
NORDIC UNIVERSITY DAYS EVENT REPORT



Content

| | |
|--|----|
| Nordic University Days..... | 3 |
| Horizon Europe Strategic Planning - Jean-Eric Paquet..... | 4 |
| Brexit State of Play – Georg Riekeles..... | 5 |
| Dinner – Rolf Einar Fife, Jyrki Katainen & Dag Rune Olsen..... | 6 |
| The State of Play in the EU – Jeppe Tranholm-Mikkelsen | 8 |
| Commission Achievements 2014-2029 – Carlos Moedas | 9 |
| Breakfast with Nordic MEPs | 10 |

NORDIC UNIVERSITY DAYS

The Nordic University Days took place on 9-10th September 2019. The objectives were to

- Demonstrate the shared interest of Nordic universities to engage with European research and innovation at all levels.
- Inform management in Nordic universities about the state of Horizon Europe, strategic planning and the negotiations of the multiannual financial framework that will be decisive for the Horizon Europe budget as well as Erasmus+.
- Facilitate networking among Nordic university representatives and with high level policy makers in the European institutions.

The programme consisted of a breakfast meeting with Members of the European Parliament that were elected in May 2019 in Finland, Sweden and Denmark, meetings on Horizon Europe implementation and strategic planning, Brexit, state of the European Union and a discussion with outgoing Commissioner for Science, Research and Innovation Carlos Moedas.

The group agreed that key messages from the Nordic University Days were:

- Universities need to engage in a close dialogue with EU policy makers to raise awareness of the importance of research, education and science-based innovation.
- Continued dialogue should also ensure that universities stay relevant in political debates about the future of Europe and addressing major challenges such as climate change, security and protection, food safety and many other issues.
- It shows a stronger commitment and message that so many universities from five countries come together to engage in EU research and innovation.

This report consists of short summaries of each meeting. In addition, a more comprehensive report of the breakfast with Members of the European Parliament is included. The breakfast report is also shared with all Nordic Members of the European Parliament. All summaries have been subject to approval by the speakers.

The Nordic University Days were organised by the Brussels based Helsinki EU Office and LUT University (Finland), Lärosäten Syd (Sweden), NTNU, University of Bergen (Norway), Central Denmark EU Office/Aarhus University and Greater Copenhagen EU Office (Denmark) in cooperation with the University Associations in Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

HORIZON EUROPE STRATEGIC PLANNING - JEAN-ERIC PAQUET

The meeting with Jean-Eric Paquet, Director General of DG Research and Innovation gave an overview of Horizon Europe implementation, strategic planning, missions and partnerships. The five-year EU strategy agreed by EU27 in June and the political guidelines for the next European Commission that will take office on 1 November 2019 are part of the general strategic framework of Horizon Europe. It includes a strong focus on digital transformation and climate mitigation with a forthcoming Green Deal for Europe. In addition, the forthcoming Commission will look deeper into the fairness, inclusiveness and democracy of European societies. Research, innovation and contributions from the academic communities are key elements to solve these issues. The key points included:

- **The budget for Horizon Europe** remains open until the EU Member States reach a unanimous agreement on the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework. Horizon Europe is in a weak position because the budget is distributed during the budget period in open competition despite support from national governments for an ambitious research programme.
- **Horizon Europe will be an evolution of Horizon 2020**, but with some significant novelties such as the missions.
- Horizon Europe will apply a **cross-cutting approach and break down silos** to achieve more impact and tackle global challenges. Horizon Europe should also strengthen the **European Research Area**.
- The main aim of the **missions** is to make a real difference in the lives of citizens and society by delivering concrete outcomes based on a research and innovation agenda.
- The recently appointed **mission boards** will help shape the missions and their respective objectives. The mission board members are expected to travel across Europe to connect and engage with citizens and key stakeholders.
- The **institutionalized partnerships** that are part of Horizon Europe are still being identified. The impact assessment and inputs from public consultations will influence the final selection.

The subsequent questions & answers focused on social sciences and humanities, social innovation, European Innovation Council, and research and education. The answers included the following:

- **Social sciences and humanities** are paramount to deliver on issues such as democracy, inclusiveness and to engage with people.
- Traditionally, the Commission drives innovation from the technological side whereas **social innovation** should come from stakeholders and society. The Commission however encourages stakeholders to share insights and experiences about social innovation processes.
- Universities are key stakeholders in the **European Innovation Council**. University experts are appointed for the Council. Universities are expected to be important in terms of projects proposals and as ecosystem connectors.
- There is a lot of demand for the European Commission's DG RTD (research) and DG EAC (education) to improve the integration of research and education at the policy level. The European Universities should ensure a research component to support this integration. Europe creates more start-ups than the US due to universities and students. More should be done to support young people and start-ups.

The meeting was chaired by Jaakko Aspara, Vice-Rector of Hanken School of Economics in Finland.

BREXIT STATE OF PLAY – GEORG RIEKELES

The meeting with **Georg Riekeles, Diplomatic Adviser to Michel Barnier, responsible of the Task Force for the Preparation and Conduct of the Negotiations with the UK** gave a state of play on Brexit negotiations. Inevitably, when the UK leaves the EU, cooperation with the UK will have to take place on a 3rd country basis. A key message was that stakeholders need to prepare for all scenarios, also a no deal scenario.

The EU's objective has been and is to ensure an orderly withdrawal; notably with respect to:

- Safeguarding the citizens' rights and ensure simple administrative procedures for UK citizens in EU27 and EU27 citizens in UK.
- Ensuring that financial obligations the UK has entered into as a Member State are honored in full, and that programmes involving UK under the current MFF will run until their completion.
- Protecting peace and stability in Ireland/Northern Ireland, in line with the Good Friday Agreement, as well as the integrity of the internal market.

The Withdrawal Agreement (WA) agreed by the EU and the UK in November last year covers these and other withdrawal issues and foresees a period of transition until the end of 2020, extendable to up to two years. It is also accompanied by a Political declaration on the future relationship between the EU and the UK after Brexit. It paves the way for an ambitious relationship covering trade, socio-economic cooperation in areas such as transport and citizen mobility, police and judicial cooperation, and also cooperation in foreign affairs and defense. When it comes to research and education, third country rules within Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ would apply.

Following the failure of the House of Commons to approve the WA on three occasions, the current UK government is requesting changes, regarding the backstop for Ireland / Northern Ireland and also level playing field provisions concerning the future relationship. As stated by President Juncker, the EU is ready to engage constructively and consider proposals compatible with the withdrawal agreement. It is the red lines of the UK government that will determine the depth of the future relationship. The current challenge is however the lack of a unified UK vision in this area.

The questions & answers touched upon the effects of Brexit on financial programmes and implications for EEA countries.

- **Erasmus mobilities that are ongoing at the time of withdrawal will be protected, whereas programmes such as Horizon 2020 will be affected in a no deal scenario** because UK partners will no longer be eligible as Member States or Associated Countries.
- The Commission proposal for **the new Horizon Europe programme includes rules of association for third countries**. Subject to the relevant conditions, this may allow a way into EU cooperation for the UK.

The meeting was chaired by Kristiina Kruus, Dean at Aalto University in Finland.

DINNER – ROLF EINAR FIFE, JYRKI KATAINEN & DAG RUNE OLSEN

The dinner was organized in cooperation with the Mission of Norway to the EU. Norway's Ambassador to the European Union **Rolf Einar Fife**, Vice-President of the European Commission **Jyrki Katainen**, responsible for jobs, growth, investments & competitiveness including research, innovation and education, and **Dag Rune Olsen**, Rector of University of Bergen gave their key notes to the participants. In addition, high-level representatives from DG Education & Culture and the EU representations of the Nordic countries joined the dinner. The key messages were:

- Universities should take their responsibility to reach out to policy makers and come up with ideas to tackle global challenges.
- Universities should also reach out to national and regional government to convince them that a decent budget for Horizon Europe is the right choice.

Ambassador Fife underlined:

- The Nordic university delegation is both timely and highly relevant since a new European Parliament has been elected and a new European Commission is expected to take office later this fall. Moreover, Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ have been negotiated over the past year based on ambitious proposals from the European Commission.
- Norway has given inputs to the processes. For Horizon Europe, one important aspect for Norway has been to secure full access to all parts of the programme and the same rights and obligations as the Member States, based on the EEA Agreement. Norway appreciates the invitation from the European Commission to Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein to the Shadow Strategic Programme Committee.
- Norway has participated in Erasmus+ for more than 25 years. The programme has given thousands of Norwegian students the opportunity to participate in student exchanges and Norwegian higher education institutions have welcomed thousands of European students to their campuses. Erasmus+ has developed into an important strategic instrument for European higher education institutions. The new flagship initiative, European Universities, takes these opportunities further by linking cooperation in education, research and innovation which has been a priority for Norway in the positions to both Horizon Europe and Erasmus+.

Vice-President Katainen pointed out that Europe needs to leverage scientific strength into leadership in breakthrough disruptive innovations by investing financial resources and skills in cutting-edge research and innovation. There is a need to reserve an ambitious budget for Horizon Europe because of the added value of European research:

- Scientific and technological excellence through competition,
- Promotion of multi-disciplinarity and international cooperation
- Support to transnational mobility
- Attracting the best talents in the world
- Pooling resources to create critical mass and solve global challenges
- Leverages substantial private investments.

83% of the funded Horizon 2020 projects would not have taken place without the support of the European Commission.

The new President elect Ursula von der Leyen will propose a European Green Deal. Research and innovation are key contributions. Universities should be active, reach out and be present towards the European institutions to demonstrate scientific evidence and make sure that money are spent properly. The universities should also try to convince national and regional leaders to use more Cohesion Funds for research and innovation.

Three personal opinions were emphasised in relation to research funding and policy making:

- Artificial Intelligence is one of the megatrends that will reshape our society. AI has opportunities to improve public services by making them better and more cost-effective while working in an ethically sustainable environment.
- Circular Economy is the industrial arm of climate policy and a smart economic choice.
- 20% of European citizens cannot read and write properly. Investing in fundamental education is a matter of equality and competitiveness to make sure that all people can benefit from societal evolutions.

Dag Rune Olsen highlighted in particular education of young generations as a mean to developing responsible engaged citizens with respect of democracy. Erasmus+ had transformative effects for students who benefitted in terms of European identity and realising the bigger picture. The young generation will provide new ideas and solutions for the grand societal challenges. Therefore, Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ should never compromise on quality and should aim for excellence in all parts of the programme. Low quality research can misguide important decisions on e.g. circular economy or democracy. Nordic universities support a decent budget for Horizon Europe and Erasmus+. Universities should contribute to high quality research that underpin global challenges and they should engage in political decision making.

THE STATE OF PLAY IN THE EU – JEPPE TRANHOLM-MIKKELSEN

The meeting with Jeppe Tranholm-Mikkelsen, Secretary General of the Council of the European Union provided a general overview of the current EU matters, the Strategic Agenda, the multiannual financial framework and the challenges ahead.

For the last 10 years, Europe has been dominated by the economic and financial crisis, the migration crisis, and now the Brexit crisis. Europe is today economically much stronger than before the economic crises. However, we cannot exclude another economic crisis in the near future. In relation to migration the EU is now back to the migration level before 2015, but the migration crisis has left scars in Europe. Brexit is ongoing. In the beginning Brexit was an existential crisis for Europe but it was dealt with very quickly because European leaders understood the need to come up with a joint vision for EU27.

This year the European Parliament elections in May many people feared for landslide elections in favour of populist political parties. It did not happen, but the European Parliament did change. Now initiatives need support from a broader majority - three political groups in the Parliament – which is also the normal political landscape in many Member States. This will call for more collaboration and more compromises.

In those 10 years the global context changed significantly, e.g. Chinese GDP doubled. China and the US are *the* two big economic powers. China has become much more self-confident and assertive. The US also changed to a US that insists more on its own interests. It means that the EU needs to take a new role. No single EU Member State is a superpower but EU as a block can play a global role.

Today, the EU is more forward and outward looking. EU leaders agreed in June on a second Strategic Agenda (2019-2024) with four pillars:

- Protecting citizens and freedoms.
- Developing our economic base; the European model for the future.
- Building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe.
- Promoting Europe's interests and value in the world.

This agenda is a response to the big trends and concerns of the EU. One of the concerns is the digital domain, where today the 10 biggest companies in the world are all digital and none of them are European.

Immediate challenges ahead include:

- There is UK majority for **Brexit** but there has never been any majority on which *form* Brexit should take.
- Member States should agree on the next Multiannual Financial Framework within the coming months.
- A majority of the EU Member States want to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 but some Member States may need more support for this transition.
- EU may face external events such as an upcoming trade war which the EU seeks to avoid. The liberalization of world trade is a strong EU priority. EU has stepped up bilateral trade agreements as the World Trade Organisation has become increasingly weak.

The meeting was chaired by Berit Eika, Pro-Rector at Aarhus University in Denmark.

COMMISSION ACHIEVEMENTS 2014-2029 – CARLOS MOEDAS

The meeting with **Commissioner Carlos Moedas** presented his main achievements and reflections based on his five years in charge of EU research, science and innovation.

Moedas stated that over his five years in office some of the most important advice came from Nordic stakeholders. The key reflections and messages included:

- More than ever it is necessary that universities are explicitly stressing the value and importance of EU cooperation and investment in R&I.
- Over the past five years Moedas and his team fought hard to get research and innovation higher up on the EU agenda. However, not one single Member State had publicly stated that they were interested in the research and innovation portfolio for their incoming Commissioner candidate.
- Nordic universities also need, in a structured manner, to address their governments and continue to underline the importance of an ambitious EU R&I budget. The support of some governments for the research and innovation programme, is overshadowed by the same governments priority to avoid increases in the overall budget.
- Universities are strongly encouraged to help protecting the European Innovation Council (EIC) and mission-driven science. Universities know how to transfer knowledge into innovation and therefore play a role in maturing the EIC to get it right.
- The mission-driven science concept has not developed as envisioned by the Commissioner because the Horizon Europe negotiations turned the concept into very broad areas. It needs to be clear to the public what is a mission and what is not a mission and that not everything should be included in the concept.

The following discussion featured questions on open science, the role of universities in addressing climate change, excellence, research infrastructures, artistic research and academic freedom.

The political endorsement of **open science** has not yet become reality. On open access Moedas called for a greater mandate for the European Commission to negotiate directly with the publishers on behalf of all Member States.

The use of technology turns out to affect democracy in a negative way. **Universities should play a strong role in strengthening democracy** by addressing anti-establishment movements, because these are effectively anti-excellence. In addition, more people with a scientific background should be encouraged to engage in politics.

Research Infrastructures should become a joint project between the Commissioner for research and the Commissioner in charge of structural funds to ensure the construction as well as maintenance of infrastructures. ESFRI will need to create more synergies between Commissioners.

The meeting was chaired by Kerstin Tham, Vice Chancellor of Malmö University in Sweden.

BREAKFAST WITH NORDIC MEPS

Europe needs a strong science and research base to solve the grand challenges, to make informed policy choices and to secure the EU's global competitiveness. The support of the Members of the European Parliament is vital for European research and innovation.

On 10th September Members of the European Parliament (MEP) from Denmark, Sweden and Finland met with high-level representatives from 56 Nordic universities in Brussels.

The objective of the meeting was to communicate the importance of investing in European research and innovation (R&I) and present the key interests of the Nordic university sector in relation to the new Horizon Europe programme.

Danish MEP Niels Fuglsang (S&D), Member of the ITRE Committee opened the event. Fuglsang emphasised his support for an increased budget for R&I and a reduced budget for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on the other hand.

He expressed his support for the mission-oriented approach which has been proposed as part of Horizon Europe. Missions should help to ensure that science contributes to creating results and new solutions to societal challenges to the benefit of European citizens. Finally, Fuglsang underlined the importance of R&I solutions addressing climate change as the biggest challenge of our time. The politically prioritised support to research topics such as climate action should go hand-in-hand with bottom-up research.

Henrik Wegener, Rector at University of Copenhagen and former Chair of the Scientific Advisory Mechanism of the Juncker Commission gave a key note speech on behalf of the Nordic University delegation. His main points were:

- **European research cooperation ensures global competitiveness and welfare for European citizens.** Food safety is one good example of how EU research collaboration has been critical in defining high standards within the Single Market and has supported strong export to the rest of the world.
- The **final budget** to support Horizon Europe matters. The volume of research conducted in Europe is essential for the capacity to develop the best solutions for tackling climate change and other challenges including the Sustainable Development Goals. The return on investment from EU R&I is documented to be 13 times the initial investment.
- **The excellence principle** fostered by open competition must be applied across all parts of Horizon Europe. Universities are committed to the new mission-oriented approach to research. The clear targets for missions will inspire excellent science under the condition that researchers can come up with novel ideas on how to reach the targets through open excellence-based competition.
- The geographical **R&I divide in Europe** should not undermine the excellence principle. It takes many years to transform the structure of national R&I systems. The Eastern European countries have developed tremendously in the past 30 years. The new European University Networks (EUN) have a strong potential to increase cooperation and spread excellence in education which is less competitive than R&I.
- **Scientific evidence is essential to inform the development of EU policy and legislation.** The MEPs were encouraged to draw on the Nordic scientific communities. The universities are open and wish to engage in societal issues and policy processes.

Many MEPs participated actively in the following debate and asked questions to the high-level university panel. The questions touched upon Brexit, bureaucracy in R&I funding, education, the need to speed up market deployment for research results, the “tech-war”, social sciences and humanities and academic freedom. The universities were also encouraged to be more explicit about the conditions for basic science, e.g. that failure is an important prerequisite for success, results and future impact.

Four Nordic university representatives responded to the questions from the MEPs: Universities hope that British universities will have access to Horizon Europe despite **Brexit**. Otherwise, it will be important to find other mechanisms to continue collaboration. Stakeholders will always wish that **bureaucracy** of R&I funding could be reduced. The panel underlined that the excellence principle is paramount to attract high level talent to apply to the framework programme. It was also noted that the complementarity between national and EU R&I funding is fundamental for the comprehensive research landscape. National return programmes should ensure the reintegration of students and researchers who build up competences outside their home countries. **Reducing the time to market for innovation** require programmes that support cooperation between universities and industry. This is particularly difficult when it comes to SMEs. It could be a solution to facilitate more and better contact between university students and SMEs. Ecosystems with universities, private and public organisations create pathways for innovation, also recognising that innovation processes are not linear. Universities are deeply aware of the global “**tech-war**” in particular with China. However, research continue to be most effective in open systems. Therefore, the problem needs political solutions and Europe should continue to invest in R&I to be ahead of other global powers. Science is transforming to work in more theme-based ways rather than traditional disciplines. Climate change and CO2 reduction are areas where **social sciences and humanities** should play major roles to unveil what new technologies mean to society and inform implementation, regulation and policy making. The issue of ensuring **academic freedom in European universities** was raised. The panel strongly defended this basic right that is essential for excellent science and research-based education to flourish. Academic freedom was invented in Europe and is fundamental to the identity of universities. R&I funding is important, but **the issue of academic freedom shows that science is much more than just the funding**.

Moderator: Sylvia Schwaag Serger, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Lund University.

Panel members: Stefan Bengtsson, Vice-Chancellor of Chalmers University of Technology, Paula Eerola, Vice-Rector of University of Helsinki, Anne Borg, Acting Rector of NTNU and Henrik Wegener, Rector of University of Copenhagen.







