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**Consultation response:****What funding for EU external action after 2013?**

The Coimbra Group of Universities has examined with interest the questions raised in the public consultation on "What funding for EU external action after 2013?". As a network of comprehensive research universities our interest is in the impact of funding for external action on co-operation in higher education and research, an issue we have already addressed in the very recent public consultations by DG Education and Culture on next-generation EU programmes – education, training and youth policy. We are attaching the papers we produced in response to these consultations, as they reflect our position on those aspects of the funding of external action relevant to our organization.

The internationalization of higher education co-operation beyond the borders of the European Union, or indeed of Europe, constitutes one of the major aims and activities of this network since our foundation in 1985, and we have ample experience both within EU programmes such as Tempus, Alfa, Erasmus Mundus, and in other forms of co-operation, not least with similar networks to our own in North and South America. We believe this experience places us well to identify ways of improving current EU approaches to external action in higher education. For that reason, we would like to take this opportunity to insist especially on the need for careful and coordinated planning on the part of the Commission of any external action undertaken in higher education, and in particular on the need for such planning to ensure continuity. Lack of continuity has proved to have a negative impact on programmes such as Erasmus Mundus Action 2 in the recent past, to the point of endangering their credibility in some partner institutions and countries, not to mention the difficulties it has provoked for EU universities in their own strategic planning.

It is our belief that pluriannual planning under a broad umbrella programme may help to avoid such undesirable and unnecessary consequences in the future. More detailed considerations are included in the papers attached. We would be pleased to discuss these points further with you.

On behalf of the Coimbra Group, I remain

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dorothy Kelly'.

Prof. Dorothy Kelly  
Chair of the Executive Board