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## **EERA: a participant or an agent in European research policy? A Governance Perspective**

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**ABSTRACT** In this article, the authors begin to frame a discussion of the educational research space that the European Educational Research Association (EERA) has been given and aims to take. The educational space is not merely a geographical phenomenon, but rather refers to the networks, flows and scapes that form the foundation for the construction of national or transnational cultural frames in which educational research works. This is a double-sided issue: EERA is a participant in the Europeanisation process working – intentionally or not and willingly or not – on harmonising educational research all over Europe and in the European Union (EU); furthermore, the EERA has been working on influencing research politics in Europe, in the EU and at the national levels for the past several years. The links between global development and local practices in universities and schools have become tighter over the past two or three decades. Transnational agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the EU are important channels in creating educational policies between global market initiatives and local practices. We can identify governance chains from these agencies through national authorities to local institutions.

### **Introduction**

Many of the influences between transnational and national to institutional levels do not appear as ‘hard or explicit governance’ that exercises direct power or steering. Often they realise their influence through ‘soft governance’, the ‘open method of coordination’, as the European Union (EU) names it, or ‘peer pressure’ in the vocabulary of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Influence is exercised through discursive power that intends to change our understanding through international comparisons, suggestions or the presentation of ‘best practices’. Interestingly, non-governmental agencies such as the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) also set the agenda through comparative educational research. In this arena, the European Educational Research Association (EERA) functions as a transnational agency in similar ways; however, without any hard or direct means of power, it has even weaker internal and external influencing mechanisms.

EERA promotes and establishes European collaboration and brings together researchers for conferences and in summer schools. Individual researchers and cross-country collaborators publish with a European perspective. EERA increasingly and actively raises its voice in the European research policy arena that is centred at present around the Horizon 2020 strategy, as will be described in the second half of this article. By constructing discursive links in the chain of governance, EERA simultaneously produces conditions and frames under which educational

researchers work in the European research field. EERA works in a complex context, aiming to develop internal policies as well as influence the greater transnational policies by being visible and giving a voice to educational researchers.

In this article we intend to find out in what ways EERA has been and continues to be a participant in the construction of a European educational research 'space' either in line with EU strategies or as an agent in opposition to EU strategies.

### Emergence of the EERA Space

Historically, we see a number of five- to six-year phases in the work on defining and constructing the EERA space: how did the EERA aim to position itself, and where did it seek to work and make its mark? The education research space is not only a geographical space, it is more of a discursive space: where does EERA belong? How does EERA form its identity? The following second and third descriptions are taken from Lawn (2007), and the first, fourth and fifth are build on our own observations:

1. *Until 1994:* many national associations of educational research were established ten or twenty years before EERA in the seventies of the previous century. International associations in other disciplines such as psychology were also established, but not in educational research. Interestingly, the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) was established ten years before EERA, probably showing its roots in a well-established more traditional discipline, psychology.
2. *1994-2000:* In the initial phase, EERA was built on national associations and thus on national spaces; therefore the space was, according to Lawn (2007), a muddled space. It was a difficult struggle to build an association and simultaneously define a European educational research space of its own.
3. *2000-2006:* EERA consolidated itself in close relation to the EU's discourse of Europeanisation. In this period, the EERA was invited to consult in the Directorates General of the European Commission (EC); several European Commission (EC) projects and networks were recommended by the EERA, and references to the EU Europeanisation process were made explicitly in EERA papers.
4. *2006-2011:* We saw a process of extending the European educational research space from building on the EU member states to more actively include more nations and thus more discursive diversity – 'the Greater Europe', as we might call it. The direct collaboration between the EERA Council and Executive Board (Exec) with the EC diminished. EERA was one out of more than 10 partners in the Hamburg University-based European Educational Research Quality Indicators (EERQI), 2008-2011.
5. *2011-present:* We have seen the extension of the EERA space even further, as EERA is currently in the process of discussing how it can define what a European State is in order to accommodate the applications for membership from countries that may not usually be considered to be European. Such definitional issues also need to guide discussions on the questions of what the regions are and when more than one association in a country can be a member. Links from EERA (on a Council and Exec level) to the EC have disappeared as Horizon 2020 (the research funding programme from 2014 to 2020) turned out to be blind to social sciences and humanities (SSH) and thus also neglected educational research. Therefore, EERA has joined forces with other SSH stakeholders to achieve a clear and strong voice in the European research discourse.

We see – from a governance perspective – EERA developing from being a non-governmental organisation (NGO), working to establish a European space for scientific exchanges, towards continuing on this track and adding an active outgoing political function in relation to transnational and national governance.

### Global Influences

Educational research governance and discourses are shaped by local, regional, national, transnational and global influences. In this section we focus on the general global governance

trends, to return in the next section to the educational research arena. In this epoch of globalisation, we see trends and tendencies in local governance that can be traced back to trends and tendencies in national, transnational and even global sources. This pattern is important for our understanding of the relationship between EERA and Europe.

Governance analyses (Foucault, 1976/1994; Dean, 1999) have established that it is not possible to govern a union, a nation, its institutions or even its individuals by economic and administrative regulation through legislation only (Moos, 2013). This understanding is supplemented, or perhaps even replaced, by the understanding that societies cannot be governed from just one point – i.e. the government. Governments and other authorities must see themselves as 'leaders of leaders' through indirect forms of power in 'polyphonic settings' (Pedersen, 2005b). A similar pattern can be observed in the case of the European Union. To balance central and national interests, a system of governance is in place: a mix of regulation and budgeting (hard governance) and soft, discursive governance (non-cohesive and advisory power). These forms are meant to influence the ways in which institutions and individuals perceive, interpret, understand and act – in particular in respect to social and human areas such as education. The actions themselves become less important in this era. The values and norms behind them are more important from a governmental point of view because indirect forms of power attempt to influence values and norms.

We observe parallel trends in the development of supra- and transnational agencies such as the OECD and the EC. When it comes to education and its governance and politics, these agencies are not commissioned to use direct forms of power, such as regulations, and they therefore develop soft forms of governance in line with very general globalisation trends.

Globalisation is an intricate pattern of changes in economics and the division of labour (e.g. the emergence of more than 50,000 massive transnational companies, which are loyal to their shareholders and therefore able to force governments to shape their financial policies according to market logic), changes in communication (especially the Internet and other forms of split-second global mass media), changes in politics (with only one global political system remaining) and changes in culture (Martin & Schumann, 1996). More recent areas affected by global interdependencies are the financial market, the climate and the environment.

One can detect strong tendencies towards designing a new global marketplace with few or no barriers to cross-country operations: the free flow of finances, goods and workers (D. Pedersen, 2010). The prime driver for this deregulation of cooperation was neo-liberal economics; hence, the core logics and theories of the new world order were economic: public choice, rational choice, principal agent, transaction cost theory and scientific management (Pedersen, 2005a).

One global effect of this development is the trend towards neo-liberal market politics (with a focus on decentralisation, output, competition and strong leadership) (O.K. Pedersen, 2010) as well as outcomes and accountability politics in the public sphere (with a focus on re-centralisation and centrally imposed standards and quality criteria). This trend is known as New Public Management (NPM) (Hood, 1991; MacBeath et al, 1996; Moos, 2006a).

Barriers between nations in the areas of economics, industry and trade, and culture and communication have thus been torn down, and new relationships and new coalitions and liaisons have been formed. Some of these new relationships are ad hoc; some are more formal. Most of them have been established primarily to promote economic and financial cooperation. The G8 (the 2006 coalition of France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Russia), the World Bank, the OECD and the EU are just a few of these powerful agencies.

This development has brought opportunities for educational research to find inspiration outside the national borders. At the same time, new challenges emerge when we try to balance national values with transnational harmonisations.

### **Supra- and Transnational Agencies**

The OECD and the European Union & Commission are two powerful players in the global field of educational politics (Moos, 2009). To date, they have not been positioned to make educational policy regulations on behalf of member governments. However, this fact is in some respects changing in the EU due to the Lisbon Agreement (EC, 2000), which includes education in the field

of services and thus became subject to EC regulation, but it is also subject to the subsidiarity clause (stating that decisions can be made at a lower level if the lower level finds it to be the best solution). National policies are influenced by supranational EU policies 'that create, filter and convey the globalisation process' (Antunes, 2006, p. 38). This influence is one of the purposes of the EU, but not the purpose for which it was originally intended. It was taken in with the Lisbon Agreement as opposed to the earlier trend in the Maastricht Treaty.

Because both agencies and their member governments are interested in international collaboration and inspiration, they have developed non-regulatory and soft governance methods to influence the thinking and regulation of education in member states. The EU has developed the open method of coordination (Lange and Alexiadou 2007), and the OECD has developed a method of peer pressure (Moos, 2006b; Schuller, 2006).

We know from the research literature that the influences of transnational agencies, especially the OECD, have been very visible over the past 20 years. Therefore, it is important to describe and analyse the ways in which these influences have been interpreted and translated into both national political cultures and policies in national states and also EERA culture and policies (Lawn & Lingard, 2002; Antunes, 2006). One transnational document seems to have been more influential than others – namely, 'Governance in Transition: public management reforms in OECD countries' (OECD, 1995). This document was produced following the well-known OECD soft governance strategy, named the 'peer learning' method: member countries have reported trends in their public management strategies to the organisation where the complex picture is clarified and simplified, as trends and tendencies across countries are categorised into a smaller number of main themes and categories. This brought ideas of New Public Management (Hood, 1991) very much into the focus of the union and national agendas and also infected policies on educational research.

At the EC's meeting in Lisbon, participants agreed to develop a flexible method based on reflexivity and indicators. This method should include flexible governance tools that rely on soft law. A major feature of the open method of coordination is reflexivity; member states and institutions should inspire each other through comparisons, peer reviews and policy learning – for example, best practices. An important tool is a set of indicators meant to enable the identification of best practices (Lange & Alexiadou, 2007).

CERI (the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation), the OECD bureau that manages education and educational research, is a powerful player in the globalisation of economies and therefore in the restructuring of nation-states (Henry et al, 2001). Both the EU and the OECD are very much in accordance with the decision of the World Trade Organization's 1995 General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (WTO, 1998) to include education services in the area of free trade, thus transforming education into a commodity, a 'product' that can be traded on the market place like all other products, as it has been analysed by Ball (2003), Moos (2006c) and Pitman (2008).

These influences on policy and practices are not linear or straightforward. Lingard (2000) describes them as 'mutually constitutive relations' between distinctive fields or spaces. Lawn and Lingard claim that transnational organisations such as the OECD act as shapers of emerging discourses of educational policy, as 'expressed in reports, key committees, funding streams and programmes' (Lawn & Lingard, 2002). The main influence comes from the OECD setting the agenda (Schuller, 2006) both within the whole organisation – for example, through international comparisons such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA; Hopman, 2008) and other agencies such as UNESCO and the IEA – and within individual member nations. If a government wants to put an issue on the national agenda but lacks the strength to do so on its own, it can call on the OECD for help. The OECD then forms a team that reviews the situation in the member state based on a detailed and comprehensive framework designed by the OECD. The team's report often forms the basis for political action in such states. The reviews of educational research and development in England and Denmark are relevant examples to show how the political interest is being shifted from universities being 'knowledge producers' towards a situation where they are deliverers of policy- and practice-relevant results (Moos, 2006b).

This strategy is explicated in the OECD publication 'Education Catalogue' (OECD, 1998) as a strategy of 'peer pressure' that 'encourages countries to be transparent, to accept explanations and justification, and to become self-critical' (OECD, 1998).

### Networking and Numbers are Soft Governance Technologies

The EU Commission needed governance tools to influence public and private education within the member states. At the Lisbon EU Commission meeting, participants agreed to develop a flexible open method based on reflexivity and indicators. This method, according to the meeting, had to include flexible governance tools that rely on 'soft law'. The divide between EU hard and soft law is that with hard law and directives, the EU Commission can create legally binding obligations for states and individuals, whereas soft law can only be persuasive. The second feature of the open method is networking and reflexivity: member states and institutions should inspire each other through 'peer reviews' and policy learning, such as best practices and networking (EC, 2000). An important tool is a set of indicators described as enabling the identification of 'best practices' (Lange & Alexiadou, 2007). In the following section will introduce these two social technologies for the educational arena: networking and indicators (governing by numbers).

#### *Networks*

The European Council meeting in Lisbon in 2000 expressed ambitious goals for the quality of the European education and training systems in line with the Bologna Accord from 1999. Because the EC had no central authority to launch regulations, it made use of two main social technologies (procedures and processes that intend to influence people's behaviour, perceptions and thinking) – namely, networks and benchmarks. These two elements in the 'open method of coordination' were institutionalised in the Lisbon Accord as well. The Lisbon White Paper – following and supplementing the Maastricht Treaty (European Communities, 2001, cited in Lawn, 2007) – says:

The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between member states and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the member states for the content of teaching and the organization of THEIR education system and their cultural and linguistic diversity.  
(Article 126)

This White Paper was very influential in European governance and the Europeanisation process as a means of producing a shared discourse. It was also influential for the work of the EERA Council. Lawn (2007, p. 90) writes:

The design and maintenance of a common associational infrastructure space, beginning with the process of developing a common identity for the European educational researcher, with associated skills, resources, networking and events, and enabling them to participate in, or structure, a European educational research space, had occupied EERA Council since 2000.

At this point, the EERA Council aimed at developing a European educational space in line with EC discourses, says Lawn. This has somewhat changed. In the EERA Constitution from 2011 (EERA, 2011), there was no mention of the European Union. The EERA Council found that Europe was bigger than and not identical to the European Union. To EERA, networking is still very important as it has always been a pivotal work mode through which it operates and pursues its aims: the conferences, the academic networks and EERJ. This was made clear in the new Constitution (EERA, 2011), which states that the purpose of the association is achieved in particular by:

- organising conventions, symposiums, seminars and lectures;
- promoting interdisciplinary communication within the whole sphere of educational research;
- publishing and promoting academic publications, specialist publications and information;
- commenting on public recommendations and academic comments concerning issues of educational policies, pedagogical practice and educational research funding and policy;
- informing the public about current developments in educational research;
- clarifying training and examination issues relevant to the education professions; and
- promoting young academics, especially by granting specialist awards.

### *Indicators*

A very important social technology in the EC toolbox is EC indicators. It is a global feature, prominently showcased by the PISA's international comparison: on the basis of a shared set of outcome indicators, one can produce images of national educational systems that governments can use for reflections about the quality (according to the indicators) of their national educational system.

The Bologna process and the European Higher Education Area (initially not an EC project but a project of the Council of Ministers of Higher Education from greater Europe) were meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems with maximum flexibility and mobility in higher education in Europe. The means to accomplish this is to develop a European model of higher education on the basis of shared recognition of professional qualifications, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and the ECTS framework.

The EC has chosen PISA as the European set of indicators for quality education at basic school level as a means to further the Europeanisation process. It is remarkable that the global measurement is imported so prominently into the European space. Remarkable but not unexpected, that is, because both the OECD and the EU are working within the same global trend to develop a new model and paradigm of education, whereby policymakers and practitioners should build on quantitative sciences (which the psychometric comparisons are seen as) instead of the traditional qualitative science of educational philosophy. These processes are named 'the political work of calculating education' (Lawn & Grek, 2012). Statistics becomes the science of the 'numerical study of social facts' and the foundation for the emergence of 'governing by numbers' (Nóvoa, 2013). Desrosières (2000, cited in Borer & Lawn, 2013) writes:

The statistics were presented like an essential tool for the 'rationalization' of the control of the human business, by substituting the reason of measurement and calculation for the arbitrariness of passion and the play of the power struggles. In social sciences or in the management of the social world, statistics were thus invested with a comparable role of 'de-ideologization' and 'objectivization', making it possible to treat social facts like things. (Desrosières, 2000, p. 122)

Over the past century, this development has been the background for the emergence of a group of 'experts' in the educational field: experts in statistics and psychometrics. In particular, politicians and policymakers are very interested in their work and results, as this is seen as the best foundation for political and governance decisions.

PISA is only one of many social technologies employed by the EC and the OECD, which are not the only agencies producing benchmarks and data. The EC, in parallel with the agencies mentioned earlier, has established Eurostat and Eurydice with similar goals:

The indicators are used to assess either quantitatively or qualitatively progress towards the benchmarks and the common objectives. Indicators should also help to stimulate exchange and discussion among member states about reasons for differences in performance ... The European Commission has set up a Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks, which has developed 29 indicators in order to measure whether, and at what rate, the EU is progressing towards its common objectives and benchmarks. (Lange & Alexiadou, 2007, p. 349)

At the beginning of the millennium, EERA established or supported networks that intended to produce and further develop indicators in diverse fields (Lawn, 2007).

### *Accreditation*

One of the many processes that align education across countries begins with voluntary cooperation but may end up in agreements that prescribe actions and requirements across countries. In higher education, for example, governments have decided in almost every European country to introduce the obligatory accreditation of study programmes (Stensaker, 2011). After the initial phases of government accreditation, this process has often been laid into the hands of semi-independent national or supranational accreditation organisations. These organisations started to exchange their procedures, rules and experiences across countries and then built the European Consortium for Accreditation. They had themselves been evaluated by the consortium and complied with the rules

and quality indicators of the consortium as a requisite for membership of the consortium. These activities and later requirements led to a homogenisation of the procedures and, in the end, to the requirements for study programmes. On the one hand, this may strengthen the procedures and quality of programmes, but on the other, local differentiation according to local specific characteristics may be endangered. Similarly, peers from other countries generally perform research evaluations. In this process, they not only export their local quality criteria for educational research to another country but also take home their experiences in that country to further develop their own quality indicators and procedures. This leads to the homogenisation of research evaluations at the risk of undervaluing the local characteristics and diversity of the research.

#### *Hard and Soft Governance*

Both the OECD and the EC distinguish between *hard governance* and *soft governance*. The choice of terms is interesting because hard law/governance stands for regulations that influence people's behaviour, while soft law/governance influences the way in which people perceive and think about themselves and their relationships with the outside world. Soft governance therefore influences agents in much deeper ways. While these methods of influence might seem softer or more educational, the effects of soft influence are harder and more profound (Moos, 2009).

In addition to soft governance, transnational agencies develop social technologies that national governments build on, adjust and use in their endeavours to influence public-sector institutions and practitioners. Social technologies are technologies with a purpose or an aim, which can be routines, manuals, methods and tools that very often conceal the aims (Foucault, 1991; Dean, 1999; Moos, 2009). The social technologies used by the EC and OECD transnational agencies seem to follow the same pattern, which builds on the liberal core concept of citizens' choice, presupposing that citizens are given a screen or a background upon which to make their choices. Therefore, there must be comparisons between competitors and, eventually, indicators that can function as yardsticks for making the selection of national interpretations.

Transnational influences are, as mentioned, forms of soft governance: advice, discourse, etc. To some degree, these are taken in by the national political and administrative systems and transformed into national policies, reinventing national education. However, something central spills over. When joining international comparison programmes such as PISA or Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), national governments take over international standards and let them replace national standards, and they take over ways of perceiving education through numbers (Lawn, 2007; Hopman, 2008; Lawn & Grek, 2012).

#### **EERA as a Proactive Agent in EU Policy Making: Horizon 2020**

The José Manuel Barroso-led European Commission launched its strategy, Europe 2020 (European Communities, 2010), in 2010. It was remarkable that societies or countries were described as 'economies'. This seemed to indicate predominantly economic, financial and marketplace thinking. The big challenges targeted in the strategy point in the same direction. Half a year later the Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, launched her strategy: Innovation Union 2020 (Geoghegan-Quinn, 2010). This strategy was very loyal to Europe 2020 in turning the focus from research and science towards innovation: initiatives that can develop production and services.

On 11 February 2011, the Green Paper entitled 'From Challenges to Opportunities: towards a common strategic framework for EU research and innovation funding' was launched (Geoghegan-Quinn, 2011). The paper invited comments to be submitted before June 2011. When the EERA Executive Board (i.e. EERA officers) read it, they saw no trace of references to social science or humanities and no signs at all of educational research. Therefore, EERA searched for associations, agencies and persons who were similarly concerned and began or reinforced the building of new networks and alliances. An important alliance is the European Alliance for Social Science and Humanities (EASSH), with participation from funding agencies, science committees and learned associations in social science and humanities (SSH). EASSH ran a petition – to make the European Commission make room for SSH in the funding programme – with approximately 23,000

signatures, and had a meeting on this petition with the Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science at the Royal Academy in London on 10 November 2011.

In November 2011, the first draft of the work programme was published. It was built around three pillars: excellent science, industrial leadership and societal challenges. The latter had a number of challenges: health, demographic changes, food security, energy, transport and climate. At the beginning of 2012, an additional challenge was added: innovative, inclusive and reflective societies. Here, educational research should be able to find relevant themes. The EC also stated that all challenges should be 'mainstreamed' by social sciences and humanities, but it did not state how this should be secured.

Over the whole period, the EERA Council supported the work, and in April 2013, the Executive Board organised a seminar in which 30 linked convenors of the EERA networks (the groups of researchers interested in a particular topic, who manage the academic work for the annual EERA conference, the European Conference on Educational Research [ECER]) worked on Horizon 2020, indicating and describing areas in which educational research was highly relevant. This group produced a flyer that has been forwarded to EU policy makers and national policy makers. It began with 'The European Educational Research Association's Agenda for Horizon 2020' (see extract in the Appendix) (Moos et al, 2013). The text contains a critical perspective on the work of the Commission: the working group of all network convenors finds the EC strategy on research, science and innovation to be inadequate because the social and human aspects of challenges are missing in the EC text Horizon 2020, and the flyer offers ideas to remedy this. All of the examples were produced by groups each comprised of people from 4-5 networks. EERA is now in a different position from ten years ago: there has been no consultancy with the EC, and EERA had not been invited (as an association) to network with the EC.

The EERA Executive Board participated actively in the European Presidential Vilnius Meeting in September 2013, which focused on SSH and Horizon 2020. A declaration to that effect was approved by the European Research Council (ERC) in 2013 and welcomed strongly by the European Chair of Science Ministers and the Director General of the Commission for Research, Innovation and Science. Following that meeting, the budget was published, and most of the funds allocated for the sixth challenge: 'Europe in a changing world – inclusive, innovative and reflective societies', had been allocated to agencies, first and foremost on information and communications technologies (ICT). We also can see that the Director General for Research, Innovation and Science has been restructured so that the social challenges generally have been given a directorate, except for the sixth challenge, which has been given a unit, a sign of its perception as relatively unimportant.

### **Summing Up: establishing and making sense of a European educational research space**

#### *Establishing a European Educational Research Space*

In the last four to five years, EERA has expanded the concept of Europe from one that was built on the European Union to a wider concept: the European Cultural Convention (Council of Europe, 1954). EERA has actively encouraged national educational research associations, groups of researchers or individuals (in countries with no national association) to apply for membership. EERA has offered and continues to offer a short programme: an on-site workshop for potential new members with participation from the EERA Executive Board. The EERA Council has supported participation in EERA by allowing associations from low-GDP (gross domestic product) countries to join while paying reduced membership fees. EERA also reimburses part of the travel expenses involved in attending EERA Council meetings for representatives from low-GDP countries. Thus, EERA tries to establish an inclusive and more diverse space, including the European Union and beyond, opening up the way for more networks, flows and discourses. This is not only a matter of structure and organisation. All representatives of member associations on the Council are expected to take part in the deliberations and decisions of EERA. In order for Council to have time for policy development and strategic discussions, day-to-day and managerial tasks are taken care of by the EERA Office and Executive Board, based on the Constitution from 2011 and the general



regulations, which are continuously being updated. Within these frames, representatives are involved in making strategic decisions and in involving their national associations in the work.

EERA works on practical platforms for its cross-country and cross-disciplinary deliberations and discussions; these consist of the annual conference, ECER, which is placed in different countries and cities every year; the journal entitled the *European Educational Research Journal* (EERJ); the EERA website; and Twitter. The heart of these activities includes the networks of researchers with interest in a particular field of study, such as higher education, didactics, etc.

To build research capacities beyond university PhD programmes, at the annual conference EERA offers a special section, the Emergent Researchers' Group (ERG), to people who are new to the scientific field. EERA tries to find funding for a number of bursaries. EERA also offers seasonal schools with a programme for developing skills and knowledge that are important for researchers in their effort to position themselves in the professional field. Examples are courses in academic writing and research methods.

In all of its platforms, EERA encourages the broadest field of educational research paradigms in terms of sharing ideas and arguments and discussing conditions and practices in education and educational research. Activities in all EERA's platforms aim to strengthen the scientific capacities of researchers to produce excellent research, to collaborate across countries within and beyond Europe, and in this way, to work for Europeanisation and internationalisation. These activities also aim to support researchers in staying qualified for the researchers' labour market because they facilitate the attainment of credits for university assessments. These two aspects are inseparable in the European space at the moment.

*Expanding Efforts to Influence Politicians, Policymakers  
and Administrators at National and EU Levels*

Beginning with the work on the Horizon 2020 process, EERA shifted its focus from tight collaboration with the EC towards a more distant and critical position, as invitations to EERA as an association to consultations with the EC have diminished to zero. A clear line can be seen connecting the Barroso-led EC's focus on the economy and numbers with the manifestations in the Horizon 2020 papers and actions. EERA has developed a two-sided strategy for its work on improving the status and position of educational research in Europe. On the one hand, EERA seeks collaboration with initiatives (ISE, the Initiative for Science in Europe) and alliances (EASSH) that are – as EERA is – concerned and very worried about the EC's worldview and actions with respect to solving societal challenges: for the EC, it seems unquestionably to be a matter for the natural and technical sciences to produce technical fixes. On the other hand, EERA seeks to organise a broad group of European educational researchers to influence national and international policy makers: it is not only the Executive Board and Council (including all the representatives of the national associations) who are involved in this work – the group of network link convenors also work in producing analyses, arguments and material to qualify our public voice.

These efforts can be seen as a sign of an ongoing shift away from the EERA seeing itself as a participant in the EU towards it being an active and critical agent in the political game. The basic stance that research needs to be constructive and critical (to itself, to practice and to politics) is fundamental to EERA, even if the EC is not as interested in this for the time being.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Extract from 'The European Educational Research Association's Agenda for Horizon 2020'**

#### *From Global to Individual and from Individual to Global*

Europe 2020 and Horizon (H) 2020 pose the question of how the European community can grasp or even overcome the grand challenges faced by economy and society.

Many societal institutions, industries and sciences are drafting strategies for action. But the challenges described in H2020 are not only challenges for societies at large; they arise at the level of community, family and personal life. It is therefore necessary to empower people through building communities that can engage with challenges and participate in solving them, and it is essential for these communities and citizens to gain the necessary knowledge, skills, values, competencies and opportunities for transforming their own situations.

An important educational agenda permeates all the H2020 challenges. Education can help bridge the gap between these global challenges and the responsibility and competence of citizens of all ages to act locally, but educational research is urgently needed to optimize the acquisition of knowledge and analytical skills that empower citizens to understand and engage with issues such as climate change. Global problems must be reframed so that they are recognizable in local contexts, whilst local problems and knowledge need to be re-contextualized, so that policy makers, systems and institutions can recognize and include individuals and communities in problem solving. Again, educational research can make important contributions to the achievement of these goals and to a more complex understanding, which includes the ability to (re-) interpret, critique and evaluate.

Finally, governance is, like education, an important aspect of relations between citizens and society. If citizens are to participate fully in solving challenges, they need to know how to act and how to participate in informed decision-making within structures of democratic governance and leadership. These transformative competences, knowledge and values are most effectively acquired through education, be it in formal or informal settings. Policies, including education policies, must target the basic needs of citizens. Educational and knowledge-creating institutions, which are often

closed off from the life world, must provide leadership, research evidence and transformative learning for citizens to engage with challenges.

In the relationship between research and innovation the focus on educating citizens for challenges implies moving away from the traditional idea of the innovation circle – a bottom-up approach involving the ‘consumers’ of innovation in the innovation process. Against this background, a reorientation of educational research is underway, towards a focus on making institutionalized education more efficient and a simultaneous shift towards learning in new and diverse contexts. This should be enabled by the involvement of educational research in a wider range of spaces and collaborations within and between the various European research communities.

The current and emergent strategy for research and innovation identifies key priorities such as: health and wellbeing; bio-economy; smart and green transport, climate change, energy, respect for the environment, and social inclusion. Overall, these priorities may also be considered as a complex educational agenda for European societies. Initial research is needed on:

- Attitudes to these priorities within current education systems.
- Whether these priorities feature in the agendas of European educational institutions.
- How these priorities might contribute to shaping the discourse of the European educational space in these times of crisis.

Implementing the kind of changes required for the fulfilment of H2020 aims and objectives here requires educational leadership, continuing professional development and curriculum reform. Our main purpose here is to show how educational research could be harnessed to meet the demands of Horizon 2020 and other forthcoming programmes.

Effective implementation of the H2020 programme, and the *Responsible Research and Innovation* (RRI) agenda will require new participation structures, as well as substantive indicators and impact factors for many of its suggested lines of research. The challenge for educational researchers is to take what we are very good at, including conceptual and critical thinking, reflection, mixed methods studies and widening participation & engagement, and insert these skills into programmes with specific scientific or technical objectives.

The H2020 challenges are not just another example of political rhetoric; they are a call to urgent action for survival. It is essential for people to engage collectively with these challenges, and this requires that people and communities acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies through education. The H2020 challenges focus on things that are already happening; education can help address these and future challenges before they are beyond our control.

The following specific areas are examples of how educational research could contribute to the aims and objectives of specific areas within H2020:

1. Education for innovation.
2. Participation, assessment and digital literacy
3. Sustainable communities
4. Globalized curriculum
5. Migration and multiculturalism
6. Shifting boundaries and challenges for professionals in education
7. Education for health and wellbeing
8. Standardization in education
9. Education and the production and circulation of knowledge
10. Complex transformations of education systems and policies
11. Effects of non-academic learning activities

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