



The European Research Area

Response to the European Commission consultation on its Green Paper *The European Research Area: New Perspectives*

1. Campaign for Science & Engineering is pleased to submit this response to the EC's consultation. CaSE is a voluntary organisation campaigning for the health of science and technology throughout UK society, and is supported by over 1,500 individual members, and some 70 institutional members, including universities, learned societies, venture capitalists, financiers, industrial companies and publishers. The views of the membership are represented by an elected Executive Committee.

2. We have not followed the restrictive and leading questionnaire issued by the EU, but have set out some of the issues that appear to us to arise from the text of the Green Paper.

Key Principles

3. Nobody could disagree with the general sentiments inherent in the proposed key principles – an adequate flow of competent researchers, world-class facilities, effective sharing of knowledge etc. But it is not clear that the Green Paper in any way addresses the challenges needed to deliver these ambitions.

4. For example, an adequate flow of researchers relies on a first class system of education below the level of a university degree. Specialist teachers are in short supply in parts of Europe, and cross-cultural studies show that interest in, and enthusiasm for, science and technology are low among industrialised countries like many in the EU. Tackling this problem could potentially do much more to ensure a good supply of trained scientists than anything contained in the Green Paper.

The single market for researchers

5. The idea that 'academic positions still remain largely reserved for national or even internal staff' is utter rubbish in the UK. British university faculties are highly international in character, and successfully draw on talent from around the world. Recent UK figures of academic staff show that 30% of those in mathematics, 31% of those in physics, and 34% of those in engineering are not British. It may be that other parts of Europe have problems (possibly because of language barriers) or that political decisions have been taken in some countries that have the effect of discriminating against foreigners. If that is the case, it would appear to break EU laws on the freedom of labour movement.

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6. Whatever the view of the Commission, 'transparent competition for recruitment' is (rightly) the norm in the UK. It would be wrong for the Commission to develop a policy on the basis of a fallacy

Concentration and specialisation

7. The blanket assertion that more specialisation and concentration will enhance European research is not based on any reasonable evidence. Of course, there are some fields, such as particle physics, where the pooling of resources is the only way of being able to afford to conduct high-level research. But in general, excellence is not equivalent to magnitude and a far better approach would be to invest in talented individual researchers. Research is done by people, not by institutions.

The European Institute of Technology

8. The Green Paper asserts in section 3.3 that the EIT will offer an 'attractive framework' to create durable research partnerships. But the EIT has attracted little if any support from the business community, despite original proposals that the private sector should put up billions of Euros in funding, and the whole project has been repeatedly criticised by the research community.

9. Far more could be achieved through using the finite resources of European taxpayers to invest in existing excellence than in creating a new bureaucracy and institution that may suit the grandiose expectations of some politicians, but which few people believe will address the challenges of research and innovation in Europe.

Overall conclusion

10. The observation that the EU needs to sharpen up its act in response to enhanced international competition is right. The outlined key principles are as good as any other set. But the analysis set out in the Green Paper is a somewhat sloppy assessment of the real world. Trying to achieve the aims set out in the key principles will require a much more serious and quantitative evaluation of the reality of research in Europe, and a set of hard policies designed to attack the specific and considerable problems that the EU research community undoubtedly faces.

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