

Knowledge at the Heart of European Development

Common Declaration

On March 25th, European Union heads of State will meet in Rome to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community. Brexit will be the white elephant in the room. What could have been a celebration has instead turned into a moment of serious contemplation on the *raison d'être* of the European Union. The German (HRK) and French (CPU) Rectors Conferences believe that knowledge creation is the answer to this question.

The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, has published five proposals for a new EU identity. After having been ignored for some time, the policies of education, research and innovation reemerge in the paper. But mentioning research, innovation and education as key drivers of Europe's future isn't enough when these policies are subsequently mostly ignored in the proposed five scenarios for Europe by 2025. In two scenarios, European research is limited to the role of serving the envisioned EU defense cooperation. Education on the other hand seems to play no role in any future scenario of the EU.

Especially in times of crisis, it is even more imperative that the EU does not neglect its strengths, resources and values. The European mobility and research programmes are a real success story. Studying and learning in Europe has become a life-altering experience for over three million students, trainees and teachers who have participated in Erasmus programmes. Similarly, almost 100,000 young researchers have acquired scientific and professional qualifications as well as cultural experiences in other EU member states through the Marie Skłodowska Curie exchange programme. Within a decade, the European Research Council has become a global benchmark for research excellence in the scientific community. Today, the European Research and Innovation Programme, Horizon 2020, fosters successful collaboration between researchers from EU members States and across the globe, driving cutting-edge scientific and innovation discovery. What a shortfall that Juncker's visions for Europe by 2015 doesn't mention Erasmus at all.

If education, research and innovation do not receive a clear role and mission in the future design of the EU, their funding may well be in peril. The cultural glue for Europe as well as the economic growth and competitiveness they provide is needed now, more than ever.

Sufficient resources alone, however, provide no guarantee of the future success of the European Union. HRK and the CPU propose therefore the creation of an Education, Research and Innovation Union as a future-oriented project for Europe. So far, the EU policies of education on the one hand and the policies of research and innovation are completely separated fields. The result is that teaching activities cannot be a part of EU research projects. There is a need for change. Innovative ideas are the result of research and development as well as educated minds.

The full potential of education as promoter of critical thought, of citizen engagement and intercultural competence needs to be better considered by the European Union. Education forms the ties that bind the babel of EU citizens together via awareness and expansion of a common European culture.

The implementation of such a strategy should preserve cultural and educational diversity. We need a multi-level governance approach in which the European Commission could assume the role of a moderator and coach. In Germany, the federal government, regional States and universities are

the key players. In France, the federal government and universities. Academics and students as well as business associations and other stakeholders should also be active participants.

Together, we can build a strong European identity that fosters our economic viability and cultural understanding while respecting our diversity. Especially now, when discussing the next chapter for Europe in Rome and after Rome, our proposals should play a vital role.

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