



Knowledge and skills play a pivotal role in driving success for the EU and its member states

Unifi places a high priority on a globally robust and functional European Union which promotes the security, prosperity and economic interests of its Member States and citizens, with democracy, the rule of law and fundamental and human rights at the basis of all its actions.

Universities hold a key position in building a competitive and attractive EU, and in solving the challenges that it faces. Unifi highlights the following key messages to the future European Parliament and Commission:

1

Unlocking Europe's success requires skills, knowledge, research as well as education and innovation activities based on these.

To enhance the EU's competitiveness, Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) needs to be modernised. The central focus should shift towards activities supporting skills, knowledge, and sustainable growth such as the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and the Erasmus+ programme. Research framework programmes have proven successful both economically and in fostering essential networking for RDI. However, it's essential to recognize that EU funding should complement, not replace, national funding efforts.

- The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10) will be made an international beacon by doubling its funding to EUR 200 billion for the 2028-2034 funding period.
- The framework programme funding must continue to be based on excellence and open competition, not on quotas or geographical criteria.
- Other EU funding programmes will be adjusted to include more RDI emphasis so that they can support the renewal of Europe. Quality criteria for these programmes will be enhanced.
- The EU encourages the Member States to increase their national R&D and education investments so that 4% of their GDP would target R&D activities, and 2% of GDP higher education by 2030.

- The EU will strengthen its role in fighting misinformation and disinformation by emphasising the importance of research and education. This will involve promoting scientific freedom, encouraging the use of well-researched information, and safeguarding the autonomy of universities across all EU activities.
- EU regulation supports education, research, and innovation. Regulatory activities should actively contribute to expanding opportunities in education, fostering research, and driving innovation forward.

2

Free science and research, autonomous universities, equality in education, and the open availability of well-researched information are cornerstones of societies where stability, democracy, and well-being prevail.

According to the Eurobarometer survey, citizens across EU countries express strong confidence in the positive impact of technology and science. However, there is a growing trend of questioning researched information, manifesting in novel ways. In its recent risk report, the World Economic Forum identifies misinformation and disinformation as the most critical global risk in the short term, and also as the foremost non-environmental risk in the long term. To address this challenge, the EU must enhance its role as both a user and advocate of well-researched and reliable information.

3

The EU and its Member States must strengthen collaboration to increase the quality and impact of education and research.

The European Research Area (ERA) and the European Education Area (EEA) are long-term EU initiatives that promote education and research collaboration between the Member States, and develop the EU education and research policy. Although these initiatives have proven beneficial for both member states and the EU, there is a need to enhance connections and coordination between them in the future. Emphasizing quality, effectiveness, and the interplay between education and research will be crucial.

- The role of the EU in promoting mobility must be maintained, and the mobility of experts, information, and data need to be strengthened.
- Collaboration among European universities must be simplified. This requires cooperation between universities, the EU, and the Member States.
- European university alliances have significantly increased cooperation between universities. Continued support from the Erasmus+ program is crucial for their ongoing development. Potential EU research funding should follow standard competitive procedures rather than being earmarked exclusively for alliances.
- The current allocation of EU jurisdiction in education and research functions well, and no changes in it are needed.