

The European Dimension of Universities

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Research at European Universities

- European universities make the major contribution to basic research in Europe. Ratios vary from country to country.
- In many fields the European university system performs at the best international level and in many other fields it has obviously the potential to do so – in numbers: *4,000 higher education institutions, 17 million students and 435,000 researchers.*
- But overall European universities are at the moment not in the position to use their full potential.
- The European university system needs to broaden access on a more equitable basis, has to reach out for more excellence and must allow for more diversification within the system (avoidance of uniformity).

Modernisation Agenda

- Deregulation at the national level, autonomy and accountability.
- Overcome fragmentation within Universities.
- Building up structured partnerships with the business community (a very good example is the Biocenter Vienna).
- Reducing the funding gap – at least 2% of the GDP should be devoted to the higher education sector.
- Funding decisions should be based more on outcomes than on inputs (greater responsibility of universities for long term funding).
- Enhancement of research across the borders of scientific fields. Example: The importance of game theory in biology and evolutionary models in economics.

Reaching out for more Excellence at the European Level

- European Research Council
- European Institute of Technology

The Special Situation of the New Member States

The Eastern European countries are in a special situation:

- Overall the scientific performance in the Eastern European countries dropped in the 1990s; the number of international publications, especially the number of highly cited and high impact paper dropped. In the last years the performance seems to recover.
- The number of researchers has decreased.
- A significant brain loss has taken place.
- But several examples exist that the situation is now improving.

Vienna Biocenter

- The Vienna Biocenter provides a perfect example for the success of a research cluster: two universities, which are linked via a company (the Max F. Perutz Labs), research institutes of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, a “Fachhochschule” and several private companies and research facilities form an internationally highly respected research and business centre for life sciences.
- The “Model Vienna Biocenter” is very successful; it may be a best practise example for building up structured partnerships between academia, other research organisations and the business community.