

## **University of Wolverhampton statement**

### **Why we're supporting the campaign to stay in Europe**

**February 2016**

For centuries universities have had a key role in opening minds, challenging conventional thinking, developing individuals for the economic needs of society and pursuing invention and innovation. The University of Wolverhampton has been at the heart of this process throughout its existence. Higher education is about learning from all and working collaboratively, it is not and never has been about closing and restricting the frontiers of knowledge, innovation and invention. Being a member of the European Union has enabled the University to bring an enormous range of benefits to the local economy and to society.

The EU has been very supportive of the University and its role. In this century we have received nearly £70 million of project and initiative funding from Europe. We have included some examples in this statement. These grants directly impact our communities – students, staff, the Black Country, West Midlands and further afield with our world-renowned research.

EU funding has helped us to make a difference in the areas of economic growth, access to higher education and in our campus buildings and facilities.

### **Contribution to economic growth**

Over half of our research income comes from Europe and research significantly contributes to the economy. We are internationally recognised for it; in the latest round of the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014), the University was ranked at its highest ever level with each submitted subject area recognised as having world-leading elements. Inside the EU, we are better able to collaborate with partners from across Europe to carry out cutting edge research, from healthcare advances to new materials, products and services. Universities across the world work together on research projects to solve problems, and we work with many European colleagues to deliver solutions.

Our Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT) runs many EU funded projects, which have included funding of 2.3 million euros for an African Forestry Governance (SAFP) programme, 2.1 million euros for a Congo Basin Forestry programme, and nearly 1 million euros for the Citizen Training and Research using University Services (CITRUS) project.

EU funding of £8 million went into the SPEED Graduate Business Start-Up programme which has seen 620 successful regional businesses launch into different industries, and 999 regional jobs created.

The current App.t project, in collaboration with Siawns Teg Limited, UK, Vsl GALVOCIUS, Lithuania, Volkshochschule im Landkreis Cham e.V, Germany, and FM Consulting s.r.o, Czech Republic, is funded by Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships. It aims to create an app to support target groups who are more likely to be unemployed in the current EU economy, and their trainers, with interactive training content focussing on developing business start-up skills based on the principles of social enterprise.

Our experience has also helped the Black Country LEP to design the new ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) programme, which universities can bid into.

Leaving the EU would mean cutting UK universities off from unique support and established networks, undermining the UK's position as a global leader in science and innovation.

### **Our campus buildings and facilities**

EU funding has contributed to our campus developments and state-of-the-art buildings and facilities to enhance the student learning experience.

This includes £14m of different grants from a regional EU opportunity for Phase 1 & 2 of our Science Park in Wolverhampton, and £4.5 million from the EU for our MI Technology Centre Building, City Centre Campus.

Three buildings at our Telford Innovation Campus have been supported by EU funding from 2003, totalling £11m.

### **Access to higher education for all**

EU funding to the University of Wolverhampton has included a £1.8 million grant scheme for disadvantaged students who needed financial support whilst studying STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects. The SignMedia project – to develop an interactive learning resource that teaches elements of written English through sign language – was also a European project, where we collaborated with Klagenfurt University, Austria, the University of Turin, Italy, and Mutt & Jeff Pictures Ltd, UK.

We have students from more than 100 nations at the University of Wolverhampton. We are seeing a growth of EU inward mobility for full-time courses, year on year – already we are 10% up on last year's student numbers. Recent recruitment trips to Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal have shown an increased encouragement from European higher education institutions, colleges and schools for students to leave their home country and have an international study experience. We participate in the Erasmus+ programme too - the latest DHLE\* survey showed that 98% of our students who participated in a European exchange programme went into work or further study. This is helping students with their employability and standing out with different experiences at application and interview stages. Our participation with Erasmus is not under threat from the 'out' vote but internationalisation as an area for UK universities will be an issue.

Internationalisation of universities improves the student experience – and leaving the EU gives the wrong message to other countries about UK universities' international outlook. We bring Europe to UK campuses and it's an attractive place for overseas students to study. One of the biggest selling points in overseas recruitment is that the UK is a diverse and multicultural country, allowing students to meet others from different nationalities and backgrounds. The 'out' vote would arguably make the UK seem unwelcoming and reduce overseas student numbers to the UK.

\*Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey

**Professor Geoff Layer**

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