

The Udine G7 University Manifesto

Extended version – 30th June 2017

Universities are the oldest type of institution in the western world, after the church. Their long-standing existence is largely thanks to being a reference point for their communities and, most of all, because they have frequently been drivers for change, improving the existing status of science, human capital and quality of life, and being a strong promoter of intellectual learning. Recognising their important role in society, these educational institutes are proud to have the chance to serve such collective goals.

Modern times present new challenges, and universities are ready to be both a pivotal actor and supportive partner in many of the main issues, in particular: 1. sustainability; 2. democratic participation and social mobility; 3. economic development, and 4. global citizenship.

After an engaging and heartfelt discussion among its representatives, the G7 has collectively drawn up the following recommendations to strengthen the effectiveness of universities' roles as actors and partners in increasing the quality and development of human society.

1. To promote a wider culture of **economic, social and environmental sustainability**, we put forward the following recommendations:

- Adopt a whole institution approach ensuring the involvement of governing bodies, faculty, administrative staff and students at all levels (teaching, research, public engagement, administrative processes and campus management);
- Improve trans-disciplinary collaborations and increase the weight of social and cultural dimensions in Education Sustainable Development (ESD) programmes; promote social and environmental values and principles; integrate specialized knowledge and skills with cross-disciplinary competences and critical thinking; have scientific literacy underpin all learning programs in order to foster Sustainable Development (SD) awareness within the leading class and among citizens and policy makers;
- Align career incentives and funding schemes with the implementation of Agenda 2030; create a massive educational initiative on Sustainable Development for teachers and professors; incentivize students and faculty entrepreneurship towards SD goals;
- Leverage ICT and MOOCs as collaborative platform for innovative teaching programs integrating active classwork, problem based learning, wide participation and inclusion;
- Expand international ESD partnerships and networks, with special attention to developing countries. Partnerships should also involve communities, charities, public administration and private sector organizations.

2. To promote **democratic participation in social life and social mobility**, we suggest the following actions:

- Invest more public and private funds (including through fair loan systems, full tax exemptions and dedicated grants) to help students from low-income families to access HE and increase their probability of completing a degree.

- Incentivize mass lifelong learning to encourage older people to obtain HE degrees. For instance, organizations and public and private companies should be offered incentives to invest money not only in executive training but also in ensuring HE opportunities for mid- and lower-level staff in their organizations.
 - Encourage HE institutions to offer degrees which take into account the particular characteristics of different target students in terms of age, education, background and income. Diversifying their educational offer will make HE programmes more appealing and relevant to a wider range of potential students. Flexibility of curricula and a better use of technology could also play a role in this direction.
 - Direct more attention to policies that seek to reduce inequalities at compulsory education levels (primary and secondary school), with the aim of streamlining and facilitating access to HE for students from disadvantaged backgrounds as well. Several actions could contribute towards this objective. For example, raising the age cut-off for compulsory education, reducing rigidities in tracking systems and providing grants and subsidies for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to complete their education.
 - With reference to less developed parts of the world such as Africa, a specific international agency (with national branches) could be established; this would be in charge of allocating grants and subsidies to potential students by investing funds collected from donors. Governments in developed countries could devote a part of the money they would normally invest in aid and development policies to this initiative. International organizations such as the UN and UNESCO, as well as the EU, could encourage and support university consortia to establish ‘international’ universities in developing countries through *ad hoc* agreements with the national governments.
3. To promote the expansion of HE by increasing the number of graduates, with the goal of fostering increased future economic development, we make the following recommendations:
- Increasing the number of HE graduates could be obtained by either ‘supply-driven’ interventions (i.e. more funding for HE institutions) or ‘demand-driven’ actions (i.e. more funding to support students directly). The policies chosen must consider the specific circumstances in each country, namely its cultural traditions, current level of HE funding and welfare regime for other public services. There is no ‘one size fits all’ policy that can be applied in every context.
 - With regard to ‘supply-driven’ interventions, providing direct financial support to HE institutions, there may be honesty and integrity concerns regarding how institutions would deal with these funds. Governments must therefore simultaneously establish ways to ensure the effective and efficient use of this financial support – for example, performance-based funding and benchmarking the standard cost of resources and services could be two useful policy tools.
 - Regarding ‘demand-driven’ policies such as providing financial aid to students directly, the integrity and diligence of the beneficiaries should be encouraged by creating incentives for responsible behaviour – for instance, the criteria for attributing financial aid packages could include rewards or conditions related to students’ ability to stay on track with their studies and exams and to complete the requirements for their qualification within the legal time limit of their study programme.

4. To promote the strengthening of **global citizenship** dynamics, we make the following proposals:
- Establish a network of ‘Universities for Global Citizenship’. These institutions shall commit themselves to contributing towards research and teaching on global citizenship as an interdisciplinary field in its own right. The universities involved would establish research units and chairs, and would offer relevant courses to students from all degree programmes, from medicine to fine arts. The universities in this network could bestow an annual prize for global citizenship studies.
 - Implement multifaceted initiatives to facilitate the international mobility of students and faculty in terms of administrative and bureaucratic procedures, given that academic international mobility is crucial to the building of global citizenship. Universities could collaborate with government authorities in order to streamline international academic cooperation.
 - Provide active support to all initiatives taken to design and implement a ‘worldwide agreement on qualification frameworks’. Recognition of individuals’ prior qualifications and previously-acquired capacity to practise a certain profession is an important element of global citizenship. A worldwide qualification framework would be of great use as a regulatory tool in the context of the economic globalization and the expanding internationalization of the workforce.