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ALLEA's position on the future of the European Research Area

ALLEA welcomes the initiative to relaunch and revitalise the European Research Area (ERA) and its overall objectives to be more inclusive and responsive to society, which are critical in the context of COVID-19.

ALLEA supports continuous ambition to broaden the ERA's outreach and connectivity by promoting open science and research mobility within and beyond its borders, as well as access to research facilities and collections.

As innovation is not restricted to technological and economic growth but also concerns social and cultural adaption, it is critical to broaden the remit of the ERA and that Union programmes consider societal values, including fairness/equality, resilience/sustainability, diversity, openness, transparency and trustworthiness. ALLEA shares concerns about issues of gender and racial discrimination in research. It also supports the recognition that research careers must be more flexible to permit all researchers to undertake caring responsibilities in a sensible work-life balance.

It is critical that the ERA continues to support the strengthening of research capacities and the variety of research models across the ERA to allow that all researchers can participate in the high-level research community to which Europe aspires. Since 2014, Horizon 2020 has been funding a very large number of collaborative projects and reversing a trend from FP7 towards more open networks. However, the core of the EU network remains mainly composed of EU-15 participants, with only a restricted number of institutions acting as hubs. Systematic efforts and specific mechanisms are required to encourage researchers across the career cycle and participants from EU-13 and Associated countries to actively shape the EU-wide networks across the ERA.

Tackling the climate crisis and protecting our environment are priorities. The promotion of Open Science is critical to addressing these issues by making research materials available to the widest community of the research public, including through the digitisation and electronic transmission, and which require greater coordination of national efforts in terms of specification (to ensure interoperability) and availability. The ERA should also be looking to ensure that Europe has the best platforms for collaborative working between groups of researchers wherever they are found in Europe.

Resources will have to remain in original languages and to be discussed with a sensitivity to the nuances of languages. Europe needs to ensure that scholars from different countries continue to acquire the capacity to communicate and work with materials in a variety of languages, including less frequently used languages. Europe also needs to work with computer-assisted translation.

It is critical that scholars have access to research funds, research infrastructures and materials facilities without barriers as to nationality, institutional or national origin. Researchers established in one the ERA country should benefit from the freedom of movement and the ability of their research activity, even if they happen to be third country nationals. Portability of pension contributions during research mobility is also an essential feature to encourage talented minds to participate in research.

ALLEA supports the notion of scientific excellence as a principle to sustain an advanced knowledge base across EU member states and beyond, and feed into current EU industrial policies. Fundamental research is best conducted with collaboration across countries and disciplines.

Dissemination for research needs to reach all social actors. The ERA needs to support the dissemination of research across Europe and encourage public and private research funders to include funding to incentivise dissemination to a wide range of audiences, not least the general public. It is in this way that trust in science and in expertise can be built through the wider understanding of the aims of science and what it can achieve.