



EUA Press statement: Tuesday 17 July 2012

EUA signs memorandum of understanding with European Commission to outline partnership in delivering the European Research Area

The European University Association (EUA), an organisation representing more than 850 universities in 47 countries in Europe, has today (17 July) signed a memorandum of understanding with the European Commission, which recognises the key role of universities in delivering a strong European Research Area (ERA).

This memorandum will be signed and presented (at 12.30hrs CET on 17 July) on the occasion of the launch of the European Commission's new communication on a reinforced European Research Area partnership, which outlines its strategy with regard to completing the ERA. EUA is also one of five stakeholder organisations (*please see list below) that have agreed to sign a joint statement with the Commission, on working in partnership towards the achievement of the ERA by 2014.

EUA considers that the direct engagement of universities as a key research stakeholder will strengthen the European Research Area and will contribute to building a unified research area, open to the world, in which researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely and thereby strengthen Europe's competitiveness and capacity to collectively address grand challenges.

Most of the current barriers and bottlenecks to the completion of the ERA are already well-known and documented and require policy and funding action that should be taken at the level of the EU, (Member State) national and regional level governments, and national funding agencies. Therefore, the commitments that EUA has made in the memorandum concern topics where university's own initiatives are helping to overcome the identified barriers and bottlenecks, and where EUA has been working with its membership to promote wider take-up and development of best practices already in place. These include actions relating to strengthening the careers of researchers, improving researcher mobility, university-industry collaboration and knowledge transfer, cross-border cooperation, and the development of open access to research publications and data.

EUA Secretary General Lesley Wilson said: *"We are delighted that the central contribution of universities has been formally recognised in the development of a successful and unified European Research Area. Our experience with the development of the European Higher Education Area has shown that voluntary processes involving both public authorities and key stakeholders can indeed be very successful.*

"EUA will actively encourage its members to carry out the actions that are set out in the Memorandum, as far as their national legislation allows. In doing so, however, EUA also emphasises that increased investment by the EU and Member States in training, skill development and research and innovation activities will be essential to lead Europe out of the economic crisis – and to underpin a competitive ERA," she added.

**The five stakeholder organisations that will sign the joint statement are: EUA, the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO) the League of European Research Universities (LERU), Nordforsk, and Science Europe (SE).*

EUA together with EARTO, LERU and NORDFORSK have also signed individual memoranda of understanding with the European Commission and in which they commit to providing a report on the implementation of their actions by end of 2013.

Ends - For further information please contact Andrew Miller: Tel: + 32 473 748 785 /+32 2 743 11 59, email: andrew.miller@eua.be

The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.

Notes for editors

- The European Commission's communication on the ERA is due to be presented by Research, Innovation and Science Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn at a press conference in Brussels on Tuesday 17 July from 11.15hrs. The communication will be available from the European Commission website: http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/index_en.htm. This will be followed by the signing of the memoranda of understanding and the joint statement by the stakeholder organisations
- A copy of EUA's memorandum of understanding to be signed today (17July) is available on request and will be available shortly on the EUA website.

A short Background to the European Research Area

- The Council (of the EU) adopted in 2000 a Resolution establishing a European Research Area (ERA) that sought to implement the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council. The May 2008 "Ljubljana Process - Towards realisation of ERA" Council Conclusions called for enhanced ERA governance based on a long-term ERA vision developed in partnership by Member States and the Commission with support from all stakeholders and citizens. It underlined the importance of ERA as a primary pillar for the Lisbon objectives and as an engine for driving the competitiveness of Europe.
- According to the Lisbon Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the European Union has the objective of promoting scientific and technological advance, and calls in particular for achieving the European Research Area to strengthen the scientific and technological bases of the Union and of its industry, and making them more competitive. The Treaty refers to ERA as an area of free circulation of researchers, scientific knowledge.
- The completion of ERA is an explicit part of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth endorsed by the June 2010 European Council. Moreover, the February 2011 European Council stated that Europe needs a unified research area to attract talent and investment and called for the completion of the ERA by 2014 and addressing remaining gaps to create a genuine single market for knowledge, research and innovation.
- The Commission announced its intention at the January 2012 ERA Conference to both deepen and broaden the ERA partnership with research stakeholders to make rapid and far-reaching progress on the key "big-ticket" measures announced in the ERA Communication adopted by the Commission on 17 July 2012.
- For EUA as a membership-based organisation with the statutory aim of promoting the development of a coherent European system of higher education and research this Memorandum of Understanding constitutes a voluntary, non-binding, informal agreement. It acknowledges that Europe's universities operate within national legal and administrative frameworks that define their autonomy and freedom of action.