CESAER and the European Research Area - Work in progress

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By engaging as stakeholder in a discussion on the current European research landscape and its possible evolution, CESAER is convinced that universities, researchers and the scientific community will see how a unified ERA supports their work within and across Europe, boost their career and improve their lives in terms of mobility, career, statute, access to world class infrastructures, social security, etc. Therefore we identified priority areas where we need to do more to achieve shared education and research objectives.

Researchers and research careers

As a network of universities of technology CESAER puts human resources for research high on the agenda. Facilitating the attraction, recruitment and career development of staff is paramount. Therefore CESAER set up a Task Force Human Resources that launched several initiatives and agreed on target actions in the area of human resources.

An analysis of institutions actively advertising their researcher vacancies on the EURAXESS Jobs portal showed that 50 out of CESAER’s 54 member institutions are currently using the portal.

In order to promote Human Resource Strategies for Researchers (HRS4R) at member institutions, CESAER, being part of the fourth cohort of the HRS4R Strategy Group as umbrella organisation since early 2013, encouraged member universities to engage in the HRS4R process. In this respect two workshops were organised in September and October. To date eight CESAER universities have obtained the Human Resource Excellence in Research Logo, seven embarked on the process, and 25 others endorsed the Charter and Code either directly or via their Rectors Conferences. 14 member universities have not yet taken any action in this respect. Participating universities promote the HRS4R process amongst the network as a benchmarking towards best practice in Europe and as an internal quality development process in HR for researchers.
Surveys on **career development and leadership training** for engineers carried out at a series of European technological universities showed how career development is handled. The reports also underline that universities are recognizing that, in order to create an attractive work environment, they have to offer well-defined posts, well-structured career perspectives as well as advice and support for career development. In the area of leadership there are a number of challenges described; most are based on achieving the “right” values and behaviour, like creating an environment of trust, collaboration and creating common goals. Combining the roles of subject expert and leadership in one person, and finding the time balance between these roles seems to be a challenge for many leaders in academia.

CESAER launched a survey on **gender equality**. It is based on a detailed questionnaire prepared in cooperation and with the advice of DG RTD. Early results from a simultaneous initiative in the area of gender show that 50% of CESAER member institutions have a person or department responsible for gender equality and 60% have a gender equality plan or equivalent.

Initiatives are being taken in order to educate at CESAER universities a new generation of entrepreneurial and innovation minded people in Europe by delivering a unique brand of excellent education responsive to both business and societal demands, focused on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. The first step was the seminar “Educating the next generation of entrepreneurial engineers” organised by the **Task Force “Entrepreneurship”** (merger between the respective CESAER and CLUSTER taskforces) to stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit amongst engineering students in order to increase the number of high-tech spin-offs and to develop **complementary and transferable skills**. Initiatives such as student exchange to enhance entrepreneurial education and training between the collaborating CESAER universities will follow.

With our partner association IDEA League we are preparing a report on **structured programmes for Innovative Doctoral Training** in line with the relevant European principles. This report will complement the Commission’s 2011 “Report of Mapping Exercise on Doctoral Training in Europe” and will highlight the important role of universities of technology.
CESAER also supports the Commission initiative for a **Pan-European Supplementary Pension Fund for Researchers**. Four member universities joined the preparatory work for the Task Force launched by DG RTD.

Since responsible innovation is one of the leading themes for the coming years, a broad and multidisciplinary Task Force "**Responsible Research and Innovation**" was established in autumn. The overall goal of the taskforce is to gain a better insight in responsible research and innovation and to advocate this idea in key places in society (universities, government bodies, industry, and funding agencies).

Although many CESAER universities run their own programme for mobility between academia and industry already, the organisation's headquarter launched a CESAER-wide campaign to join the first edition of the **EIT Foundation's Internship Programme** that involves three multinational companies. This campaign resulted in the submission of almost 50 eligible fellowship applications from seven different universities. Involved companies are in the process of analysing the applications and interviewing selected candidates. Results are to be expected soon.

**Optimal transnational co-operation**

With many CESAER universities among the top 50 higher education institutions participating in FP7 CESAER wants to confirm its ambition to substantially contribute to innovation under Horizon 2020 and to help fostering prosperity for the European continent, including in the EU13 countries, in which several leading universities of technology can be counted among our membership. By carefully monitoring the participation as well as the collaborative links between member organisations in FP7 CESAER aims at fostering benchmarking and mutual learning, initiating or strengthening collaboration in order to support "**widening participation**", ERA Chairs and "**teaming and twinning**" actions as proposed by the Commission.

The report on the outcomes of the EuroTech Universities High Level Event on **Strategic University-Industry Partnerships**, which took place on 3 December in Brussels, drew some important conclusions on this topic and its importance when addressing societal challenges and should be seen as part of the delivery of EuroTech’s ERA commitments.
Knowledge circulation and open access

In the area of circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge CESAER is investigating how its member universities’ governance and structures support knowledge transfer. First results revealed that 55% of CESAER’s member institutions have a Vice-Rector (or equivalent) responsible for knowledge transfer and/or innovation and more than 90% of the CESAER universities have a Technology Transfer Office.

Open Access to publications and to research data are longstanding subjects in the academic world. The many discussion and position papers that have been collected for the initiation of the CESAER process show that some positions are well established, while some are still debated. The CESAER Task Force “Open Access/Open Data” will help OA policies gaining acceptance, will support initiatives to promote OA and to influence publishers to adopt policies that serve the research community well. At the same time CESAER is identifying what the most important issues are for engineering universities.

Conclusion

CESAER has entered into an innovative but challenging partnership with the Commission and the other stakeholders. Looking ahead to 2014, CESAER is and will continue to be highly committed to make the ERA Partnership successful. It is clear that some issues require more focused efforts and that the many initiatives taken will have to be turned into concrete actions and recommendations, before entering the implementation phase at all our member universities. ERA is our common horizon for 2020 and beyond.