

ANSWER ON CONSULTATION

TOPIC: Communication on the future of research and innovation and the European Research Area
DATE: 17 July 2020
TO: European Commission
FROM: CESAER

CONTEXT

Recalling our positions [Future of the European Research Area \(ERA\)](#), [Research talent circulation within the ERA](#), [Sustainable funding for universities of the future in Europe](#), [Lead for research, education and innovation in recovery and to build resilience](#) and white paper [Universities of S&T as engines of excellence, talent and innovation](#), we hereby emphasise three key messages that should be central in the ‘Communication on the future of research and innovation and the European Research Area’ as our answer on the [consultation for the communication](#). We also offer to continue to contribute pro-actively and constructively to the implementation of the ERA.

EXCELLENT SCIENCE MUST BE AT CORE OF ERA

Excellent science and technology is at the core of the public research system and thus the ERA, and therefore must be one of the new aims of the ERA. This includes strong (public) support for investigator-led frontier research, as well as the enabling infrastructures which are vital for excellence in research, education and innovation (see our white paper [Universities of S&T as engines of excellence, talent and innovation](#)). Any attempt to disrupt the balance of bottom-up and top-down approaches by an undue focus on top-down ‘directionality’ of research would rip the heart out of the ERA and restrict the contribution of research, innovation and education as global public goods to lead recovery and to build resilience in Europe and beyond.

ERA MUST BE OPEN AND WELCOMING TO ALL LIKE-MINDED PARTNERS

The Covid-19 outbreak has reminded us of the importance of working together across borders in Europe and beyond. While the treaty objective ([TFEU 179](#)) compels the removal of all barriers to ensure that ‘researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely’, it would be damaging to the ERA to limit this to the borders of the EU. The communication must instead pave the way for (i) a genuine contribution of European research to the world, (ii) the free circulation of researchers, scientific knowledge and technology with all like-minded partners and (iii) an orderly and timely association of interested and third countries to Horizon Europe.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING TARGETS ARE CRITICAL TO IMPLEMENT ERA

The bold ambitions of the ERA require sustainable funding levels, including increasing the often anaemic national and regional funding levels. It is therefore paramount to ensure sustainable funding for research and innovation. This should take the form of commitments to new and reinforced targets, as a proportion of GDP, for private and for public spending on research and innovation, and higher education that match the best performers in the world.

GENUINE OFFER TO IMPLEMENT ERA

The full support of diverse research careers is a cornerstone of a thriving ERA. Here, we universities must assume leadership in ensuring our rewards and assessment procedures fully support modern

researcher careers. Recalling our recent efforts on [Boosting the careers of early-stage researchers](#), [Research talent circulation](#), [Next-generation metrics](#), [Equality, diversity and inclusion](#), and [Sharing experiences with Human Resources Strategy for Researchers](#), our association hereby offers to be an active and constructive partner in this area.

To empower universities to fully contribute to the ERA and assume leadership, key research stakeholders and their representatives must be involved in the future overall governance of the ERA in a structured way, e.g. through the ERA Stakeholder Organisations (ERA SHO) Platform, and not in an incidental or *ad hoc* fashion.

To ensure effective and genuine contributions to this governance, key SHO would be those who pledge to commit to specific contributions towards the implementation of the ERA. As one of the member organisations in the ERA SHO Platform, we offer our continued partnership and stand ready to make such commitments, with our President Rik Van de Walle personally committed.

For more information and enquiries, please contact our Secretary General [David Bohmert](#) or our Advisor for Research & Innovation [Mattias Björnmalm](#).

[CESAER](#) is the European association of leading specialised and comprehensive universities of science and technology that: champion excellence in higher education, training, research and innovation; influence debate; contribute to the realisation of open knowledge societies; and, deliver significant scientific, social, economic, and societal impact.



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