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WORKING DOCUMENT

From:	ERAC Secretariat
To:	ERAC (European Research Area and Innovation Committee)
Subject:	Synergies between the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area

ERAC delegations will find in Annex a background note on Synergies between the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area with a view to discussions at the informal videoconference of ERAC on 4 June 2020.

Delegations are kindly requested to send written contributions on this note to the ERAC Secretariat (erac@consilium.europa.eu) **by Friday 29 May**.

Kind regards,

ERAC Secretariat

Synergies between ERA and EHEA

Background note

1. POLICY CONTEXT

At the ERAC plenary on 30/31 March 2020, delegations will be invited to share their views about possible scopes of collaboration in the framework of synergies between ERA and EHEA.

The topic appeared prominently in the context of the review of the ERA advisory structure in 2018. One of the recommendations of the related ERAC Opinion¹ asked the ERA-related groups *“to foster exchanges and discussions about common policy interests between ERA and the EHEA, examine the possibility of an annual back-to-back meeting between ERAC and the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) and/or DG Higher Education.”*

In November 2018, research ministers confirmed the need to improve ties between ERA and EHEA. The Council explicitly asked ERAC and the ERAC Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility *“to strive for better synergies between ERA and the European Higher Education Area on issues related to higher education, training, research careers and the knowledge triangle”*.²

In addition, the Competitiveness Council referred to the “Paris Communiqué” of 25 May 2018 in which the Bologna Ministerial Conference encouraged closer collaboration between the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) and ERAC.³ In 2019, an informal exchange of views between the ERAC co-chairs and the representatives of the BFUG took place as a first response to the political instruction.

During the Finnish Presidency, a first-ever joint conference of Directors-General for Higher Education and ERAC was organised to facilitate cooperation between these two groups of R&I&E decision-makers. The conference focused on finding common ground especially around the societal game-changers of openness, digitalisation and artificial intelligence. The meeting was regarded as a welcomed first step towards understanding and awareness of common challenges and opportunities for enhanced cooperation between the two sectors, despite of their different structures and governance models. It was agreed that the topic would

¹ ERAC Opinion on the 2018 review of the ERA advisory structure, document ERAC 1209/18, 21 September 2018

² Council Conclusions on the governance of the European Research Area, document 14989/18 RECH 512 COMPET 833, 30 November 2018

³ Paris Communiqué, Conférence ministérielle européenne pour l’enseignement supérieur, 25 May 2018

be further developed and discussed both at the Bologna Follow-Up Group and in the future discussions of ERAC.

In preparation of this conference, the ERAC Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility prepared a document on how to build stronger links between ERA and EHEA.

In late 2019, ERAC adopted an Opinion on the future of the ERA⁴ as an input to reflections in view of a scheduled Commission communication on ERA by mid-2020. In the Opinion, ERAC recommended, inter alia, *“to adopt more holistic and comprehensive policy approaches encompassing research, innovation and education (including training and skills development), in particular with respect to higher education (EHEA), where the ERASMUS+ programme and the European Universities Initiative, as well as the EIT, could be building blocks.”*

In the course of the recent informal meeting of the Competitiveness Council in Zagreb, the Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth introduced the term of a “European Knowledge Area” as a comprehensive approach to address education, higher education, science, research, and innovation under one heading.

On the side of the Bologna process, the next Ministerial Conference will take place on 24/25 June 2020 in Rome.

During the in-coming German Presidency, one of the priorities in the area of research will be the contribution of education, research and innovation to processes of transformation (e.g. green and digital). Germany, Portugal and Slovenia as the in-coming Trio presidency have agreed to follow a common roadmap on education, research and innovation, which will target synergies between ERA and EHEA, including the future role of European University Alliances.

2. HUMAN RESOURCES AS THE KEY ELEMENT TO ERA AND EHEA

Human resources at universities and research organisations have a key role in the knowledge triangle. This role cannot be fulfilled without the gender equality dimension also being at the core of the human resources policies. The European Union should strongly focus on its youth and citizens and on strengthening its academic, research & innovation workforce, which should be well educated and fully capable of taking its multiple roles, as well as actively engaging with the new trends of Open Science, Open Innovation and Open Education. At the same time, transnational, international and inter-sectorial mobility are crucial in building next researchers and highly skilled generations. Finally, international research-driven teaching should be a cornerstone for European universities as it contributes to building resilient societies to anti-scientific movements and it is a direct way to internationalise higher

⁴ ERAC Opinion on the future of the ERA, document 1201/20, 23 January 2020

education institutions. For all this to happen, a common agenda for Higher Education and Research & Innovation is deemed relevant.

ERA and EHEA are linked through the research intensive universities (in particular, through the European universities network) and research organisations in the EU that carry an important responsibility for research and innovation, researchers' education (doctoral studies) and training of undergraduate and master students.

Moreover, EHEA and ERA are strongly linked through the student force that is educated through research experiences at different levels of their career, in particular through the third cycle (doctoral studies) which is the first phase of a research career and allows access to advanced level research careers (outside and within academia) and highly skilled positions beyond academia.

ERA and EHEA share the need to promote virtual, blended and geographical mobility, mainly within Europe, but also beyond. The motto should be "studying, researching and working like at home". In full respect of the different framework conditions in each country, students, researchers, academics and other higher education and research institutions professionals should benefit from comparable rights and duties abroad as within their own institution (services, rewards, pensions, etc.) and gender equality should be guaranteed.

ERA and EHEA should make this new Human Resources outlook possible by defining favourable framework conditions. In the context of the future of ERA and EHEA after 2020, European universities should be the cornerstone of this policy.

Some examples of issues to reflect upon:

- How could ERA and EHEA work together in supporting a highly competent and socially responsible students, academics, researchers, and professionals in Europe in the new open science, Innovation and education paradigm throughout their working life?
- How could ERA and EHEA work on a comprehensive recognition and rewards system acknowledging teaching/academics, research and innovation activities in a more balanced, gender-equality way, and embedding open science and open education practices? Is there a need to update the existing Charter & Code, and to develop European guidelines for responsible evaluation of researchers?
- How could the highly skilled European workforce be aligned towards addressing grand challenges? How can the research profession (career) be better aligned?
- How could ERA and EHEA achieve effective mobility of students, researchers, academics, and HE&RI professionals within, to and from Europe?
- How could European University Networks contribute to ERA and EHEA common goals?

- How could university students be mobile beyond university-to-university schemes, (i.e. ESFRI infrastructures)?
- Should doctoral candidates have the opportunity to develop teaching schemes?
- Is there room for competitive calls addressing research and teaching projects?

Against the background of the above-mentioned past and future developments, delegations are invited to express their views on the following lead question (within a time frame of three minutes per speaker):

In your opinion, which are the priorities for collaboration between the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area?