

EUA R&I Agenda 2027

Seizing the moment, driving the change



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Preface

Setting a comprehensive Research and Innovation agenda for the largest association of universities in Europe for the first time requires vision, boldness and consensus-building. This agenda builds on the foundations laid within EUA's vision for 2030, '[Universities without walls](#)', and the pillars and values spelled out in its [Strategic Plan](#). The proactive spirit which permeates those documents is replicated here, through a series of major actions that will be pursued over the next four years. By seeking to amplify the societal impact of R&I, cultivate robust, diverse and collaborative R&I culture(s), and champion a well-designed and sustainable R&I system, the European University Association demonstrates a clear understanding of what is required to help shape a better future for Europe. By underscoring the inherent value of the research-innovation continuum, and the interconnectedness between them, this agenda speaks to a nuanced understanding of the R&I landscape, while the need for attractive and academic careers and deeper trust in science are essential cross-cutting themes.

This agenda could not be better timed, given the current challenging political context, and anything less ambitious would have been untenable. There are unparalleled pressures on universities and governments, caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, war and rising geopolitical tensions, and strained public finances. Despite these challenges, our global competitors – particularly in Asia and North America – continue to rapidly scale up their R&I efforts and investments, as illustrated by the latest [OECD data](#). It is clear that the growth of investment in Europe is less ambitious and that the financial resilience of the European R&I sector must be a clear focus in our strategy. The majority of R&I investment is allocated through national budgets, and EUA has a critical role to play in helping our universities and national rectors' conferences to make the case for greater funding across all European nations. In addition, the ongoing EU framework programme evaluation, which will influence the size and objectives for the successor of Horizon Europe, is a real opportunity to draw attention to the need for more investment. The ambitious plans for a revamped European Research Area may provide a foundation upon which increased investment could be focused around a more common European direction.

Of course, R&I is a global endeavour, and while Europe must compete with the rest of the world, we must also collaborate. Managing such collaborations in a way that is sensitive to security concerns will be essential, and it is reassuring that European attitudes to these challenges to date have been measured.

At a time when societal equity and economic growth are forefront in the minds of politicians and policy makers, the need for free reflection, interdisciplinary inquiry, and a resilient and well-supported R&I ecosystem is paramount. EUA has a leading role to play in helping to shape, champion, and focus this future R&I agenda. The holistic, sector-wide measures proposed here are intended to counter the trend towards increasingly selective and fragmented European R&I policies. Whether the issue is insufficient funding, inadequate career mobility and flexibility, or short-term expectations for investments in R&I to yield concrete and swift responses to challenges, solutions will only come through joint work by many different stakeholders. We hope that this strategy provides a starting point, and we welcome the opportunity to work with others to deliver on our ambitious vision.

As EUA Vice-President and Chair of the EUA Research and Innovation Strategy Group, the development of this agenda has provided a valuable opportunity to join colleagues from across Europe in a wide-ranging reflection upon the role of universities in delivering a world-leading R&I sector. I wish to thank the national rectors' conferences, members of the EUA Research and Innovation Strategy Group, the EUA Innovation and Open Science Expert Groups, and the EUA Board and Council for their input. I also thank the EUA Secretariat for their creativity and hard work in compiling this strategy.

Prof. Paul Boyle
EUA Vice-President



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Introduction

In this document, the European University Association (EUA) outlines its research and innovation (R&I) vision for the European higher education sector. In view of the challenges ahead for the sector and Europe as whole, this Agenda builds on EUA's vision for 2030, '[Universities without walls](#)' and the pillars and values of its [Strategic Plan](#) by defining three priorities in R&I for the Association for 2027:

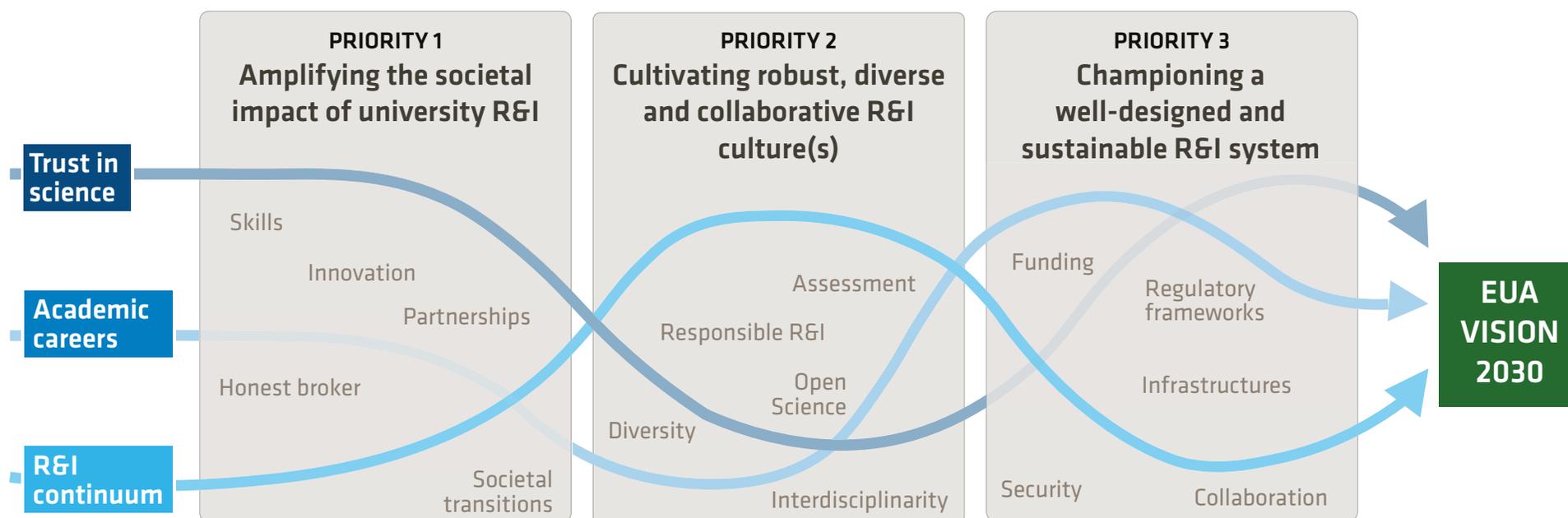


The next sections further define what EUA seeks to achieve, based on an introductory overview of existing and emerging trends that constitute the national, European and global socio-political context to which this Agenda responds, and which will influence its realisation. This is followed by a review of the state of play and challenges under each priority area.

In addition to these priorities, the Agenda identifies three fundamental building blocks for successful implementation, according to which:

- ❖ In the **R&I continuum**, basic research, applied research and innovation are not isolated activities, but rather are part of a continuous, interconnected process. Universities play a crucial role right across this continuum, particularly in basic research, which is less commonly undertaken by other stakeholders and plays a unique role in pushing the frontiers of knowledge.
- ❖ **Academic careers** and their R&I dimension are attractive in that they are flexible, diverse and rewarding.
- ❖ **Trust in science** is strengthened through strong policies on R&I ethics and integrity, combined with a clearly defined relationship with politics and the wider public.

By systematically juxtaposing these building blocks and the three priorities, EUA has formulated concrete actions to be undertaken by its expert groups and secretariat over a four-year timespan. The actions are aligned with the four pillars of the Association's Strategic Plan: effective advocacy, horizon scanning, enabling enhanced performance, and European solidarity.



Context

As further emphasised by the Covid-19 pandemic, R&I is essential to solving the multitude of social, economic, environmental, cultural and political challenges that are challenging governments across the world. With complex interdependencies that amplify this strain and heighten the need for effective solutions, R&I is increasingly expected to generate solutions in ever shorter timeframes. Moreover, R&I can improve societies' self-understanding in the uncertain context of a multipolar world with fluid, transnational governance.

Europe has a fragmented and complex R&I funding landscape that risks hampering transnational strategic alignment, and which is further complicated by the continent's divide between membership and non-membership of the EU. Even so, the recently renewed [European Research Area](#) and the [Pact for R&I](#) have the potential to strengthen Europe's competitiveness in global R&I by shaping a common European direction, including beyond EU's borders. In particular, the EU R&I framework programme can provide a foundation upon which to achieve ERA's ambitious goals, as long as it continues in a spirit of international cooperation. The ongoing interim evaluation of Horizon Europe and the design of its successor are crucial moments to reflect on whether the programme is fit for purpose and whether it will be resourced sufficiently to achieve its goals. Universities are the programme's largest beneficiaries and hence must provide imaginative input to the design of its successor to ensure that it fits their needs, especially in terms of better integrating all their core missions of R&I, education, and service to society. Strengthening synergies and regulatory alignment with other policy areas, such as employment or digitalisation, will also be crucial. Universities cannot solely carry the responsibility of the entire continuum of basic research to real-life implementation, but we have a major role to play.

Europe's place in the world is particularly notable, given its strong tradition in R&I and the fact that many of the world's most important scientific discoveries and innovative solutions have originated there. Europe has some of the best universities and R&I organisations and, when aligned through initiatives such the [European Strategy for Universities](#), can foster synergies between their missions and help deliver the European Research Area and the European Education Area. Yet in recent years, Europe's position in the global R&I landscape has come under increasing scrutiny as it faces intensified competition from regions such as Asia and North America, which are rapidly scaling up their R&I efforts and investments. However, since many of the values and perspectives that underpin R&I are in fact

global, it is an open question if the leadership ambitions of any region fit into a global whole that is ideally driven by a good balance between competition and open cooperation and exchange.

As many countries across the world have started to address international cooperation in R&I, the European Commission recently outlined its global approach to R&I in [Europe's strategy for international cooperation in a changing world](#). This strategy stresses that the EU should continue to lead by example to preserve openness in international R&I cooperation, while also promoting a level playing field and preserving the EU's 'strategic autonomy' in critical sectors. On the other hand, geopolitical assertion by the EU and security concerns among its member states are rising in view of intensified global upheaval and economic uncertainty. For example, this has led to discussions about 'derisking' relations with nations including China. Thus, while openness is still formally acknowledged in programmatic EU statements, it does not fully match political practice.

Reconciling Europe's values-based commitment to openness and its political commitment to leadership and autonomy is an ongoing process. A constructive, globally beneficial outcome partly depends on whether the EU can concede that a truly open international context may also facilitate leadership from newly emerging powerhouses of science, at least in some areas of R&I. Rather than seeing this phenomenon in terms of rivalry, the achievement of excellence in different parts of the world should be recognised on its own scientific merits. Hence, even if openness bolsters contenders for global leadership at the expense of Europe's frontrunner status, these contenders should not automatically be seen as rivals as long as scientific cooperation remains possible.

Maintaining such cooperation is particularly crucial for Europe's universities, as they are engaged in R&I partnerships around the world and build bridges between different stakeholders and countries through common projects. While R&I needs to be above politics whenever possible, the EUA in its [response to the European strategy for international collaboration](#), stresses that an integrated international role for universities should not only be seen as instrumental for foreign policy goals. Universities are central, independent, and active institutions in global R&I cooperation, striving for openness while managing the risk of foreign interference and the protectionist reactions that this can generate.

Priority #1 - Amplifying the societal impact of university R&I

Definition

Universities' impact across all spheres of society is demonstrated by the wide-ranging social, economic and cultural benefits of R&I and the talents and skills that it builds upon. Universities are unique players in the R&I landscape as they do not share the shorter term geopolitical or commercial imperatives of politics and industry. Universities provide an intellectual space for free reflection and interdisciplinary inquiry generating a broad understanding of societal needs and scientific, technological or environmental challenges. This holistic, long-term orientation of universities underlines their honest broker role and their ability to put societal needs at the core of new insights and solutions developed across disciplines and in partnership with different sectors and communities.

State of play and challenges

The societal impact of university R&I is impressive as they play numerous roles through the combination of basic research and its applications, which is the root of frontier knowledge. For example, universities are major drivers of regional clusters, test beds for policy and nodes of collaboration for industrial

and commercial entities that need to innovate. Universities address questions of societal governance and development that go beyond economic considerations. They also act as stores of cultural and creative value and institutional reserves for competences and practices that are crucial to society and culture, but which are not viable as traded entities in markets. Political support for these different roles varies across time and across Europe. Nevertheless, it is important to conceptualise and appreciate the aggregate societal impact of universities' R&I activities, rather than the particular impact of any line of research. In addition, the extent to which these roles will shift must be carefully examined in line with the nature of R&I as a continuum, where research is the driving engine and where science needs to enjoy the trust of society.

Yet, a number of large-scale transitions are redefining the impact of R&I, in general, and the societal impact of university R&I, in particular. Tensions between the national and transnational facets of universities' missions have always existed. Some systems (e.g. the United States) have shown a high level of integration of universities into the national security apparatus, even while they remain pillars of the international university network. Due to their transnational ramifications, the green and digital transitions and the search for talent against a backdrop of shifting demographics are likely to further amplify these tensions. In addition, the rise of species-affecting technologies such as genome editing (e.g. CRISPR-Cas9) and artificial intelligence presents notable ethical challenges. Inconsistent regulatory approaches to such challenges across Europe, and in other global contexts, risk adding further complexity. Meeting this challenge also makes it imperative for universities and industries in Europe to collaborate and ethically address the possibility of altering the fundamentals of biological and cultural life through new technologies.

While this multitude of ethical, regulatory and transnational issues marks an ever-greater need for universities' honest broker role, engaging with such issues may eventually result in a direct feedback loop which also challenges the self-understanding of the university sector. Education and research rarely generate such a challenge as they tend to have a more external impact. Nevertheless, some universities may outgrow this honest broker role to become agents of societal transformation and thus take on a more proactive stance.

Such institutional innovation will require foresight capacity to understand how the transitions will feed back into universities. Broader historical analogies may also be needed. For example, in the mid-nineteenth century, a current emerged whereby universities reorganised themselves to manage the world of knowledge for a globalising and industrial world. While not obvious at the outset, new forms of knowledge had been creating new institutions (e.g. scientific societies) from the mid-eighteenth century. The research university was thus a highly successful response to the challenges of that era. The new challenges of the present era will similarly require the development of innovative ways to maximise the full societal impact of university R&I.

Objectives and actions

R&I continuum

- ❖ Policy makers should understand and value the crucial role of R&I which will deliver the breakthrough discoveries that are needed to help solve societal problems. Universities have a crucial role to play in both basic and more applied work, and we must recognise the fundamental role that basic research plays in the development of more applied research and innovation. Use-inspired basic research must also be recognised as an integral part of this endeavour.
- ❖ A wide diffusion of the benefits of R&I across society and within universities themselves must be embedded in a multifaceted understanding of innovation, including social, cultural, and organisational aspects, as explained in the [EUA Innovation Agenda](#).

EUA will:

- Work with its members to showcase the value of R&I to Europe's global competitiveness, explaining the crucial role that universities play.
(effective advocacy | horizon scanning | European solidarity)
- Advocate for R&I to be understood as a continuum, from basic research to innovation, and beyond, including service to society through the provision of use-inspired research and evidence-based input to public debate.
(effective advocacy)
- Continue to deliver on the commitments made in the EUA Innovation Agenda, particularly to advocate for a broad understanding of innovation, boost the capacity, competence and culture of universities in this area, as well as promote strategic partnerships with other sectors and actors in the innovation ecosystem.
(effective advocacy | horizon scanning | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)

Trust in science

- ❖ R&I ethics and integrity must be firmly embedded in institutional policies, allowing universities to pursue their honest broker role within a democratic order, the stability of which relies on the autonomy of the university sector.
- ❖ R&I's relationship with politics must be clearly defined in terms of respective roles and responsibilities at national and transnational levels, particularly with a view to safeguarding universities' space for cooperation with a wide range of partners.
- ❖ The commitment to evidence-based discussion that underpins R&I, as underlined in 'Universities without walls', must be translated into proactive efforts to combat misinformation and disinformation that lead to the erosion of public debate.

EUA will:

- Engage its members in exploring the realm beyond universities' honest broker role, and what is required for them to be proactive agents of transformation that are fully conscious of their own political weight.
(horizon scanning | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Showcase the value of intersectoral collaboration for strengthening trust in science and boosting awareness of its benefits for citizens and stakeholders.
(effective advocacy | horizon scanning | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Support its members in further embedding R&I ethics and integrity in institutional policies through best practice sharing.
(European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Support its members in implementing institutional policies and innovations that better equip them to engage with policy makers and politicians by means of evidence-based input.
(effective advocacy | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)

Priority #2 – Cultivating robust, diverse and collaborative R&I culture(s)

Definition

Research and Innovation Culture (RIC) refers to the values, beliefs, practices, and expectations that exist within an R&I community made up of academics, other researchers, students, research management, technical and support staff. RIC shapes the conduct and dissemination of R&I. Furthermore, it underpins the way academics interact with each other, how they uphold the principles of equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB), how they identify and approach R&I questions, how they select and use relevant methods and tools, the standards of rigour and quality to which they adhere, the norms for sharing and collaborating on R&I findings, how they define R&I impact and, finally, how their work is measured, recognised, and rewarded.

There is a diversity of RICs at universities as they are influenced by various factors. These include institutional contexts within and beyond universities, disciplinary traditions, national contexts, including governance and funding models, and societal expectations. Universities should provide an environment where academics can flourish, as researchers and innovators who can engage in innovative, ethical, and impactful R&I that advances knowledge and addresses pressing societal challenges.

State of play and challenges

The emergence of new research-intensive university systems across the globe, and the proliferation of new kinds of research performing organisations in Europe, has accelerated the pace of research. The diversity of actors and perspectives is an inherent good, but there is evidence that systemic risk is being distributed toward individual researchers. There is further evidence that precarity and insecurity are changing researcher behaviours and decelerating the pace of discovery.

Universities in Europe will continue to create coherent and nurturing environments that incentivise researchers to explore and create. They will also strive to attract the most talented and ambitious minds. This requires robust RICs and will in turn help safeguard Europe's excellence and leading position in R&I.

There is a growing awareness at universities and other R&I organisations that poor RICs can negatively impact the whole R&I process and ecosystem. The success of universities in Europe is based on the balance between competitiveness and collaboration and a healthy balance should be preserved. In addition, excessive rule proliferation and formalisation in some universities – partly triggered within universities and partly imposed on them – bear the risk of increasing the heavy administrative and bureaucratic burdens and thereby detracting from the focus on R&I. Finally, the acceleration of R&I outputs and the impact of new technologies create both opportunities and challenges for the R&I community. Here, flexible, yet responsible, RICs have an important role to play.

The talent found across the R&I continuum needs to be valued and nurtured, taking stock of the benefits that diverse and flexible career pathways provide. A long-term perspective is required to design flexible and multiple career pathways, drawing upon professional career support services, lifelong learning and skills development opportunities, and mentoring programmes. Here, the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#) points to the crucial role of fair rewards and incentives systems, alongside work-life balance and wellbeing, acknowledging and enabling multiple transitions between R&I sectors throughout researcher careers.

Academic careers can be multifaceted and for many include education, administration, management and public engagement, alongside R&I activities. In order to reflect the holistic mission of universities, all aspects of the academic

profession should be valued and rewarded appropriately. Reforming academic careers is a priority of EUA's vision document '[Universities without walls: a vision 2030](#)'.

With the growing recognition of the value of inter-disciplinary perspectives when considering global problems, it is important that academics are supported in their disciplinary journeys. Thus, while most scientists may be experts at least in one discipline, there is an increased need for holistic approaches to R&I strongly grounded in the respective disciplines, while mining the frontiers of curiosity at the intersection of these disciplines.

Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) practices also have a role to play in RICs. Open Science and public engagement are key pillars of RRI. Open Science is understood as an "inclusive construct that combines various movements and practices" as set by the [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#) (2021) and taken up by the EUA Open Science Agenda. There is a rapid evolution and uptake of Open Science in universities. This transition – and associated systemic, cultural, and technical reforms – will be further expanded. For example, new approaches are still needed to clarify the articulation between Open Science and intellectual property or R&I impact. A responsible approach to citizen engagement and the interaction with other actors within the R&I ecosystem is an important part of public engagement, closely connected to Open Science. The involvement of citizens throughout the R&I continuum can act both as RRI leverage and a gateway to R&I engagement, boosting richer and sounder RICs. Increased cooperation and engagement activities with citizens and within R&I ecosystems should duly consider the university values of institutional autonomy, academic freedom and research ethics and integrity.

Therefore, robust RICs require innovation, with applications into the R&I process itself as well as in education, society, and universities themselves. The promotion of open communication, collaboration, and mentorship needs to go hand in hand with encouraging the development of diverse and inclusive R&I communities. This will contribute to maintaining attractive and rewarding R&I careers.

Objectives and actions

R&I continuum

- ❖ Open Science can be an enabler of excellent R&I and RICs should embrace open science principles and practices when relevant.
- ❖ Interdisciplinarity is an important element of the research endeavour and RICs should provide support for this type of activity.
- ❖ R&I in social sciences, humanities and the arts (SSHA) should be seen as an integral part of the scientific endeavour.
- ❖ Administrative processes should be simplified to enable a smoother functioning of R&I activities at universities while maintaining responsible systems of checks and balances.

EUA will:

- Continue to support members interested in the transition to Open Science by using the EUA Open Science Agenda 2025 to contribute to the development of national, European and institutional policies conducive to the mainstreaming of Open Science and encourage universities to play a more proactive role in the regulatory and financial frameworks shaping this process.
(effective advocacy | horizon scanning | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Promote the opportunities of multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary R&I. This includes fostering the recognition of interdisciplinary R&I in academic assessment and reward schemes and considering the role of education in fostering a multi-, inter-, or trans-disciplinary R&I mindset.
(effective advocacy | enabling enhanced performance)
- Monitor and facilitate the exchange of good practices among EUA members regarding the long-term implementation of interdisciplinary initiatives, such as interdisciplinary R&I projects, groups, centres, etc.
(horizon scanning | European solidarity)
- Advocate for equal treatment of all R&I disciplines, based on the experiences and good practices of EUA members.
(effective advocacy)
- Advocate for the need for simplified administrative processes at universities, as allowed by their legal and financial context (see Priority 3).
(effective advocacy | enabling enhanced performance)
- Monitor R&I administrative processes, identify gaps and challenges, gather evidence, and support EUA members in developing solutions to reduce the administrative burden on those engaging in R&I.
(horizon scanning | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)

Academic careers

- ❖ A holistic approach to equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) is an important element of RICs. This entails making R&I careers accessible to everyone regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnic, cultural, economic and social background.
- ❖ Flexible and multiple career pathways should be promoted with a long-term perspective, supported by a foundation of adequate work-life balance and wellbeing, acknowledging and enabling multiple transitions throughout life between the different sectors performing R&I.
- ❖ Assessment frameworks, criteria and practices for academic careers should recognise the comprehensive set of skills and activities of academics, including research, teaching and learning, innovation, management/leadership and service to society.
- ❖ Researchers' experiences, competencies (including soft skills) and behaviours must be explicitly recognised and rewarded, paying particular attention to early-career researchers (ECRs). This will allow for the development of flexible and sustainable career pathways.

EUA will:

- Continue the work undertaken on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) by collecting good practice examples, offering spaces for collective reflection, and raising awareness within and beyond EUA's membership.
(effective advocacy | horizon scanning | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Explore the notion of belonging to broaden the concept of EDI to EDIB in university R&I, considering the potential impact on both RICs and society in general.
(horizon scanning | enabling enhanced performance)
- Continue engaging and contributing to the development and implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda and the associated relevant actions.
(effective advocacy | horizon scanning | enabling enhanced performance)
- Support EUA members by fostering peer-learning regarding policies and practices on R&I careers, including identifying good practices that enable flexible career pathways.
(horizon scanning | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Continue the work on institutional approaches to research assessment, in the context of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and the activities of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).
(effective advocacy | horizon scanning)
- Support EUA members in implementing the commitments of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and organise peer-learning activities to boost this effort.
(European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Initiate and lead work to acknowledge academic career assessment from the perspective of all university missions, including the R&I dimension.
(effective advocacy | horizon scanning | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Foster synergies with the EUA Council for Doctoral Education by identifying new common priorities and potential joint lines of action.
(horizon scanning | enabling enhanced performance)

Trust in science

- ❖ RRI must always be the standard for any R&I activity that is performed inside or outside of academia, with universities leading by example.
- ❖ The RRI agenda must be more visible to wider society, permeating science communication and citizen science practices.

EUA will:

- Continue to support universities in developing institutional strategies, policies and practices for RRI, facilitating the exchange of experiences and visions.
(horizon scanning | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Highlight the role of universities as agents of RRI by collecting evidence, opening spaces for debate and exchanging good practices.
(European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Share best practice on the role of universities as key enablers for embedding responsible science communication and citizen science in co-creation practices within R&I ecosystems, as well as the interaction of such activities with Open Science and R&I assessment.
(horizon scanning | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)

Priority #3 – Championing a well-designed and sustainable R&I system

Definition

Universities are key drivers of R&I processes in Europe. To fully unleash their potential in responding to current and future global challenges, universities require a well-designed and sustainable R&I system. Such a system depends on a favourable regulatory environment that guarantees university autonomy and academic freedom, as well as enables interdisciplinarity, flexible career paths, mobility of researchers, knowledge transfer, and exchange and cooperation. It also requires sufficient and sustainable funding that offers the right instruments to unlock the full potential of research. The funding landscape encompasses a mix of competitive public funding from the EU and national agencies, as well as private investment. The European Research Area, in concert with the European Education Area, is one of the key elements in aligning these regulatory and funding frameworks in the EU.

State of play and challenges

Europe is constantly adapting to be at the forefront of discoveries in the face of growing transnational challenges and increasing competition with other major knowledge economies, including China and the US. However, its ambition to achieve the green and digital transition is notably jeopardised by current crises that shift public support towards short-term goals and new priorities. On top of that, the looming financial crisis raises risks of significant impacts on funding for R&I both at national and European levels. For universities to deliver on a range

of R&I ambitions, it is essential that longer-term sustainability is maintained. Similarly, Europe is confronted with high expectations that investments in R&I result in concrete and fast solutions to new and existing challenges. In such circumstances, there are risks that political leaders lean more towards encouraging applied research and innovation to the detriment of basic research. The latter is a prerequisite for truly systemic transformations, but to be able to deliver on this promise, it requires long-term approaches and sustainable public support, beyond short-term political cycles.

The EU R&I framework programme (FP) plays an important role in this landscape by driving significant public and private investments at EU and national levels. It has the potential to raise Europe's global profile thanks to its crucial role in strengthening the European knowledge base. However, low success rates and discrepancies in access are persistent challenges. Despite the measures implemented in the current FP, it can still be perceived as a 'closed club', with many researchers discouraged from applying. Therefore, there is a risk that funding gaps between countries may increase. However, a well-designed and sustainably funded FP is not, by itself, sufficient to bolster Europe's global competitiveness. National and private R&I investments must also be increased to keep at pace with other leading world regions.

Sufficient and sustainable funding is only one element of a well-designed R&I system. Regulatory frameworks at national and EU levels play an equally important role in the European R&I landscape. As well-designed and well-implemented regulatory frameworks can empower Europe in responding to societal needs, it is highly important that European and national legislation continues to consolidate a sustainable R&I system. This includes broader aspects such as improving conditions for R&I careers, tackling brain drain from and within Europe, creating an innovation-friendly environment, building synergies between different policies (e.g. R&I and education), and strengthening research security. The goal of these frameworks should not be harmonisation but building a system that is united in its diversity.

Infrastructures are also important enablers of R&I activities. Their investment value comes from the active use of such infrastructures, which is often insufficient compared to their capacities. This is mostly due to inadequate national regulations (e.g. not allowing for Europe-wide access to local infrastructures), poor management expertise, insufficient funding for upgrades, and lack of knowledge of their existence.

Objectives and actions

R&I continuum

- ❖ Sufficient and sustainable European and national R&I funding needs to be ensured to support deeper, long-term science. In particular, the FP needs to be equipped with an ambitious budget to deliver on its goals. Similarly, long-term approaches and sustainable public support beyond short-term political cycles must be guaranteed.
- ❖ Only the right mix of support for basic research, applied research, and innovation can ensure that the EU will tackle global challenges and emerging crises. It is especially crucial in times of economic turmoil to ensure sufficient support for basic research as it is essential for achieving profound systemic changes.
- ❖ European and national regulatory frameworks should be well-coordinated and provide the right conditions for the EU R&I system to thrive.
- ❖ European R&I initiatives should better respond to the needs of universities, e.g. through reduced administrative burden, increased participation, and better synergies between R&I and education policies, as well as with other EU policies and initiatives.
- ❖ Emerging security concerns in the current geopolitical context may impact universities' academic values and R&I performance in ways that need to be understood, monitored, and responded to. To address these challenges, a balanced and risk-appropriate approach that carefully recognises the need for university autonomy is needed.
- ❖ The sustainability of R&I infrastructures and their role in capacity building and collaboration should be strengthened through increased funding, training opportunities, broader access, and better regulations.
- ❖ Universities are increasingly engaging in transnational R&I collaboration through EU programmes and initiatives, notably the FP, and more recently through the European Universities Initiative. It is therefore important to support universities with adequate funding and regulatory frameworks in that regard.

EUA will:

- Continue to advocate for sufficient, sustainable and long-term European and national R&I funding, notably for reaching the 3% GDP R&I investment target as set in the Lisbon Treaty, maintaining a good balance between investment in basic and more applied work
(effective advocacy | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Advocate for its vision for the post-2027 European R&I funding programmes, with a particular focus on securing an ample budget, promoting openness, ensuring simplification, and increasing participation.
(effective advocacy | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Monitor European legislation to ensure that it delivers the outcomes society needs, within which universities play a strong and appropriate role.
(effective advocacy | horizon scanning)
- Monitor the emerging impacts on its membership caused by the increased emphasis by governments on security, identify good practice examples that can be considered by universities, and advocate against possible threats to university R&I.
(effective advocacy | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Promote the role of R&I infrastructures in capacity building, collaboration, and training.
(effective advocacy | horizon scanning | European solidarity | enabling enhanced performance)
- Monitor and provide feedback on the development and implementation of university R&I collaboration schemes, notably through the European Universities Initiative and its alliances.
(effective advocacy | horizon scanning)

Academic careers

- ❖ Ensuring adequate framework conditions in support of research careers is a pre-requisite for the ability of researchers to engage in R&I.
- ❖ Regulatory frameworks and funding programmes should be designed to attract and retain talent in Europe, as well as to address brain drain from and within Europe.
- ❖ Flexible and multiple career pathways need to be supported by adequate regulatory frameworks. Likewise, adequate funding and administrative systems should enhance the attractiveness of academic careers.
- ❖ Academic career assessment approaches should be reformed for a well-functioning R&I system inclusive of all university missions. Regulatory frameworks should aim to support such reforms by recognising a wide range of academic staff contributions.

EUA will:

- Continue to advocate for attractive research careers in Europe, including in the development of European legislation and the ERA Policy Agenda.
(effective advocacy | enabling enhanced performance)
- Advocate for sufficient investments in university staff, including academic, professional services, and research management and support staff.
(effective advocacy | enabling enhanced performance)
- Continue to support reforms of research assessment through regulatory frameworks, where appropriate.
(effective advocacy | enabling enhanced performance)

Conclusions

This R&I Agenda is an ambitious plan that will require EUA's close collaboration with its members, national rectors' conferences and universities across Europe. The actions and objectives outlined under the three priorities of the Agenda constitute EUA's values-driven commitment to boosting universities' contribution to R&I, anchored in academic freedom and institutional autonomy. With critical thinking, creativity and inclusivity as core parts of this contribution, universities' expertise is a form of commons from which all of society can benefit. Hence, EUA's commitment entails a wide-ranging enhancement and closer integration of universities' capabilities as leading R&I actors acting in solidarity. Moreover, it reflects and adds further impetus to ongoing developments and innovations in the very cultures and systems which allow universities to be societally impactful. With vital discussions already underway regarding funding frameworks, regulations, careers and infrastructures, this Agenda is meant as a catalyst for strategic reflection and mobilisation on the part of universities as they navigate and shape the R&I landscape in the coming years. EUA will actively orchestrate these efforts together with all relevant stakeholders so that university R&I, and its synergy with education and service to society, remains the premier gateway to the knowledge and skills needed for scientific progress and sustainable societal development. The implementation of the Agenda will be closely monitored with a view to updating its objectives and actions beyond the initial four-year timespan.

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The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact their activities.

The Association provides unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, websites and publications.

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