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# European Educational Research Association

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## EERA Response to Green Paper

The European Education Research Association (EERA) and its 26 national member Associations from all parts of Europe welcome the opportunity to comment on the EU Green Paper *From challenges to opportunities: Towards a common strategic framework for EU research and innovation funding*. EERA is an Association committed to the construction of a European Research Area within the field of educational enquiry and so naturally looks both for what it can contribute to the EU research strategy and for ways, in partnership with public and private sector institutions, it can participate in the next stage of its implementation (as indeed it did under Framework 7). It is in this spirit that it offers the following observations on the Green Paper.

In our response to the Green paper we want to focus on questions 9, 10 and 11 touching on a wider focus on societal challenges, bottom-up activities and links between research and policy rather than on the technical and procedural aspects of the paper, but we agree with any suggestions aimed at making collaboration between the Commission and researchers less bureaucratic, simplifying procedures and contributing to speedier responses from the Commission to eg financial claims.

### **Trends in: 'Innovation Union:' trends in 'Europe 2020' and the 'Green Paper'**

The Green Paper clearly builds on the 'Europe 2020' and the 'Innovation Union.' Including them in our reading has made it much clearer, what the ideas and intentions of the Green Paper are. Thus we take as our starting point our concerns with trends and tendencies in those papers as well.

The analysis in those papers is that there is too much fragmentation in European science and technology. Sharpening the focus should reduce fragmentation: Clarifying objectives, reducing complexity, avoiding duplication (simplifying and broadening participation, increase impact of EU funding), more collaboration between science and business. The Green Paper envisages a common strategic framework that shall tackle societal challenges, strengthen competitiveness and strengthen the EU science base and EU Research Area.

The Commission's strategy focuses on the challenges for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of economies developed in particular through research and innovation in product/services in natural science and technology.

We have three main concerns about this strategy:

- (i) It appears to take a very narrow view of what constitutes economic development ie one measured very largely by reference to GDP – and it ignores other important approaches to and measures of development advanced eg by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and expressed in terms of the growth in human capabilities.
- (ii) Even within its own terms of business development it looks exclusively to science and technology and ignores the contribution to GDP in many countries in Europe made by eg film, television and other media, the publishing industry, cultural and heritage industries, art and design, health services and indeed the huge foreign earnings from overseas students choosing to study in Europe.
- (iii) Beyond this, and granted the need to establish some priorities for research funding, it is alarming to observe the omission from the strategy of any reference to such key areas as health (other than in terms of medical science), education, social welfare, social inclusion, social justice, multi-culturalism, immigration, mobile EU population, , European languages, arts & culture, identity & citizenship. It is not just one but ALL of these that seem to have disappeared from the agenda.

Of course, the consequence of each of these three strategic policy preferences is to push the social sciences and humanities (and with these educational research) to the margins of the European research arena with all the insights into the *human* condition that these provide. This is our central concern.

### **'Knowledge transfer'**

The preoccupation with science and technology distorts the vision of research and innovation in other ways, for example in the way in which research issues in social innovation. The Green Paper seems to suppose a very linear relationship in which research is conducted and then you have the separate task of 'knowledge transfer'.

There also should be room for non-linear thinking: Educational research, for example, rarely works in this way and rarely has the tangible 'product' that might issue from eg materials science or medical research. Often, what it provides is new understanding, which then enters into a complex process of assimilation into policy and practice, but is rarely the only source of the policy or practice, which emerges. Often too the conduct of educational (and other social science) research itself stands in a close relationship with the sites of practice: the research is itself conducted in a way, which will contribute directly to development. There is not such a clear separation between research and development as there is in e.g. many areas of science and technology.

Thus the whole discourse of 'knowledge transfer' and 'taking products to market' needs to be reconstructed in contexts of what might be thought of as social innovation but not only these. The point is that the requirements for reporting and impact in educational and social science research need to be tailored to the particular ways in which research functions in these areas.

## **EERA Requests: Room for diversity and for Educational Research**

We are not taking a stance opposed to science and technology. This would be absurd. We want, however, to emphasise the *insufficiency* of these disciplines alone in tackling the sort of issues and in serving the priorities that are indicated in the Green Paper and elsewhere – and hence the need for the sort of research provided by the social sciences and humanities to be part of the EU 's agenda.

The research agenda laid out on the Green Paper: research - innovation - products/services (technologies) makes no reference to the role that social scientific and even more broadly arts and humanities research might have a role to play in informing these dimensions of innovation, creativity, social innovation and changes in business practices. European economic growth, balance of trade and competitiveness do not rest simply on the products of our science and technology. And of course such analysis itself rests on an understanding of economics and politics (and not just science).

Among our major earners of foreign income are our cultural heritage and the benefits derived from international tourism but also from our music industry, film and television and publishing; our education systems, especially where these are on offer through the medium of the English language, as they are now in many parts of Europe; our financial services etc. etc. Technology clearly has a role in enhancing any of these, but so also does research (in the widest sense) that cultivates, enriches, refines and sophisticates our offer to the world and to our own citizens in any of these areas. Our education systems also need to be nimble and innovative if they are to offer the best possible experience to Europe's own citizens and to continue to be a magnet to students from across the world.

To tackle the problems of climate change and environmental sustainability clearly requires responses rooted in science and technology, but it also needs an understanding of human behaviour, sensibility and responsibility, because in the end it is not the natural world which is going to change in order to assist us but we humans who have to change in order to save the environment and ourselves.

We have to be *re-educated*: we have to develop a new and expanded sense of responsibility and ethical obligation, not just limited to the time horizon of our own lives but to that of our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren. Whether we are farmers, drivers, politicians, town planners, builders, manufacturers or consumers we have to come to terms with different ways of living and behaving. And we need research to tell us how to achieve these huge changes in perspective and behaviour, because without them all the new science and technology we can think of will be to no avail.

### Examples: the need for Educational Research

- All of this also underscores the need for continuous effort on **Life Long Learning** and its informing through research in professional and vocational education and training.
- The production of world class science and technology (as well as world class financial services, artistic and design innovation, etc) requires a **world class educational system**
- The appreciation of what innovative science, technology and etc. might be able to offer in terms of business opportunity or social or environmental improvement requires an **educated understanding and imagination.**
- The application of science and technology to wealth creation and the solution of social problems need to be conducted under an educated framework of **moral and social responsibility.**
- Economic growth and higher employment require the ready availability of a well educated and well trained workforce, the continuing professional development of that workforce and opportunities for **re-skilling** (inside and outside of employment) as working opportunities change.
- A competitive higher education system attracting students and scholars from across the world needs to be one in which **world class research** is supported across the academy and not just in science and technology.
- The grasp of the compelling requirements for change in our lives and lifestyles, if we are to respond successfully to our changing climate and our depleting carbon resources, requires an **educated understanding** of the issues and their consequences – whether we be farmers or house builders.
- Learning to live well to an old age – well in body and mind, taking responsibility for one's own care as far as is possible and contributing fruitfully to society rather than expecting to be a burden to it – requires a whole new raft of **educational initiatives for 'the third age'**.

All of these (and more) depend on our **continuing and research informed development** and refinement of our educational policies and practice. In short whether we start with the priorities indicated in the Green Paper or the wider set of social priorities that we have indicated, little will be accomplished without the continuing development of Europe's educational resources and practice, the European Research Area – and this development, this area of social innovation, like any other needs to be informed by high quality research which draws on the combined expertise of the European community. This is what EERA seeks to advance, and this is what EERA hopes the Commission will itself seek to advance in the next stage of its research programme.

*Kind Regards*

*On behalf of EERA*

*Leif Moos, President*

*David Bridges, Member of EERA Council*

### **Member Associations of EERA**

Austria

- Österreichische Gesellschaft für Forschung und Entwicklung im Bildungswesen (OEFEB)

Belarus

- Belarus National Association "innovation in Education" (BNA "IE")

Belgium

- Flemish Educational Research Forum (VFO)
- Association Belge de Chercheurs en Education (ABC-Educ)

Cyprus

- Cyprus Educational Sciences Association (KEB-DER)

Czech Republic

- Czech Educational Research Association (CERA)

Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland

- Nordic Educational Research Association (NERA)

Estonia

- Estonian Academic Research Association (EAPS)

Finland

- Finnish Educational Research Association (FERA)

France

- Association des Enseignants et Chercheurs en Sciences de l'Education (AECSE)

Germany

- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft (DGfE)

Hungary

- Hungarian Educational Research Association (HERA)

Ireland

- Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI)

Italy

- Società Italiana di Pedagogia (SIPED)

Lithuania

- Lithuanian Academic Educational Association (LERA)

Netherlands

- Vereniging voor Onderwijs Research (VOR)

Poland

- Polskie Towarzystwo Pedagogiczne (PTP)

Portugal

- Centro de Investigação, Difusão e Intervenção Educacional (CIDInE)
- Sociedade Portuguesa de Ciências da Educação (SPCE)

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27/640/57831

Scotland

- Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA)

Slovakia

- Slovak Educational Research Society (SERS)

Spain

- Sociedad Espanola de Pedagogía (SEP)
- Asociación Interuniversitaria de Investigación Pedagógica (AIDIPE)

Switzerland

- Swiss Society for Research in Education (SSRE)

Turkey

- Turkish Educational Research Association (EAB)
- Educational Administration Research and Development Association (EARDA)

United Kingdom

- British Educational Research Association (BERA)