

President of the European Commission
Ursula von der Leyen

Commissioner for Innovation and Youth
Mariya Gabriel

European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

28.11.2019

Dear President of the European Commission, dear Ms. von der Leyen,
Dear Commissioner for Innovation and Youth, dear Ms. Gabriel,

As the new European Commission is about to be officially established, we wish to jointly extend our sincerest wishes of success for the years to come. By bringing the domains of education, research, innovation and culture – the strong knowledge rectangle of Europe – under the supervision and leadership of one commissioner, for the first time in twenty years, you have put universities, and the values they embody, at the heart of the European policy debate. The members of our three national conferences are grateful for thus sending out a powerful message in support of universities, and are keen to contribute to Europe's societal advancement.

Universities, as drivers of knowledge attuned to the most pressing concerns of contemporary European societies, are vital for the sovereignty of the Union:

- by teaching competences and critical thinking, they make young people fit for the challenges of the future;
- by conducting research, they gain new knowledge and insights that can help reaching the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 agenda;
- by cooperating with the business sector and fostering the start-up culture, they become important actors of our ever more interconnected innovation ecosystems
- and by reflecting and shaping our cultures, values and worldviews, they increase our resilience against threats to our 21st-century democracies

The European Commission can strengthen all universities in Europe by developing coherent policies for education, research, innovation as well as the exchange with society and culture, and has already begun this process by developing instruments

such as the European Universities Alliances. We welcome the emphasis placed on the reinforcement and extension of this initiative in Commissioner Gabriel's mission letter. However, all dimensions of university activities in the knowledge rectangle should be incentivised by appropriate funding in the Alliances and be given the necessary leeway to experiment new forms of collaboration and governance. Accordingly, we wish to voice our strong concern that the resources allotted to the rise and development of the new European Universities be commensurate to the hopes and ambitions they have already triggered throughout Europe.

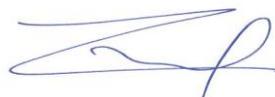
It is likely that when this letter reaches you, negotiations on the MFF will enter a crucial phase. We support a sufficient budget for the European Union and especially the European Union programmes that shape Europe's future. If they are properly accompanied, the European Universities Alliances are indeed likely to become powerful catalysts and boosters for change in the European Higher Education and Research Area. Synergies between various DGs of the European Commission and programmes of the European Union can help to achieve this goal. Greater cooperation between DG EAC and DG RTD immediately comes to mind, but one should not overlook the benefits to be derived from joint actions with DG Regio, DG Connect, and DG Grow in order to support and enhance mobility. By the same token, programmes such as Digital Europe or Innovation Europe could be made to contribute to the education, research and innovation policy of Europe.

We are delighted that you have created the opportunity for developing a more global EU strategy on universities and we are ready to contribute to this goal. That is why our three conferences respectfully request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience so as to discuss these issues, as well as any other topics you might wish to address through HRK, CPU and KRASP.

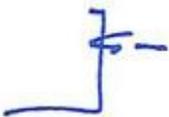
Yours sincerely,



Professor Peter-André Alt
President of the German Rectors' Conference
(HRK)



Professor Gilles Roussel
President of the French Rectors' Conference
(CPU)



Professor Jan Szmidt
President of the Polish Rectors' Conference
(KRASP)