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Open letter on EU budget

14 May 2018

Dear Commissioner,

In the last week of April the French, German and Polish Rectors' Conferences – Conférence des présidents d'université (CPU), Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK) and Konferencja Rektorów Akademickich Szkół Polskich (KRASP) – published a trilateral declaration requesting a boost of EU investments in the knowledge triangle and the framework programme for research and innovation. We also expressed our strong support for the new European Universities initiative. It could be the missing link to better integrate the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area.

Today, we would like to express our gratitude about the MFF proposal foreseeing a funding increase for research and innovation (Horizon Europe) and education (Erasmus+) and we would like to thank you for your contribution to the internal discussions in the Commission.

However, we believe that a strategic link and more effective synergies between the two programmes are still missing.

Universities are at the heart of research and innovation ecosystems all over the world. The European University Networks initiative is a unique opportunity to enable universities across the whole of Europe to strategically work together, create teaching-research-innovation nexuses and set up integrated courses of studies that could in the long run lead to joint degrees.

So far, DG RTD has been reluctant to play any role in the new initiative. President Emmanuel Macron said in his famous Sorbonne speech that the University Networks

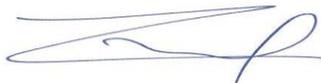
should allow for stronger research. Likewise, the European Council stated in the conclusions to the Leaders' Agenda meeting that the European University Networks should strengthen the international competitiveness of the participating institutions. We therefore kindly ask you to advocate for a dedicated instrument from FP9 for the funding of European University Networks. We call on DG EAC and DG RTD to work together on this initiative.

We would also like to voice our concern regarding some circulating FP9 draft texts that are calling for the modernization of Europe's universities. This reflects an improper assessment of the situation. Our universities are high quality above all, deliver strong performance, and we are proud of our motivated scientists who train young people, conduct research, cooperate with companies and society at large, and contribute to innovation.

Accordingly, our Rectors' Conferences would highly welcome further funding incentives for jointly improving the teaching, research and innovation performance of universities through the creation of networks across Europe.

On all these matters, we would be happy to exchange our views with you in a meeting at your convenience.

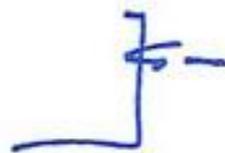
With kind regards,



Professor Gilles Roussel,
President of CPU



Professor Horst Hippler,
President of HRK



Professor Jan Szmidt,
President of KRASP