Αγαπητοί Συνάδελφοι,

Σας αποστέλλουμε για ενημέρωσή σας το Ενημερωτικό Δελτίο (Μάρτιος 2020) του Πανεπιστημιακού Δικτύου EUA, στο οποίο ανήκει το Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου.

Φιλικά,

Έλενα Αυγουστίδου – Κυριάκου
Αναπληρώτρια Προϊσταμένη της Υπηρεσίας Διεθνών Σχέσεων
Υπηρεσία Διεθνών Σχέσεων

Διευθύντρια
Ινστιτούτο Κομφούκιος στο ΠΚ
A digital strategy for Europe

On 19 February, the European Commission launched its digital package under the title "Shaping Europe’s Digital Future". This is one of the new Commission’s top priorities. It aims to make the digital transformation work for all citizens, while establishing Europe as a global leader. The path to achieve this covers numerous initiatives related to the diverse aspects of the digital transition: digital skills, digital innovation, and a new data strategy that looks to give citizens more control over personal data and make use of the massive amounts of industrial data produced in Europe.

While research, education and innovation are all central concepts for the strategy, the role of universities is limited to the idea of creating a “lighthouse” institution that will attract talent and produce cutting edge research – a somewhat old-fashioned idea in a time of innovation in university networks and innovation ecosystems. However, the concrete initiatives already on track, such as the plan to set up Digital Innovation Hubs, are luckily following the trends of spreading capacity across the Union.
Why this is important: This is going to be one of the most important EU priorities for the years to come, at the same level as the ambitious Green Deal launched in January. Several of the initiatives will be directly relevant for universities: the Commission is preparing an updated Digital Education Action Plan, there will be funding for Digital Innovation Hubs and digital skills in the new Digital Europe Programme.

On 19 March, EUA will organise a webinar on EU digital policies. Registrations are open here, and the webinar will be streamed via YouTube.

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New Gender Equality Strategy

Leading up to International Women’s Day, the European Commission launched its Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025 on 5 March. The strategy is broad, reflecting the many areas where gender equality is still a challenge in Europe: it touches on topics from gender-based violence to entrepreneurship. Of interest to universities, there are many points in which the Commission would like to strengthen its instruments to promote gender equality. These include proposals requiring gender equality plans for applicants to Horizon Europe, promoting women-led start-ups through the European Innovation Council, and monitoring the digital skills of women. The strategy also looks more broadly at the general over-representation of men in leadership positions, something that the university sector knows all too well.

Why this is important: Overall, the university sector in Europe is not doing too well when it comes to gender equality. While generally more women than men study at university, there are huge differences between disciplines. When it comes to university careers, men dominate senior positions. Only one in five full professors in Europe is a woman, and female rectors are even more uncommon.

EUA has recently published a study on equity, diversity and inclusion in universities. It is also arguing for more diversity, including and beyond gender equality, in its new position on the European Research Area.
European Council Summit: still no agreement on 2021-2027 budget

European Council President Charles Michel called a special European Summit on 20 February to discuss the Multiannual Financial Framework. The negotiations of this seven-year budget are almost down to the wire and will determine the future of key programmes like Horizon Europe and Erasmus+. It did not come as a surprise that this time EU member state leaders could not agree on how far to open their purses. It usually takes two summits to strike a deal. However, time is pressing as the first calls in programmes like Erasmus and Horizon Europe would need to be published in the autumn to avoid a gap between the current and the new programmes. Stakes are high for the EU as member states need to enable the Union to act on the ambitious policy goals set by all the new strategies.

*Why this is important:* There is a risk that funding for research, education and innovation will be tight for the coming years. This could dampen the recently more positive trajectory that national funding is taking in several countries across Europe, as EUA’s Public Funding Observatory shows. Hence it is important for the university sector to keep up the pressure on national governments to invest at the EU level as well. The European Council will hold another summit later in March.

An article by EUA’s Enora Bennetot Pruvot, Deputy Director for Governance, Funding and Public Policy Development, explains why Europe cannot afford to backpedal on investment in education, research and innovation.

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European Court of Justice Advocate General calls Hungarian Lex-CEU unlawful

On 5 March, Juliane Kokott, Advocate General of the European Court of Justice (EJC), published an opinion on the so called “Lex-CEU”, the amendment of the Hungarian higher education law that made it impossible for the Central European University (CEU) to continue its operations in Budapest and forced the institution to
move its campus to Vienna. In December 2017, the European Commission referred Hungary to the ECJ in this case.

The Advocate General considers the requirement to conclude an international treaty between the state of origin of a foreign higher education institution and Hungary as the host country and the need to organise teaching activities in the state of origin as incompatible with the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and EU law. Education, including higher education is considered a service by WTO agreements and foreign and domestic service providers must be treated equally. Kokott’s opinion sees this national treatment rule violated by the Hungarian higher education law. Furthermore, she considers the need to organise teaching activities also in the state of origin as infringing on the freedom of establishment of an educational institution and academic freedom, both protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The opinion is non-binding and represents the prelude to the deliberations of the ECJ judges that will now follow. A judgement is expected later.

Why this is important: The “Lex-CEU” has caused a lot of uproar and drew massive protests across Europe and internationally, as it was the first time that an EU member state threatened the operations of a legally established university. It is also part of the rationale behind the EU’s procedure against Hungary last year to assess the risk for a serious breach of fundamental EU values (the so-called Article 7 procedure), which is still ongoing. In recent years, academic freedom and university autonomy have been eroded in several countries in and outside the EU.

EUA follows these developments with great concern and supports its members in upholding fundamental rights and values. In a joint statement with All European Academies (ALLEA) and Science Europe, EUA calls on governments and public authorities to safeguard academic freedom and institutional autonomy. This is also an important topic in the discussions on the future of the European Research Area and the Bologna Process.
Call for participation: Two surveys on how Europe’s universities support researchers at risk

Deadline: 10 April 2020

ABOUT EUA
With nearly 850 members across 48 countries, EUA is the largest and most comprehensive organisation representing universities in Europe. As the voice of Europe's universities, EUA supports and takes forward the interests of individual institutions and the higher education sector as a whole.

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