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Executive Summary

This paper reports on the key outcomes from the European Commission's conference in Liège on research. (April 2004)

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'A vision for university-based research and innovation' - European Commission Liège conference

1. The European Commission held a major conference in Liège, Belgium, at the end of April entitled 'The Europe of Knowledge 2020: A vision for University based Research and Innovation'. The aim of the event - attended by over a thousand vice-chancellors, researchers, industrialists and policy makers - was to discuss the best ways for universities in Europe to meet the challenges of the 21st century and to produce a 'roadmap' for European universities to achieve their full potential in the knowledge society of the 21st century.
2. This paper reports on the main outcomes of the event.

Background

3. The conference arose from the Commission's communication on 'The role of Universities in the Europe of knowledge'¹. Over 140 responses to the Commission's communication (including from the DfES and Universities UK) were used as the basis for a series of preparatory workshops ahead of the conference. The European Commission organised the event to enable discussion on how HEIs can assist the EU in the attainment of the Lisbon goal: "*to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world*".
4. The conference was also organised in view of the Bologna Process Berlin Communiqué's call for the European Higher Education Area² to be linked more effectively with the European Research Area³.
5. The event addressed a range of themes such as:

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¹The full text of this communication can be found at: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0058en01.pdf

² For further details of the European Higher Education Area see: <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Communique1.pdf>

³ For further details of the European Research Area see: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/era/index_en.html



- creation and certification of knowledge;
 - changing nature of research training, brain drain issues;
 - public/private partnerships;
 - role of university for research in the regions; and
 - challenge of inter-disciplinary research.
6. For a copy of conferences papers please see:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2004/univ/background_en.html

UK engagement

7. Over one hundred speakers addressed the conferences' four plenary sessions and nine parallel sessions, including several from the UK, *inter alia*:
- Sir Howard Newby, Chief Executive, Higher Education Funding Council for England;
 - Sir John Enderby, Vice-President and Physical Secretary, Royal Society;
 - Andrew Dearing, Secretary General, European Industrial Research Management Association
 - Joyce Tait, Director, Scottish Universities Policy Research and Advice Network;
 - Janet Metcalfe, Director, UK Graduate Programme;
 - Phil Cooke, Professor, University of Wales-Cardiff;
 - Ian Halliday, Chief Executive, Particle Physics & Astronomy Council; and
 - Jean-Patrick Connerade, President, Euroscience, Professor, Physics Department, Imperial College of London.
8. The speakers presentations can be found at:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2004/univ/results_en.html
9. The UK HE Europe Unit, based at Universities UK, produced a briefing paper for the eighty UK participants attending the event, which set out the sector's interests on the major conference issues. The briefing reflected the shared views of: UUK, SCOP, QAA, HEFCE, SHEFC and HEFCW. The Europe Unit also circulated the paper among key EU decision-makers to raise awareness of UK interests, policy and best practice. (For a copy of this briefing please contact: Jessica.olley@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

Key conference outcomes

10. A number of recurring themes featured throughout the conference, such as comparing and contrasting the 'European' research modal to that of the US and the reasons behind the brain drain of EU researchers to the US.

11. The key outcomes from the working sessions included agreement on the importance of:

- multi-disciplinary research by combining bottom-up process with institutional stimulation at EU level;
- fostering the emergence of strong well funded research universities not only in the natural sciences but also the social sciences and humanities;
- maintaining a strong link between research and teaching;
- diversity within HEIs – ‘there is not one standard university of tomorrow’;
- exchanging good practice on research training - the UK’s graduate research training and career research development was singled out: and
- greater institutional autonomy and financial flexibility to enable institutions to play to their strengths in response to society, research and research training.

12. With regard to the proposed European Research Council (ERC) participants seemed to broadly support the proposal on the basis that basic research should receive better funding. However, it should be a truly independent agency or body and the grant money should be provided as an addition to existing national and European programmes and schemes. The Commission also recognised the importance of supporting full economic costs of potential ERC projects.

13. EU Commissioner, Philippe Busquin, in his closing speech pointed to the following factors for success in Europe:

- a focus on excellence based on co-operation;
- public and private financing; and
- a true university-industry partnership for innovation.

14. For further information on the key messages for the conference, produced by the European Commission ahead of the event please see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2004/univ/pdf/univ_key_mess_en.pdf

Next steps

15. The European Commission’s Directorate-General for Research has indicated it is likely to follow-up the conference with a second communication. Many of the key issues – such as the seventh framework programme and the proposed European Research Council – are likely to be developed in the forthcoming legislative programme of the new European Parliament. The Commissioner for Research Philippe Busquin also proposed a further conference of key organisations, networks and European university bodies to identify the practical steps needed to take forward the outcomes of the conference in particular relating to management and



infrastructure. (This event is likely to take place before Busquin's current term as EU Commissioner comes to an end at the end of October)

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