

**Framework for the European Research Area  
Public Consultation of the European Commission  
Proposals of the Conference of University Presidents  
(known by the French initials "CPU")**

By way of introduction to its answers, the Conference of French University Presidents (CPU) would like to restate certain principles:

1. As enunciated to the Competitiveness Council on 2 December 2008, the purpose of the European Research Area (ERA) is to "provide attractive conditions and effective and efficient governance for research work, and to invest in intensive R&D sectors in Europe."

- **The CPU wishes to stress the primordial importance of the EU dimension of the ERA and its instruments;**
- **The CPU recognises the value of transnational pilot initiatives for subsequent EU actions that include the EU Member States.**

2. The Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties (cf. TFEU, Article 182) vest the European Commission with the authority to use legislative measures to establish the ERA.

- **In a context of shared competencies, the CPU wishes for the European Commission to implement an EU legislative framework for a certain number of fields defined in this document as and when pertinent;**
- **The CPU has noted that most questions require a reply "excluding funding." It nonetheless wishes to reiterate the preponderant importance of the funding of European research activities in the EU framework.**

3. Horizon 2020 reiterates the importance of the three pillars of the knowledge triangle.

- **In that respect, the CPU recalls the need for an enhanced correlation between the ERA and the EHEA.**

4. The transparency and visibility of the European Research Area must be enhanced

- **The CPU wishes to have public "counters" for the funding of research mapped so that a global discussion can be engaged on the stated objectives, the beneficiaries and the nature of research (individual and cooperative projects, basic research or applied research, etc.) in order to rationalise and simplify matters.**

5. As a financial instrument of the ERA, Horizon 2020 must continue to support cooperative research on a European scale, whether targeted or otherwise.

- **The CPU calls on the EU to make every effort to facilitate the access of the scientific community to calls for proposals in this context. The top-down approach opted for hinders a large part of the scientific community from participating in the PCRD and deprives the EU of a direct mode of expression of research needs. The CPU reiterates its wish for the opening up of non-specific calls for funding.**

**The ERA in a time of crisis:**

The consultation comes at a time when the Euro zone and Europe are going through a serious economic crisis. Research and innovation are identified as **growth engines**, representing an opportunity but also a great deal of responsibility for the establishment of the ERA.



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Beyond the economic challenges, the ERA must in our view be also geared to consolidating **solidarity between the Member States**, accelerating European integration, and being a **vehicle for European identity**:

*The ERA must be a European Area for all the stakeholders of the Member States. The Commission's means and resources for the establishment of this environment must concern all the Member States.*

## 2. Introduction

For the CPU, the construction of the ERA requires:

### - A reflection on the assessment of excellence

A fundamental principle, excellence requires new indicators or an additional viewpoint to gauge excellence in the making. This approach in turn requires taking into account intellectual risk capital so as not to miss out on potential innovations in the 10 to 20 years to come: to define in greater detail excellence and the conditions under which it emerges (ecosystem), take quality into consideration as well (cf. career), and acquire more precise and more suitable analysis and guidance tools.

### - The ERA: An area that must remain open to newcomers and new ideas

A rather distinct trend shows that those who have managed to get initial EU funding find it easier to get subsequent such funding. The matter could be discussed far beyond 2014 so that funding for the ERA can remain open to newcomers and new ideas. The idea of reserving a part of the funding (or a preferential subsidy rate) for the first registrants should be examined in greater depth.

### - More detailed definition of the EHEA and ERA approach

Research, teaching and technical and socio-economic innovation are inextricably linked. The universities are today at the very heart of the system, geared to educational activities, a search for dissemination and finally development. The EHEA and the ERA mobilise the same stakeholders, in part, so they must be constructed in a coordinated manner.

## 3. Research professors in the ERA

The free movement of researchers and research professors, and the harmonisation of the status and working conditions constitute one of the objectives to be achieved in stages by drawing inspiration from good mobility practices as in the case of cross-border projects.

### **Support for qualification adapted to researchers**

The CPU wishes to restate the central role of “research professors” and “researchers” in the establishment of the ERA and hails the positive impact of the individual funding programmes Marie Curie or ERC for enabling exceptional researchers to emerge and to find the working conditions in Europe attractive so as to stay.

The CPU is in favour of increased funding for such programmes, but remains vigilant about any shift of such funding to “co-funded” programmes.

The CPU wants higher education programmes to be in line with the concerns of citizens and the markets.

The CPU has welcomed the “Industrial Doctorate” programme which draws a great deal of inspiration of the CIFRE theses developed in France, but continues to be concerned about European funding being able to support Post-doc graduates in sectors of activities outside

academia.

It would be useful for Europe to continue its “awareness raising” policy among legal entities for recruiting doctoral candidates and post-doc graduates.

### ***Enhance the appeal of a career in research***

The CPU cites the difficulty encountered in implementing the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers. This charter does not seem to concern private companies much. The entire mechanism would be improved if it were simplified and elucidated so as to be adopted by each of public and private sectors.

The CPU deplores that teaching is often seen as a constraint or even a handicap in academic careers, and would like more funding to develop the relationship between teaching and research.

### ***Transnational and inter-sectoral mobility of researchers and research professors in Europe***

Transnational and inter-sectoral mobility leads in particular to status problems which could be settled at the outset by having the professional experience of a researcher on secondment recognised by his country/sector of origin.

#### ***Transnational mobility***

The strength of the ERA lies in large measure in the transnational mobility of researchers. To encourage this trend, the following initiatives would be needed:

- Harmonisation of European legislations relating to the working conditions, career management (recruitment and prospects), and various leaves (such as parental leave, etc.).
- Enhanced development of interfaces/equivalencies between the Member States for diplomas/courses, and social protection and retirement systems;
- Enhanced visibility of and communication on the initiatives in force (as in the case of Euraxess, etc.)
- Enhanced (multi-)language training.

#### ***Inter-sectoral mobility***

To promote inter-sectoral mobility, which is less developed than transnational mobility, the CPU has formulated the following proposals:

- **Draw inspiration from national initiatives that have shown their mettle in terms of inter-sectoral mobility** like the French CIFRE theses → Industrial Doctorate, etc.
- **Support the development of interfaces between the public and the private sector**, in particular by finding the means to attenuate disparities (diplomas, professional recognition, salary).

***For mobility, the CPU proposes to rely initially on the cross-border experiences where the institution of outgoing researchers ensures that their career can be resumed and continued, and to plan a European regulation for a subsequent stage.***

## **4. Transnational actions for researchers**

### ***A reflection on the ERA***

This consultation on the ERA comes at a time when Europe is going through profound economic and identity crises. Going back to concerted national approaches would be a historical step backward, all the more so as science is enriched through international cooperation. The ERA must be an area of the EU, for all the citizens of the Member States. The European Commission's means and resources to secure the viability of this area must concern all the Member States, and the European Commission has offered its financial instruments to that end hitherto.

Nevertheless, the ERA's responsibility to coordinate Europe's research policy must be accompanied by a demanding policy, namely to:

- Clarify the objectives of the ERA without fail;
- Define the steps in the establishment of the ERA, accompanied by an interim assessment by the European Parliament;
- Seek efficacy/efficiency on all fronts;
- Optimise cooperation and the capitalisation of knowledge between the Commission's different Directorates General;
- Develop interactions between the different European funding tools (Structural Funds, tools relating to education, etc);
- Hone the teaching skills of European researchers and research bodies;
- Develop the communication to the general public.

### ***An EU policy in the service of all its members***

Europe must fund mainly major societal challenges that require a European critical mass, where national and transnational funding can serve as a first lever. This is the very objective of establishing the ERA as defined in the Maastricht Treaty.

- The CPU accordingly reiterates the importance of the financing of the ERA's Community instruments;
- It calls for mapping European and national funding to identify what is not covered, so as to propose new funding instruments, and/or to make recommendations, specific to each country, on additional actions to be financed;

This could be the role of new tools (on the model of the EIPs which would be extended to different areas of research by subject, to arrive at an overall view of the situation, programmes for calls and funding).

- European alliances

The CPU recognises the importance of European alliances by underscoring that they are not the only stakeholders of European research, which covers far vaster areas. It is up to the universities to contribute to an exhaustive mapping of the current lines of research in Europe.

The aim is to redress the balance between the more or less targeted issues and to cover more extensively scientific problems taking into consideration interests of the research and teaching community.

### ***Joint programming: a lever for community programmes***

The Member States have got organised to establish joint programmes, thereby hoping to counter fragmentation by coordinating their research efforts. This poses difficulties. In fact, the prime

rationale of a common pot to support the best teams of the Member States has now become that of co-funding by the contributing states for their teams above all, while asking the EU to make a financial contribution.

This modus operandi poses a problem for the decision-making process, but also in terms of fairness as to the choice of direction and financing.

Joint programming puts inter-governmental cooperation to the fore. For the CPU, any EU funding must be in the interest of all the EU Member States.

The aims of joint funding therefore are to coordinate funding efforts to tackle challenges that society faces:

- When the societal challenges of joint programmes are advanced and mature, they should be integrated in Horizon 2020 and benefit from the EU rules of this programme;
- The Commission must contribute financially to the initiatives of joint programmes if the governance and rules of participation are transparent and harmonised between the joint programmes (Article 185 too diverse) and if they do not lead to a concentration of very sizeable means on a small number of teams. The European Commission should legislate on this matter. Without these conditions, the Commission would abandon the very principle of the ERA.

### **Coordination of national research agencies, Horizon 2020 programme**

Responsibilities should be shared between the initiators of national programmes and the Commission. The latter must play a federating and disseminating role.

When a challenge acquires a significant European scope, financial support must be forthcoming from the EC. In that connection, national calls for proposals must be different from or complementary to European calls for proposals. |

The links between the framework programme and the national agencies can also be strengthened, in particular by taking into account the results of calls from the European Commission in very specific cases and on a dedicated budget.

### **The regional level and the structural funds**

There are no major societal challenges at regional level today, but it is necessary to mobilise and to provide guidance and support to the regions for the societal challenges of tomorrow. ERDF: Research and innovation condition the societal challenges of tomorrow.

Encourage the development of knowledge triangles at local level and the implementation of appropriate framework conditions.

- Revise the European policy in terms of unfair competition between the States (cf. failure of the IIA) in the age of *Smart Specialisation*
- Work for a controlled European Research Tax credit (cf. Research taxation).

***It seems important to consider an EU legislative framework in order to avoid relations of force between the different stakeholders and to arrive at a clear situation for the researchers.***

## **5. Research infrastructures**

- Map the existing European infrastructures;
- Work towards interoperability of instruments and databases at European level;
- Communicate more extensively on the infrastructures and expertise in Europe among the scientific communities, industries and the public authorities;
- Promote interfaces with structural funds more intensely;
- Improve the functioning of the ESFRI (make it more open);
- Promote the emergence of new common infrastructures in the ERA, both in R&D and in e-infrastructures.

The research infrastructure programme is therefore all the more important for the universities because it enables them to pool the facilities, resources and services used by the scientific community and in particular to establish the networks needed for the construction of the European Research Area and to consolidate the knowledge triangle (transmission, exchange, and preservation of knowledge).

The research infrastructures are excessively pre-defined thematically: we know who will apply for and practically who will obtain funding. It is therefore necessary to strike a new balance between the bottom-up and top-down approaches. This procedure will achieve greater opening to new pooled activities and support for new stakeholders, taking due account of the realities on the ground:

- Non-themed (“blank”) projects should get part of the protected budget;
- It is necessary to promote the establishment of predetermined quotas for modest-sized networks to structure a larger number of new communities;
- Pursuant to the virtuous rationale of the knowledge triangle, the universities want emphasis to be placed on the “educational” aspect of the infrastructures (e.g. student participation and part of the access time and services made available to students), more training for the community of researchers to access such research initiatives or common services. This aspect could be included in the project assessment criteria;
- It is necessary to promote open access whilst remaining vigilant about intellectual property:

***The European Commission could propose a legislative framework that defines a flexible legal support (which is sorely missing at this time) for the continuity of the existing infrastructures.***

## **6. Knowledge circulation, technology transfer**

Knowledge circulation and technology transfer are two cornerstones for the edifice of knowledge.

- Open Access is given preference in terms of circulation. Particular attention must be focused on intellectual property.
- In terms of technology transfer, the CPU would like to stress that intellectual property should be distributed fairly in all contractual research partnerships. The CPU regrets that the usual framework conditions do not take account of this necessity, in particular with industrial partners. Only the sharing of intellectual property and the expected benefits, will make it possible to overcome the rapid obsolescence of intellectual property, thanks to renewed investments in laboratories initially present in the projects. This makes all the more sense as in countries like France and Germany, development structures are being established to secure visibility and professionalism in the patent management. This also ensures far greater fairness between SMEs and large corporations. Furthermore, the CPU has in mind the model of the Bayh-Dole Act which promotes the ownership of research results by the universities and which has proven to be efficacious.

***We think it is vital for the European Commission to achieve fairness in intellectual property at European level through an EU legislative framework.***

## **7. The international dimension in the European Research Area**

- In terms of the international dimension of research, the CPU calls on the European Commission to:
- Develop and enhance said dimension through invitations to tender and cooperation instruments such as mixed international research units of European scope;
  - Define measures for what are known as “target” countries, in particular outside the European Union, so that research stakeholders can develop joint initiatives for such countries;
  - Draw up an inventory/map of existing bilateral relations between Member States and third countries;
  - Study the possibility of negotiating framework conditions by capitalising on the European critical mass;
  - The EIPs or similar tools pertaining to research must be included in international cooperation for the sake of clear information: a European governance tool for all matters and not only for societal challenges.

***It seems to us premature to impose an EU legislative framework at this stage, but more useful to continue the coordination work between national and European policies as well as the mapping efforts, and to have a clear vision of the EU's international policy.***

## **8. Gender and ethics**

Encourage due consideration for the gender dimension (in the steps for the composition of the team, the choice of subject to study, the choice of methods, and in the application and development of research), so as to help strike a balance between work and family life (the possibility of a position for the spouse in case of mobility), paternity and maternity leave, etc.. Harmonisation (e.g. levelling on the most favourable status) in legislation on such issues is the only condition for real fairness on the gender front:

- Calls for projects must be drawn up in such a way as to encourage, explicitly and systematically, mixed and diversified teams (balance between sexes, young and more experienced researchers);
- Committees working on the implementation of the framework programme must aim at 40% participation by the under-represented sex;
- Gender research must be enshrined in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Said strategy actually calls for a reflection on the place of women in the labour market, the degree of participation, methods of integration, and obstacles to equality. The profound changes resulting from the economic and social developments in the last two decades, which are further enhanced by the crisis, deserve to be analysed in order to define possible and efficacious equality policies.