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Action

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Executive Summary

This E-note urges UK stakeholders to respond to a European Commission consultation on the future of the European Research Area.

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European Commission Consultation on its vision for the future of the European Research Area

1. This Europe Note summarises and alerts the sector to a European Commission consultation on its vision for the future of the European Research Area. The Commission puts forward its views in a Green Paper entitled 'The European Research Area: New Perspectives'. The UK higher education (HE) Europe Unit urges UK higher education institutions (HEIs) and stakeholder organisations to respond to the consultation to ensure the UK HE sector's views are fully voiced. The Europe Unit will also seek to coordinate a UK HE sector response.

Background information

2. At a meeting of the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000, the Member States of the European Union (EU) set themselves the goal to make the EU by 2010 the: *'most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'*. This agenda is referred to as the Lisbon Strategy.
3. The European Commission proposed the creation of a European Research Area (ERA) in January 2000. The aim of the ERA is to contribute to a better integration and organisation of Europe's scientific and technological area and to the creation of better overall framework conditions for research in Europe.¹ In order to successfully complete the transition to a more knowledge-based economy, the European Council in Barcelona in 2002 set the objective to increase research investment levels in the EU to 3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), of which two thirds should be funded by the private sector, by 2010.

¹ European Commission Communication 'Towards a European Research Area'. The Communication follows earlier working documents and a consultation process in 2005/06: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2000/com2000_0006en01.pdf. For facts and figures on the European Research Area visit:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/128&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

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The Green Paper

4. The European Commission's Green Paper² focuses on factors affecting the performance of research systems in Europe:
 - 7th Framework Programme and its role in developing the ERA;
 - the free movement of persons and the realisation of a single labour market for researchers;
 - international co-operation on issues of a global dimension, involving the EU and third countries;
 - application of intellectual property rights and patenting;
 - linking public funding for research to output and performance factors and
 - implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment.

5. Linked to the Green Paper, the European Commission has published a Communication on 'Improving knowledge transfer between research institutions and industry across Europe'.³ The document sets out ideas on how EU Member States and the wider European Community can act together to overcome some of the existing obstacles to the trans-national dimension of knowledge transfer. It is accompanied by 'Voluntary guidelines for universities and other research institutions to improve their links with industry across Europe'.⁴

UK HE sector response

6. The online consultation will be open from 1 May to the end of August 2007 at the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/questionnaire_en.html. The UK HE Europe Unit urges UK HEIs and other stakeholders to respond to the consultation. The Europe Unit will submit a UK HE response. HEIs and stakeholder organisations are asked to copy any responses to the UK HE Europe Unit or to inform the Unit of any comments for incorporation into the UK HE sector response no later than 17 July 2007. Please email Paul Dowling, EU/Bologna Process Policy Officer, at: paul.dowling@universitiesuk.ac.uk.

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² To view the Green Paper, visit: http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/pdf/era_gp_final_en.pdf

³ Communication on 'Improving knowledge transfer between research institutions and industry across Europe', http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0182en01.pdf

⁴ Voluntary guidelines: http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/sec2007449_en.pdf