

August 2025

Dear colleagues and friends in CESAER,

I am writing to outline my motivation and vision for a second term as President of CESAER.

It has been an honour and a pleasure to serve as your President since the start of 2024. Each time I have engaged with one of our member universities throughout that period, I have come away enormously impressed by the breadth and the quality of the work that is underway within these institutions and by the impact that this delivers to the world. I have also seen how this impact is amplified by our engagement within CESAER. The contributions of our task forces and our governance bodies are outstanding, and I have seen the influence in Brussels and elsewhere of the outputs that we produce from this work. I have witnessed on many occasions the dedication and ability of our Secretary General and executive team, and the very high regard in which they are held by those who interact with them. I also want to record my appreciation for the culture of collegiality and friendship that exists across our organisation.

All of these impressions give me great confidence in the value of what we have created within CESAER. However, this is not a time for complacency, given the unprecedented disruption faced by universities around the world. I have written recently in [Science | Business](#) about some of these disruptions: challenges of demographics, deglobalisation and digitalisation, deficits in university finances, growing distrust of universities, and divisions in society becoming manifest on our campuses. Not all universities are experiencing these disruptors to the same extent, but we are all experiencing some combination of them.

Europe is also facing significant challenges, some of them identified in the reports of Mario Draghi, Enrico Letta and our CESAER colleague Manuel Heitor last year, and others arising through separate geopolitical developments.

I truly believe that at this time of disruption it is more important than ever for universities of science and technology across Europe to have a strong and united voice. CESAER has a vital role to play in this by bringing member institutions together to identify and implement best practice, to address shared challenges, and to grow their partnerships and their reputations. CESAER can also be bolder and more ambitious in our advocacy efforts for the interests of our members and in how we build support for all that universities of science and technology bring to the world at this time of change.

A particular priority over the next two years will be to bring the voice of our membership to discussions around the successor to Horizon Europe and the new Competitiveness Fund within the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034. I believe that we have already established ourselves as a trusted voice in these conversations, and it is time to build on this. The Irish EU Presidency in the second half of 2026 will come at a crucial moment, and I would hope to find synergies between my role in University College Dublin and, if elected again, in CESAER.

I want all of our member institutions to be proud of their membership of CESAER and to derive very clear value from that membership. Our draft Strategy 2030 states that CESAER will continue to advocate with clarity, inspire with integrity, and lead with purpose. I hope that the same can be said of my Presidency, if you entrust me with this role for a second term.

With every good wish,

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