

## ACA input paper Towards a 2030 Vision on the Future of Universities in Europe

This paper is ACA's contribution to the ongoing consultation process on the *2030 Vision of Universities in Europe*, which is to inform and shape policy developments in revitalising the European Research Area (ERA). ACA's position herein takes into account the much welcome intention to bring (higher) education and research closer on the EU agenda, reflected in the Commissioner Gabriel's joint portfolio and the European Commission's current endeavours to align the policy developments on the ERA and European Education Area (EEA) through coordinated work between the two responsible Directorates-General. It is also informed by the discussions at the stakeholder workshop on the Future of Universities in Europe related to achieving more complementarity between (higher) education and research, and building fully on universities' key roles for the benefit of the European higher education community and societies at large.

As an association of national organisations supporting international cooperation in higher education, ACA represents the multitude of agents facilitating collaboration, mobility and inclusion in the areas of education, research and development, within diverse national and regional systems, support structures and political landscapes. This diversity needs to be reflected and addressed in the future European areas of education and research. As stated in the ERAC Opinion on the future of the ERA, "*A new ERA paradigm should be based on an integrated, coherent approach to education, research and innovation policies and instruments in order for the ERA to effectively achieve its wider objectives*" (p.5)<sup>1</sup>. ACA supports and encourages such a holistic approach in order to ensure a balanced cross-country and cross-sectoral relevance and impact.

To address the widely-recognised societal challenges, from rising populism and xenophobia to mistrust in science and academia, to climate change and ageing societies, collective efforts are needed and universities already have a key role in creating and mobilising knowledge for the benefit of society, as well as in building bridges with and towards the general public and non-academic actors.

ACA members, in their role of support agents for higher education institutions in their countries and promoters of international cooperation, are committed to contributing to the **development of a European area of education, research, innovation and cooperation**, and call for creating a setting which is

**Based on cooperation, complementarity and inclusion:** between European, national and regional systems and structures, different types of higher education institutions (HEIs), across sectors, programmes and competencies. Going beyond ERA alone, the European space of research and education should be supportive and inclusive of all types of HEIs (and not only of research-intensive universities), each in their own remit contributing to the Europe's knowledge society and lifelong learning. It is imperative to embrace education and research as two equally important components of the knowledge triangle (or knowledge diamond), and build on the achievements of the existing frameworks such as, for example, the European Higher Education

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<sup>1</sup> ERAC Opinion on the future of the ERA: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-1201-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

Area (EHEA) and the Erasmus+ programme<sup>2</sup>, as well as the potential of the latest initiatives such as European Universities, in order to further cooperation, excellence and inclusion.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, an inclusive setting means equal appreciation of all disciplines: as noted during the stakeholder workshop, it of high importance to discuss and find the best ways to ensure a strong and functional nexus between STEM and Humanities/Social Sciences both in Horizon Europe and Erasmus+.

There is a strong urge to develop research-based education methodologies with a view to promoting research results via thought-through pedagogical approaches and equally, the ways to present research results to the wider public.

It is highly recommended to create and promote opportunities for exchange and collaboration, such as online and offline match-making platforms, targeted European conferences for interdisciplinary research and education, as well as between academic and non-academic actors.

**Closer to citizens:** in order to indeed contribute to a better quality of life for European citizens, raise visibility of its impact and relevance, get public and political commitment<sup>4</sup>, the renewed ERA – and HEIs as its main driver – need to further contribute to removing barriers in communication and to making research results more tangible and available to the general public. Societal engagement, involvement of citizens and non-academic actors in research cooperation is another *sine qua non* of building trust in the knowledge-based society that Europe has become in the past two decades. It is understandable that not all fields of research will have the same outreach and engagement potential, but it is necessary to engage in dialogue with non-academic sectors and search together for the best approaches to citizen engagement.

There need to be a range of opportunities for interaction with citizens, such as researchers' night type events at universities, interactive science exhibition centres, young researcher ambassadors to secondary schools (to promote university research), social entrepreneurship education and service learning in curricula.

Existing activities and tools developed by the EU and its partners should be used to further enhance and develop activities planned in the next period (e.g. HEINNOVATE, SELFIE).

Funding for research should be reconsidered with the involvement of non-academic actors as well as via crowdsourcing options.

**Conducive for smooth, balanced and inclusive international mobility:** international mobility of researchers – both experienced and early-stage – is not only key to research excellence and cooperation on global issues, institutional capacity building and professional development, but also to intercultural communication and understanding of different academic and research cultures. For strengthening human capital and research infrastructures within the European framework, it is necessary to ensure *smooth and more balanced mobility*, i.e. to remove barriers to and recognition of mobility and ensure more geographically balanced flows, especially along the North-West/South-East axis. Brain circulation instead of brain drain needs

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<sup>2</sup> "Education plays a key role for the future of ERA and a special emphasis should thus be placed on a coordinated approach with the higher education sector, in particular the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and Erasmus+." (ERAC Opinion on the future of the ERA, p.5)

<sup>3</sup> See ACA Reflection Paper "Internationalisation for All? Wider Inclusion in the internationalisation of higher education": [http://www.aca-secretariat.be/fileadmin/aca\\_docs/event\\_presentations/ACA-2019-April\\_Reflection\\_Paper\\_Inclusion.pdf](http://www.aca-secretariat.be/fileadmin/aca_docs/event_presentations/ACA-2019-April_Reflection_Paper_Inclusion.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> ERAC Opinion on the future of the ERA (2019)

to become a reality for a Europe of excellence and inclusion – experts and policymakers agree. Career advancement and incentives, peer learning and training for researchers (and academic staff at large) are a topic of Europe-wide relevance towards this end. *Inclusive international mobility*, in one of its emanations, implies taking advantage of digitalisation options by providing blended and alternative formats of mobility and international cooperation, as well as pertinent curricular developments.

It is recommended to continue collaboration supported by initiatives and actions such as the European University Networks, Knowledge Alliances and Strategic Partnerships, particularly in the areas mentioned above (regional balance, multidisciplinary and the knowledge triangle, involvement of non-academia, balanced and inclusive mobility and mobility of all relevant stakeholders).

**An area of dialogue:** to ensure and maintain support, mutual understanding and mutual recognition of efforts in research and education, all stakeholders – EU, national, regional policymakers, the wider HE community and non-academic sectors – need to engage in continuous dialogue, about the values, goals and benefits of ensuring a Europe of knowledge and lifelong learning. The noticeable decrease of trust in academia and perceived privilege that HEIs enjoy are some of the factors that may impact on how HEIs in Europe will (re)position themselves in the general public and the global higher education setting. Last but not least, it should not be forgotten that students have an important role in shaping relevant developments and benefiting from them, as (future) innovators, decision makers, citizens and agents of change.

Student involvement is necessary in ensuring an area of dialogue, be it in research projects or international fora. Students should be involved in university research projects from the beginning of their studies – adjusting tasks to their actual stage of knowledge and experience, in international problem-solving contests together with professionals, in student ‘hackathons’ as well as in activities promoting social entrepreneurship or in service-learning programmes.

In the course of its consultation process, ACA has collected some examples of good practice from ACA members and member countries, which are provided in the Annex to this paper. They refer to the Transformation Modules (TMs), as they were provided in the first draft of the 2030 Vision policy brief, regardless of all subsequent changes to the numbering of TMs and their formulation.

## ANNEX

### Examples of good practice from ACA members and member countries

ACA MEMBER	COUNTRY	INITIATIVE
<b>DAAD</b>  (German Academic Exchange Service)	Germany	<p><b>DAAD FUNDING PROGRAMMES THAT SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION TOWARDS SOLVING KEY SOCIETAL CHALLENGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">MOPGA</a>: Make Our Planet Great Again – addressing climate change</li> <li>- <a href="#">PAGEL</a> – addressing the health sector</li> <li>- <a href="#">SDGs graduate schools</a> and <a href="#">partnerships for supporting biodiversity</a> in developing countries</li> </ul> <p>There are even more examples of funding programmes, addressing the internationalisation of higher education institutions and equipping students with intercultural and international skills: scholarships, joint studying programmes, guest lecturer programme, programmes supporting a more balanced mobility (for example <a href="#">Go East</a>) or supporting the use of digital technologies in internationalisation (<a href="#">IMKD</a>)</p> <p>DAAD programmes on refugee integration: <a href="#">Integra</a>, <a href="#">NRWege</a>, <a href="#">Leuchttürme</a>, <a href="#">Welcome</a></p> <p>Facilitating access of students to research: <a href="#">RISE – Research Internships in science and engineering</a>:  <a href="https://www.daad.de/rise/en/rise-worldwide/">https://www.daad.de/rise/en/rise-worldwide/</a></p>
		<p><b>DAAD STUDY “INTERNATIONALISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SOCIETY”</b></p> <p>For respective project examples access the link <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<b>DZS</b>  (The Centre for International Cooperation in Education)	Czech Republic	<p><b>WELCOME OFFICE AT THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY</b></p> <p>Welcome Office at the Central European Institute of Technology (CEITEC) in Brno, Czech Republic, helps international scientists to overcome struggles during relocation to the Czech Republic and concentrate on scientific work.</p> <p>More information: <a href="https://www.ceitec.eu/welcome-office/t9938">https://www.ceitec.eu/welcome-office/t9938</a></p>
<b>VLUHR</b>  (Vlaamse Universiteiten en Hogescholen Raad)  <small>*input provided by Ghent University</small>	Belgium/Flanders	<p><b>CAREER PATH FOR PROFESSORS (Ghent University)</b></p> <p>In 2018 Ghent University radically changed its career progression model for professors (i.e. underlying principles and modalities regarding performance, evaluation and promotion). A predominantly quantitative and output-driven academic evaluation process makes way for academic freedom, quality and intrinsic motivation, prioritising vision development and strategy – at the personal as well as the group level. The focus is on talent-oriented support, open feedback and coaching of professorial staff in different phases of the</p>

		<p>career, and administrative simplification (i.e. a lower evaluation rhythm). A personalised HR committee has been set up for each professor in order to stimulate a career and academic performance dialogue.</p> <p>More information: <a href="https://www.ugent.be/en/work/mobility-career/career-aspects/professorial-staff/overview.htm">https://www.ugent.be/en/work/mobility-career/career-aspects/professorial-staff/overview.htm</a></p>
<p><b>OeAD</b></p> <p>(Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research)</p>	<p>Austria</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>EURAXESS</b></p> <p><b>EURAXESS</b> is a platform for researchers, entrepreneurs, universities and businesses to interact with each other. Packed with information, EURAXESS covers mobility issues for researchers and entrepreneurs, allows universities and businesses to find the right talent, and connects people, projects and funding. The Austrian EURAXESS Centres (higher education institutions, research organisations and regional offices) provide free and customised assistance to all researchers and their families seeking advice on issues related to their relocation across borders and career development. Researchers and research organisations can contact us for information and assistance regarding: Taxation and social security system in Austria (through FFG) and Visa, entry and residency permits, work permits, funding opportunities and accommodation in Austria (through OeAD)</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.euraxess.at/">https://www.euraxess.at/</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE AUSTRIAN RESEARCH PROMOTION AGENCY</b></p> <p>The Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) is the national funding agency for industrial research and development in Austria. FFG funding schemes play an important role in generating new knowledge, developing new products and services, and enhancing competitiveness in the global marketplace. They make it easier, or possible, to finance research and innovation projects, and help to absorb the risks involved in research. The FFG supports international networking and encourages careers in science. FFG is the Austrian 'one-stop shop' for industrial research and development. It aims is to strengthen domestic companies in global competition to assure jobs and wealth sustainably as well as to make a lasting contribution to the strength of the Austrian economy. As part of the Austrian innovation system, it helps Austria's business and science sectors to remain competitive both nationally and internationally.</p> <p>The tasks of the FFG are stipulated follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To manage and finance research projects in the business and science sectors, impulse programmes for the economy and research facilities, and networks fostering cooperation between science and industry.</li> <li>• To manage cooperative programmes and projects with the EU and other European and international partners.</li> <li>• To represent Austria's interests at relevant European and international institutions on behalf of the Austrian government.</li> <li>• To provide consultation and support to intensify Austria's involvement in European programmes, especially in the EU Framework Programme for Research, Technology and Innovation and the Framework Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation.</li> <li>• To provide support and strategy development services for decision-makers in the Austrian innovation system.</li> <li>• To improve public awareness of the importance of R&amp;D.</li> </ul> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.ffg.at/en/FFG/Die-FFG">https://www.ffg.at/en/FFG/Die-FFG</a></p>

		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>YOUNG SCIENCE CENTER</b></p> <p>It supports schools and pupils to get connected with scientists and science far before University level, and renders the relevance of science visible at an earlier stage of education. It was founded in 2011 as a service and information centre offering Austrian schools and research institutions many opportunities to get in contact with each other and work together. It has built a network of schools, teachers and scientists interested in the cooperation between science and schools. The centre also started several initiatives to foster this cooperation, e.g. Young Science Ambassadors (Young Science-Botschafterinnen und -Botschafter) or Young Science Seal of Approval (Young Science-Gütesiegel).</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://youngscience.at/">https://youngscience.at/</a> (Information in German available only)</p>
		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CENTER FOR CITIZEN SCIENCE</b></p> <p>The Center for Citizen Science was established in June 2015. It serves as a service and information centre, which supports both scientists and practitioners in the development and implementation of citizen science projects as well as the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research in the conception and implementation of appropriate funding measures. Another task of the centre is the cross-linking of the interested community beyond Austria. The centre is and was especially promoting two initiatives: the Citizen Science Award and Top Citizen Science.</p> <p>The aim of the Citizen Science Award is to motivate citizens - in particular individuals and school classes - to participate in citizen science projects by awarding cash and non-cash prizes. The Citizen Science Award takes place once a year and has encouraged almost 14,000 people so far to take part in research over the past three years.</p> <p>Top Citizen Science was a funding initiative supported by the BMBWF, FWF and OeAD for three years promoting expansion projects in line with the citizen science and open innovation objectives. The aim was to conduct excellent research with the participation of citizens. A total of € 500,000 was available for FWF and Sparkling Science basic projects each year, 31 projects have been successfully funded under the three calls. The FWF launched two additional calls in 2019 and 2020.</p> <p>In addition the Center for Citizen Science promotes the development of a network of contact persons for the issues of citizen science and young science at Austrian research institutions and schools. Link: <a href="https://www.zentrumfuercitizenscience.at/en/citizen-science-en">https://www.zentrumfuercitizenscience.at/en/citizen-science-en</a></p> <p>Besides the Center for Citizen Science there exists a second citizen science platform in Austria: „<b>Österreich forscht</b>“ (situated at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna) with its associated Citizen Science Network Austria.</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.citizen-science.at/">https://www.citizen-science.at/</a></p>
		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ALLIANCE FOR RESPONSIBLE SCIENCE</b></p> <p>In 2015, the Austrian government has included Responsible Science or RRI as an important element in the strategy document “Action plan for a competitive research area”. One of the first steps that resulted from this was the establishment of an “Alliance for Responsible Science” at the OeAD, which has already 45 different institutions from science, research, education and practice. All</p>

		<p>members of the Alliance have declared that they are willing to pursue a number of goals, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translating social challenges and key concepts into scientific, scientific-artistic and institutional strategies, plans and projects; operationalizing the concept of “social relevance” (societal impact factor)</li> <li>• Reflecting upon and integrating relevant concepts, such as Citizen Science, crowdsourcing and open innovation, in institutional key profile areas, in research, the development and exploitation of the arts, in teaching and in further training</li> </ul> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.responsible-science.at">https://www.responsible-science.at</a></p>
		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SCIENCE WITH AND FOR SOCIETY</b></p> <p>The acknowledgement of the importance of involving the civil society in research and innovation processes by the BMBWF happened already much earlier. In 2007, the Ministry of Education, Science and Research initiated the Sparkling Science funding programme. From 2007 until 2019 the programme adopted an unconventional way in the promotion of pupils: In 299 projects scientists have worked side by side with young people on current scientific research questions. 200 research institutions, 529 schools, about 95,200 pupils and around 2.600 teachers have been involved in Sparkling Science projects.</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.sparkling-science.at/">https://www.sparkling-science.at/</a></p>
		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FUNDING OF THE CREATION OF DIGITAL TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS</b></p> <p>On behalf of the Innovationsstiftung für Bildung (Foundation for educational Innovation), the OeAD-GmbH launched a new funding programme "Development of digital teaching and learning materials with citizen science methods" in 2017. Within two calls (2018 and 2019) the OeAD funded 21 projects in Austria.</p> <p>The content of the funding initiative “Development of teaching and learning materials” covers topics such as mobility, migration, democracy, etc. from an interdisciplinary perspective. By integrating the projects into the school environment, not only the innovative and practice-oriented teaching and learning materials are to be created, but also the conscious, selective, critical and targeted use of digital media in the classroom should be promoted.</p> <p>Projects were funded up to a maximum of 50,000 euros.</p>
		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MORE RRI INITIATIVES IN AUSTRIA</b></p> <p>Several other Austrian initiatives are fostering RRI. In 2014, the “platform for Responsible Research and Innovation for Austria” (German: “Plattform Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) Österreich”, short: “RRI-Plattform”) was created. It is a competence network that collects experience from national and international RRI projects, supports scientific exchange, promotes the RRI concept and supports relevant projects.</p> <p>Two years later the research platform “Responsible Research and Innovation in Academic Practice” was established at the University of Vienna. In addition to its research activities, the research platform explores the potential of this much-debated concept for academic research practice, by conducting group discussions with life science</p>

		<p>researchers and by organising events and workshops that create space and time for broader public, scientific and policy debates about issues of responsibility in academic practice.</p>
<p><b>TPF</b> (Tempus Public Foundation)</p>	<p>Hungary</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HIGHER EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY COOPERATION CENTERS (FIEK)</b></p> <p>The Center for Higher Education and Industrial Cooperation (FIEK) at Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BME) is an autonomous university unit, but it is also a research organization model with joint strategic management of the institution and the companies. Companies are given the opportunity to articulate their R&amp;D and training needs for higher education, while the university, in addition to its scientific activities, can produce results that can be put into practice while boosting its research activities.</p> <p>FIEK is a new type of value-creating collaboration between BME and industry, a bridge between the university and industry.</p> <p>The new industry-university co-operation organization was formed with four major industrial partners, Siemens Zrt., Gedeon Richter Plc., Nokia Solutions and Networks Kft. And Magyar Villamos Művek Zrt. and the Budapest University of Technology and Economics.</p> <p>In order to develop BME FIEK's new model system and to carry out the research tasks undertaken in the application, FIEK is financed partly by state funds, partly by the participating companies. Each member of the consortium is actively involved in the management and work of BME's new organizational unit. Within the legal framework of the University, BME FIEK provides the possibility for the University of Technology to work with partner companies on a long-term strategy, to deal with areas of corporate-university relations, education, research, development, knowledge transfer, intellectual property management, incubation, supplier system development and international relations. This creates a new innovation ecosystem that leverages the synergies of the various components to create a new quality among domestic innovation systems.</p> <p>The spill-over effects of the results of BME FIEK will include strengthening university unity and the culture of interdisciplinary collaborative work, linking industrial needs with university potential, optimizing infrastructure sharing and management, stimulating innovation, rapid exploitation of research results, and motivating a wide range of industrial partners. The goal is to empower all participants, albeit indirectly, through FIEK projects: exciting tasks for researchers, innovative solutions for companies, interesting thesis topics for students and lecturers can take part in high-quality projects that can be translated into education as practical benefits.</p> <p><b>Contact: László Lengyel: <a href="mailto:lengyel@mail.bme.hu">lengyel@mail.bme.hu</a></b></p>

		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MOBILIS – INTERACTIVE EXHIBITION AREA AT A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS. SZÉCHENYI UNIVERSITY, GYŐR</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>WHAT IS MOBILIS?</b></p> <p><b>Interactive exhibition area</b></p> <p>In Mobilis visitors can discover the mysteries of science, the latest technologies in the automotive industry and transport at nearly 2000 qm. In the interactive exhibition space, visitors can try out the tools for stimulating 70 games from the wind-channel through the mirror labyrinth to the aerodynamic car-body. Spectacular science shows lead visitors to the exciting world of physics and chemistry. The periodically renewable programs provide exciting entertainment for all ages. All exhibits are captioned in English and German.</p> <p><b>Mobility – Digital Experience Centre</b></p> <p>The MobilITy Digital Experience Centre is a creative space where in the weekdays scholar groups, on Saturdays individual visitors and families can create, learn playfully, discover and experiment the latest ICT and digital devices: 3D printing, AR/VR, robotics, smart home tools, animations, humanoid robots.</p> <p><b>CONTACT:</b> Gyor, 9026 Vasarhelyi P. Street 66. + 36 (96) 618-118 , + 36 (20) 296-8680 <a href="mailto:mobilis@mobilis-gyor.hu">mobilis@mobilis-gyor.hu</a> <a href="http://www.mobilis-gyor.hu">www.mobilis-gyor.hu</a></p>
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