

EAIR – European Association of Institutional Research

History, structure and themes.

Homework

by

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EAIR – European Association of Institutional Research

Table of contents

1. Introduction: What is EAIR?	3
2. Organization of EAIR	3
2.1. <i>Structure</i>	3
2.2. <i>Clientele</i>	4
2.3. <i>Self Portrait and Offers for Members</i>	4
3. History of EAIR	5
3.1. <i>Institutional Research in the US and Europe</i>	5
3.2. <i>The History of EAIR</i>	6
4. TEAM – the Journal of EAIR	8
4.1. <i>History of TEAM</i>	8
4.2. <i>Issues of TEAM</i>	9
5. Forums and Seminars	10
5.1. <i>Forums, their Themes and Subthemes</i>	10
5.2. <i>Seminars</i>	12
6. Changes over the time and Future of EAIR	12
6.1. <i>EAIR today</i>	12
6.2. <i>The future of EAIR</i>	13
Appendix	14
Statement of Affirmation	17

1. Introduction: What is EAIR?

EAIR is the acronym for European Association for Institutional Research. According to their constitution EAIR is an association for professionals in the area of higher education management and for academics doing research in this area. The constitution states that “the name of the Association is EAIR – The European Higher Education Society” and claims that it is the only association of this kind (CONSTITUTION OF EAIR). EAIR is an association of individuals.

EAIR’s objectives are 1) to encourage research in the field of higher education in Europe, 2) to support the interaction between higher education research, policy and practice, 3) to promote the development of institutional management, planning and policy implementation, 4) to disseminate information on good practice in higher education and finally 5) to cooperate and exchange information with related organizations (CONSTITUTION OF EAIR).

Teichler summarizes these functions and points out that EAIR’s exclusively function is to strengthen the interaction between researchers, policy makers and practitioners (TEICHLER, 2003). For that purpose of networking EAIR offers networking to its members via various means, such as an annual conference, called “forum”, a newsletter, the journal TEAM – Tertiary Education and Management and an on-line directory with contact details about all members, only to name a few.

2. Organization of EAIR

2.1. Structure

EAIR is structured as an association and it has more than 500 members mainly from Europe but also from other countries all over the world. EAIR is based in The Netherlands with its head office in Amsterdam. The association is financed by member’s fees (118 Euro for a full membership) and donations (CONSTITUTION OF EAIR, HOMEPAGE OF EAIR).

EAIR has the usual committee members of an association: A president promotes the mission and objectives of EAIR. An executive committee appoints him or her for a three-year term. The executive committee consists of nine elected members and is responsible for decisions and administration. The members, who are elected for a three-year term, appoint a chair, a Vice-Chair, a secretary, a treasurer and any other officer out of their midst. Between their regular meetings a steering committee is responsible for the business.

2.2. *Clientele*

EAIR is an organization from and for its members. It wants to give a forum mainly for professionals of universities and higher education institutes (CONSTITUTION OF EAIR). The themes of EAIR make it also relevant for policy makers in government ministries. Teichler categorizes the members into three groups: researchers, policy makers and practitioners (TEICHLER 2003).

EAIR is an association of individuals. Only individual persons can become a member, a membership for institutions is not possible. Membership is categorized according to the financial situation and the member's country of origin. The home institution of a member is only taken into account if there are more than four members of one institution: then EAIR grants the fifth member free membership. Apart from the applied membership EAIR recognizes awarded membership, which can be awarded to members or former members who have made distinguished contributions to realizing the objectives of EAIR.

EAIR members are primarily but not exclusively out of Europe. South America, Asia, Australasia and Africa are also represented. This surely reflects the increasing activities in Eastern Europe and the other continents after 1990, at that time EAIR had a "mother function" for professionals in these regions.

2.3. *Self Portrait and Offers for Members*

By its own claim, EAIR is Europe's only true Higher Education Society. The title "EAIR – The European Higher Education Society" emphasizes this and indeed, it is unique in Europe (BEGG AND BELANGER 2003; NEAVE 2003). A few other organizations were founded after EAIR's birth, but they differ in their objectives or members. For example EAU, the European Association of Universities, whose members are mainly institutions or IMHE, the Institutional Management of Higher Education, an initiative of OECD which leads joint research projects.

In its objectives EAIR emphasizes encouraging research and promotion of institutional management with the idea of networking its members and spreading information among them and into higher education institutes. According to that policy, EAIR has created a new slogan: "EAIR – The Higher Education Society Linking Research, Policy and Practice" (EAIR STRATEGY).

Networking and its benefits are very strongly emphasized. On its homepage EAIR states the following benefits for its members.

- 1) *TEAM*
- 2) *Newsletter published twice a year*
- 3) *On-line directory with contact details of all members*
- 4) *Reduction to the annual forum*
- 5) *Nomination or election to committees possible, here one can express ones opinion during the General Meeting of the Forum.*

These benefits are usual outcomes of every lively association and in other communities they are not emphasized that much. These themes have a great importance to EAIR and they give a hint of history and the reasons of its formation and the situation of the institutional researchers community in the early days of EAIR: Institutional researchers had no specific profession in these days and rarely had colleagues in their institutions. Their work was interdisciplinary and they had to deal with many groups inside and outside higher education institutions, many of which had a strong corporate identity. This magnified their isolation further and our lonely fighters lacking exchange were grateful for a place where they could share common themes.

3. History of EAIR

The association was founded in a time, where no organization for professionals of higher education researchers and managers existed in Europe. Today there are a few more associations, indeed, for example Institutional Management of Higher Education (IMHE, under the umbrella of OECD), European Association of Universities (EAU) and others. In the mentioned associations, institutions – and not individuals – are members. Being the only association that gives a home to individuals it can be seen as reason why EAIR emphasizes so much the service of networking for its members.

3.1. Institutional Research in the US and Europe

EAIR was founded as a spin-off from the American AIR after a process of secession. Let us have a brief look at the different situations in Europe and North America to understand the origin of EAIR. In the early days of EAIR the setting in Europe and the situation of its members was very different compared to that in North America: Universities in Europe lived the Humboldtian ideal and (were) developed in close relationship to politics and government. Financed and developed by public means they never had such a strong need to fulfill stakeholder requirements. On the other hand, American universities were used to reflect the standing and repute of the establishment in the community and their ties to local

communities were strong. Universities found themselves in a competition and institutional research was seen as an “internal audit” (NEAVE, 2003). The clientele of AIR had a natural position in universities and they never had to justify their work. So they had a deeply positive self-conception about their work.

After the student movement in the end of the 1960s many traditions of the old European universities were abolished. One of the consequences of this was that students and staff obtained the right of co-determination. The movement towards mass higher education required new and structured programs as well as monitoring tools. They were established by the government such as in Spain and France or by the institutions themselves, as in Sweden and Great Britain.

3.2. *The History of EAIR*

“EAIR became an independent membership organization on 1989”, claims the association in its self-portrait (SELF-PORTRAIT OF EAIR). This simple declaration conceals a long period of foundation. Let us have a look back to the roots of EAIR, that go back to 1979, when the young movement made the first steps out of the arms of its mother association AIR.

Indeed, the year 1979 is regarded as the year of foundation: 25 years later, in 2003 EAIR celebrated its silver jubilee. On that occasion several reviews and analyses have been published: the special publication “The Dialogue between Higher Education Research and Practice – 25 Years of EAIR” collects further articles about the history and the future of EAIR. Further analyses of the history are to be found in TEAM Vol. 11, No. 1 (BEGG, 2003; NEAVE, 2003). Many of these articles and papers are enjoyable flow offs of how the authors, mostly members of EAIR for many years and higher education researchers themselves see and write about research on higher education. One feels reminded of the film “Being John Malkovitch” (1999 by Spike Jonze, regie and Steve Golin, producer). In this film persons can enter John Malkovich’s head through a mysterious gate. They see the world through his eyes and can manipulate his behavior. When Malkovich recognizes this, he wants to enter his head himself. He manages it and what he sees reminds of a short circuit: he sees himself, mirrored hundredfold. He is absolutely confused about what is true and what is his imagination.

In fact, the texts about the history of EAIR are not fiction. But some of them are written by long-time members, who helped to build EAIR up from the very beginning and the texts are sometimes very personal and to some extent amiable.

The most important authors writing about EAIR's history are BEGG, BELANGER, KEHM and TEICHLER. In their paper "EAIR in the Making" BEGG AND BELANGER illuminate the history from the early days of EAIR and describe the details of the raising of EAIR out of a wing of AIR and how it grew into a new association. The mother association AIR, not founded earlier than 1965, grew fast counting 1200 members by 1970 already, with most of them from North America and some from Canada. When the association became bigger and bigger AIR founded the so-called International Activities Subcommittee (IAS). They tried to recruit new members from foreign countries, especially from Europe and started a "Love Boat Tour" from 1975-1979: Every summer a board member of AIR joined a small international group interested in Higher Education. However, the delegates had not enough experience in the international arena. They assumed, that Europeans were not doing any institutional research at all and so this attempt was not successful (BEGG AND BELANGER, 2003).

BEGG AND BELANGER consider that the idea of a European Association was born at the San Diego annual forum of AIR in 1979. Some European representatives, amongst them Claude Cossu, Professor of Management Science at the Université de Paris, discussed to establish the First AIR European Forum. A few months later the board members accepted this reluctantly. They appointed the European representatives as "regional correspondents".

The first meeting of this regional forum took place on November 16, 1979 with twenty-six members from twelve countries in Sorbonne. It turned out, that the Europeans had not been familiar with what was called "institutional research". They knew "academic" or "disciplinary" research at the best. The title of the meeting mirrors the self-defining process of that time: "Institutional Research in North America and Europe". Like the American model, EAIR began to set up annual meetings from that time on.

In those years the European activities gained more and more self-confidence: the annual meetings became more professional with a well-prepared program accompanied from social events, in a gentle competition of the host institutions. In 1984 "winds of secession were rising" (BEGG AND BELANGER, 2003) and Peter Maasen, a CHEPS researcher and association member, established a temporary secretariat at CHEPS (Center for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente, The Netherlands), which was changed into a permanent secretariat only a few years later.

This long phase of emancipation terminated in 1989, when the EAIR was constituted. BEGG AND BELANGER compare the young association EAIR to a fully fledged bird ready to fly the nest (BEGG AND BELANGER, 2003).

From 1990 on the association became further established: increasing participation of Eastern Europe, the extended use of the World Wide Web, 400 participants at the Lyon forum. One by one, further services were offered such as a directory of membership, a newsletter that was circulated twice a year and ad hoc seminars on hot topics. From April 1995 on EAIR has provided its members its journal TEAM, which is published four times a year.

Today EAIR counts more than 500 members from 40 different countries all over the world, including South America, Asia, Australasia, Afrika (SELF-PORTRAIT OF EIAR).

4. TEAM – the Journal of EAIR

4.1. History of TEAM

The four-volume journal of EAIR is called TEAM – Tertiary Education and Management. Its founder and first editor for many years was RODDY BEGG. After his retirement from that position he describes TEAM's history of origin in a personal reminiscence. With a wind in his eye he relates how he came to and kept this job: he considered it as a penalty for suggesting the idea. Not feeling well prepared he agreed in 1994 to edit the journal "for the first year" (BEGG, 2005). Finally he retired from this job after nine years in 2004!

The idea of a regular journal came up in the middle of the 1990s when the amount of papers of the annual forums became higher and higher. It was not appropriate any more to bind the several hundred pages of the presentations and present them at the following years forum. On the other hand Some of the presentations were considered to be worth offering to a wider readership.

Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, published the first volume of TEAM in April 1995. The current publisher is Springer Science and Business Media B.V., the former Kluwer Academic Publishes B.V. It was planned to publish TEAM twice a year, but soon there was enough material to produce four issues of 75 pages each a year. Thus, since 1997 TEAM has been published four times a year Today, the chief editor is now Bjorn Stensaker, Oslo and the editors' team has grown to six members. nowadays it is guided by an editorial board of 25 members (BEGG AND BELANGER, 2003).

From the beginning on TEAM was a highly requested journal. Not only 20% of the papers of a forum were published but also many direct submissions were sent to the editor. TEAM has

become a successful journal and KEHM states that it has been able to attract interest beyond the members of the association itself and continues to do so (KEHM 2005).

4.2. *Issues of TEAM*

Retrospective on a ten-year history B. KEHM analyses the main fields of contents of the articles published in TEAM from 1995 to 2004 (KEHM 2005). They represent the dominant issues of higher education in general as well as the topics of the annual forums of EAIR.

The themes KEHM mentions are

- 1) *Leadership and management*
- 2) *Quality*
- 3) *Expansion and mass higher education*
- 4) *Internationalization*
- 5) *New ways of learning*
- 6) *Relationships of higher education and state*
- 7) *Higher education and employment.*

Most of these main topics were discussed from the beginning on and articles about these subjects can be found in the first volumes and are still on the agenda. However, soon most expanded and diversified and thus mirrored the development of higher education. For example the leadership and management theme, focused on institutional issues in the early days, then discussed issues as governance and decision-making and later topics like strategic management (e.g. market orientation, competitiveness and cost reduction) and change management.

Performance indicators and benchmarks had been main topics in the quality discussion. More and more the argument of legibility and accountability was underlying the contributions due to the shift to the higher degrees of institutional autonomy.

Important developments in higher education were also mirrored in the other main topics: The expansion debate, for example, presents themes from mass education in the early volumes to lifelong learning in recent contributions; from “admission” in earlier days to “recruitment” nowadays. Another example is the discussion about internationalization: contributes reach from curriculum development to GATS negotiations.

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of EAIR the former editor RODDY BEGG published the book “The dialogue between Higher Education Research and Practice”. The articles summarize the discussion on the subjects of the past years and give an overview about the

current stage of knowledge as well as the future of the main topics in Higher Education. Again, that will be quality, management self-regulation, economics, expansion and diversification and internationalization (BEGG, 2003).

In the opinion of KEHM some topics are not or in a far too small extent regarded at, for example contributions on administrative matters. Also, there have been only few attempts in agenda setting and KEHM claims for the future that the contents should be in a better balance in terms of representing the clientele of EAIR.

5. Forums and Seminars

5.1. Forums, their Themes and Subthemes

The themes and subthemes of the annual conferences, called “forums” are not as obvious as the topics in TEAM. Of course, the list of annual forums is available at the EAIR head office and the most recent forum are available online (linked from the EAIR-homepage www.eair.nl). However, only the last five forums homepages publish a list of the sessions and their subjects, the so-called tracks (Berlin, Prague, Limerick, Barcelona and Riga).

Therefore, the first approach to find out something about the (changing of the) themes over the years is to compare the titles of the forums. One can assume different main themes behind the titles, like quality, management and so on. I categorized these main subjects into seven groups, according to the main topics KEHM identified for the TEAM articles (see above). The presumable subjects of each forum are put together in a table (see the appendix). Knowing that this is a very vague proceeding, I still dare to say that there are subjects that are more frequently discussed, such as leadership & management, quality, and the relationship of higher education to the state. Other topics, such as employment and new ways of learning are hardly touched; at least they do not appear in the titles of the forums.

Having a closer look to the mentioned track lists of the most recent forums, the picture gets more different. The titles of the forums are pretty general, and they are open to offer various categories of sub themes. For example, the conference in Limerick in 2003 with the title “Building bridges and enhancing experiences” has the following tracks:

- 1) HE in its Context: Local, National & International*
- 2) Governance and Leadership*
- 3) Quality development & Accreditation*
- 4) The Student Experience*

- 5) *HE and the World of Work*
- 6) *Management of HE: Improving Performance*
- 7) *Management of HE: Optimizing Funding.*

Therefore there are many theme categories offered indeed.

The themes are partially mirrored in the journal TEAM and some of the speakers appear in the following year as an author of an article on their forum theme. But TEAM, as mentioned above, goes far beyond that and publishes many other articles that do not have their origin in a speech at the forum.

The first forum, however, has a unique title: “The differences of institutional research in North America and Europe.” It refers to the splitting process and again displays the process of self-finding of EAIR.

The dates for the following conferences of that time were appointed more or less spontaneously. It became practice that one of the attendees extended an invitation to the next conference. The second and third conference took place in London 1980 and Louvain-la Neuve 1981. A warm atmosphere and a familiar spirit had characterized them. Begg and Belanger describe the participants as a community whose members feel like working on and discussing about common topics rather than losing their energy in committees and boards. In comparison to the more homogenous crowd of the AIR meetings, the members were a “fortuitous mélange of institutional researchers, policy analysts, scholars, university and agency executives, industrial executives and governmental officials alike.” (BEGG AND BELANGER 2003). This again mirrors the different cultures of the continents: the high culture of old countries on the one hand, with its universities as society shaping institutions, and an experimental culture of the young continent on the other hand. No class conceit or pride of place poisoned the atmosphere and the missing of borderlines made it easy to come together and encourages especially young professionals to become involved into this community.

But this relaxed atmosphere also has its risks: firstly, the quality of research might not be on the level as it is required by peers researchers. Secondly EAIR, might put immediate areas of interest on the agenda and neglect fundamental or future issues of higher education as other similar organized fora do (TEICHLER 2003).

5.2. *Seminars*

In the last years EAIR has organized joint seminars with partner organizations, such as AIR and EAIE. These seminars, which took place in Amsterdam, are not organized regularly. The seminars till now were held in June 2003 (Workforce Development and Higher Education; together with AIR) and in April 2005 (Internationalization in Higher Education; together with EAIE) (www.eair.nl). This indicates a development towards a more specialized program with selected topics and experts from other associations. Potentially a seminar and “training” aspect will complete the networking aspect of EAIR.

6. **Changes over the time and Future of EAIR**

6.1. *EAIR today*

Founded as an association of researchers and practitioners the early years of EAIR were dominated by intensive self-reflection.

After this identification process EAIR has now arrived in a new period of self-confidence. This can be seen in their paper of strategy 2003-2006, which states that one aim is “to underscore its profile and provide a better understanding what the Association stands for”. This new self-awareness becomes manifest in a new slogan: “EAIR – the Higher Education Society Linking Research, Policy and Practice” (EAIR STRATEGY).

However, one can still find something of the exceptional union: BEGG AND BELANGER describe it in their article: “EAIR has resisted the temptation of becoming a hotel based conference and remains institution based with the academic sessions in a university’s regular teaching accommodation, and cheaper accommodation options in the University’s student residences.” Also the familial atmosphere persisted, which is a result of the job situation of its members: “its adherents often have lonely jobs in their home institutions. They like to huddle together for inspiration (if not for warmth) each year, and – for many members – the EAIR colleagues are more vital to their professional survival than those in their home institutions” (BEGG AND BELANGER 2003).

The relation to the “old” AIR became very friendly and cooperative. Joint seminars are organized and high representatives of AIR join the EAIR forums every year. Aside sister organizations on other continents evolved, to whom EAIR is in exchange (BEGG AND BELANGER 2003).

6.2. *The future of EAIR*

After the 25 years lasting foundation phase new scopes of duties are becoming important and a stronger diversification is expected. Still the main issue is clearly identifiable: Networking and offering a platform for a professionals' organization of many different professions. That is why the EAIR forum is still regarded as the most important event of the association (EAIR STRATEGY). It shall be improved by e.g. smaller round table discussions and other instruments.

Nowadays EAIR has a more professional understanding of its duties as an association and sees new functions to fulfill: One important issue is to recruit new members, especially from South and East Europe. Another task is to form policy makers junior and middle level administrators. Moreover, a task that resembles on alumni-activities of old institutions, trying to keep members or gain lapsed members back. The offers for its members will be diversified: It is planned to establish interest groups, for example for Bologna process or internationalization, and to set up regional networks. Further offers shall be an "EAIR News service", an "EAIR Question-Answer Service" and a mentor service.

In matters of content EAIR intends to strengthen its function as link between policy and practice in Higher Education based on research. Important themes of the future will be deregulation, globalization and decentralization. In order to meet the special interests and diversifying demands of its members, EAIR plans to organize special seminars and networking of special groups (EAIR STRATEGY).

Teichler notices a changing of the context of higher education research: growth of bodies with similar activities, increase of higher education professionals and a growth of knowledge production in higher education and related subjects, such as statistics and evaluation. He claims the adaptation to these new circumstances. In his eyes the research function must be strengthened in order to provide professionals with systematic knowledge and last but not least to serve them as a "strong home" (TEICHLER 2003).

Appendix

Table 1: Titles and Themes of the Annual Forums

Year and Place	Title	Category of themes						
		Leadership & management	Quality	Expansion and mass HE	Internationalization	New ways of learning	Relationships of HE - state	HE and employment
1979, Paris, France	Institutional Research in North America and Europe	x					x	
1980, London, UK	From Institutional Evaluation to Catastrophe Theory	x						
1981, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium	The Pyramid of Decision and Other Approaches	x						
1982, Uppsala, Sweden	The Universities in a Changing World – Adaptions or Guidance?	x		x			x	
1983, Maastricht, The Netherlands	The University as an Open System	x		x				
1984 Brussels, Belgium	Beyond Retrenchment: Planning for Quality and Efficiency		x					
1985 Copenhagen, Daenmark	Universities in the Melting Pot: Institutional Research as a Tool for Change	x					x	
1986, Loughenborough, UK	Information for Excellence		x					
1987, Enschede, The Netherlands	The Changing Relationship between Government and Higher Education: The Management Challenge						x	
1988, Bergen, Norway	Evaluation of Teaching and Research in Planning and Management of Institutions of Higher Education	x	x					
1989, Trier, Germany	Towards Excellence in European Higeher Education in the 90's		x					
1990, Lyon, France	Quality and Communication for Improvement		x					
1991, Edingburgh Scotland	Managing the Higher Education Environment	x					x	
1992, Brussel, Belgium	Higher Education in Europe for Tomorrow: Strategy for Cooperation or Competition?				x			
1993,. Turku, Finland	Higher Education in a Changing Environment: Regional, National and Trans-National Issues				x			
1994, Amsterdam, The Netherlands	Less Administration, More Governance: Professional Leadership for Academic Professionals	x					x	
1995, Zürich, Switzerland	Quality and Communication for Improvement		x					
1996, Budapest Hungary	Higher Education in the Market Place: Strategies of Survival and Success	x						
1997, Warwick, UK	The University of the Twenty First Century	x	x				x	
1998 Basque Country, Spain	Higher Education Institutions: Open to Innovation, Willing to learn		x	x		x		
1999, Lund, Sweden	New Realities – Renewed Institutions	x						
2000, Berlin, Germany	Institutional Responses to Mass HE: The Challenge of Social Change and Technological Development	x		x				
2001, Porto, Portugal	Diversity and Harmonization in Higher Education				x			
2002, Prague, Czech Republic	Crossing National, Structural and Technological Borders: Development and Management in Higher Education	x	x		x			
2003, Limerick, Ireland	Building Bridges and Enhancing Experience	x					x	
2004, Barcelona, Spain	Knowledge Society Crossroads	x					x	
2005, Riga, Lativa	Enduring Values and New Challenges in Higher Education	x						
planned: 2006, Rome, Italy	Who runs Higher Education in a Competitive World	x						

Abbreviations

AIR: Association for Institutional Research

CHEPS: Center for Higher Education Policy Studies. University of Twente, The Netherlands.

EAIR: European Association of Institutional Research

GATS: General Agreement on Trade and Services.

IMHE: Institutional Management in Higher Education (an OECD program)

NIFU: Norwegian Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education, Oslo, Norway.

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Named Persons and Authors and their functions at EAIR

(all information have been collected from the quoted papers and journals)

RODDY BEGG: First editor of TEAM (since 1995), later Editor in chief (until 2003). Member of Executive committee for 9 years as Secretary, Vice-Chairman and Chairman.

CHARLES BELANGER: Many years of outstanding positions in Institutional Research and university administration and leadership, e.g. Université de Montreal, Canada. Now teaching and consulting activities. As AIR Board member he led the fortunes of the "European Wing" until 1982.

BJORN STENSAKER: Senior researcher at NIFU, Oslo, Norway. Editor of TEAM since 2003.

LEONARD KAIL: University of Surrey, UK. Chairman of the first executive Committee 1990-92.

BARBARA KEHM: Center for research on Higher Education and Work, University of Kassel, Germany. Member of EAIR Executive Committee since 1998, Secretary since 1999, Co-Editor of TEAM since 1996.

PETER MAASEN: Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS), University of Twente, The Netherlands. First secretary of EAIR.

GUY NEAVE: Director of research at the International Association of Universities, Paris, France. Professor of Comparative Education Policy Studies, Twente University, the Netherlands. Current president of EAIR.

Dokuments of EIAR

(All documents available at EAIR Secretariat, Herengracht 487, 1017 BT Amsterdam, The Netherlands, eairstat@eairstat.nl or via Internet, www.eairstat.nl)

EIAR – THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION SOCIETY. Brief self-portrait.

CONSTITUTION OF EAIR.

EAIR STRATEGY 2003-2006.

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