



Implementing the ERA Policy Agenda and European Strategy for Universities: **Towards a European Excellence Initiative**

Slovenian Knowledge Platform, ERAvolution consultation, 16 June 2022

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European strategy for universities: *key objectives*

1 Strengthen the European dimension in higher education and research

Bringing transnational cooperation to a higher level contributes to a culture of excellence and inclusion, a true European identity, and global competitiveness and attractiveness

2 Consolidate universities as lighthouses of our European way of life

Strengthen quality and relevance for future-proof skills

In a fast changing environment, universities need to strengthen their capacities to equip young people, lifelong learners and researchers with the right competences and skills

Foster diversity, inclusiveness and gender equality

More institutional changes are needed for universities to become places of truly equal opportunities

Promote and protect European democratic values

Universities need to be places of freedom: for speech, thought, learning, research

3 Empower universities as key actors of change in the twin green and digital transitions

Develop skills, competences and technological innovation for the green and digital transition

Universities are key actors for the green transition and for a more sustainable world. We need to make 'connected universities' a reality

4 Reinforce universities as drivers of Europe's global role and leadership

Universities are instrumental in building Europe's connections with the world

Commission Communication, 18 January 2022 (education package)

⇒ Council Conclusions, 5 April 2022

Realising the new European Research Area

ERA Policy Agenda: 4 priorities and 20 actions

DEEPENING A TRULY FUNCTIONING INTERNAL MARKET FOR KNOWLEDGE

1. Open sharing of knowledge, incl. EOSC
2. Data legislation fit for research
3. Reform of research assessment
4. Strengthen research careers
5. Gender equality and inclusiveness
6. Protect academic freedom
7. Better knowledge valorisation
8. Research infrastructures
9. International cooperation, reciprocity

TOGETHER FOR TWIN GREEN AND DIGITAL TRANSITION, AND INCREASING SOCIETY'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ERA

10. R&I Missions and Partnerships for ERA
11. Green energy transformation
12. Transition of industrial ecosystems
13. Empower higher education institutions
14. Bring science closer to society



AMPLIFYING ACCESS TO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION EXCELLENCE ACROSS THE UNION

15. Regional and national R&I ecosystems
16. EU-wide access to excellence
17. Strategic capacity of public RPOs

ADVANCING CONCERTED R&I INVESTMENTS AND REFORMS

18. Coordination national support for ERA
19. ERA monitoring mechanism
20. Prioritisation and coordination of R&I investments and reforms

ERA Action 13: Empower higher education institutions to develop in line with the ERA, and in synergy with EEA – Objectives:

Cooperation for excellence

Raise excellence in science and in value creation through integrated and inclusive cooperation of HEIs

- *By contributing to the European dimension of HEIs (cooperation, alliances of HEIs)*
- *By supporting implementation by HEIs of ERA actions (i.a. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16; esp. digital and careers)*

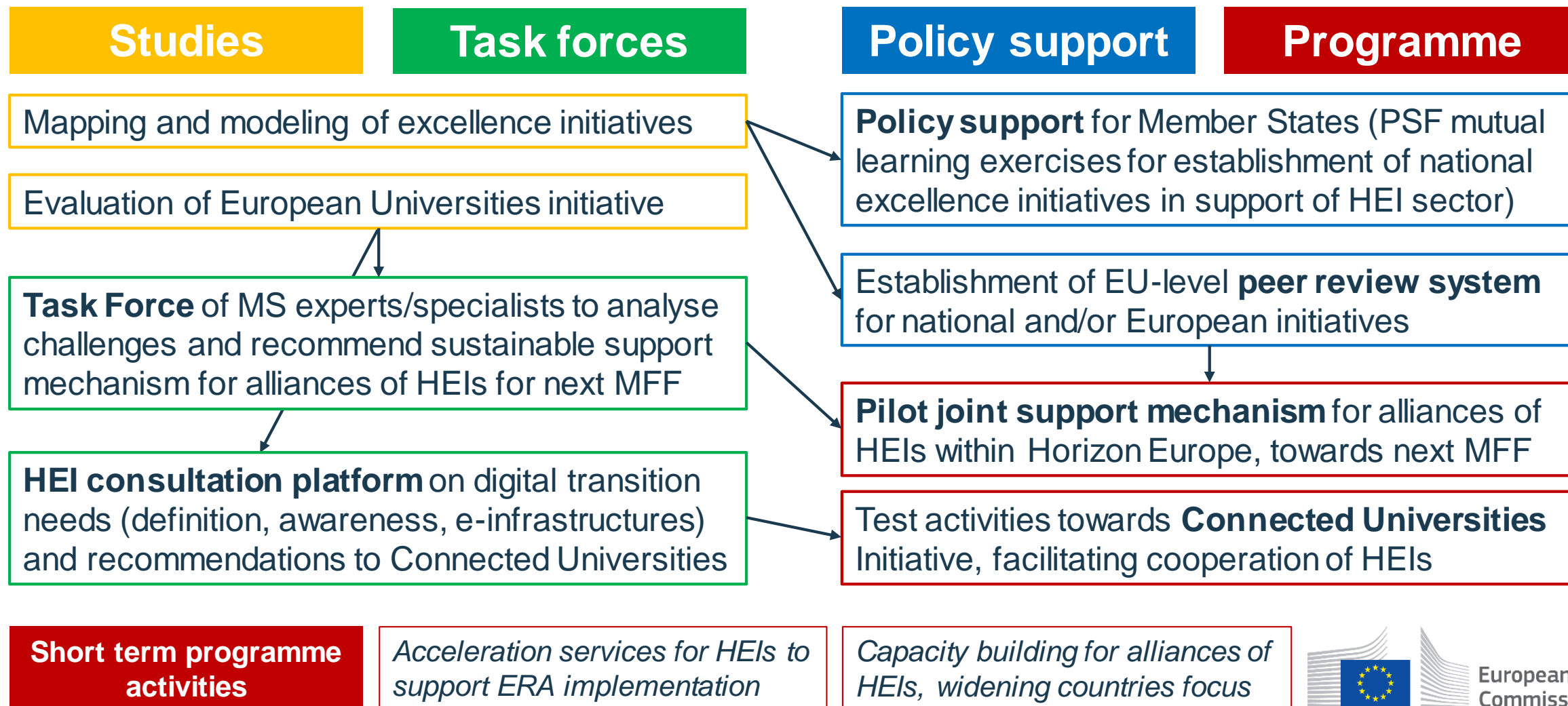
Global competitiveness

Improve global competitiveness and visibility of Europe's higher education institutions

- *By supporting formation of joint critical mass and international cooperation in key R&I policy areas*
- *By establishing a highly competitive, visible, attractive, joint, long-term support system for HEI cooperation*

⇒ Process towards a European Excellence Initiative

ERA Action 13: Proposed umbrella of activities leading to a European Excellence Initiative



What is an excellence initiative?

Mapping & modelling of national excellence initiatives

National 'excellence initiatives' in support of higher education sector

⇒ mapping and modelling of the landscape (study 2022): DE, FR, PL, AT, ES,...

Preliminary analysis of national initiatives:

COMMON PURPOSE:

- creating critical mass in science
- more **international visibility** to top HEI in country
- providing **directionality** to research investments
- introducing long-term commitment by country
- strengthening the economic **impact** of HEIs

COMMON PARAMETERS:

- a **competition** (selection of the best)
- targeting an **excellent science** base and mind-set
- benchmarking with international counterparts
- about **large-scale and long-term funding** for research
- need for **innovative governance** / institutional leadership

Recommendations from stakeholders: DE-FR-PL Rectors, The Guild,...

- Establish **EU competition** (peer review system); support **capacity, institutional change**

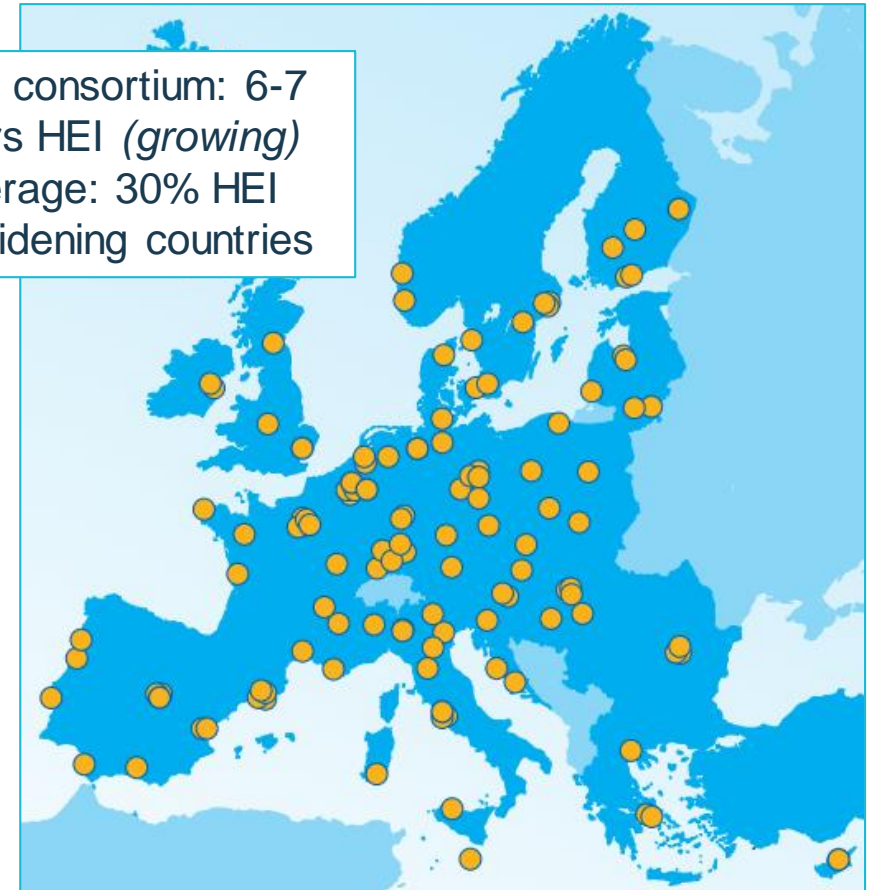
What is the link with the European Universities Initiative?

R&I dimension of pilot alliances supported by Horizon 2020

H2020: Supporting institutional change in R&I through **HEI cooperation**

- Creating critical mass in key areas
- Sharing of capacity and resources
- Open Science & digitisation
- Strengthening research careers
- Reinforcing knowledge transfer capacity, and role/cooperation within innovation ecosystem
- Engagement with citizens, cities, society

- Typical consortium: 6-7 partners HEI (*growing*)
- On average: 30% HEI from widening countries



Mid-term review & assessment (Q3-Q4 2022)

- Impact of the H2020 support? Challenges?
- Role of the inclusive and integrated cooperation of the alliances? (*indications: accelerate further institutional development*)
- Recommendations for future support?

Where could the process lead to?

Excellence Initiatives for Europe

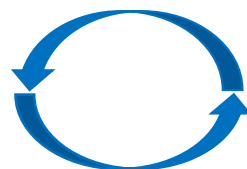
European excellence initiative

Strengthening the European dimension of higher education sector in R&I
(ERA in synergy with EEA)

European alliances of HEIs

Characteristics proposed to pursue:

- Competition ('selection of excellent alliances')
Task Force to define what is excellent: ERA? International?
- Strong EU-level peer-review system (~ERC)
- Holistic approach (all HEI's missions together)
- Aligning resources (EU, national, regional)
Enabling rules and instruments required
- 'Sustainable' support: large-scale, long-term



National excellence initiatives

Empowering higher education sector in R&I dimension
(in synergy with education)

National/regional HEI focus

EU support proposed:

- Mutual learning on the basis of models
- Potential EU peer review mechanism
- ...



Thank you!