



BUILDING A EUROPE BASED ON THE PILLARS OF EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Coimbra Group Statement

Brussels, 25th February 2025

Building a Europe based on the pillars of education, research, and innovation is crucial for strengthening EU's societal and economic growth, promoting sustainable development, and ensuring the well-being of future generations.

It is only by investing in these key areas that Europe can drive knowledge creation, foster cross-border collaboration, and increase its competitiveness. **A competitiveness that is not solely defined in economic terms.** Education, research and innovation are indeed strategic tools, not only to **increase competitiveness** in areas such as climate change, digital transformation, health or defence, but also to address **societal and global challenges**. Investing in these areas is the only way to **reap long term and sustained economic gains**.

For this we need more investment, and this must start with the basics, since R&D expenditure in the EU currently falls short of the target of 3% of GDP. **Coimbra Group (CG) calls for a substantial boost in funding in these areas to drive strategic priorities**, support high-quality projects, and close the innovation and skills gaps with other global regions.

CG emphasises that **skills are always grounded in knowledge, hence the importance of interaction between research and education**. We advocate for a long-term vision of skills development – one that is not only crucial in the short term but also prepares for future challenges.

Political discourse seems to prioritise a technocentric perspective on skills, innovation and growth. CG highlights the fundamental role of the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) in addressing global challenges and driving the necessary societal and socio-economic transformations.



CG emphasises the importance of funding fundamental research as a cornerstone for long-term innovation and progress. CG therefore calls for **increased funding for the European Research Council (ERC) and Marie Curie-Sklodowska Actions (MSCA)**, including the collaborative networks, in the next EU Budget. It is also absolutely crucial that **independence of the ERC** is safeguarded.

The future priorities of the EU should integrate the concept of the *'fifth freedom,'* as recommended by Enrico Letta, **embedding education, research and innovation at the core of the Single Market** to foster economic vitality, societal advancement, and cultural enrichment.

CG strongly support efforts to **simplify access to EU funding and harmonise programmes' rules from the perspective of the beneficiaries.** Moreover, the recent years have shown that flexibility in the budget structure is essential for beneficiaries to respond effectively to crises and emerging priorities. To maximise the impact and efficiency of its policies, the EU must ensure streamlined budget allocation within each programme, enhanced coordination between EU and national levels, and greater transparency.

As the negotiations on the EU budget 2028-2034 are in full swing, **CG calls for a stand-alone Erasmus+ programme and a stand-alone R&I framework programme (FP10) in the next Multiannual Financial Framework** with ring-fenced budgets for both programmes for the whole MFF duration.

— Coimbra Group Executive Board —

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