



LINKING RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

## **EAIR Strategy 2018 – 2023**

### **Introduction**

EAIR has a unique position as the international Forum for higher education researchers, practitioners, managers and policy-makers. EAIR has organised successful Forums in Rotterdam, Essen, Krems, Birmingham and Porto and looks forward to presenting future Forums in Budapest (2018) and other European cities.

We will support other activities for our membership besides existing ones, such as publishing the journal (Tertiary Education and Management). The association is run efficiently by the office management in Amsterdam and supported by the Executive Committee and president as well as by other active members.

Despite successful Forums and general positive appraisal from the membership for the activities the organisation carries out, it cannot be denied that we have fewer members than a number of years ago and also that we mainly depend on the success of the Forum. This has reflected upon our financial situation, which is currently not worrying, but needs further improvement. The negative trend of the decline of membership/attendance could be stopped by 2017 and remains as one of the major challenges of the future. In the coming years, the strategy will be to sustain the main strengths of the association: creating the opportunity for international networking, offering high quality Forums with trusted hosts at attractive locations and other events and services, attracting additional funding towards European higher education development initiatives and projects and respecting and stimulating diversity. Our strategic challenge will be to do more for our members – under better financial and resource management – and to cooperate with like-minded organisations, and ad-hoc networks to work together and to seeking synergies. In light of these issues Tertiary Education and Management will move to Springer by 2019, and as the editor's position is limited to two terms, EAIR will look for a new editor-in-chief from 2020 onwards.

### **Status of EAIR**

EAIR has established itself since its inception in 1979 as an association of experts and professionals interested in the relationship between research, policy and practice in higher education. EAIR has developed from its roots as a European model of the US-based Association for Institutional Research (AIR), widening its sphere of interest to policy at all levels, institutional, national and international. Although the initials refer to institutional research, EAIR formally added 'The European Higher Education Society' to its logo and then appended the strap-line 'Linking Research, Policy and Practice'. This reflects the direction that EAIR has taken: it crosses boundaries between types of activities and seeks a mix of researchers, lecturers, administrators, managers, decision- and policy-makers. Crossing boundaries means sharing best policy and management practices, learning from peers and exchanging and reflecting upon research findings. At the same time, we actively seek partnerships with like-minded organisations and associations.



LINKING RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

## **Mission and aims of EAIR**

Preamble: EAIR is a European society whose interests encompass higher education and a wide international perspective.

Mission: The mission of EAIR is to support research and development in higher education research, policy and practice, to the general benefit of higher education.

Aims: The following aims should be read with reference to institutional, national and international contexts, as appropriate.

- To reflect, discuss and utilize research in higher education.
- To promote the development of institutional management, planning and policy implementation.
- To disseminate information that supports policy-making, policy implementation and good practice in higher education.
- To support the membership by providing opportunities for networking and professional development in the field of higher education.

EAIR seeks to achieve its aims by:

- Organising an annual Forum bringing together students, researchers, policy makers, leaders, administrators and practitioners.
- Publishing the peer-reviewed journal 'Tertiary Education and Management' which may include high quality papers from the annual Forum and other appropriate contributions. EAIR may support other publications too in addition to TEAM.
- Organising seminars and networking opportunities of interest to specific groups of the EAIR membership, involving non-members where appropriate. These may involve cooperation with other organisations.
- Providing a variety of opportunities for networking and professional development of members and other interested parties in the various fields of higher education.
- Initiating, encouraging, taking part and actively supporting comparative research and development initiatives on issues in higher education in Europe and elsewhere.
- Cooperating and exchanging information with relevant organisations.
- Providing other services to the membership, such as a membership directory; online databases; and electronic copies of Forum presentations.

## **Membership**

EAIR being an association of experts and professionals in higher education, membership is crucial for the development of the association and its activities. Pro-actively engaging members in structured network activities and promoting a sense of belonging to a high profile and influential association in the higher education landscape from the foundations of EAIR's strategy.

Creating network opportunities, delivering current, critical comment regarding developments in higher education, and respecting and reflecting diversity are highly valued features of EAIR activity. The cultural capital of the EAIR community should be leveraged to attract new members and consolidate the existing membership. EAIR should recognise that while it is a European association at heart, the community extends



LINKING RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

beyond the continent. The EAIR Forum should promote topics of greatest interest to members: quality assurance; institutional research; leadership; and institutional governance and management. But EAIR should also embrace and promote emergent and controversial themes relevant to higher education.

EAIR should work in partnership with the membership. The association should be collectively owned and the strategy shared. EAIR must continue to develop approaches that promote dialogue and engagement with the members. The membership should take an active role in determining the direction of the association. Open discussion should be promoted on the website and social media used to develop and strengthen networks. Projects should be developed that support sharing and adoption of practice. It is recognised that in recent years maintaining the membership numbers has been challenging. Competition from other conferences has reduced attendance at the Forum. Consideration should be given to approaches that promote partnership working with neighbourhood associations and build on shared values and interests. Affiliations could be reflected in membership fees and the timing of subscription renewal should be aligned with conference fees to maximise engagement. Furthermore the strategy should be focused on retaining existent EAIR members by offering them interesting and relevant services and a sense of belonging to an association that really needs their input. Obviously this does not exclude the need to attract new members. An effort will be made to broaden the 'usual' membership, going beyond Europe and attracting members from emerging economies.

The association website and marketing material need to be strengthened to ensure that they play a critical role. For the upcoming period an effort must be made to improve these mechanisms to disseminate EAIR's mission, aims and activities.

EAIR is predominantly an association of academics and managers/administrators. Furthermore the large majority of its members are older than 35 years. So, for the upcoming period an effort will be made to further encourage involvement from:

- Policy-makers both from national ministries and at European level. This will be reflected in the forum programme.
- Policy-makers at different NGOs with interests in higher education development.
- Young(er) researchers and administrators (at junior levels). This will be reflected in a reduced membership fee.

EAIR is relatively unique in offering the opportunity for networking across countries, disciplines, areas of interest and job roles, which is an aspect that has made EAIR successful and which we will continue to emphasise. It is also characterised by a warm and friendly atmosphere that has even led to the slogan: "A Forum with a Smile". These EAIR characteristics must be preserved in order to maintain the uniqueness of the association and the diversity of its membership.

### **The Annual Forum**

EAIR's key activity has been, and continues to be, its Annual Forum. Approximately half of the members regularly attend it and the other half of the participants are newcomers. EAIR will continue on-line access to Forum materials. In the interests of securing good keynotes and high quality tracks, EAIR will maintain and review its revised keynote guidelines, track chair selection procedures and general instructions on an annual basis as part of the Forum planning process.



LINKING RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

The Forum programme has changed in recent years from “track view” to “slot view” and this will be retained as it is positively evaluated by the participants. Other aspects of the Programme will be kept under annual review as part of normal planning cycles as EAIR is committed to innovation in relation to presentation and participation formats alike. These innovations will include consideration of the ways in which new technologies can enhance the quality of the Forum experience for participants and presenters alike. As part of this activity EAIR will reduce its environmental impact and improve accessibility for disabled participants by offering electronic Forum documentation alongside hard-copy Forum documentation and by offering pre- and post-Forum follow-up activities using Apps and/or webinars as well as regional interest groups.

EAIR will strengthen the position of the Annual Forum in Europe and beyond. Through our distinctive approach linking research, policy and practice, we will engage our membership in seeking new opportunities through which to assume a higher profile role in higher education and society at large. In part this will involve exploring new partnerships for the organisation and delivery of the Forum to increase levels of participation by both European and International higher education practitioners, researchers and policy makers. EAIR will also seek to make more effective use of existing networks such as Research Gate to boost recognition and awareness of the Network.

EAIR will introduce key assessment criteria into its Forum planning and delivery from 2018 onwards to drive this agenda forward. These criteria will inform our discussions on Forum design and redesign. These criteria are:

- Maximising technological affordances.
- Intelligent partnership working with allied networks.
- High levels of interactivity and engagement for participants.
- A place for student voices and perspectives.
- Parity of esteem for the triumvirate of research, policy and practice.
- Astute public relations and participant relations management.

## **Publications**

### *Tertiary Education and Management*

By the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2019 the Journal is transferred from Routledge back to Springer, to ensure a strong(er) financial situation for the association.

Tertiary Education and Management is the journal of EAIR. It continues to focus on research that reflects the EAIR strap-line: linking research, policy and practice in higher education. However, the journal also publishes articles that are of broader interest to the HE research community.

In the coming years, the Executive Committee will need to find a new editor-in-chief, for the current editor will have served the maximum of two terms (of four years each). Together with the Executive Committee, the new editor will aim to develop the journal further, particularly in terms of a healthy number of high quality submissions and in terms of the recognition of the academic reputation of the journal. With respect to the latter, the journal currently figures in the second quartile of the Education Journal rankings ([www.scopus.com](http://www.scopus.com)).



## Forum books

In the recent past, few members have explored the possibility of publishing in the EAIR Monographs series (e-book series on the EAIR web site). In fact, the latest monograph appeared in 2009. However, another publication series – an annual edited volume, stemming largely from the Forum presentations and papers – was developed from the 2013 Stavanger EAIR Forum and has appeared annually thereafter. It is a valuable, well-received resource and an important tangible output of the Forum. Both seasoned researchers and newcomers to the field are offered the opportunity to contribute. It is the intention to continue publishing an annual volume.

## EAIR website & Social Media

The website of the Association is a fundamental channel for the members as well as for the outside world. In reflection upon the overall strategy the website should support the Association to fulfil its mission. In the coming years EAIR strives to further develop available social media opportunities, to realise an interactive podium for members and conference participants.

The EAIR e-strategy will focus on the following:

- In general, social media will be used to improve the interaction between EAIR and its members, to position it as a living and modern association, and to attract new members.
- EAIR will keep paying attention to further e-content development for the website (e.g. EAIR-ings, newsletters, news alerts, e-papers, Forum advertisement etc.).
- The website will be migrated from HTTP to HTTPS in order to create a modern platform for members, conference participants and new members to interact.
- The HTTPS website will also allow EAIR to develop more secure ways to share e-content and to establish custom-made and personal membership e-services in a protected environment.
- Facebook and Twitter will play a central role in advertising the Forum and other activities as well as keeping in touch with members.
- EAIR will explore the possibilities in the near future to launch a conference app and to establish a YouTube channel and/or do streaming.

## Other activities and services

Proactively there is a need to develop a set of additional services and activities and/or improve existing ones. In current competition and in economically dire times EAIR should cease dysfunctional operations and concentrate on strategically beneficial actions as well as cost control:

- Focus on relevance and organize joint seminars with partner organisations and associations which are of interest to EAIR members, given our strategic focus and mission.
- Place a specific emphasis on attracting early stage researchers, which would provide us with long term strategic benefits and help secure our future.
- Abandon the development of an EAIR directory, as there are several search engines and effective means for spreading information available.



LINKING RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

## **EAIR finances and operational management**

Due to the involvement of its members, its well-attended Forums and the positive relations with Forum hosts, EAIR has been an independent and autonomous association for almost forty years, able to finance its organization, its secretariat and its activities. Nevertheless EAIR is still a relatively small and financially vulnerable organization. It's absolutely necessary to budget carefully and operate very economically.

In the upcoming policy term 2018-2023 the following performance indicators will be pursued:

- To strengthen its financial base by generate more sources of income. With that the EAIR wants to effect that she depends to a lesser extent on a financial good Forum-result for the financial stability of EAIR. The aim for 2023 is that the effect of the Forum-result on the yearly EAIR-result is not more than 60%.
- To maintain a sufficient financial reserve at least equal to the amount of the annual turnover. The aim for 2023 is a financial reserve of 150 K€.
- To perform as a stable association it's necessarily to have a sustainable amount of members. The aim for 2023 is to have at least 600 members. (Intermediate aims: 2018-325 / 2019-400 / 2020-450 / 2021-500 / 2022-550).