



Joint response of Universities UK and the UK Higher Education International Unit to the UK Government Review of the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union – Education, Vocational Training and Youth

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Contact:

Chris Hale
Deputy Director of Policy
Universities UK
chris.hale@universitiesuk.ac.uk
T: 020 7419 5490

Lucy Shackleton
Policy Officer – European HE
UK HE International Unit
Lucy.shackleton@international.ac.uk
T: 020 7419 5404

Universities UK

Universities UK (UUK) is the representative organisation for the UK's universities. Together with Higher Education Wales and Universities Scotland, its mission is to be the definitive voice for all universities in the UK, providing high quality leadership and support to its members to promote a successful and diverse higher education sector.

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UK Higher Education International Unit

The UK Higher Education International Unit (IU) represents all UK higher education institutions internationally and delivers a number of programmes and initiatives to support the development and sustainability of the UK HE sector's influence and competitiveness in a global environment. It supports the sector's engagement in European Union and Bologna Process policy debates.

The IU is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Scottish Funding Council, Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland), GuildHE, Universities UK, the Higher Education Academy and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. It is located at Universities UK.

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Introduction

1. This document sets out the response of Universities UK (UUK) and the UK Higher Education International Unit (IU) to the UK Government Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' Call for Evidence on the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union (EU) in the field of Education, Vocational Training and Youth.
2. The response has been developed jointly by UUK and the IU, in consultation with higher education institutions, sector bodies and individual experts from across the UK higher education sector.
3. The division of competences between the EU and its Member States is set out in the Treaty of Lisbon, in effect since 2009. Article 165 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) provides that the EU has supporting competence in the area of education and youth. Articles 156 and 166 further describe action to implement a vocational training policy. Article 165 states that the Union will "support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of systems". The article specifically prohibits any harmonisation by the EU in the area of education.

The EU's role in education and training

1. As stipulated in the review document, the European Union (EU) has supporting competence in the area of education. This means that, while it can '*support and supplement the action of Member States*', it must respect the autonomy of national education systems. Article 165¹ of the Lisbon Treaty relates to '*encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity*'. Article 166² relates to '*a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training*'.
2. EU activity relating to higher education has expanded steadily since the late 1980s when the first Erasmus funding programme for student mobility was launched. The EU has primarily focused on increasing student and staff mobility between EU countries, through funding for mobility periods, the research and development of tools designed to facilitate transparency and recognition across borders and the promotion of European language learning.
3. However, in recent years the policy prominence of higher education at the European level has grown considerably, as evidenced by the European Commission's 2011 Communication *Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the Modernisation of Higher Education*.³
4. In particular, the modernisation of higher education has been recognised as central to economic growth and long-term competitiveness in Europe. Europe 2020⁴, the EU's ten year growth and jobs strategy, aiming for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, includes headline targets in five areas, including education, one of which is specifically higher education-focused:
 - 40% of Europeans aged 30-34 should have a higher education or equivalent qualification by 2020
5. Alongside this, the European Commission has developed a Strategic Framework for education and training, Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020⁵), to support Member States in developing higher education policy priorities to help address common challenges.

¹ <http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-the-functioning-of-the-european-union-and-comments/part-3-union-policies-and-internal-actions/title-xii-education-vocational-training-youth-and-sport/453-article-165.html>

² <http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-the-functioning-of-the-european-union-and-comments/part-3-union-policies-and-internal-actions/title-xii-education-vocational-training-youth-and-sport/454-article-166.html>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/policy/modernisation_en.pdf

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index_en.htm

6. ET 2020, which was designed as a 'strategic framework' to organise the education and training activities in the Commission, was produced one year prior to the EU 2020 Strategy. EU 2020 has political backing (having been adopted by the European Council⁶), and ET 2020 has become more focused on supporting the EU 2020 'jobs and growth' agenda, particularly through focusing Commission education and training activities on country-specific needs (CSRs) as they are developed through the European Semester⁷.
7. ET 2020 covers the education context for UK higher education – from schools producing excellent applicants, to excellent teaching and learning. However, the extent to which the ET 2020 strategy can support country-specific needs very much depends on a Member State working with the EU to identify needs. In the current version of the UK Country-specific Recommendations (CSRs) for 2014⁸ there is no explicit reference to the word education, reflecting the strong UK position that education is a national competence.
8. The European Commission has also provided funding opportunities to support the internationalisation of higher education. In the previous policy cycle this ranged from Erasmus student mobility, through the development of international Master and Doctoral programmes under Erasmus Mundus⁹, to the establishment of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT¹⁰). Erasmus Mundus has been an important mechanism to build multi-national, multi-institution, and multi-disciplinary programmes that have attracted excellent students from across the world. The EIT builds research and teaching collaboration across countries and regions. The Knowledge Innovation Communities (KICs) are structured across countries, sectors (higher education, industry, and policy), and within regions (linking higher education institutions with business in a strategic way).
9. The European Commission also plays a central role in the intergovernmental Bologna Process, acting as a consultative member, sitting on the Bologna Follow-Up Group and the Bologna Board, and providing the majority of funding for activities to support the consolidation of the European higher education area.
10. UK higher education sector believes that it is appropriate and advantageous for the EU to support Member States in addressing common challenges pertaining to higher education, and is encouraged by the EU's increasing emphasis on the role of higher education and research for sustainable growth and competitiveness.
11. The EU adds value in the area of education and training, through providing funding for mobility and research; gathering evidence and providing policy recommendations; and developing tools to support cross-border higher education.

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/council_conclusion_17_june_en.pdf

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2014/csr2014_uk_en.pdf

⁹ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/index_en.php

¹⁰ <http://eit.europa.eu/>

12. For the most part, current EU activity complements, rather than duplicates, activity at Member State level and no single country has the networks, access and funding to provide the same outputs.
13. However, it is important that Member States retain full authority over their higher education systems, and that EU activity is restricted to those areas that can be accurately described as 'supporting and supplementing' national efforts. In this context, the EU must continue to respect the diversity between and within national higher education systems, and prioritise full and sustained stakeholder consultation in the development of initiatives at European level. It is equally crucial that the principle of institutional autonomy continues to be fully respected by EU institutions and Member States.
14. It is also important that the EU makes best use of existing data and programme activity undertaken by other international organisations (e.g. OECD, UNESCO) to maximize the efficient use of public money, and where possible works to ensure complementarity of indicators and definitions. In this context, the UK higher education sector welcomes recent EU commitments to increasing strategic engagement with other international organisations. For example, there is a focus on building evidence with OECD through links to PISA and PIAAC¹¹.
15. There must be a clear demarcation between EU higher education policies and initiatives and those undertaken in the context of the Bologna Process. While the European Commission is an important member of the Process, it should be recognized that the Bologna Process is an intergovernmental one, with a different membership from the European Union, and it should primarily be driven by consensus between national authorities.
16. Some recent European Commission interventions, including on the revision of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* and the wider consultation on a *European Area for Skills and Qualifications* have the potential to unhelpfully duplicate activity already in train in the context of the Bologna Process.¹²
17. Although they fall outside the scope of this review, EU research mobility funding and related initiatives also constitute an area of vital importance to the UK higher education sector, as outlined in the International Unit's response to the Balance of Competences review on Research and Development.¹³
18. UK universities also have access to EU Structural and Cohesion Funds which aim at supporting overall social and economic development by reducing disparities between the regions and Member States. Universities have made use of these funds to

¹¹ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1198_en.htm

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/consultations/documents/skills-back_en.pdf

¹³ <http://www.international.ac.uk/media/2392521/BoC-Response-joint-HE-International-Unit-UUK-Research-and-Development.pdf>

finance a number of activities from widening participation to technology transfer and higher level vocational training.

19. As a general point, maintaining and enhancing cooperation and coherence between Directorates General of the European Commission, in particular DG Research and Innovation and DG Education and Culture but also more widely, is vital to placing higher education and research at the heart of Europe's approach to sustainable growth.

The advantages of EU Activity in education and training

EU Funding for Mobility

20. For UK higher education institutions, the EU primarily adds value in the field of education and training, through the provision of funding for staff and student mobility, building on the principle of freedom of movement enshrined in the Treaties and central to the Single Market. The Erasmus programme, and latterly Erasmus+, represents the single largest source of funding for UK staff and students wishing to benefit from international experience.
21. In this context, the UK higher education sector was delighted to see higher education mobility funding protected and prioritized during negotiations on the overall EU budget for 2014-2020. Despite the first ever real terms decrease in the EU budget, the total budget for the Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport was agreed at €14.7 billion, which represents a 40% increase compared to spending levels under the previous programmes. UK higher education institutions believe that this is a sound investment and would like to see higher education prioritized in future budget negotiations, including in the event of a budgetary review in 2016.
22. Although still low in comparison to other European countries, the numbers of UK students benefitting from Erasmus placements has been growing steadily since 2006/7 and reached record levels in academic year 2012/13, when 14,600 UK students received Erasmus funding to pursue a work or study placement abroad. (An overview of the increase in UK participation is included at Figure 1).

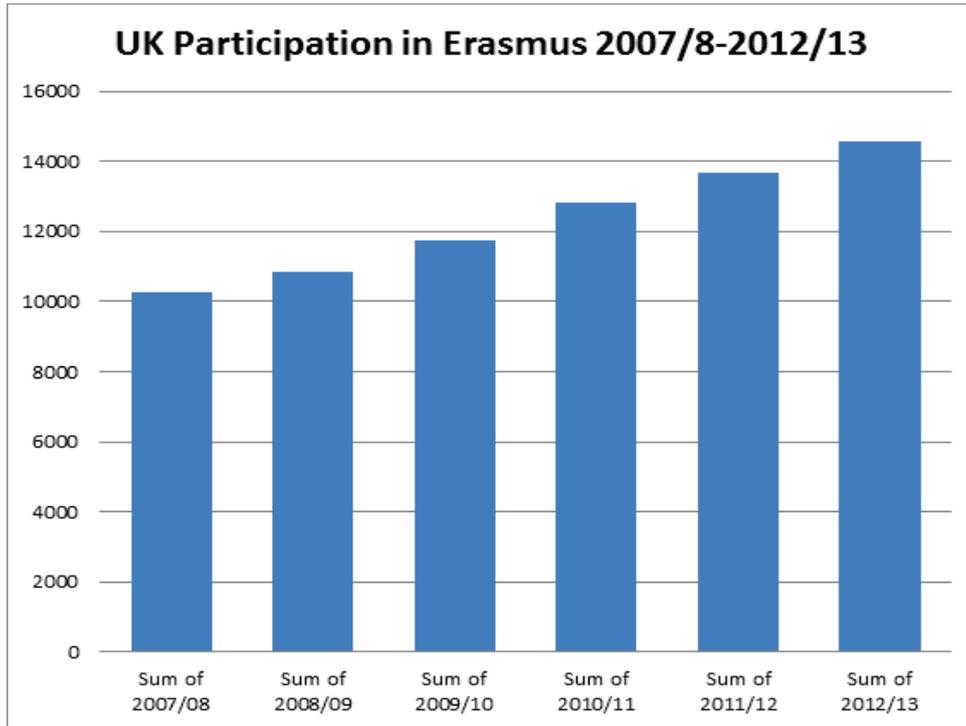


Figure 1: The British Council

23. Increasing the level of UK outward student mobility, including through Erasmus, is central to the long-term employability of the UK work force and is a key component of the UK Government's July 2013 *International Education Industrial Strategy*¹⁴, as well as the International Unit's Government-funded *Outward Student Mobility Programme*.¹⁵
24. Research has repeatedly demonstrated the benefits of international experience. A period abroad improves a students' academic performance, linguistic ability, and intercultural awareness. These transversal skills are central to success in a globalised and globalising graduate labour market. Students who have undertaken an Erasmus mobility are more likely to be in either employment or further study six months after graduating, and to have more responsibility and higher average salaries, than their peers who stayed at home.¹⁶
25. Forthcoming research conducted by the European Commission, the key findings of which will be published on 10 July, further confirms the positive impact of Erasmus mobility, on the basis of a longitudinal study of over 50,000 students. According to the study, those students who undertook an Erasmus mobility were half as likely to be unemployed and a fifth more were in management roles than those who had not

¹⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/229844/bis-13-1081-international-education-global-growth-and-prosperity.pdf

¹⁵ <http://www.international.ac.uk/programmes/programmes/outward-student-mobility.aspx>;
<http://www.international.ac.uk/media/1520768/uk-he-international-unit-uk-strategy-for-outward-mobility-version-1-0.pdf>

¹⁶ http://www.britishcouncil.org/hefce_bc_report2010.pdf

undertaken an Erasmus mobility.

26. International experience helps to enhance job prospects and satisfaction for participating staff, whether academic or administrative. Administrative staff return from a mobility period with an enhanced understanding of how institutions are organised in international contexts, which facilitates partnership building. Researchers who have spent an extended time abroad tend to be significantly more productive in terms of articles published than those who have remained in the UK.¹⁷
27. The Erasmus programme has also benefited institutions. Hosting international students and internationally mobile staff, helps to internationalise the home university, enriching the academic and extra-curricular life of the institution and surrounding area, and enabling students who are not studying abroad to accrue international experience.
28. Inter-institutional partnerships cement relationships between academic and administrative staff, facilitating and encouraging deeper cooperation from joint programmes to research collaboration. What starts as staff mobility can become institutional collaboration that establishes the conditions to develop international teaching (for example Erasmus+ Joint Master Programmes) and research (enhancing the ability to secure research funding through Horizon 2020).
29. European higher education mobility funding also enhances the quality of institutions' teaching and learning, allowing them to offer opportunities they would not otherwise be able to offer, which improve their ability to recruit and the student experience. A case study from the University of Reading is included on page 11.
30. Finally, from a practical perspective, the framework of the Erasmus programme has facilitated the negotiation of inter-institutional partnerships, enabling institutions to draw on established templates and procedures, where bilateral agreements outside this framework would have to be negotiated on a case by case basis.

¹⁷ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263729/bis-13-1297-international-comparative-performance-of-the-UK-research-base-2013.pdf

Case Study – University of Reading

The Lifelong Learning Programme Erasmus Intensive Programme (IP) initiative funds a joint field course between the University of Reading, the University of Akureyri (Iceland), Jacobs University Bremen (Germany) and Ghent University (Belgium).

It was established to improve student training in research field skills and laboratory analysis: each participating HEI currently offers limited or no field trips for degrees offered in microbiology, so the IP adds a practical field course to the curriculum.

Additionally, the IP gives the students unprecedented access to experts in a range of disciplines and from culturally different academic environments, providing a unique opportunity to learn cutting edge technologies and pioneering research. 30-40 students will participate, with the UK, Germany and Belgium each providing a minimum of 10 students.

By supporting student mobility and encouraging international exchange, it contributes towards the University of Reading's strategic objectives for teaching and learning by engaging students in research, improving employability and evolving our teaching & learning approaches

It also contributes to the University's strategic objectives for internationalisation by establishing international collaborations with world class academics and Universities, better equipping staff and students with values, skills and experience for living and working in a globalised world, and increasing the number and diversity of our students by developing teaching partnership.

Other EU Education and Training Activity

31. While funding for individual mobility constitutes a large proportion of the EU budget for education and training, it is involved in a number of other activities, also of tangible benefit to UK universities.
32. The EU provides funding for collaborative, transnational projects to support the collaborative transmission of best practice and the gathering of a sound evidence-base for future policy and practice. This brings experts from across the European Union together to work on common solutions for common problems and can develop into large-scale research collaborations of the kind funded under Horizon 2020.
33. Funding opportunities outside the 7th Framework Programme and relevant to UK universities include:
 - Transnational education and exchange
 - Innovative curriculum development
 - Research – focused on EU policy priorities
 - Community/business engagement
34. UK universities are well-placed to access these opportunities (which are detailed monthly in the International Unit's European HE Funding Bulletin¹⁸) and the amount of

¹⁸ <http://www.international.ac.uk/research-and-publications/european-funding-bulletin.aspx>

funding secured increased dramatically over the last EU budgetary period (2007-2013). Please see Figure 2 below.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
England	9	10	15	31	31	96
Scotland	2	2	4	4	5	17
Wales	0	2	4	1	7	14
Total	11	14	23	36	43	127

Figure 2: European Commission

35. Figure 3 provides an overview of UK higher education institutions' access to research funding opportunities outside the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) in 2012.
36. As might be expected, the most significant EU Programmes for UK HEIs are the main education and training programmes 2007-2013:- Erasmus Mundus; Lifelong Learning and TEMPUS.¹⁹ Together these three Programmes account for 83 (63%) of the projects and €18.4m (38%) of the funds awarded in 2012.

EU Programme	No of projects	Amount of grant secured
		€
Erasmus Mundus	52	7.8m
Lifelong Learning Programme	26	6m
TEMPUS	5	4.6m
DAPHNE	7	4.2m
CIP – Entrepreneurship & Innovation	5	3.2m
Progress	2	1.6m
Fundamental Rights & Justice	1	0.9m
Prevention of & Fight Against Crime	1	0.8m

¹⁹ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/programmes_delegated_to_eacea_en.php

Criminal Justice	2	0.6m
LIFE+	2	0.6m
Drug Prevention & Information	1	0.4m
Safer Internet	1	0.4m
Culture	2	0.4m
Health	2	0.3m
Others	22	16.4m
Total	131	48.2m

Figure 3: European Commission

37. Universities identify the following benefits in being involved in such projects:

- Income generation and diversification of funding sources
- Enriching the experience of home students, enhancing student employability, and strengthening international research networks
- Enhancing the academic reputation of individual academics and the institution itself
- Helping UK universities to become more attractive locations for the best quality international students and researchers
- Creating international networks that may facilitate or enable future access to FP7/Horizon 2020 research funding opportunities

UK HEI Testimonials – Involvement in EC-funded Education and Training Projects

'There was unanimous agreement that the main benefit of the project was the networking opportunities that it provided. Firm connections have been established among the partner organisations and there are strong possibilities that these will be further developed beyond the project.'

Alan Britton, University of Glasgow

'The involvement of national institutions and international partners has helped to raise our profile and added to the credibility of the project as a whole'

'No individual partner could have produced the courses and other resources that we have developed.'

Tony Green, University of Bedfordshire

'Collaborating on small LLP projects [...] provides the means to identify common synergies and interests between partners and institutions that will allow research consortia to develop to undertake much larger projects'

Irene Glendinning, University of Coventry

'The project has been enriched by the fact that we come from different intellectual and academic traditions which broadens our approach to research. It also enables us to see issues from different perspectives, including interdisciplinary.

Dr Barbara Merrill, University of Warwick

38. Much of the activity funded under the Lifelong Learning Programme and now Erasmus+ is designed to underpin, support and develop the EU's agenda for the Modernisation of European higher education. UK universities strongly support the involvement of Europe's universities and research-performing organisations in the development of European Union policy for higher education, as well as more generally.
39. As a complement to this, research previously funded under programmes such as Erasmus Mundus and Tempus, now subsumed into the Erasmus+ programme, is designed to support capacity building within higher education systems' that are being developed or modernised, contributing to development objectives and enhancing the international attractiveness of European higher education and by extension UK higher education.
40. Often drawing on the results of funded research, the EU is also involved in the development and maintenance of tools to support mobility, like the European Credit Transfer System and the Diploma Supplement.
41. While UK engagement with these tools varies from institution to institution, both ECTS credits and the Diploma Supplement can play a vital role in facilitating the recognition of time spent abroad.

Erasmus+

42. With an increased budget, a new structure and a number of policy innovations, the new Erasmus+ programme will provide more opportunities than ever before for staff and students to build their international competences, and to increase their innovative potential.²⁰ Erasmus+ has been welcomed by UK universities and by the UK Government.²¹
43. Funding for individual mobility will, for the first time, be extended beyond Europe's borders, offering the opportunity for international students to receive Erasmus funding to study in Europe, and for EU students to study in destinations beyond those countries participating in the programme. The UK higher education sector is the most internationalised higher education sector in Europe and is well-placed to take advantage of these new funding

²⁰ <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/>

²¹ <http://international.ac.uk/media-centre/press-releases/erasmusplus-programme-launched.aspx>;
<http://llpukecorys.com/2014/05/02/erasmus-celebrates-its-official-launch-in-the-uk/>

opportunities to cement relationships with important partners, for example in the emerging economies. While the international dimension of Erasmus+ is only likely to constitute a small proportion of overall funding, this, coupled with the Commission's internationalisation strategy *European Higher Education in the World*, helpfully underlines that the EU in the 21st century is outward, rather than inward, facing.²²

44. The Erasmus+ programme will also see the launch of the European Masters Loan Guarantee Facility which will give students who wish to pursue Masters-level study in a participating country other than their own the chance to access a loan at favourable rates, offered through a financial intermediary but part-guaranteed by the European Investment Fund. This has the potential to support both incoming and outgoing mobility at postgraduate level, with positive consequences for UK students and institutions.
45. Erasmus+ has taken a more strategic approach to encouraging university-business collaboration through funding for 'Knowledge Alliances' and 'Sector Skills Alliances'. This is in line with UK Government and higher education sector priorities, and may also help to prepare universities for larger scale industrial partnerships under Horizon 2020.
46. There is also a strong emphasis in Erasmus+ in tracking and understanding impact, which is to be welcomed. The new UK Erasmus+ Agency has built impact firmly into the Agency activities and the European Commission is doing more to monitor and track impact centrally.
47. Overall Erasmus+ and its range of actions respond to relevant UK policy aims to improve international competitiveness, and to make the UK a globally attractive location for overseas students, and the Commission is developing the programme in a positive direction from the perspective of the UK higher education sector.

²² http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/international-cooperation/world-education_en.htm

The UK, the Bologna Process and the European Commission

- The Bologna Process is an intergovernmental process, made up of 47 Member States and consultative members, including the European Commission.
- By creating a European Higher Education Area with a common, three cycle degree structure and promoting common fundamental principles, the Bologna Process has enabled UK higher education to build internationally high-quality collaborative teaching programmes where the students are provided with clearly documented outcomes that enhance their international employability.
- While it has not necessitated fundamental change in the UK higher education system, by bringing other countries' systems into line with the UK system, Bologna has facilitated student, staff and researcher mobility, international recognition of qualifications and peer learning.
- The international recognition, and therefore the value of a UK qualification, has increased as a result of the Bologna Process and being part of the European Higher Education Area has arguably enhanced UK universities' international attractiveness, as well as their links in Europe.
- The European Commission has played a fundamental role in making the Bologna Process a success. However, this success has also come as a result of the Process' voluntary nature, and the involvement of stakeholders, including universities.
- The Bologna Process should remain Member-State led and the commitments made must remain sensitive to national and institutional diversity and autonomy.

Disadvantages of EU Activity in education and training

48. The primary challenge for UK higher education institutions accessing EU funding is the level of bureaucracy involved. Simplification is a stated priority under Erasmus+ which has been welcomed by UK higher education. However, while the Commission is working on streamlining the application, evaluation, and monitoring processes, there are some structural issues still of concern.
49. In particular, the European Commission has a tendency to limit flexibility in programme implementation through insisting on a one-size fits all approach which does not adequately accommodate institutional or national diversity, and which may have adverse consequences for uptake. An example of this is the introduction of a flat reimbursement rate for staff mobility which is at odds with UK institutional accounting practices and which has the potential to discourage UK universities from accessing these opportunities.
50. The accommodation of national diversity is also of fundamental importance in the setting of common standards and minimum requirements. While the UK higher education sector

welcomes the revision of the Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive²³ agreed in 2013, the UK had to work hard to ensure the mandatory minimum duration for Medicine and Dentistry training remained six full-time years 'or' 5500 hours, rather than six full-time years. If the higher education community had not intervened, the stipulation of a minimum of six years would have had serious adverse consequences for graduates of shorter UK Medicine and Dentistry degrees.

51. It would be advantageous to simplify and to streamline EU tools for recognition and transparency. A recent review has highlighted how numerous these are, as well as the extent to which the European public is unaware of their existence. In this context, the European Commission would do well to focus on those areas where it adds the most value.²⁴ Equally, it is essential that mechanisms such as Europass CVs, ECTS, and the Diploma Supplement, while important mechanisms to support and enable education mobility, do not become compulsory requirements.
52. UK higher education has concerns regarding U-Multirank, the EU-funded multi-dimensional transparency tool, designed to surmount the challenges posed by traditional rankings and provide students, institutions and policy-makers with more transparent information about European higher education institutions.²⁵
53. Although UK universities recognise the shortcomings of traditional rankings, it remains to be seen whether it will be possible for U-Multirank to address these. Currently only nine UK HEIs are participating, and the first iteration of the tool has raised questions about the reliability and completeness of the data used and how it is presented.²⁶
54. More generally, the UK sector is uneasy about the use of public funding to develop a ranking system and how the information collected will be used in future. In particular, it is critically important that the Commission does not extend the U-Multirank into a normative tool that is used as the basis for allocating EU funding.
55. In order to ensure that EU funded initiatives contribute to addressing concrete issues, full stakeholder consultation is of fundamental importance. In this context, more could be made of the synergies between EU higher education policy and the Bologna Process. To avoid funding-led research, European Commission work-streams could draw more inspiration from the policy exchange and common priorities defined by national higher education Ministers and stakeholders under the Bologna Process.

Future Opportunities and Challenges

56. As touched upon in the above, it will be important to monitor the future role of the European Commission in the Bologna Process and related policy areas, to ensure that

²³ http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/policy_developments/legislation/index_en.htm.

²⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/consultations/documents/skills-back_en.pdf

²⁵ <http://www.u-portal.org/u-multirank/>

²⁶ http://www.international.ac.uk/media/2641096/iupn-03_u-multirank-launch.pdf

the future of the European Higher Education Area remains clearly defined by national Government and stakeholders.

57. Given the European Commission's increasing interest in the field of higher education, it will also be important to be vigilant about any suggestion of competence creep. The UK higher education sector firmly believes in the autonomy of institutions and of national higher education systems and there should be no change to the balance of competences between the EU and the UK in this area.
58. Nevertheless, UK universities welcome the European Commission's emphasis on the importance of higher education for the future of European growth and the increase in funding secured for Erasmus+ over the course of the last EU budget negotiations.
59. In future, UK higher education would support both more and a higher proportion of EU funding being allocated to DG Education and Culture, and, by extension, to European universities. Alongside this, UK higher education wishes to see increased cooperation between Directorates General within the Commission, in relation to issues which affect the higher education and research community. In particular, synergies between Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 should be nurtured.
60. In order to ensure higher education funding is most effectively used, the UK higher education sector wishes to work with the European Commission and the UK Government to address and reduce the amount of bureaucracy involved in the Erasmus+ programme, and to help to ensure that sufficient flexibility is possible, accounting for national and institutional diversity, particularly in the context of the encouraging growth in the number of UK students participating in the Erasmus+ programme.
61. It also wishes to ensure that this flexibility and accommodation of national and institutional diversity is mirrored in European higher education policy, and that the importance of learning outcomes, rather than course content and duration is recognised in future discussions of qualifications, including in relation to the UK one year Masters.
62. UK universities are in a good position to play a leadership role in the development of European higher education policy as it develops an increasingly global dimension. While increasing the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area is central to this, any activity undertaken by the European Commission in this area must recognise the significant activity already undertaken at institutional and national level, and seek to complement rather than to duplicate this. It must also recognise that a key strength of the European Higher Education Area is its diversity and any promotional activity should reflect this.
63. As this agenda develops the UK Government should equally be mindful of the impact of national visa regimes on a country or region's attractiveness for international students and the adverse economic, political and cultural impact that short-sighted immigration policy decisions have on the international reputation and financial sustainability of higher education sectors.

64. Finally, while we do not yet have the necessary information available on whether higher education will be included in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)²⁷ negotiations or the likely impact of this, it is vital that negotiations recognise both that higher education is vital to UK growth and competitiveness and that they respect national diversity across Europe in this area.²⁸

Related balance of competences reviews

65. Universities UK and the UK HE International Unit has commented on the following other balance of competences reviews as these contain some important cross-cutting themes between their area and that of research and innovation:
- Research and Development
 - Budget
 - Internal market: Free movement of persons – Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions
 - Asylum and immigration – Home Office
 - Internal Market: Free movement of goods – HM Revenue and Customs, BIS and Intellectual Property Office
 - Trade and investment - BIS

²⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/in-focus/ttip/>

²⁸ <http://www.euractiv.com/trade/ttip-threatens-european-educatio-news-534162>