

EU Funding for Universities



Europe is currently facing many

As [EUA's annual Public Funding Observatory](#) shows, the level of public investment in universities is going down. The EU target of 3% GDP invested in R&D is being missed. Only a few countries keep up their financial contribution to the sector and even those who did so far, begin to struggle recently.

challenges, varying from economic and financial pressures over terrorism to the high number of refugees seeking protection and many other things that put the European idea and values under scrutiny.

Universities are key actors in addressing these issues. They are motors of economic recovery, educating the future generation and the leaders of tomorrow, delivering cutting-edge research and developing solutions to current scientific and societal challenges. They play an important role in building our societies, transmitting cultural heritage and European values as well as fostering social inclusion and forging relations with other parts of the world.

Nevertheless financial resources are scarce and governments are reluctant to provide the money needed, be it at national or at European level, to tackle these challenges and find common solutions.

Also EU funding for universities is under threat. An example is the establishment of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) in 2015, a loan scheme for which 2.2 billion € were diverted from Horizon 2020 in order to finance part of the EU guarantee needed to set up the fund. Strong universities need sustainable and sufficient public funding, be it at national or at European level to be able to respond to the current challenges. EU funding programmes such as Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ are important instruments to support them in this endeavour and increase at the same time the added value of public investment.

Focus

In order to protect universities from further funding cuts, the campaign focuses on three aspects:

- » **Sufficient funding** (overall level and cost coverage)
- » **Sustainability of funding conditions** (grants instead of loans for academic research and education)
- » **Simplification of funding schemes** (implementation; management; reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries).





Key Messages

Key actions

EFSI campaign

The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council should: Policy makers at EU level should:

Guarantee **sufficient** funding for universities

- » Protect EU funding programmes important for universities, notably Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ from further cuts.
- » Take account of the high participation rate of programmes such as H2020 and Erasmus+ and provide sufficient funding in order to allow the financing and implementation of relevant and high quality projects and actions in the field of research and higher education.
- » Ensure an appropriate level and relation between appropriations and payments in the EU budget in order to avoid a payment backlog which harms universities, students and staff as beneficiaries of EU funding programmes.

Ensure **sustainable** funding conditions

- » Sustain grant programmes for academic research and education instead of replacing subsidies by loan schemes, guarantee funds and other financial instruments as this is not suited to fund academic research.
- » Foresee an adequate cost coverage for EU funded projects in the field of research and education and do not decrease the current level of reimbursement.

Further **simplify** funding rules and implementation for beneficiaries

- » Provide a coherent funding framework and set of rules and ensure an adequate balance of flexibility and predictability as well as stability of rules and implementation.
- » Accept nationally recognised institutional management and accountancy practices also for EU funded projects, in order to reduce the administrative burden for beneficiaries;
- » Make auditing procedures more efficient and avoid double-auditing of projects; e.g. through the acceptance of audit certificates from national level.

European University Association (EUA)

Brussels office:

Avenue de l'Yser, 24

1040 Brussels

Belgium

Tel: +32 (0) 2 230 55 44

Geneva office:

114, Rue du Rhône

Case postale 3174

1211 Geneva 3

Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 552 02 96

EUA Secretariat

Contact Information



@euatweets



EUA on LinkedIn



EUA on Facebook

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