

The Guild welcomes the potential of the European Research and Education Areas to boost the excellence of the European higher education sector

The visions for European Research and Education Areas published yesterday represent an important opening for a dialogue on common priorities and their implementation.

The three communications presented yesterday by the European Commission represent a new momentum for articulating a common ambition between universities and decision-makers at the national and European levels for the next decade. Setting new priorities will take place at a time when research, education and innovation are at the heart of Europe's recovery from the current pandemic and its ability to orient our societies towards a more resilient future.

As for the [Commission's vision for the European Research Area \(ERA\)](#), The Guild particularly welcomes the objective of increasing the public investment in R&I from the current 0,8% to 1,25% of EU GDP by 2030. The Guild calls for a specific attention within this goal to investments in public universities through their institutional and competitive research funding. This is a major enabler for boosting the competitiveness of national and regional R&I systems.

We also welcome the Commission's acknowledgement of the crucial contribution of research and innovation to many of today's burning political objectives, such as creating more sustainable societies. Whereas The Guild shares the Commission's view that research and innovation play a key role in contributing to the green and digital transformations, building Europe as a strong knowledge society must be a broader objective by itself. ERA is uniquely placed to strengthen the Europe's public science systems in a holistic way, not just in areas where they can support industrial needs. We urge the EU Member States to define strengthening the national frameworks for research excellence as a core ERA objective, as well as acknowledging the essential role of fundamental research in contributing to Europe's capacity to respond and adapt to global challenges, such as the coronavirus pandemic or climate change. A strategy that invests only in the translation of knowledge whilst reducing attention to the production of new break-through knowledge will result in a reduced R&I capacity for Europe, and make it less attractive for scientific talent.

Finally, we welcome the support from many EU Member States for a strong involvement of the research community in the governance and implementation of ERA.

The Guild also welcomes the European Commission's Communication on the [European Education Area \(EEA\)](#) and the complementary European [Digital Education Action Plan \(DEAP\)](#) as a signal of the importance of education in Europe's recovery.

Universities have a responsibility to train students for the future, which means truly embracing the changing skill sets needed in a rapidly changing world. However, the need for pedagogical innovation such as micro-credentials or online learning should not compromise the fundamental mission of universities: providing deep subject knowledge, and stimulating enquiring minds, based on excellence in teaching and research.

Cooperation between universities offers an opportunity to learn from each other, share resources, and develop common standards. This is why we strongly support the Commission's ambition to further develop the EEA and increase the quality and competitiveness of European universities globally. The European Universities initiative has enabled the sector to work on new and 'out of the box' approaches to learning and teaching, but this should now be facilitated with national and EU level support that goes well beyond the limited Erasmus+ budget. By building on existing good practices and engaging in a true dialogue with the university sector, the ERA and EEA have a potential to push for meaningful changes.

The Guild's publications on the European Research and Education Areas:

[Successful ERA requires maintaining focus on Europe's ability to create world class new knowledge](#) (statement, July 2020)

[Empowering Europe's scientific leadership through a renewed European Research Area](#) (position paper, March 2020)

[Recommendations for developing the European Education Area](#) (position paper, July 2020)