**Press release – 25 October 2017**

**Europe’s University Leaders Call for Urgent Brexit Clarification**

Leaders of European higher education bodies have signed a statement calling on governments across Europe to speed up Brexit negotiations so talks can begin over the future of European research, collaboration, and student mobility.

The statement from 22 representative organisations of universities and national rectors' conferences from across Europe asks for clarification on arrangements for the European Research and Innovation programme – Horizon 2020 - and the Erasmus+ exchange programme after March 2019 when the UK is due to leave the European Union.

Research and higher education will be discussed in the second phase of Brexit negotiations, which are expected to start following the conclusion of the first phase of discussions. The European Council Summit concluded on 20 October 2017 that not enough progress had been made to start the second phase. The delay in the negotiations extends the uncertainties that the higher education sector is facing.

Professor Janet Beer, President of Universities UK and Vice-Chancellor of Liverpool University, says the lack of clarity is causing problems for universities now:

“We are now entering the period in which universities need to be finalising their research, collaboration and student exchange programmes for 2019. There is an urgent need for clarity on the UK’s participation in Horizon 2020 beyond Brexit. This scheme enhances the impact of our research by providing access to vital networks, talent and funding. Without clarity, the risk is that important European research programmes could stall.

“The arrival on campuses across Europe of students hoping to study abroad in 2019 increases the need to know whether the UK will or will not be able to continue to take part in Erasmus+. Participation in outward mobility schemes, such as Erasmus+, has major benefits for students, universities and employers.”

Full statement:

*Higher education, research and innovation are critical to the future of Europe. Conditions favourable to close cooperation and exchange are crucial to knowledge development in the interests of our societies. Universities call on the leaders of our respective governments and on the European Commission to accelerate the process of reaching agreement on the UK’s continued participation in, and contribution to, Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ to the end of these programmes. Clarification is now urgent: European consortia are already being formed and bids designed ready to be submitted after March 2019. Similarly, students arriving on campus this autumn and planning a period abroad as part of their studies need clarity on whether they can participate in Erasmus+ mobility involving UK partners from 2019 onwards.*

*The time has come for clarity and agreement in this important area. Universities must know which, if any, measures they need to undertake in the future to enable their students to thrive and their researchers to continue their innovative research. We urge you to address these pressing issues.*

Signatories: The Presidents of European Rectors' Conferences

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| Professor Rolf Tarrach | President | European Universities Association |
| Professor Janet Beer | President | Universities UK |
| Professor Jan Szmidt | President | Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (KRASP) |
| Professor Helen Dannetun | Chair of the Board | Association of Swedish Higher Education (SUHF) |
| Pieter Duisenberg | President | Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) |
| Professor Herman Van Goethem | President | Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR) |
| Dr. József Bódis | President | Hungarian Rectors’ Conference |
| Professor Tiit Land | President | Universities Estonia |
| Arvids Barsevskis | Chairman | Council of Rectors of Latvia |
| Professor Michael O. Hengartner | President | swissuniversities |
| Professor Rudolf Kropil | President | Slovak Rectors´ Conference |
| Professor António M. Cunha | President | Portuguese National Conference of Rectors (CRUP) |
| Professor Dragan Marušič | President | Slovenian Rectors’ Conference |
| Dr Jon Atli Benediktsson | President | National Rectors Conference in Iceland |
| Professor Jouko Niinimäki | President | Universities Finland (UNIFI) |
| Professor Tomas Zima | President | Czech Rectors' Conference |
| Professor Mari Sundli Tveit | President | Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions |
| Rector Anders Bjarklev | Chairman | Universities Denmark |
| Prof. Dr. Oliver Vitouch | President | Universities Austria (UNIKO) |
| Roberto Fernández | President | Conference of the Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE) |
| Professor Alfred J. Vella | Rector | University of Malta |
| Professor Vladimir Bumbasirevic | President | Conference of the Universities of Serbia |

Notes to editors:

National Rectors’ Conferences (NRCs) are member organisations that represent the universities and higher education institutions in their respective countries or regions. The NRCs represent their members to government, parliament and civic organisations. The signatories are all members of the European University Association (EAU), which is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors’ conferences in 47 European countries.

Universities UK is the representative organisation for the UK's universities. Founded in 1918, 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. With [136 members](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3a%2f%2fwww.universitiesuk.ac.uk%2fabout%2fPages%2fmember-institutions.aspx&data=01%7c01%7cgareth.morgan%40universitiesuk.ac.uk%7cc7b8ff789c05486c9e9308d3d67f9eca%7cb66c9f751b5f4d6280ff8ac626f15ced%7c0&sdata=HZo0mhA1oD3ib1h852%2fRzrZD1iHBe9pu5cQL3OaAs3k%3d) and offices in London, Cardiff ([Universities Wales](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3a%2f%2fwww.uniswales.ac.uk%2f&data=01%7c01%7cgareth.morgan%40universitiesuk.ac.uk%7cc7b8ff789c05486c9e9308d3d67f9eca%7cb66c9f751b5f4d6280ff8ac626f15ced%7c0&sdata=YLgnNtl4xAKjmchtjRVw5GCyb2DgyFn%2btuh6bg%2fLN5k%3d)) and Edinburgh ([Universities Scotland](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3a%2f%2fwww.universities-scotland.ac.uk%2f&data=01%7c01%7cgareth.morgan%40universitiesuk.ac.uk%7cc7b8ff789c05486c9e9308d3d67f9eca%7cb66c9f751b5f4d6280ff8ac626f15ced%7c0&sdata=Q3cYmkg%2fkrK28H1DS%2fiAhcngZW2CtV0ZRdmbhruJ9ME%3d)), it promotes the strength and success of UK universities nationally and internationally. Visit: [www.universitiesuk.ac.uk](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3a%2f%2fwww.universitiesuk.ac.uk%2f&data=01%7c01%7cgareth.morgan%40universitiesuk.ac.uk%7cc7b8ff789c05486c9e9308d3d67f9eca%7cb66c9f751b5f4d6280ff8ac626f15ced%7c0&sdata=575zbbcXEHC%2b0zZOAtPXoRplUUJzC%2faAuzyoop6cKRw%3d)​