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Written address to the E³UDRES² European Universities alliance leaders' event

Dear Rectors and Presidents of the E³UDRES² European University,

Let me first thank you for the opportunity to address you in a few words.

You are best placed to know that, in these challenging times we are going through, universities and higher education in general have become key actors to contribute to Europe's resilience and post-pandemic recovery. And the question of resilience has become all the more relevant after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, highlighting essential role higher education can play to help our societies face crises, and be prepared for future challenges, be they geopolitical, societal, environmental, health-related or digital.

*It is crucial to support and enable universities as they adapt to changing conditions. That is why, on 18 January, after more than a year of intense consultation with the higher education sector and Member States, I presented the **European strategy for universities** and with it, a Proposal for a Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation, which, I am glad to say, was adopted on 5 April.*

*We are convinced that universities need to **engage more effectively in transnational cooperation** to remain guiding lights for us all. Because it is through such extensive cooperation that your work will remain innovative and at the forefront of any development.*

*With the European strategy for universities we are taking transnational cooperation to a **new level of intensity and scope**. Our vision is a **genuinely European dimension** in the higher education sector, built on shared values.*

*The **European Universities initiative** is essential to this strategy, and the alliances are leading the way towards a genuine European Education Area in higher education.*

I am pleased to see E³UDRES² playing an important role, and the Commission is determined to support you and the other alliances on the way.

Your alliance brings together universities of applied sciences, focused on regional ecosystems, innovative practice-oriented learning and future skills. With this, your vision is fully in line with the ambitions of the European strategy for universities, and reflects the diversity of the higher education landscape. Inclusiveness and openness are paramount to your alliance.

*E³UDRES² follows the idea of **developing European solutions to regional problems**.*

And this is what European Universities should be doing: contribute to the vitality and the future of our regions. This implies the involvement of teams of students, academics, researchers,



regional decision makers, local businesses and civil society, all of them working together across sectors and disciplines to address societal challenges and create knowledge. 2

Not least, through their contribution to the creation and preservation of interesting jobs at local and regional levels, the alliances will provide students and young people with great opportunities in their home countries and cities.

At the Commission, we will examine how to take the initiative further, possibly through **institutionalised cooperation instruments**, or a **legal statute** for alliances of higher education institutions, which could lead to the sharing of resources and services, inter-university campuses and joint digital or blended activities.

Together with the stakeholders and Member States, we will also explore the possibility of a **European label for joint programmes**. Later on, in accordance with the existing instruments of the Bologna Process, this could lead to the possible design and delivery, on a voluntary basis of joint degrees at national, regional or institutional level.

The European Universities alliances are shaping the future of the European higher education sector.

I am hopeful that others will be inspired by your work and follow in your footsteps.

And I congratulate E³UDRES², I congratulate you all on **your alliance's enlargement**. Starting with six institutions, E³UDRES² will now become a true transnational endeavour uniting **eight higher education institutions from eight countries** across Europe.

To achieve our common, ambitious vision for the European higher education sector, let me also add this: the **mobilisation of university leadership** is key.

There can be no transformation of higher education, no capacity to work for more resilience and sustainability without the **creativity and the energy of higher education leaders and management**.

You have my trust and my support.

Witnessing your transformative ambitions, and seeing your European University becoming a reality in only a few years' time.

Remembering the mobilisation of higher education and research during the pandemic to ensure the continuity of higher education.

Seeing now the commitment of your communities and all the actions put into place to support Ukraine academics and students – then, yes, I am confident, I trust in our strengths and our collective capacity to prepare the future.

The Commission fully supports your vision and ambitions. Your endeavours will make an impact on the transitions our societies are undergoing, towards a greener, more digital and more inclusive future.

I wish E³UDRES² every success and look forward to following your progress and achievements in the time to come.



Mariya Gabriel