

European Innovation Policy

During this year's trilateral meeting held in Basel on 23 September 2010, the German Rectors' Conference, Universities Austria, and the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) discussed the current developments taking place in the field of European innovation policy. The goal pursued by the European Commission, namely to create "Intelligent Growth" on the basis of knowledge and innovation, was fundamentally welcomed. Given the innovation policy debate taking place in Brussels, and which became all the more dynamic with the European Commission's announcement of an "Innovation Union" on 6 October 2010, the three conferences jointly announced the following key demands:

- The definition of innovation which underlies this term must be applied as comprehensively as possible. To ensure that the aspired "Innovation Union" is able to develop to its full capacity, it will have to incorporate a broad range of themes, services, products, as well as social innovations, and include, without exception, all the relevant carriers of innovation in the process.
- Similarly, the understanding of innovation must not be narrowed down to seemingly isolated almost marketable processes, but must rather take the whole innovation chain into consideration, from basic research through to incremental improvements of products and applications. The goal of raising the competitiveness and the quality of life in the EU by means of knowledge-based processes requires unconditional support for creating knowledge and gaining insights.
- To successfully master the major social challenges we face, for example by advancing the "European Innovation Partnerships" considered in the EU2020 Strategy, it is essential that we have a transparent, open and science-driven procedure. To identify and assess the innovative potential that exists in the various action fields, the scientific expertise available at the universities is just as essential as is the wealth of experience they have acquired in collaborating successfully with stakeholders from industry and commerce, the public sector and civil society.
- A consistent and comprehensively-integrated innovation policy must also incorporate the EU's Cohesion Policy. Capacity-building measures at European universities on the way towards excellence and the premiere league in research must be provided with more support than has previously been the case. Regional development plans give greater consideration to the universities' role as a driving force positioned at the centre of locally based innovative alliances.
- Europe's innovation policy must take account of higher education in its capacity as the most proven and verified means for disseminating knowledge.

The rectors' conferences agreed that the HRK and uniko would (also on behalf of CRUS) continue to actively monitor the debate on shaping Europe's innovation policy by issuing statements and engaging in constant dialogue with political decision-makers at national and European level.