

## ERA Policy Agenda<sup>1</sup>

**Type of Document:** Annex to the Council conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area

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### Policy document summary

The the 2022-2024 ERA Policy Agenda (hereinafter: Agenda) specifies the list of voluntary actions for the period 2022-2024 that shall contribute to the priority areas defined in the Council Recommendation on the Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe. To this end, it sets out relevant action concerning: (1) the deepening a truly functioning internal market for knowledge; (2) taking up together the challenges posed by the twin green and digital transition, and increasing societies participation in the ERA; (3) amplifying access to research and innovation excellence across the Union; and (4) advancing concerted research an innovation investments and reforms.

### Disclaimer

This brief overview is intended to summarize the essential points from the EU institutions' policy document that are relevant for research performing and innovation institutions, without providing the full extent of information available in the original document. The focus of the overview is put on initiatives regarding circulation of highly qualified staff, especially researchers, relevant to the European Research Area. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission.

Actions that are envisaged to contribute to the priority area of **'deepening a truly functioning internal market for knowledge'** include:

**(1) Enabling the open sharing of knowledge and the re-use of research outputs, including through the development of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)**

With a view to establish long-term open science practices, the Agenda envisages the development of a trusted, open and free repository of data and other digital research outputs in the form of EOSC (as a “Web of FAIR data and services”). By enabling machine readability and re-usability of scientific data and other research outputs, the EOSC will contribute to reproducibility of research and establish a seamless procedure of publishing, finding, and re-using the data, tools and services in the European research landscape.

**(2) Making proposal for an EU copyright and data legislative and regulatory framework fit for research**

The Agenda calls for the thorough analysis of EU copyright and data legislation by the European Commission in order to identify obstacles in the existing legislative and non-legislative framework that hinder the effective access and re-use of scientific publications and data for research purposes.

**(3) Advancing towards the reform of the assessment system for research, researchers and institutions to improve their quality, performance and impact**

<sup>1</sup> You can access the original document here: [Council of the European Union. \(2021, November 19\). Conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area \(ERA\) \(14126/21\).](#)

The Agenda addresses the inappropriateness of the current methods for assessing the quality, performance and impact of the research and their fragmented nature across ERA countries. The Agenda specifies that the reform of the current research assessment system shall include introduction of more appropriate assessment criteria and processes as well as acknowledge the diversity of countries, disciplines, research cultures, research maturity levels, missions of institutions, and career paths.

#### **(4) Promoting attractive and sustainable research careers, balanced talent circulation and international, transdisciplinary and inter-sectoral mobility across the ERA**

The Agenda calls for the proposal of a new comprehensive legislative framework that will reform the original European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The new framework will aim at:

- addressing the issue of precariousness of working conditions of researchers;
- strengthening skills, employability and the attractiveness of research careers;
- promoting inter-sectoral mobility and balanced geographical mobility;
- addressing issue related to research assessment;
- and encouraging the full recognition of research profession.

The following initiatives will complement the reformed legislative framework:

- the ERA4You initiative (aims to contribute to sectoral and geographically more balanced research talent mobility)
- ERA Talent Platform (online one-stop-shop gateway to EURAXESS services including HRS4R, RESEVER as well as links to Europass platform and EURES network)
- European Competence Framework for Researchers (framework aimed at (up)/(re)skilling of researchers throughout their career)

#### **(5) Promoting gender equality and fostering inclusiveness, taking note of the Ljubljana Declaration**

In line with the Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation, the Agenda proposes the following priority actions:

- develop a policy coordination mechanism to support all aspects of gender equality through inclusive Gender Equality Plans and policies, and a dedicated EU network on their implementation
- strategy to counteract gender-based violence including sexual harassment in the European R&I system and to assure gender equal and inclusive working environments through institutional change in any research funding or performing organisation
- a policy approach to inclusive gender equality, that addresses gender mainstreaming and opening to intersectionality with other diversity dimensions to advance the new ERA
- develop principles for the integration and evaluation of the gender dimension in R&I content in cooperation with national Research Funding Organisations

## **(6) Deepening the ERA through protecting academic freedom in Europe**

The Agenda specifies that action is needed to:

- publish the first European monitoring report on the freedom of scientific research that will identify countries and partner institutions where academic freedom is at risk
- develop an action plan on academic freedom to strengthen commitment to academic freedom and integrity at institutional and individual levels
- develop guidance on tackling R&I foreign interference and conduct a vulnerability assessment to understand external pressures on academic freedom and integrity of institution

## **(7) Upgrade EU guidance for a better knowledge valorisation**

In order to improve knowledge sharing, the Agenda calls for changes that will move from the considerations of the traditional concept of knowledge transfer to the notion of knowledge valorisation. To this end, the Agenda calls for the:

- development and endorsement of Guiding Principles for knowledge valorisation
- development of a Code of Practice for smart use of IP together with stakeholders
- development of a Code of Practice for researchers on standardisation

## **(8) Strengthen sustainability, accessibility and resilience of research infrastructures in the ERA**

The Agenda specifies the following activities designed to strengthen the European research infrastructure:

- strategic analysis of the European Research Infrastructure landscape
- revision of the European Charter of Access to Research Infrastructures
- update of the ESFRI (the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures) Roadmap and implementation of the research infrastructures performance monitoring framework
- report on the ERIC (the European Research Infrastructure Consortium) legal Framework
- increase cooperation between research infrastructures, e-infrastructure and stakeholders, including through EOSC

## **(9) Promote a positive environment and level playing field for international cooperation based on reciprocity**

Based on the Agenda, the Commission shall enhance the international R&I cooperation by:

- further developing values and principles for international cooperation in R&I as set out in the Council Conclusions on the Global approach to Research and Innovation - Europe's strategy for international cooperation in a changing world to be promoted in multilateral dialogues with partner countries and international fora
- launching one pilot initiative on the Team Europe approach for a specific world region and/or topic
- develop a European Science Diplomacy Agenda
- promoting a coordinated joint approach for engagement in multilateral initiatives

Actions that are envisaged to contribute to the priority area of **'taking up together the challenges posed by the twin green and digital transition, and increasing societies participation in the ERA'** include:

### **1. Making EU R&I missions and partnerships key contributors to the ERA**

The Agenda defines EU R&I Missions (Missions in Horizon Europe) and European Partnerships as key instruments that contribute to the twin green and digital transitions. Missions aim to tackle societal challenges by establishing cooperation with stakeholders on the national, regional and local levels. Partnerships enable aligning the R&I agendas of public and private R&I actors and address the crucial challenges in the ERA through concerted research and innovationj initiatives.

### **2. An ERA for green transformation**

Based on the Agenda, the actions aimed at green energy transformation shall include:

- policy approach for a cooperation framework on R&I driven safe and sustainable low-carbon energy technologies
- development of a green hydrogen R&I ERA pilot action, while ensuring consistency with other related initiatives and without prejudice to the relevance of a broader hydrogen R&I policy approach
- ERA4FutureWork: a policy approach (at national, regional, local and EU levels) to address research and development (R&D) funding for the Future of Work

### **3. Accelerating the green/digital transition of Europe's key industrial ecosystems**

The Agenda highlights the important nexus between the European R&I and industrial policy and calls for the development of policy approach aimed at accelerating the industrial take-up of R&I results. The Agenda introduces the development of ERA Common Industrial Technology Roadmaps that shall explore the current industry engagement in relevant R&I areas.

### **4. Empowering Higher Education Institutions to develop in line with the ERA, and in synergy with the European Education Area**

The Agenda specifies ERA actions aimed towards supporting Higher Education Institutions' green and digital transformation which involve initiatives such as Connected Universities. It highlights that the Commission shall prepare a European strategy for universities to empower the entire higher education sector across Europe.

The Agenda also refers to relevant policy initiatives aimed at upgrading higher education institutions such as European Excellence Initiative (EEI) and European Universities Initiative. The former intends to implement actions that will:

- (i) provide policy support for Member States to set up national excellence initiatives in support of universities through mutual learning with models of practice

- (pending analysis) and potentially complemented by support through a EU peer-review system, and
- (ii) pilot a competition-based programme co-fund approach for integrated networks of universities

The latter addresses the strategic collaboration between universities and aims to move from the current project based model to a more sustainable approach of establishing funding synergies between European and national/regional programmes.

## **5. Bringing Science closer to Citizens**

In order to engage citizens and local communities in the digital and green transitions efforts and to strengthen the trust in the fact that the society and science are mutually influenced, the Agenda foresees the following action:

- Scaling-up of *the Plastic Pirates – Go Europe!* citizen science initiative that investigates plastic pollution of rivers in Europe
- Launching the *European City for Science*, during the European Year for the Youth, and networking different European cities
- Feasibility analysis for a federated “EU Science Media Network” to ensure more factual journalistic reporting on science
- Proposing a policy coordination mechanism on public engagement practices, including citizen involvement in scientific processes

Actions that are envisaged to contribute to the priority area of ‘amplifying access to research and innovation excellence across the Union’ include:

### **1. Building-up regional and national R&I ecosystems to improve regional/national excellence and competitiveness**

Based on the Agenda, the Commission will conceptualize, pilot and launch the ERA Hubs to enable the emergence of competitive R&I ecosystems across the EU, to fill territorial gaps and to ensure easier flow of talents and investments. In addition, the consultation process on future bilateral R&I cooperation activities to strengthen and connect R&I excellence in the ERA shall be launched.

### **2. Improving EU-wide access to excellence**

In order to improve access to excellence across the EU, the Agenda specifies that the Commission will create a dedicated work stream in the ERA Forum with the general objective of supporting low R&I performing countries to increase the excellence of their R&I systems while the following objectives will be pursued:

- promote and monitor access to excellence of researchers and institutions from Widening countries with cohesion policy support;
- support Member States to better integrate researchers in smart specialisation strategies in cooperation with industry; and

- help designing measures to support researchers in Widening countries to improve their skills for excellence in the labour market. Member States willing to increase the performance of their R&I system towards excellence should be encouraged and supported through this measure.

### **3. Enhance the strategic capacity of Europe's public research performing organizations**

In order to enhance strategic capacity of public research performing organizations in the ERA countries, the Agenda calls for the implementation of a Science Management Initiative aimed at improving training and skills development of science management staff. The Initiative whose implementation shall involve at least 100 participating institutions across Europe also aims to develop better R&I management capacity and guidance for researchers and innovators across the entire ERA, including laggard regions and research organisations, as well as pave the way towards institutional acknowledgement of the R&I management profession.

Actions that are envisaged to contribute to the priority area of **'advancing concerted research and innovation investments and reforms'** include:

1. Facilitation of a national process or **ERA policy vehicle preparation** for identification of running or planned measures contributing to the implementation of ERA (in the form of National ERA Action Plans or Roadmap)
2. Establishment of an **efficient and effective ERA monitoring mechanism** that will include the following elements:
  - the ERA Scoreboard/Dashboard, including indicators on the progress towards ERA;
  - an online policy platform to share qualitative information on strategies and initiatives;
  - regular policy dialogues between Member States and the Commission to share best practices and as a mutual learning exercise;
  - reporting on each Member State, which will feed into the policy dialogues, as well as a mid-term review on the implementation of the ERA policy agenda
3. Support to the prioritisation, coordination and direction of R&I investments and reforms focusing the action on:
  - providing new knowledge and evidence on the R&D investment targets and the need for directionality, duly considering existing capacities in R&I areas, domains and technologies
  - Contributing to the organisation of joint policy and technical discussions with Member States, experts and stakeholders to reflect on the targets and commonly agree on their specificities as well as on the process and methodology for their potential roll out at national level
  - Framing the setting up of bilateral debates with interested Member States to voluntarily translate the targets in the national contexts.