



COMMENTS ON
THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S COMMUNICATION
"A REINFORCED EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA PARTNERSHIP FOR EXCELLENCE AND GROWTH"
(COM (2012) 392), 17 JULY 2012

Introduction

ALLEA (All European Academies), bringing together the European Academies in the Council of Europe region, welcomes the European Commission's Communication on a reinforced European Research Area (ERA). In line with its previous position papers,¹ ALLEA is fully supportive of the realisation of a coherent and inclusive ERA. It is our vision that its achievement is of vital importance for the positioning of European research in a globally competitive environment. We look forward to furthering our dialogue with the European Commission on how to shape and develop the ERA over the coming years.

With members of self-governing communities of leaders of scholarly enquiry across all fields of the natural sciences, the social sciences and the humanities, ALLEA serves as the collective voice of European researchers. Assembling an unparalleled human resource of intellectual excellence, experience and expertise, ALLEA has the capacity to provide knowledge- and evidence-based advice.

In the following, some areas are highlighted, which the Academies consider crucial for the realisation of a successful and sustainable European Research Area and on which they are prepared to take an advisory role.

Strengthening the European Research Area

Underpinning Excellence

Excellence must remain the principal criterion for the future Framework Programme for Research and Innovation "Horizon 2020" and ERA-related activities, as we argued in the ALLEA position paper on the respective Green Paper consultation.² Open competition and international peer review in assessing and funding research proposals are therefore *sine qua non* elements to promote top-level research in Europe and to ensure mutual recognition of evaluations. **The Academies are well placed to set standards for best practice and on research integrity matters.**³

To level out the disparities regarding the scientific performance among the ERA-countries and to support them in eventually gaining equal access to the relevant funding schemes, we propose these instruments, such as the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) and the Structural Funds, should be reinforced. **ALLEA – geographically embracing the Council of Europe region – is in**

¹ Notably "Challenges of the Future: Reflections of ALLEA on ERA" (2007).

<www.allea.org/Content/ALLEA/Themes/European_Research_Area/Reflections_of_ALLEA_on_ERA.pdf>

² "Common Strategic Framework for EU Research & Innovation Funding" (2011).

<www.allea.org/Content/ALLEA/Task%20Force/CSF_consultation_ALLEA_final.pdf>

³ See, *inter alia*, the joint ALLEA and ESF publication "The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity" (2011).

<http://www.allea.org/Content/ALLEA/Scientific%20Integrity/Code_Conduct_ResearchIntegrity.pdf>

ALLEA, the federation of All European Academies, was founded in 1994 and currently brings together 52 Academies in more than 40 countries from the Council of Europe region. Member Academies operate as learned societies, think tanks and research performing organisations.

Independent from political, commercial and ideological interests, ALLEA's policy work seeks to contribute to improving the framework conditions under which science and scholarship can excel. Jointly with its Member Academies, ALLEA is in a position to address the full range of structural and policy issues facing Europe in science, research and innovation. In doing so, it is guided by a common understanding of Europe bound together by historical, social and political factors as well as for scientific and economic reasons.

a good position to take a broker role and assist those countries that intend to undertake structural reforms in their science systems.

Societal Challenges

The challenges Europe faces concern energy security, environmental degradation, but also include issues like the impact of fertility/birth rate and ageing population on national economies, the creation of effective and resilient political institutions, the increase of health consciousness, the creation of a European identity, the disintegration of societies and civil unrest, behavioural aspects of consumption, etc. Overall we therefore prefer the term “Societal Challenges”, as proposed in the 2011 Communication on Horizon 2020, to “Grand Challenges”.

In this context and in some topical areas, such as cultural transfer or migration, **the Academies’ work on cultural heritage would be a valuable basis for tackling these challenges.**

In order to bring about a sustainable Europe, truly transdisciplinary and cross-border responses, with contributions from the social sciences and humanities, are required. Although appreciating that research results should foster sustainable growth whenever possible in view of the current economic situation, we advocate the need for fundamental research to sustain “a genuinely world class science base” in Europe in the long-term, such as we are heartened to note in the ERA Communication. Sufficient flexibility to allow for a careful balance between curiosity-driven and agenda-driven research is essential to enable responses to newly emerging challenges.

Given their expertise in these and other scientific fields, **the ALLEA Member Academies have the capacity to assist in the formulation of effective approaches** along which to orient instruments and on which to focus resources.

Open Science and Digitisation

Because ALLEA has been and continues to be involved in initiatives aimed at simplifying and furthering both access to and dissemination of scientific information and data, we welcome the European Commission’s recent Communication on the subject.⁴ We share the understanding of an “Open Science Culture” that the Vice-President of the European Commission and European Commissioner for the Digital Agenda proposes. On the occasion of the ALLEA General Assembly earlier this year, the Commissioner and the ALLEA Presidency jointly presented the ALLEA policy document “Open science for the 21st century,”⁵ to which the Communication “Towards better access to scientific information” refers to, we are pleased to note. **ALLEA is willing and prepared to take further the dialogue that has been initiated in a follow-up meeting between the ALLEA President and Vice-President Neelie Kroes on the benefits of open science and open access.**⁶

ALLEA’s advisory function in this instance can entail sensitising and informing researchers regarding the possibilities “Open Science” offers them and other issues at stake. It can inform further exploration of the comparative merits of different open access models, for example where a one-size-fits-all approach would not fit the social sciences and humanities disciplines. In the field of the Digital Humanities, the Academies’ expertise and experience represent a rich basis on which further endeavours could build upon, particularly regarding pressing questions like the bundling of existing initiatives in this field, the standardisation of data intensive research and the issue of long-term data ar-

⁴ “Towards better access to scientific information: Boosting the benefits of public investments in research” (COM (2012) 401), 17 July 2012.

⁵ “Open science for the 21st century: a declaration of All European Academies”, 11 April 2012.
<<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/e-infrastructure/docs/allea-declaration-1.pdf>> & <<http://allea.org>>.

⁶ Video “Talking Open Access: Neelie Kroes meets Günter Stock”, 10 May 2012.
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1M6hMBbaDM&feature=relmfu>>

chiving. Finally, the Academies can help establish standards regarding best practice for the increasingly important role of publication managers and data curators.

ALLEA can help develop best practices for e-infrastructures for storage purposes of accessible, assessable and re-usable information and data. ALLEA can also contribute to the development of more appropriate reward systems for scientific personnel involved in data appropriation work.

Conclusion

The establishment of the European Research Area is a long-term endeavour, to whose implementation ALLEA is committed to contribute to the extent its Members are in a position to do. We are equally open and prepared to co-operate with the involved bodies of the European Union as well as with other relevant stakeholders to achieve this task.

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