

CESAER

Contributions of Universities of Science & Technology to implementing the European Research Area

Position dated 24 June 2022

Recalling our long-standing commitments and efforts to [reinforce](#) the European Research Area (ERA) including through our [joint partnership](#) (2015), the leading universities of science & technology united in [CESAER](#) welcome the [twenty actions](#) planned from 2022 to 2024 to advance the ERA.

Our association and our Members have been and are engaging committedly in different ways with all twenty actions, and we therefore also welcome the full [ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024](#). With this position, we present our top priorities, describe our ongoing efforts and offer additional commitments in line with our [genuine offer to implement the ERA](#).

We urge the ERA Forum to deploy action- and result-focused subgroups composed of representatives of member states and stakeholder organisations who commit to concrete contributions. This will allow our association together with our Members to actively contribute along the commitments outlined below. We look forward to continuing engaging with the ERA Forum towards the full implementation of the ERA.

Action 1: Enabling open science including through European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)

Our Members are [owners, designers, hosts, contract partners, operators, funders and users](#) of key parts of the European backbone of infrastructures for research, education and innovation. Our association is a strong proponent of open science, including [open access](#) and [research data management](#). We are a [founding member of the EOSC](#) and our nominee was elected [EOSC President 2021-2022](#). We support the engagement with and advancement of the EOSC through events such as dedicated online seminar series on sharing best practice in research data management and related infrastructure and support.

We will continue to be an active and constructive partner to:

- Further advance the backbone of key infrastructure, the establishment of a critical mass of data scientists and data stewards, and the promotion of broad [FAIR](#) data-literacy in Europe;
- Provide guidance to the EU institutions in ensuring that the [FAIR principles](#) are at the heart of ongoing and upcoming data-driven initiatives such as the ERA monitoring framework and scoreboard, the observatory on research careers and the European Higher Education Sector Observatory.

Action 2: Copyright and data legislative framework

In 2020, we [called upon the Commission](#) to “propose EU legislation to give researchers the nonwaivable legal right to share publicly funded and peer-reviewed research findings without embargoes”, and in January this year we [called upon the EU institutions](#) to “develop a legally binding framework, such as a ‘European Digital Knowledge Act’, which reflects the unique context of the public research and education sectors and protects the objectives of scientific knowledge and technology generation, sharing and preservation”.

We work closely together with partners in this matter and offer to:

- Support the design of a survey on the barriers, challenges and possible legislative and non-legislative measures, and promote its dissemination;
- Provide feedback and enrich the resulting analysis of barriers and challenges;
- Provide feedback on proposed legislative and non-legislative measures proposed by the European Commission to address these barriers and challenges.

Actions 3 & 4: Research assessment and careers

Supporting diverse and modern academic careers is key for us and we actively contribute to the [core group](#) of the coalition on reforming research assessment. Our President has [argued](#) that reform is overdue, in our [position](#) we described how to boost research talent circulation within ERA and in our [white paper](#) we detailed how to boost careers of early-stage researchers. We support the development of the ‘European Framework for Research Careers’ and the ‘observatory for research careers’ through a broad range of activities, including events to exchange best practice.

We urge member states to commit to this action and offer to:

- Support the design of a survey to map and analyse the legal and administrative barriers at various levels to a modern research assessment system;
- Provide feedback and enrich this analysis of the mapping efforts;
- Provide feedback on legislative and non-legislative measures to be proposed by the European Commission to remove identified barriers;
- Support the design of a survey on ‘researchers flows’;
- Provide feedback and enrich the analysis on ‘researchers flows’ and the development of the ‘observatory for research careers’.

Action 5: Gender equality

In 2019, our association and our Members [committed](#) to accelerate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) through a [declaration](#). We support our Members in achieving their pledges and concrete commitments and will publicly report on our achievements in 2024.

We reiterate our strongest commitment to this action, and offer to:

- Provide experts and leaders to work with ERA Forum to move towards engaging with the full spectrum of equality, diversity and inclusion;
- Provide feedback and enrich the ‘common concept and policy approach for gender equality’.

Action 6: Academic freedom

Academic freedom, research integrity and institutional autonomy laid down in the [Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education](#), the [Utrecht Declaration on Academic Freedom](#) and the [Magna Charta Universitatum](#) (MCU) are [core values](#) for our association. We have recently declared defending them a principle guiding all our activities. In the light of the increasing constraints on these values even within the EU, we are dedicated to secure them when challenged. Our key endeavour when bringing them into practice is to balance 'openness and closedness' along our [guiding principle for global S&T cooperation](#) especially with regards to [key technologies shaping the future](#). We will present our best practice and concrete recommendations for knowledge safety and foreign interference in research and innovation for leaders from universities and governments and policy makers by summer 2023.

We work closely together with all partners to defend academic freedom, research integrity and institutional autonomy in Europe and beyond and offer to:

- Support the design and development of a monitoring system on these values;
- Advise on enforcement mechanisms in case of infringement.

Action 7: Knowledge valorisation

[The role of universities of S&T goes far beyond the more passive 'third mission'](#) and is crucial in directing and bringing together innovation ecosystems to help tackle local and global challenges and to ensure a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future for all. Therefore, knowledge valorisation is most effective when universities are empowered to (i) act autonomously while taking risks, and (ii) deploy physical, human and monetary assets in an agile way to support the development of ecosystems and [boost disruptive innovation](#). We actively contribute to the development of Guiding Principles on knowledge valorisation and the Code of Practice for the smart use of intellectual property.

We offer the best practice of our Members as frontrunners in knowledge valorisation and will take a proactive stance in the finalisation of the Guiding Principles and Code of Practice.

Action 8: Research infrastructures

Our Members play diverse and key roles in infrastructures for research, education and innovation at all levels, particularly with regards to achieving scientific and technological excellence and capacity. In 2019, we demonstrated these roles in our [white paper](#) and currently work on improving the management and operation of (university-related) infrastructures. In March, our Board appointed Katharina Eggenberger (ETH Zürich) as our [Envoy to the ESFRI Stakeholder Forum](#).

We continue our strong engagement in infrastructures and offer to:

- Support the development of a streamlined methodology for the strategic analysis of the European research infrastructure landscape as an evidenced-based framework for the ESFRI Roadmaps;
- Help revise the European Charter of Access to Research Infrastructures;
- Help update of the ESFRI roadmap methodology and implement the research infrastructures performance monitoring framework.

Action 9: Global approach

We engage in all of Europe and beyond, and take a global approach to help tackle local and global challenges. We have [called upon](#) the EU to assume leadership at the global level, promote agency of academic institutions and academics, and boost systemic transformations, and have [provided guiding principles](#) for the Global Framework for S&T Cooperation. We will share best practice and present our recommendations for leaders of universities and governments and policymakers in this respect by summer 2023.

We urge the EU to cherish and seek strong like-minded S&T allies and offer to:

- Actively participate in the multilateral dialogue on values and principles;
- Help achieve a Global Framework for S&T Cooperation;
- Inspire recommendations, opinions and reports through our upcoming white paper;
- Explore synergies including co-organising our launch event in summer 2023 of the white paper together with the ERA Forum Global Approach workgroup.

Action 13: Empower higher education institutions

We welcome the emphasis on empowering universities. [Advancing the European Strategy for Universities](#) and its associated flagship initiatives is key for our Members to release unprecedented transformative forces in service of society.

We continue our constructive contributions and cooperation with our partners and offer to:

- Provide leaders and experts to events and efforts for identifying barriers and solutions for building synergies between the ERA and the European Education Area;
- Provide expertise for the development of and feedback on joint support mechanisms for alliances of higher education institutions;
- Co-create and advance the European Higher Education Sector Observatory.

Action 16: Access to excellence

To champion excellence in higher education, training, research and innovation is at the heart of the [mission](#) of our Members. Ensuring [favourable framework conditions](#) and [sustainable funding](#) across Europe is foundational for championing excellence, as is boosting [careers of early-stage researchers](#) and [research talent circulation](#). This is a cross-cutting priority embedded in the efforts of a range of our [task forces](#), including contributing to the upcoming communication on 'brain drain' (autumn 2022) and the priority of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU to boost synergies in funding.

We offer to:

- Provide [guidance and support](#) for the reform of national research and innovation systems;
- Provide support and feedback for 'initiatives for excellence in research and innovation';
- Provide guidance for European and national efforts aimed at empowering research institutions to be more attractive to international talents.

Action 20: Future R&D investments

[Sustainable funding](#) is foundational for research, education and innovation to [boost recovery and build resilience](#), and for [universities to assume responsibilities](#) to help tackle local and global challenges. We reiterate [our call](#) for the EU and its member states to lead by example and finally enact its 3% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) target for private and public expenditures for Research and Innovation (R&I), and commit to 1.25% of its GDP from public sources for R&I and higher education respectively, in line with the best performers in the world. We have provided [guidance](#) towards (i) benchmarking against the best in the world, (ii) balancing between competitive and non-competitive funding, (iii) expanding support infrastructures for research, education and innovation, (iv) aligning with usual accounting practices and cover real costs, (v) assuring any demand management measures safeguard key values and (vi) [effective funding for inter- and transdisciplinary research](#).

Our association stands ready to provide its full support on all of these topics, including to actively participate in policy and technical discussions guiding the planning, monitoring and reporting on targets, and analysis thereof, related to the achievement of sustainable funding levels and ensuring a balance between competitive and non-competitive funding streams on all geographical levels.

For more information and enquiries, please contact our Deputy Secretary General [Mattias Björnmalm](#).

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