

# Higher education fit for the future

18 oktober 2011

This report sets out the Education Council's response to the strategic agenda for higher education and research. The Education Council endorses the ambition described in the agenda for better quality and more differentiation. However, we also believe that the innovative capacity of society can be further strengthened by our higher education. Excellent higher education is necessary for economic growth and is intrinsically valuable for both the participants and for society. Mindful of this vision, the Education Council has formulated four recommendations.

## *Redouble efforts towards quality*

The Education Council endorses the efforts made by the State Secretary to increase the quality of higher education. The Education Council recommends that this should not just mean setting efficiency targets, but directly and more integrally establishing criteria for aspects of quality. A broadly accepted definition of quality based on international standards is needed to underpin this. To achieve these ambitions will require a strengthening of the quality culture.

## *Redouble efforts towards profile differentiation*

The Education Council endorses efforts to achieve differentiated institutional profiles. However, we believe it is important that there should be no advance influence on the types of profiles to be chosen. Besides content-related profiles achieved by exchanging master's programmes, other profiles are also possible (e.g. based on region, target group, etc.). The Education Council believes that strong process management and the deployment of more resources will be necessary to provide a stimulus for this process.

## *Focus on the broad remit of higher education to foster the innovative capacity of society*

In regard to the innovative capacity of society, it is important that the remit of higher education is broadly defined. An internationally oriented knowledge economy demands graduates that are highly skilled in their discipline, are creative, critical and can think and act in a problem-solving way, can work together with people from other disciplines, feel at home in a culturally diverse environment, and have a broad view of the world. The Education Council also considers this broad remit of higher education important in terms of the personal development of students.

## *Safeguard the accessibility of higher education*

An important item requiring some focus is the accessibility of higher education. Accessibility at the system level, as argued in the agenda, forms an important aspect of this. Although the Education Council believes that selection can contribute to an increase in the quality of higher education, we also believe it is advisable to encourage participation in higher education, rather than hinder it. This therefore means that greater variety is needed within both academic education and higher professional education. This will make it possible for every student to follow a programme of higher education that suits them. Furthermore, the Education Council also calls for attention to be devoted to the issue of transfer within the higher education system.