Universities and Higher Education Institutions in the European Research Area

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European
Commission

Research and
Innovation

ERA Policy Framework and Governance

25 years of European Research Area (ERA)

What is the ERA? – Art. 179 of the Treaty

A single, borderless market for research, innovation and technology across the EU...

...where countries come together and improve their research policies and systems...

...and where there is free movement of researchers, knowledge and innovation.

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25th ERA Anniversary

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2000: The ERA becomes a political project addressing the fragmentation of EU R&I

2007: The ERA is recognized through **Art. 179 of the Lisbon Treaty**, setting out the free circulation of researchers, scientific knowledge and technology

2021: Launch of the **revamped ERA** with the Pact for R&I and ERA Policy Agenda 2022-24

2024: **Communication on implementation of the ERA**

2025: Council Recommendation on the **ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027**

The broader policy framework of the ERA

ERA Policy Agenda

- Non-binding instrument: Council Recommendation or Conclusions
- Encourages voluntary collaboration and commitments on ERA activities
- Politically endorsed in **May 2025**

ERA Act

- Mission letter of Commissioner Zaharieva's
- Legal instrument to tackle enduring issues that are not solved through voluntary measures
- Propose measures to foster the free movement of research, knowledge and technology → "5th freedom"
- Internal/external reflection started, proposal **planned for 2026**

WIDERA

- Grant-based funding framework
- WIDERA work programme specifically supports the implementation of ERA Policy Agendas
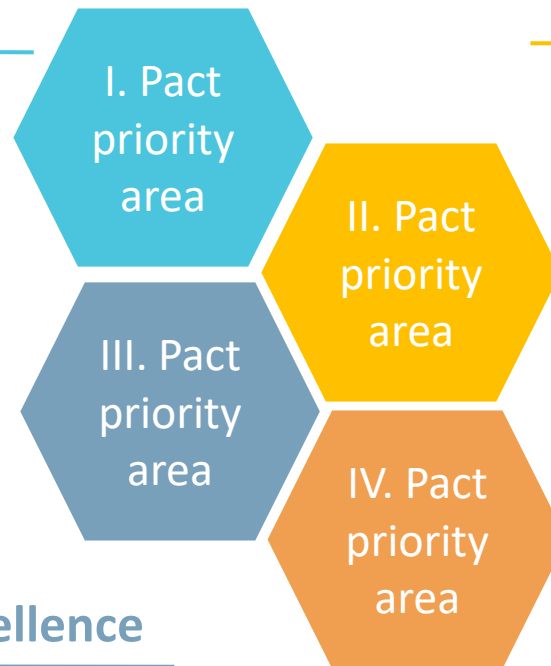
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ERA Policy Agenda 2022-24

Deepening an internal market for knowledge

1. Open sharing of knowledge, incl. EOSC
2. Data legislation fit for research
3. Reform of research assessment
4. Strengthen research careers
5. Gender equality and inclusiveness
6. Protect academic freedom
7. Better Knowledge Valorisation
8. Research infrastructures
9. Global Approach

I. Pact priority area

II. Pact priority area

III. Pact priority area

IV. Pact priority area

Green and digital transition

10. R&I Missions and Partnerships for ERA
11. Green energy transformation
12. Transition of industrial ecosystems
13. **Empower higher education institutions**
14. Bring science closer to society

Investments and reforms

18. Coordination national support for ERA, merged with other actions
19. ERA monitoring mechanism
20. Prioritisation and coordination of R&I investments and reforms

Research and innovation excellence

15. Regional and national R&I ecosystems
16. EU-wide access to excellence
17. Strategic capacity of public RPOs

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ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027: ERA Structural Policies & ERA Actions

11 ERA Structural policies	8 ERA actions
Long-term ERA policies, which are not confined to individual policy agendas but still have a three-year workplan'	*New and to be completed within the three-year policy agenda*

11 ERA Structural policies

- Enabling open science via sharing and re-use of data, including through the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)
- Strengthening sustainability, accessibility and resilience of research infrastructures in the ERA
- Strengthening gender equality and inclusiveness in the ERA, notably with an intersectional approach
- Making research careers more attractive and sustainable, and support mobility
- Reforming research assessment
- Upscaling knowledge valorisation capacities and activities
- Making the strategic energy technology (SET) plan a key thematic component of the ERA
- **Improving the articulation between R&I and higher education within the ERA and unleashing the full potential of European R&I ecosystems**
- Enhancing trust in science through citizen participation, engagement and science communication
- Improve EU access to excellence

8 ERA actions

- Applying equity in open science
- Advancing the European Science for Policy (S4P) ecosystem
- Facilitating and accelerating the responsible use of AI in science in the EU
- Enhancing research security
- Accelerating R&I investments for Europe's industrial transformation and competitive sustainability
- Accelerating new approach methodologies (NAMs) to advance biomedical research and testing of medicinal products and medical devices
- Developing a coherent and coordinated framework for a European approach to integrity and ethics in R&I in the face of emerging challenges
- Empowering R&I: A new era in research management

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Improving the articulation between R&I and Higher Education within the ERA and unleashing the potential of European R&I ecosystems

*This structural policy aims to create a **structured and focused exchange** within the community to promote a **more systematic approach**, including in terms of governance and support, and involving both research and higher education representatives. For establishing **robust partnerships** between education and research & innovation actors, working together to set up new mechanisms and incentives to **reduce fragmentation** and **bridge the regional divide.***

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ERA Policy Agenda 2025-27: Improving the Articulation between R&I and Higher Education

4 expected outcomes

Recommendations drawn up to design and implement strategies at **institutional, regional, national and European level**

Identification of **legal obstacles at regional, national, and European levels**; of main components for a **legal framework for establishing the fifth freedom**; recommendations for **consolidating European HEIs at the forefront of global R&I**

Identification of policies, mechanisms and incentives to foster **more robust cooperation between HEIs and the other R&I actors**

Ambitions **roadmap adopted for ERA/EEA strategic alignment**

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ERA in European Research & Innovation Framework Programmes

Action 13 in WIDERA – European Excellence Initiative

Policy Objective: support the transformation of higher education sector and their surrounding ecosystems, including non-university research centres, mobilising local and regional governments' investments in the higher education sector (in its broadest sense).

Scope: the European Excellence Initiative in its widening dimension aims to raise excellence in science and in knowledge valorisation of Europe's universities through cooperation. The action aims to engage with universities and empower them further to be actors of change in R&I.

How?

- Consortium including at least three independent legal entities in three different EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries, at least one of which established in a Widening Country.
- Reinforcing the role of higher education institutions in innovation ecosystems.
- Expenditures for R&I activities cannot exceed a maximum of 20% of the total budget.
- The duration should not exceed 5 years.

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ERA WP 2026-2027: Architecture

	Pillar I: Institutional changes for ERA	Pillar II: Ecosystems for ERA	Pillar III: Citizens and Science for ERA	Pillar IV: New knowledge for ERA
Type	CSA	CSA	CSA	RIA
Focus	Capacity building and support to foster adoption of ERA policies/practices within institutions.	Building and reinforcing networks and partnerships to foster broad uptake of ERA policies/practices.	Connecting R&I with citizens and other stakeholders.	Creating new knowledge that supports design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies & practices.
Activity type	Tools, resources, training, services, policy advice.	Exchange of knowledge and practice, networking and cooperative actions.	Implementing and promoting participatory approaches, such as citizen engagement and citizen science.	Conducting analyses, developing and testing new methods & practices.
Expected impact	Effective and sustainable structural institutional changes aligned with ERA priorities.	Sustainable ecosystems established around ERA priorities.	Increased trust in science and alignment of R&I with society's needs.	Strengthened evidence base for advancing the implementation of the ERA.
Policy areas	▪ Equity in open science ▪ Inclusive gender equality ▪ Research assessment reform ▪ Research ethics and integrity ▪ Open access policies	▪ Research ethics and integrity ▪ Environmentally sustainable science ▪ Knowledge valorisation ▪ Open science ▪ Research careers	▪ Trust in science ▪ Knowledge valorisation ▪ Citizen and societal engagement	▪ Open science ▪ Research ethics and integrity ▪ Inclusive gender equality ▪ Research careers

ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027

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ERA WP 2026-2027: Calls and topics

Call year	Pillar I: Institutional changes for ERA	Pillar II: Ecosystems for ERA	Pillar III: Citizens and Science for ERA	Pillar IV: New knowledge for ERA
2026	▪ Accelerating open access and research assessment reforms in ERA ▪ Building institutional capacities for ethical, equitable, open, and inclusive ERA	▪ Strengthening ecosystems for open, ethical, and sustainable ERA ▪ Piloting innovative approaches to support academic startups and spinoffs	▪ Fostering citizen engagement for more responsible and democratic R&I ▪ European Citizens' Hackathon Championship ▪ Science comes town 2028	▪ Advancing Knowledge for ERA
2027	▪ Facilitate development of institutional open access policies through the retention of intellectual property rights	▪ Talent ecosystems for attractive early research careers	▪ Science comes to town 2029 ▪ Promoting public engagement in R&I and scientific literacy	▪ tbc

Indicative opening dates:
2026 call: 10 December 2025
2027 call: 8 December 2026

ERA Info Day:
11 December 2025

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ERA WP 2026-2027: Calls and topics

Call year	Topic
Calls 2026	- Teaming Synergies action - Twinning - Hop-on Facility **Research management support facility** - ERA Fellowships - COST
Calls 2027	- EIC Pre-accelerator – widening - ERA Chairs - ERA Chairs **ERA Research Manager** - ERA Fellowships - Excellence Hubs

Widening Info Day:
22 January 2025 (tbc)

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The structure of the new Horizon Europe

Pillar I
EXCELLENT SCIENCE

EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL

MARIE SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE ACTIONS

SCIENCE FOR EU POLICIES

Pillar II
COMPETITIVENESS AND SOCIETY

COMPETITIVENESS[1] :
1. Clean Transition and Industrial Decarbonisation
2. Health, Biotech, Agriculture and Bioeconomy
3. Digital leadership
4. Resilience and Security, Defence Industry and Space

SOCIETY:
1. Global societal challenges
2. EU Missions
3. New European Bauhaus Facility

Pillar III
INNOVATION

EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS AND THE KNOWLEDGE TRIANGLE

Pillar IV
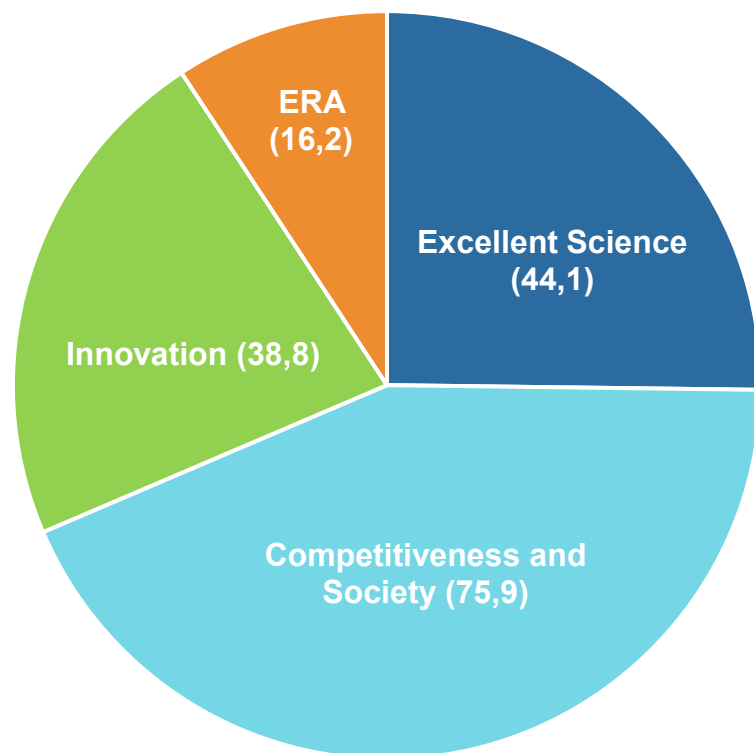### EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

ERA POLICIES

RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURES

WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND SPREADING EXCELLENCE

[1] Consistent with activities under the European Competitiveness Fund

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The Budget

Horizon Europe total budget EUR 175 billion (current prices)
Figures all in EUR billion

- Excellent Science (44,1)
- Competitiveness and Society (75,9)
- Innovation (38,8)
- European Research Area (16,2)

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Pillar IV - European Research Area (ERA)

Pillar IV aims to support the development of a unified ERA with a focus on **promoting excellence, inclusiveness and impact**. It also supports the development and operation of **research and technology infrastructures**.

- Indicative budget: **EUR 16.2 billion**, of which EUR 5.4 billion for 'Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence'

An upcoming legislative initiative – the ERA Act

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Indicative planning for ERA Act Commission proposal

Q1 2025-Q2 2026
Preparation/drafting of an impact assessment report

Throughout 2025
Targeted consultations, such as ERA Forum workshop

Q3/2025
(4 weeks)
Call for evidence

Q4/2025
(12 weeks)
Public consultation

Q3/2026
Commission proposal

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ERA Act Call for evidence open 6 August to 10 September

Contributions received: 178, from 29 countries

By category of respondent

- Academic/research Institution: 48 (26.97%)
- Non-governmental organisation (NGO): 37 (20.79%)
- Other: 30 (16.85%)
- EU citizen: 28 (15.73%)
- Company/business: 9 (5.06%)
- Trade union: 8 (4.49%)
- Public authority: 6 (3.37%)
- Business association: 6 (3.37%)
- Non-EU citizen: 5 (2.81%)
- Environmental organisation: 1 (0.56%)

- Strong support for the ERA Act and its main objectives.
- Alignment of contributions around key priority problems and objectives.

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Structure of the ERA Act and upcoming public consultation questionnaire

- Three main areas of intervention, according to the Communication on a Competitiveness Compass for the EU

    - **Strengthening R&D investment** (3% target)

    - **Reinforce alignment** of investments and policies between the EU and Member States and across Member States

    - **Improve conditions** for research and researchers
        - ⇒ Upholding ERA values ⇒ AI guidance ⇒ Knowledge valorisation
        - ⇒ Fifth Freedom ⇒ Research security

Purpose of the public consultation: collect feedback on the key challenges that the ERA Act aims to address and on potential solutions to tackle them by means of EU-level legislation.

Dive into the
European Research Area and explore the
ERA Policy Platform!

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Interactive maps and reports: find out how European countries implement the ERA actions.

Progress indicators: find the latest data measuring advancements in the European R&I system.

News and events: keep up with diverse topics through our events and news updates.

Visit the **ERA Policy Platform:**
https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/home

#ResearchImpactEU
#EUResearchArea

What to keep an eye on...

Consultation on European Research Area Act in 2025:
- Call for evidence until 10 September
- Public consultation open next week for 12 weeks

Publication of ERA Monitoring
- 47 country reports (August)
- 2nd EU-level report (June)
- Annual dashboard/scoreboard (April)

Conference on Research Careers, 11-12 December:
- 11 December: plenary sessions and policy updates
- 12 December: topical groups on ERA actions

THANK YOU!

For more info:
- The new European Research Area: https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/our-digital-future/era_en
- ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027: https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/documents/proposal-council-recommendation-european-research-area-policy-agenda-2025-2027
- ERA Policy Platform: https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/
- Widera WP 2025 Info Day: https://research-innovation-community.ec.europa.eu/events/01QHd1MW6tFfr16XBGbMyo/overview
- Horizon Europe work programmes: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/horizon-europe-work-programmes_en#pre-publication-of-work-programme-2025
- Conference on Research Careers: https://research-innovation-community.ec.europa.eu/events/1Jrq4PIevDtASiYEJEwDbX/overview

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