

## The right EU budget for the next seven years

Written by Rolf Tarrach and Michael Murphy on 18 June 2019 in Opinion Plus  
Opinion Plus

Europe must boost its investment in research and innovation, argue the European University Association's Rolf Tarrach and Michael Murphy



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The outcome of the recent European Parliament elections says a lot about what Europeans expect for their future.

They want action on climate and energy, social protection and migration, as well as job security and economic growth.

As the new Parliament and Commission prepare for a new term and the European Union's next budget is fine-tuned, the role of research and education will require considerable attention to address these challenges in a smart and sustainable way.

Investment in research and education is the most effective, sustainable, and future-oriented

commitment that the EU can make for its citizens.

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According to a [Commission impact assessment](#) [7], every €1 spent in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon 2020) leads to €13 in added value for industry.

Research and innovation investment fuels competitiveness and contributes to job creation, energy and climate solutions, social inclusion and sustainability.

However, investing in the EU's future also means being more efficient. Today, 75 percent of high-quality proposals submitted to Horizon 2020 go unfunded due to insufficient budget.

This is a significant waste of money and loss of potential innovation for Europe. Doubling the funding for the next programme will resolve this - and the payback will be big as pan-EU research empowers excellent ideas with global impact.

“Investment in research and education is the most effective, sustainable, and future-oriented commitment that the EU can make to its citizens”

Research and innovation are a European public good. However, public funding to universities, where much of that research is conducted, is stagnating and even receding in many parts of Europe.

Europe needs to seriously re-invest in its universities and doing this at European level creates synergies, economies of scale and value for money for EU taxpayers.

Investing in education and research in Europe means investing in people, especially youth, and developing much-needed human talent and capital.

This is an essential condition to fulfil any ambition of turning the EU into a world leader in innovation-driven growth and competitiveness.

Furthermore, supporting transnational collaboration and mobility in research and education creates cross-border frameworks and networks for professionals and academics to work together and reinforces European awareness and identity.

Only people can do this and the EU's Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ programmes are unique vehicles that bring real results.

The EU and its Member States have great expectations for research and education, and the upcoming

Horizon Europe programme is tasked with ambitious goals and grand missions addressing global challenges.

The programme is also expected to boost innovation in an unprecedented way through the creation of a dedicated funding body.

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The EU has also reasserted its interest and trust in the added value of the Erasmus+ programme, proposing to considerably widen its outreach.

The scale of funding must therefore be much bigger to match these ambitions. To establish Europe as a world leader, Europe must heavily boost its investment in research and innovation.

Only then can we ensure European independence and excellence in science and technology.

For all these reasons, the final negotiations of the next seven-year Multiannual Financial Framework present an opportunity to significantly step up funding for European research and education.

To unlock the EU’s future, we must match ambition with proper funding and invest in people.

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### **About the author**

Rolf Tarrach is the President of the European University Association (EUA) and Michael Murphy is EUA’s President-Elect

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