



A Tradition of Innovation

Coimbra Group Statement on the Rolling out of the European Universities Initiative after the pilot phase

Brussels, 7 June 2021

The Coimbra Group has been a major actor of the co-design of the European Universities Initiative since the earliest stage of its development and remains fully engaged in its roll-out, with 32 of its 41 members involved in an alliance. The Coimbra Group is also Associated Partner to four selected alliances, CHARM-EU, Circle U., EC2U and Una Europa.

In light of our experience with this initiative, and after carefully considering the recent proposals put forward by the European Commission for the next steps in its development, we are making the following proposals:

- We call on the European Commission to **reflect on the initial rules of the initiative** - which were all about flexibility, creativity, bottom-up approach, inclusiveness, implementing an ambition with respect to fostering the quality of higher education and research - and not to change ‘the rules during the game’;
- We support the proposal that the funding period be extended after the pilot phase, for a duration of 4+2 years, to avoid any funding gap, but we recall our plea for a **long-term structural programmatic funding** after that transition;
- We see the current funding of the alliances as relatively modest, leading to a ‘danger’ that the **running of the Erasmus+ project gets more attention than the structural building of a European University**;
- We are of the view that it is up to the alliances to decide if they wish to extend their membership or not; should they wish to do so, a **gradual extension should be allowed without financial penalties** to avoid destabilisation of alliances that are still under construction;



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- We advocate for an **incentive compatible approach**: financial incentives to expand should be aligned with strategic improvement of the quality of the alliances;
- We believe that a **call for new alliances should come in 2022**; if this is delayed until 2024 momentum will be lost, and it will be more difficult to maintain the levels of cooperation and inclusiveness fostered through the creation of new alliances with fresh ideas;
- We should reaffirm that research and education are intrinsic components of research-led education and, as such, the **impact of Brexit and the withdrawal of the UK from the Erasmus+ programme** on the success of the European Universities initiative is something to be considered very seriously;
- The Coimbra Group is strongly committed to maintain and strengthen the **relationship between the EU and the UK**. This is also reflected by our recent [publication on post-Brexit perspectives](#);
- We welcome the proposed expansion of the second-phase funding to **all Bologna process countries**.

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