

Press release:

EEA and ERA should reach out to the whole of Europe

Aurora position on the European Education Area in connection to the European Research Area

Today, the Aurora Universities Network has published its position paper on the future development of the European Education Area (EEA) which it sees linked to the European Research Area (ERA). Aurora consists of nine research-intensive universities in Europe with a common commitment to matching academic excellence with societal relevance.

Based on our understanding of the aims of both EEA and ERA and our vision on the role of the whole Higher Education & Research sector, this position paper expresses Aurora's view on the contribution of societally-engaged and research-intensive universities to education and research as pillars of Europe's prosperity and resilience.

Our position paper is drafted as an outside-in document, articulating how autonomous and vigorous HE&I institutions can contribute to the society they serve.

Aurora recommendations

Aurora has five overall recommendations:

1. The EEA and ERA are not just there for EU institutions and services: all higher education and research institutions as well as governments in Europe need to own these strategies. The European Commission should ensure that stakeholders are meaningfully involved in establishing the EEA and ERA.
2. SDGs must be the guiding themes and compass for both EEA and ERA.
3. Europe is larger than the EU. The higher education and research institutions collaborate beyond the EU. Hence, the EEA and ERA should also reach out to the whole of Europe.
4. Aurora Universities Network supports the European Parliament position that the budget for the Erasmus+ programme should be tripled as compared to the 2014-2020 budget in order to achieve all goals set out in the Council's resolution and ERAC advice for a new EEA. However, the budget increase should not be focused on Youth and Sports alone. In addition, Aurora Universities Network emphasises that to fulfil all ambitions the budget for Horizon Europe should amount to at least 120 billion euro.
5. In order to achieve an effectively integrated EEA and ERA both DG EAC and DG RTD should work closely together rather than in isolation from each other.

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Key messages in press contacts

- European HE&R is too important to be left to the universities and the Commission; national politics must form an opinion on EEA/ERA and work towards it.
- Universities can be both academically excellent and societally engaged. We understand we work with taxpayers money and must focus on societal problems. There is no contradiction or friction between ground-breaking research and focus on societal problems.

- European HE&R will have to be pan-European or it will not be excellent against global standards.
- The two Commission's Directorates General for Education and Research need to get out of their trenches. Lack of attention from the Member States has allowed them to dig the trenches and stay there.