Αγαπητοί συνάδελφοι,

Εκ μέρους της ΥΔΣ, σας αποστέλλουμε για ενημέρωσή σας το Ενημερωτικό Δελτίο (Μαρτίου 2021) του European University Association (EUA) (https://eua.eu/), στο οποίο το ΠΚ είναι μέλος.

Στο παρακάτω ενημερωτικό δελτίο του Προέδρου του EUA, υπάρχει ενημέρωση σε σχέση με διάφορα θέματα που αφορούν την Ευρώπη και την Ανώτερο Εκπαιδευτικό Χώρο όπως, για παράδειγμα ότι:

- Οι ηγέτες της Γερμανίας, της Φιλανδίας, της Εσθονίας και της Δανίας, με επιστολή τους στην Πρόεδρο της Ευρωπαϊκής Επιτροπής ζητούν μεταξύ άλλων τον προσδιορισμό των κρίσιμων τεχνολογιών και την προτεραιοποίηση αυτών, την εξασφάλιση ανοικτών αλυσίδων εφοδιασμού και την ανάπτυξη μίας πολιτικής εργαλειοθήκης για μετασχηματισμό καθώς και την δημιουργία μόνιμου συστήματος παρακολούθησης για την πρόβλεψη των ψηφιακών εξελίξεων. Τα παραπάνω κράτη-μέλη απευθύνονται και στον Γάλλο Επίτροπο της ΕΕ, υποστηρικτή μίας πιο παρεμβατικής προσέγγισης στις βιομηχανικές πολιτικές.

- Η κυβέρνηση του Ηνωμένου Βασιλείου ανακοίνωσε τη δημιουργία ενός νέου οργανισμού για την επαναστατική καινοτομία, τον Οργανισμό Προηγμένης Έρευνας και Εφευρέσεων (ARIA) με σκοπό την χρηματοδότηση ερευνών υψηλού κινδύνου και υψηλής ανταμοιβής. Προβλέπεται να τεθεί σε λειτουργία έως το 2022 με προϋπολογισμό περίπου 930 εκατομμυρίων ευρώ.

- Στα τέλη Φεβρουαρίου, ξεκίνησε η πρωτοβουλία «Scale-up Europe» υπό την ηγεσία της Γαλλίας, συγκεντρώνοντας εμπειρογνώμονες τεχνολογίας και καινοτομίας για να διαμορφώσουν μια στρατηγική για την επιτάχυνση κορυφαίων ευρωπαϊκών εταιρειών τεχνολογίας.
- Οι Υπουργοί Παιδείας των Κρατών-Μελών της ΕΕ συμφώνησαν με ψήφισμα στο νέο στρατηγικό πλαίσιο συνεργασίας για τα έτη 2021-2030, με το περιεχόμενο της Συμφωνίας να περιλαμβάνει 5 στρατηγικές προτεραιότητες και ορισμένους ενδεικτικούς στόχους της ΕΕ.
- Οι συζητήσεις για την αντιμετώπιση της πανδημίας εντείνονται, με τους ηγέτες των κρατών να αναμένουν για περισσότερα επιστημονικά στοιχεία ώστε να προχωρήσουν στην εκπόνηση έκθεσης του Ιουνίου σχετικά με τα διδάγματα που αντλήθηκαν και τους τρόπους διασφάλισης επαρκούς παραγωγικής ικανότητας στην ΕΕ.

- Το κύριο θέμα συζήτησης αφορά την δημιουργία μιας «Ψηφιακής Πράσινης Κάρτας» και η νομοθετική πρόταση σχετικά με αυτή την διαδικασία θα κατατεθεί στα μέσα Μαρτίου.
Για οποιεσδήποτε περαιτέρω πληροφορίες σε σχέση με τις δραστηριότητες του Δικτύου EUA, μπορείτε να αποταθείτε στην κα Στέλλα – Μαρία Βασιλείου, Λειτουργό Πανεπιστημίου Α’, Υπεύθυνη Γραφείου Διεθνών Σχέσεων και Προβολής (ηλεκτρ. δ/νση: vassiliou.stellamaria@ucy.ac.cy, τηλ.: +357 22894299).
Είμαστε στη διάθεσή σας για στις δηπότε χρειαστείτε επί του θέματος.
Ευχαριστούμε για τη συνεργασία.
Με φιλικούς χαιρετισμούς,

Μαρία Κελβέρη
Γραφείο Διεθνών Σχέσεων και Προβολής
Τομέας Διεθνών Σχέσεων
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Subject: EUA President's Newsletter - March 2021
European leaders call for boosting “digital sovereignty”

On 1 March, the leaders of Germany, Finland, Estonia and Denmark sent a common letter to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stating that Europe needs to “get ahead of the curve” in the digital transformation to become digitally sovereign. While the four leaders underline that they are going to make investments through the EU’s Recovery and Resilience Facility, they call on the European Commission to take three specific actions: 1) identify critical technologies and sectors and give priorities to those; 2) ensure
open supply chains in these critical sectors and develop a “policy toolbox for digital transformation”; and 3) set up a permanent monitoring system to anticipate digital developments. The letter also underlines the need for a strong transatlantic relationship, open markets with “free, fair and rules-based trade”.

This is not the first time that Germany, in particular, calls for European digital and technological sovereignty. Last year, Germany together with France launched GAIA-X to boost European cloud services. The recent call, however, comes from member states that are traditionally more free market-oriented than France, and some of the text could be seen as directed at the French, EU Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton, who is sometimes seen as a proponent of a more interventionist approach to industrial policies. It will be interesting to see what the suggested approach will be for the updated Industrial Strategy to be launched by the European Commission (specifically by Thierry Breton) mid-March.

*Why this is important*: The discussions about Europe’s digital transformation and digital sovereignty, the policies and the investments will have direct consequences for universities. They touch on international cooperation, data management, innovation capacity and rely on creating the frontier of knowledge in key areas. When Europe talks about setting up monitoring systems to define priorities for all these areas, universities should take an active part in the discussion.

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**UK announces agency for disruptive innovation**
The UK government announced the launch of a new agency for disruptive innovation, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA), on 19 February. It will fund high-risk, high-reward research that will – in the words of the government – support “ground-breaking discoveries that could transform people’s lives for the better.” The agency will be using more flexible procedures than traditional funding bodies. For example, it will be able to stop projects and redirect funding. It is planned to be operational by 2022 with a budget of £800 million (about €930 million) from then and until 2024.

The UK initiative is part of a larger European trend of trying to boost disruptive innovation through new types of support. The model for this is often the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), which is known for having a light administration (with the individuals inside having much power) and a high appetite for risk. Notably, it has an annual budget of almost €3 billion. At the European level, there is the European Innovation Council (EIC), as part of Horizon Europe, and the inter-governmental Joint European Disruption Initiative (JEDI). In late February, the French-led Scale-up Europe initiative was started, gathering tech and innovation experts to formulate a strategy for accelerating leading European technology companies.

Why this is important: Disruptive innovation is often derived from curiosity-based research that happens at universities. For this reason alone, universities should pay attention to the possibilities that appear in this area. However, until now, many initiatives have not been reinforced by large-scale investments: The EIC has only half the budget of DARPA. Here, the UK agency, although still far from DARPA’s level of money, is a good example that could hopefully be followed by others.
On 19 February, the Education Council with education ministers of EU member states held an informal videoconference. The highlight on the agenda was the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), which was approved in a Council resolution the day before.

The new strategic framework sets out the principles, priorities and key targets for EU-level cooperation in education and training for this decade, covering all levels of education through a lifelong learning perspective, including formal, informal and non-formal learning. It builds on the previous one, which covered the period up to 2020.

The resolution includes the following five strategic priorities: improving quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training; making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all; enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession; reinforcing European higher education and supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training.

Besides concrete suggested actions for all five priorities, it also includes some indicative EU-level targets such as: reducing the share of low achieving pupils in basic and digital skills and early leavers from education and increasing the share of tertiary level attainment of 25-34 year-olds to at least 45% by 2030.

For higher education, the resolution highlights the resilience and ability to cope with unforeseen challenges, which the sector has demonstrated during the pandemic. While acknowledging remaining challenges, it also
points to the opportunities that the crisis has created for further development. These are to be taken up in the discussions about the university transformation agenda, which will kick off this spring in preparation for a possible Commission Communication by the end of the year.

*Why this is important:* The strategic framework is needed as the EU-level competency in education is limited to a supporting role; the member states decide what they will do in the end. In the resolution, member states agree to work with the European Commission over the course of the year to develop suitable structures to coordinate and steer the work. For universities, it is important to ensure links and synergies, while avoiding duplication of the structures and tools in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Bologna Process, as well as the European Research Area (ERA) - and it is good that this is acknowledged in the Council resolution. Systematic and transparent involvement of key stakeholders in the process will be key as well. The latter applies for the EHEA, the Education and Research Areas alike, and EUA is working to ensure that universities are adequately represented and involved in all these processes.

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**Will we get a European “vaccination passport”, and when?**

On 25-26 February, EU leaders held a European Council meeting online to discuss once again the epidemiological situation across the Union. [Leaders stressed the need to urgently accelerate](https://www.euractiv.com/section/political-headlines/news/leaders-stress-the-need-to-urgently-accelerate-the-authorisation/) the authorisation,
production and distribution of vaccines, as well as vaccination programmes. The Commission is tasked to produce a report by June on the lessons learnt and the ways to ensure adequate production capacity in the EU. The report is also supposed to address how to build up strategic reserves, while supporting the diversification and resilience of global medical supply chains.

In the same vein, leaders agreed to continue work on a common approach to “vaccination certificates”. Asked about it during the joint press conference after the European Council meeting, Commission President von der Leyen explained that the Commission was working on the matter, but several questions were still open. While leaders from EU countries seem to agree on the need to coordinate, the devil is - as usual - in the details. Scientifically, further evidence would be needed to understand to what extent vaccination prevents transmission of the virus by the vaccinated person. Politically, it would need to be decided what purpose such a tool should have and what information it would include. Von der Leyen announced on Twitter that the aim should be to “gradually enable again to move safely within the EU and abroad for work or tourism.” In order to avoid discrimination, the pass would also need to include other information, such as the results of a recent Covid-19 test for those not vaccinated, or proof of immunity be it through vaccination or undergone illness. The Commission will present a legislative proposal for a so-called “digital green pass” by mid-March.

For the time being, EU member state leaders agreed on the need for restrictions on non-essential travel due to the situation across Europe, while leaving it to each government’s discretion what this means in practice.

Why this is important: Even if vaccination campaigns are not yet in full swing across Europe and many questions are still open as regards a possible “digital green pass”, it is positive that the EU is looking into this now as coordination on such matters takes time. Being able to travel again is crucial for academic staff and students, as it is for many citizens. For universities, a coordinated approach at least within Europe would be important to avoid an uneven playing field for mobility and cooperation with partners from many different countries.
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