



Implementing the ERA Policy Agenda and European Strategy for Universities:
Towards a European Excellence Initiative

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Stijn DELAURE, European Commission, DG R&I, R&I Actors and Research Careers



Realising the new European Research Area

Pact for R&I

10 values & principles

4 priority areas

- Deepening the ERA
- Broadening ERA and relevance
- Amplifying access to excellence
- Advancing R&I investments and reforms

R&D targets

ERA Governance

ERA Forum (+ subgroups)

Expert group for coordination and implementation of the ERA, together with EU MS, AC and stakeholders

ERAC

High-level strategic policy body, providing advice

ERA Policy Agenda

Designed to contribute to the priority areas from the Pact for R&I, setting out the voluntary **ERA actions** which are defined and coordinated at Union level

20 actions, 2022-2024

ERA Policy Agenda: 20 actions

DEEPENING A TRULY FUNCTIONING INTERNAL MARKET FOR KNOWLEDGE

1. Open sharing of knowledge, incl. EOSC
2. Data legislation fit for research
3. Reform of research assessment
4. Strengthen research careers
5. Gender equality and inclusiveness
6. Protect academic freedom
7. Better knowledge valorisation
8. Research infrastructures
9. International cooperation, reciprocity

TOGETHER FOR TWIN GREEN AND DIGITAL TRANSITION, AND INCREASING SOCIETY'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ERA

10. R&I Missions and Partnerships for ERA
11. Green energy transformation
12. Transition of industrial ecosystems
13. Empower higher education institutions
14. Bring science closer to society



AMPLIFYING ACCESS TO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION EXCELLENCE ACROSS THE UNION

15. Regional and national R&I ecosystems
16. EU-wide access to excellence
17. Strategic capacity of public RPOs

ADVANCING CONCERTED R&I INVESTMENTS AND REFORMS

18. Coordination national support for ERA
19. ERA monitoring mechanism
20. Prioritisation and coordination of R&I investments and reforms

ERA Action 13: Empower higher education institutions to develop in line with the ERA, and in synergy with EEA – Objectives:

Cooperation for excellence

- Raise excellence in science and in value creation through integrated and inclusive cooperation of higher education institutions
- *Support implementation of i.a. ERA actions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16 by HEI, in particular support digital transition and research careers*
- Contribute to consolidating the European Universities Initiative for the R&I dimension

Global competitiveness

- Improve global competitiveness and visibility of Europe's universities
- Create critical mass in research and innovation in key policy areas

⇒ ***Towards a European Excellence Initiative***

Mapping & modelling of national excellence initiatives

National 'excellence initiatives' in support of higher education sector

⇒ mapping and modelling of the landscape (study 2022): DE, FR, PL, AT, ES,...

Preliminary analysis of national initiatives

PURPOSE:

- creating critical mass enabling more **international visibility** to the top universities in the country
- providing **directionality** to research investments, introducing long-term commitment by country to strengthen the economic **impact** of higher education institution

COMMON PARAMETERS:

- A **competition** between universities or centres of excellence (selection of the best)
- Aiming at establishing or strengthening the **excellent science** base (and mind-set)
- Benchmarking with international counterparts and involvement of international experts
- Providing large-scale and **long-term** (batch) funding for research
- Internationalisation (often based on diaspora or foreign-trained academics)
- Demanding **innovative governance** and strong institutional leadership

Towards a European Excellence Initiative

recommendations from stakeholders, incl.:

- **DE-FR-PL Rectors' Conferences (HRK, CPU, KRASP):**
 - Capacity building in less competitive higher education systems, competition at national level
 - An **EU peer-review** system, organised by national funding agencies consortium and Commission
 - Bulk of funding from national/regional/structural funds, topped-up by EU funding
 - https://www.hrk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/hrk/02-Dokumente/02-05-Forschung/Position_CPU_HRK_KRASP_18.5.2018/CPU-HRK-KRASP_Living_Up_to_the_Significance_of_Universities-2.pdf
 - https://www.hrk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/hrk/02-Dokumente/02-05-Forschung/CPU-HRK-KRASP_on_budget_European_Universities_and_regional_ecosystems_2018.pdf
- **The Guild:**
 - Support the **institutional development** of universities across Europe
 - Strengthen research excellence and capacity to attract international researchers
 - Improve managerial and administrative capacity in widening countries
 - Encourage participation of non-academic organisations
 - Support **open competition** and evaluation by international experts
 - https://www.the-guild.eu/publications/position-papers/guild-position-on-excellence_initiative.pdf

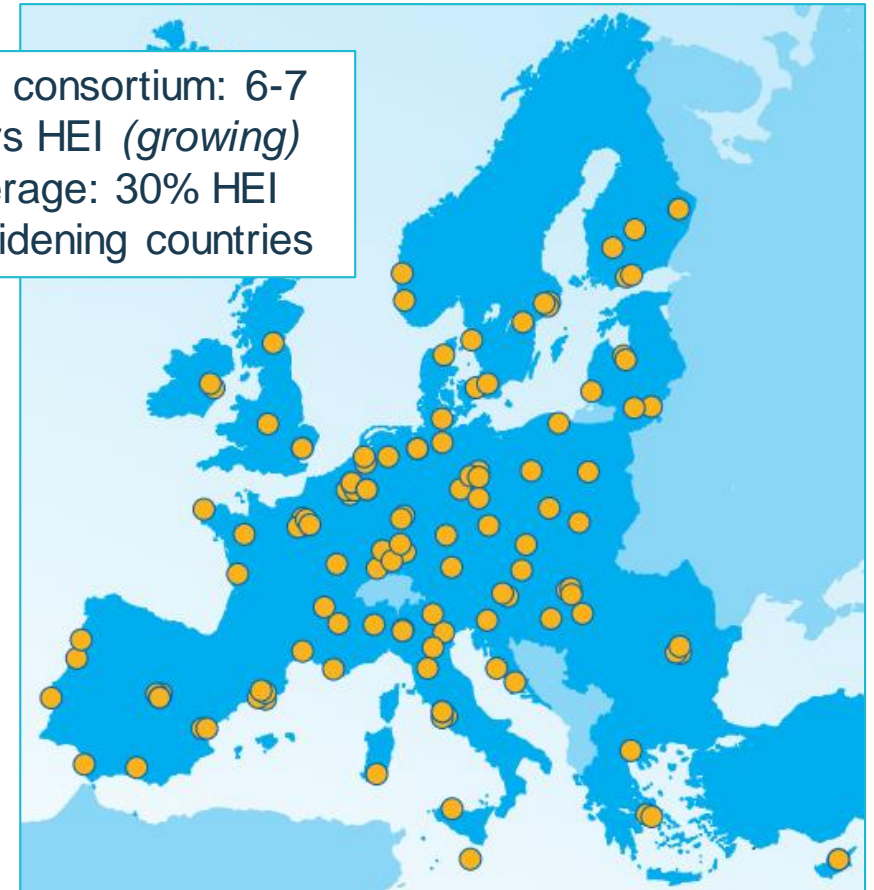
Link with the European Universities Initiative

R&I dimension of pilot alliances supported by Horizon 2020

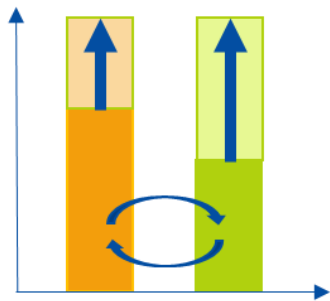
H2020: Supporting institutional change in R&I through HEI cooperation

- Creating critical mass in key areas
- Sharing of capacity and resources
- Open Science & digitisation
- Strengthening research careers
- Reinforcing knowledge transfer capacity, and role/cooperation within innovation ecosystem
- Engagement with citizens, cities, society

- Typical consortium: 6-7 partners HEI (*growing*)
- On average: 30% HEI from widening countries



excellence



Mid-term review & assessment (Q3-Q4 2022)

- Impact of the H2020 support?
- Role of the inclusive and integrated cooperation of the alliances? (*does it accelerate institutional transformation?*)
- Recommendations for future support?

Future R&I support for alliances of higher education institutions through **European Excellence Initiative**

Horizon Europe support: Implementation of **ERA Policy Agenda** by alliances of HEIs?

- Strengthening of research **careers** within and beyond HEI
 - Reinforcing role of universities in innovation **ecosystems**
 - Mainstreaming practices/tools for **open** knowledge sharing
 - Promoting gender equality, diversity and **inclusiveness**
 - Accelerating society's **green and digital transition**
 - **Global outreach** and cooperation with **third countries**
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- **Short-term:** excellence funding under widening
 - **Long-term:** sustainable support for alliances of HEI
(enabling pooling resources from EU and national level,
highly competitive, with top-level peer-review system)



European Excellence Initiative umbrella

Envisaged activities on short and long term

Policy:



Policy support for national initiatives for excellence for HEIs (*based on study*)



Task force exploring future sustainable support for European Universities (*enabling pooling of resources, e.g. co-funded partnership*)

Programme (Horizon Europe WIDERA):



Acceleration services to support institutional change in HEIs



Excellence funding for integrated and inclusive networks of HEIs



Piloting competitive and sustainable support mechanism for alliances of HEIs, towards next MFF

Thank you!