

Brussels, July 2, 2014

## Consultation

### Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation

#### Statements from ECIU – European Consortium of Innovative Universities

ECIU supports the ambitions for widening the participation in the European Research Area and ensuring that all talents are drivers for growth in Europe. This is a key concern, and ECIU strongly supports the need to address this challenge of spreading excellence and widening the participation of all talent in the European community. The widespread European and international cooperation is a driver of growth and innovation for the benefit of all societies.

ECIU member institutions are based in regions which have challenged the decline of key industries and have made a significant contribution to the economic and social regeneration in these areas. This is evidenced in the close collaborations between research groups and emerging industries and in the fact that ECIU institutions were early and enthusiastic proponents of technology transfer and knowledge exchange activities. Over the last decades, the role of ECIU members has been to challenge the structural difficulties in order to engage regions strategically on a way to innovation and growth by developing capacities and growing the critical mass of knowledge.

Based on the experience embedded in ECIU, we hereby forward the following comments on measures to implement the Horizon 2020 programme on Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation.

- To a higher degree, facilitating a greater **strategic alignment** between universities and the regional authorities. Strategic regional planning and smart specialisation for regional growth is in many cases underdeveloped. Structured cooperation and greater synergy between regional authorities and universities need to be facilitated in order to fully benefit from the resources available in the regions. Without common denominators, the actors will be hesitant to actively engage in the programme.
- Stimulating the **entrepreneurial spirit** of research institutions – and inspiring to greater scientific social responsibility
- Introducing a new dimension of the programme to focus on **capacity building** in the administrations of the involved institutions. A lack of competent and sufficient administrative support will hinder the full exploitation of talent and competences. Within

capacity building there needs to be a larger focus on bridging the intersections between scientists, policy-makers and the administrators to contribute to optimal use of talents and ensuring outcome and success of the initiatives.

- Creating stronger **links to industry** at regional, national and European level. Exploring the potentials of linking the widening participation activities with industry led activities, as for instance an enhanced cooperation with the European public-private partnerships launched under Horizon 2020. Regional commitments aligned with the innovation and growth perspectives of the partnerships, could be further investigated and supported.
- Avoiding lack of commitment by supporting the important **transaction costs** of initializing a framework of cooperation for this programme.

Building the relations and preparing the ground for increased wide spread participation in Europe represent great potentials for all stakeholders. ECIU is prepared to contributing further to the development of the measures for successful implementation of the Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation Work Programme 2016-2017.

<http://eciu.web.ua.pt/default.asp>