance processes in ensuring that education provision is geared towards student learning and success. It also suggests an approach to student-centred learning which considers the concept a part of quality culture and reduces the widespread perception of quality assurance as a bureaucratic burden.

4. Internationalisation

EUA supports the internationalisation of its members through conferences and projects. At the same time, it engages in international dialogue, in particular with sister organisations around the world. Over the last decade, internationalisation has emerged as an issue of high importance for universities. This has generated a network of international partners that continue to convene and collaborate in different settings and on different issues. Some examples of this are:

Centralised Support for Higher Education Reform Experts (SPHERE II)

The University of Barcelona (coordinator) and EUA currently comprise the consortium SPHERE II (Support and Promotion for Higher Education Reform Experts), an initiative funded by the European Commission. SPHERE II provides training and networking for Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) and National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs) in European neighbourhood countries (former Tempus countries) between January 2015 and December 2020. More information, as well as the list of upcoming events, can be found here.

Development of the Internationalisation of PhD Studies in South-Africa (Yebo!)

The Yebo! project (2017-20, Erasmus+) is focused on developing the internationalisation of doctoral education in South African universities. It will develop a web-based portal and organising thematic conferences and training sessions. The project builds on the FRINDOC framework for international doctoral education developed by EUA. Five European and seven South African higher education institutions together with EUA, the Coimbra Group and the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development are involved in the project. The University of Montpellier is the project coordinator. More information can be found here.

5. Inclusiveness

Refugees Welcome Map

In late 2015 EUA has launched the Refugees Welcome Map campaign, to showcase the commitment of the higher education sector in welcoming refugees. The interactive tool so far has gathered around 300 initiatives that focus on the integration of refugees through a number of concrete activities, such as bridging and language courses, community outreach and research, the adaptation of recognition procedures and scholarships for refugees.

InSPIREurope project

EUA will over the next three years participate in the InSPIREurope project, a Europe-wide initiative that aims to support researchers threatened with discrimination, persecution, suffering or violence. The InSPIREurope project will forge a coordinated, cross-sectoral, Europe-wide alliance in support of

researchers at risk and facilitate transnational cooperation between European and national initiatives and programmes. Funded under the European Commission's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, the project brings together a diverse set of partners under the leadership of Scholars at Risk Europe, based at Maynooth University in Ireland. The project runs from 1 September 2019 until 31 August 2022.

Biannual mailing on refugee inclusion

To continue the collaboration and synergies from ongoing initiatives such as the Refugees Welcome Map and the previously completed inHERE project (Higher Education Supporting Refugees in Europe), EUA prepares a biannual newsletter (in spring and autumn) on the integration of refugees into European higher education.

This newsletter features updates from higher education projects and initiatives on the theme, as well as relevant publications, event announcements, policy news and funding opportunities. Readers are encouraged to use a dedicated webform to submit news stories from their own projects, event invitations and new publications on the theme. Subscriptions to the mailing are possible via EUA's main webpage, in the section "Subscribe to our newsletters" at the bottom right corner of the page.

Towards Empowered Migrant Youth in Southern Europe (TandEM)

The TandEM project, co-funded by the AMIF fund and lead by the IOM (International Organisation for Migration), carries out activities to foster the engagement of young third-country nationals (TCNs) and their peers in six Southern European Countries, including awareness raising campaigns and student mentorship programmes. For the project EUA has conducted a comparative cross-country study on higher education access and participation as a means to societal integration. The project will end in December 2019, with a final conference in Brussels announced on 4-6 December.

REACT project - Refugees and Recognition

The REACT project, led by NOKUT, builds on the recently completed Erasmus+ project Refugees and Recognition, which developed a common methodological approach to the recognition of refugees' qualifications. Taking this work a step further, the REACT-project develops and test this methodology in major refugee-receiving countries and in cooperation with higher education institutions admissions offices. It will provide recommendations to higher education institutions and identifying best practice cases that illustrate pathways for admission of refugee students to further studies. EUA is an advisory partner to the project.

REIs2 project – Refugee Education Initiatives

The Erasmus+ Refugee Education Initiatives (REIs) consortium addresses inequality in access to higher education and does so through three types of activity, all centred on fostering inclusion of
people of refugee status or who are forced migrants into European higher education institutions:
• Education programs designed to develop academic and language skills to prepare students
for university entry
• Admissions policies and criteria as they apply to people of refugee status and asylum
seekers, with a particular emphasis on how previous qualifications and learning are assessed
• Development of shared learning on inclusive pedagogic and administrative practices to foster
inclusion, which would benefit not only refugees, but also other under-served people.

The consortium is currently preparing a workshop on "Exploring European experiences in providing higher education for refugees and asylum seekers" to take place on 19-20 March 2020 at the Central European University, Budapest.

INVITED project

The INVITED project on "Strategies towards Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Universities" aims to support universities in developing and strategies towards equity, diversity and inclusion of students and staff from underrepresented, disadvantaged or vulnerable backgrounds. It also seeks to promote dialogue between stakeholders at the system level in order to ensure that regulatory and funding frameworks empower universities to fulfil their social responsibility.

The first step was to create a knowledge base through a survey and follow-up interviews with data from 159 higher education institutions from 36 European systems about the state of play, the challenges, success factors and needs for further support of higher education institutions engaging in the topic. Preliminary results were discussed at a peer learning seminar with more than 30 university leaders and practitioners from 14 European countries held in June 2019 at the University College Dublin in Ireland. The final results will be published in a report in November 2019 and disseminated through a webinar (both will be for download on the EUA website). A final conference focused on the policy level and targeted mainly at representatives of EU institutions, permanent representations and national ministries will be held in Brussels in spring 2020 (end February/early March). In parallel the project outcomes are also fed into the Bologna Process, notably through the Advisory Group 1 on the social dimension of higher education where EUA and ESU are members.

EUA Annual Conference (16-17 April 2020)

The 2020 EUA Annual Conference will be hosted by Gdańsk University of Technology in Poland on 16-17 April 2020. The conference topic will be 'Universities building a better Europe'. As usual, institutional leaders, higher education researchers and analysts as well as representatives of other bodies involved in educational policy will be invited to attend the conference. The event will be preceded by statutory meetings and a Leadership Roundtable on 15 April 2020.

6. University finances & EU funding

Public Funding Observatory

The Public Funding Observatory Report 2018 (March 2019) offers the most up-to-date information on 33 different higher education systems across Europe.

EUA has been following the evolution of public funding to universities 2008 and the present report covers funding trends up until 2017, including a short-term outlook for 2018/19. It categorises countries into three different areas, namely systems with sustained growth in funding, systems with sustained funding decreases and those showing improvements.
EUA's monitoring reveals that since the crisis, the divide between higher education systems that increase public funding, and those that reduce investment, is getting wider. It also shows that any recovery that can now be detected is slow and fragile.

The monitoring is conducted in close cooperation with EUA's collective members, the national rectors' conferences, which regularly provide extensive funding data from their countries.

The Public Funding Observatory Report 2018 is complemented by a full update of the online interactive tool and individual country reports. The next report is expected for the first trimester of 2020.

Simplification of EU funding

EUA understands simplification as the achievement of a coherent set of rules, mindful of the diversity of actions and beneficiaries accommodated in a programme, and that ensures both high-quality processes and an effective use of resources.

EUA argues for the wider acceptance of nationally recognised institutional management and accounting practices of beneficiaries as the most significant way to enhance efficiency and participation in the programme.

After the release of a compendium of national and institutional accounting practices as well as strategic and practical recommendations to improve the acceptance of institutional accounting practices in funding schemes (September 2018), EUA convened a new informal stakeholder meeting on Horizon Europe simplification and alignment of funders' practices (May 2019). This provided input for EUA's latest policy input "Achieving high quality audit in European research" (August 2019), which outlines EUA's proposals to national and EU funders on how to make **the EU reporting and control environment more efficient and effective**. This is a matter of strategic importance to improve the added value of European investment in education, research and innovation.

'EU funding for universities' campaign

EUA's work on FP9 and on Erasmus+ is included in its broader campaign 'EU funding for universities', which also puts forward recommendations for impactful simplification and increased efficiency and value for money of EU funding programmes. In 2019, the campaign feeds into the preparation of the implementation of the next programmes, as well as into the debate leading to the adoption of the next multiannual financial framework of the European Union, and focuses on added value of EU-level investment in research & innovation. In addition to previous membership consultations on Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ EUA has published a list of concrete reasons to step up EU investment in research and innovation and in higher education exchange and cooperation here. Over the summer, EUA has also coordinated a joint initiative with 14 other university associations. The call "Seize our Common Future" has been endorsed by 20 National Rectors' Conferences. In total over 300 organisations signed up, including universities, 24 national university associations, other higher education institutions, as well as research centres and companies. This has been presented in the final session of the Commission's first R&I days (3,000 participants) and handed over to Commissioner Moedas.

Efficient university management: USTREAM project

The USTREAM project is supported by the Erasmus+ programme and examines the measures that are in place in universities across Europe to enhance efficiency at operational level, and also analyse policies at system level that support universities in their efforts to operate more efficiently, with a view to identify good practice examples and develop recommendations for further development. The project addresses the question of operational efficiency in universities in a European comparative way. EUA released thematic publications on the topic of efficiency, building on the findings from the different peer-learning seminars and the national policy events. In December 2018, "**Efficiency, Leadership and Governance: Closing the gap between strategy and execution**" explored the key ingredients for successful strategy implementation at universities, that is, effective institutional leadership (governance and management), coherent operating models and structures and institutional culture. In the framework of the project, EUA also launched a pilot **University efficiency hub**. The online portal provides useful background data on general framework

conditions for efficiency, effectiveness and value for money at the system level. The portal offers access to a dynamic database of good practices in efficiency and effectiveness and allows higher education institutions to self-evaluate the internal structures and measures for efficiency and effectiveness.

The recommendations developed as part of the project activities were compiled in a final publication, "Efficiency, Effectiveness and Value for Money at Universities" (June 2019).

Procurement in higher education

A substantial share of public investment is spent on public procurement in the European Union and quality public services depend on well-managed and efficient modern procurement. Public higher education institutions, including university hospitals, are important public procurers.
Universities act not only as buyers (of goods, services and works), but also as providers for other public authorities as well as companies, particularly in the context of research, development and innovation. In December 2018, EUA released the report "**A comparative analysis of public procurement frameworks and practices in universities in Portugal and selected EU member states**" for the Portuguese higher education sector. It is designed to provide a comparative overview of the existing public procurement frameworks in selected EU member states and to showcase the procurement systems and good practice at several universities. Next to an analysis of the 2014 EU Directive on public procurement, the study covers a sample of seven benchmark countries representing different government, legal and university traditions: Austria, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

7. Research & Innovation

EUA contributed to several research and innovation (R&I) policy areas with the aim of supporting EUA members in following up and contributing to main developments at EU level. The work of EUA in R&I is coordinated through high-level working groups gathering input from all EU countries. Policy dialogues in 2019 revolved around the development of the next framework programme for research and innovation (Horizon Europe), the future of the European Research Area (ERA), Open Access/Open Science, and research assessment. The field of Energy as a major underlying societal challenge continued to be a thematic focus area of the EUA Platform of Universities in Energy and Environment. In close relation with research and innovation, Doctoral Education, a central activity characteristic of universities, was addressed through the EUA Council for Doctoral Education (Section 8).

EUA proposals for the next framework programme for research and innovation (Horizon Europe)

As a key stakeholder, EUA has been closely following the developments of Horizon Europe since 2016. Its views and recommendations, supported by the EUA Research Policy Working Group chaired by Prof. Paul Boyle, are detailed in position papers, including on the Horizon 2020 mid-term review, the European Commission's proposal for Horizon Europe, the design of the European Research Council (EIC) and of mission-oriented research. Following the conclusion of the trilogue negotiations between the European Parliament, Council, and Commission in spring 2019, EUA expressed a positive reaction to the agreement on Horizon Europe in a new statement. Before the end of the year, EUA will provide its views on the Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe, in the last phase of the co-design process.

The future of the European Research Area (ERA)

There is a renewed political commitment for the ERA and revitalising the ERA is one of the missions of the Commissioner-designate for Innovation and Youth, Mariya Gabriel. As one of the initial members

of the ERA Stakeholder Platform, EUA has been invited to provide feedback on the new narrative, the objectives and priorities of ERA.

Open Access/Open Science

As one of the leading actors in the transition to Open Science, EUA is developing a comprehensive approach to this paradigmatic shift, with the support of the Expert Group on Science 2.0/Open Science, chaired by Prof. Jean-Pierre Finance. By carrying out regular university surveys and commissioning studies, EUA has built a shared knowledge base on the most pressing implications of Open Science, as Open Access policies for research publications and data, the financial cost of access to scholarly publications (Big Deals), research assessment practices, innovative publishing practices (such as Read and Publish agreements) and other key Open Science issues, as open science skills and education or citizen science.

EUA has been supporting 'Plan S' since its inception in September 2018. Plan S is an ambitious plan by research funding organisations to accelerate the transition towards Open Access by 2020. EUA provided further input to the 'Implementation Guidance' of Plan S in February and June 2019.

The fourth edition of the EUA Open Access Survey Report (published in April 2019) tracks European universities' progress towards Open Access by looking at the degree to which they have implemented institutional policies and practices in the field. This survey focuses on Open Access to research publications, research data management and the openness of research data.

Another focus area are negotiations of large-scale contracts for scientific publications with publishers. Work in this area is led by the EUA High-Level Group on 'Big Deals' since 2016. The 2019 EUA Big Deals Survey Report published in May provided an updated mapping of major scholarly publishing contracts in Europe. This contributes to reframing the debate on the costs of the scholarly publishing system.

A follow-up report published in October 2019 helps decrypting the Big Deal landscape. It combines country-level publication numbers with country-level Big Deal expenditures, in a comparative analysis of 26 European countries. It aims to support universities and consortia with better market insights and comparative data to make the transition to Open Access publishing (cf Plan S) financially sustainable, in particular in negotiations with large scholarly publishers.

To further support the work of the negotiating consortia, EUA, together with 26 NRCs and consortia represented in the Big Deals Negotiators Group commissioned a study on future scenarios and implications of so-called read-and-publish agreements with scholarly publishers. The study is currently carried out by Technopolis Group (Amsterdam, NL) and results are expected in early 2020.

EUA is also core partner of the project 'Fostering a FAIR research culture in Europe' (FAIRsFAIR) since March 2019. FAIRSFAIR aims to supply practical solutions for the use of the FAIR data principles throughout the research data life cycle. Emphasis is on fostering FAIR data culture and the uptake of good practices in making data FAIR. The project focuses on the development of data management and in particular FAIR data competences and skills of students EUA's role in the project is to provide evidence-based support to universities in following the FAIR principles in research and teaching.

Research assessment

Reviewing research assessment practices to make them more accurate, transparent and responsible is an essential element of the transition to Open Science. Research and academic careers assessment and rewards and recognition systems are also more broadly debated in the context of universities as key players in innovation ecosystems, and in discussions on the future European Research Area. EUA is actively involved in this discussion, raising awareness and helping universities to review their evaluation practices. Specifically, the Association supports the development of research assessment approaches that focus on research quality, potential and future impact, and that take into account Open Science practices.

EUA gathered and shared information in 'Reflections on University Research Assessment. Key concepts, issues and actors', a briefing published in April 2019, and 'Research Assessment in the Transition to Open Science. 2019 EUA Open Science and Access Survey Results', a survey report published in October 2019. The Association also started dialogue between universities and other actors by organising a workshop on 14 May 2019 in Brussels, Belgium and signing a joint statement with Science Europe, an association of public research performing and research funding organisations, in May 2019. EUA is also co-organising with the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) a conference on recognition and rewards systems for academics in Rotterdam on 15 November.

EUA is committed to carrying on this discussion. In future, EUA will continue its work on these priority actions and will start making policy and good practice recommendations in close collaboration with its members.

Innovation Ecosystems

EUA has given much attention to the role of universities in smart specialisation in the past four years but has recently also taken a broader interest in their contribution to regional innovation ecosystems in general. In 2019, the activities of the new Expert Group on Innovation Ecosystems will build upon EUA's expertise gathered through the Innovation Ecosystems project, and a novel set of priorities and activities will be defined, taking into account the broad lines given by the Council in April 2019. The Group's first meeting on 5 November 2019 started off this discussion by outlining ways in which to deepen the engagement with members throughout 2020 and to strengthen the knowledge base on emerging EU innovation instruments in Horizon Europe.

To set the scene for its focus on these new topics, EUA organised a conference on Universities as drivers of European innovation ecosystems, hosted by the European Committee of the Regions on November 6 in Brussels. The event started with a vibrant discussion on the role of universities in the new European innovation landscape and the necessary framework conditions to unlock their potential for innovation. These conditions stem from the interplay of regional development and adequate policies for research, education, and innovation. Examples of successful partnerships between universities, industry, and public authorities were also showcased.

The EUA Energy and Environment Platform (EUA-EPUE)

The EUA Energy and Environment Platform (EUA-EPUE), guided by its *Ad hoc* Steering Committee chaired by Dr Douglas Halliday (Durham University), serves as the voice of universities in EU energy and environment policy since 2008.

The EUA-EPUE platform, in collaboration with the Energy-SHIFTS project (Energy Social Sciences & Humanities Innovation Forum Targeting SET-Plan) hosted a workshop on 'Evidence in the energy policy process' in June. The first Energy and Environment Clustering Event took place at Durham University end September. Under the title "Energy, environment and us - Circular economy and the role of citizens", it was very successful in providing a unique platform for university actors to reflect on the role of universities in the energy transition and climate change and to exchange good practices.

8. Doctoral Education

Study on Doctoral Education

In 2018, EUA-CDE conducted in collaboration with researchers of the University Ghent a Europe-wide survey on the organisation of and challenges in doctoral education that counted on the participation of 311 institutions in Europe. The resulting survey report "Doctoral education today: approaches and institutional structures" was published in January 2019.

Development of the Internationalisation of PhD Studies in South-Africa (Yebo!)

Please see "Internationalisation"

EUA-CDE Thematic Workshop (January 2019)

The EUA Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE) invited academic leaders, heads of doctoral schools and doctoral education professionals to the 2019 Thematic Workshop. This event focused on inter-institutional collaboration in doctoral education. Participants reflected on how universities with different goals and levels of development can benefit from different forms of collaboration. Part of this discussion concentrated on sharing good practices to start inter-institutional collaboration and considered the added value of inter-institutional collaboration in doctoral education. More information can be found here.

EUA-CDE Annual Meeting (June 2019)

EUA-CDE brought together about 200 participants on 12 to 14 June to discuss the societal dimension of doctoral education. Hosted by the University of Brescia, the meeting explored a variety of topics such as the contribution of doctoral education to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals, the opportunities and challenges of science communication, inter-sectoral mobility and collaboration, career development and societal impact. Plenary sessions discussed various aspects of the societal engagement of doctoral candidates, including their skills development for addressing global challenges and how to support early-career researchers to actively communicate their research to the society. More information can be found here.

The Meeting was preceded on 12 June by the Italian Universities Conference gathering academic leaders from the Italian institutions. Participants discussed the current status, challenges and opportunities for doctoral education in Italy and held an exchange on strengthening their relations with the European doctoral education community.

EUA-CDE Thematic Peer Group on "Career Development and Tracking in Doctoral Education"

Aware of the transformation of academic careers and the diversity of non-academic career paths available to doctoral candidates, many European universities have established a career tracking component in their doctoral education structures. To analyse this trend, EUA-CDE established this year its first Thematic Peer Group (TPG) on "*Career Development and Tracking in Doctoral Education*". The aim of this group was to take stock of the different approaches and methods of career tracking in Europe, while also observing the main challenges experienced by institutions when engaging in this process. Participants met three times and addressed the collection and usage of career data in doctoral education. The findings of this Thematic Peer Group will be presented at the 2020 EUA-CDE Thematic Workshop. A final report will be available in June 2020 for the EUA-CDE Annual Meeting.