

THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

The European Research Area (ERA) aims to create a unified research area open to the world and based on the internal market. It is intended to enable the free circulation of researchers, scientific knowledge and technology.

The current implementation of the ERA is based on the ERA Roadmap (2015-2020) together with ERA National Action Plans in which Member States and Associated Countries set out their ERA related policy objectives and initiatives. Every other year, the Commission adopts a report on ERA progress with a classification of countries based on a set of agreed indicators.

In the context of the European Semester integrating the SDGs, ERA offers strong potential to enhance coordination, coherence and synergies of R&I policy, investment and funding towards the SDGs, particularly with regard to R&I related ESIF funding. This coherent direction of investment at Member State level can support the alignment of efforts at national and EU levels to address the challenges facing Europe.

The ERA – state of play and milestones

In 2000, the ERA concept was proposed by the European Commission and subsequently endorsed by the European institutions. The overall aim of the Commission's approach was to achieve 'a better organization of research in Europe'.

In 2007, the green paper 'The ERA: new perspectives' opened the way for a partnership between the Commission, EU Member States and stakeholders to further the ERA process.

In 2009, the Lisbon Treaty formally introduced the ERA (Article 179 TFEU) making the free movement of researchers, scientific knowledge and technology across Europe a formal objective of the EU. The Lisbon Treaty also opened the way for the EU to adopt legislation to enforce the implementation of the ERA (Article 182(5) TFEU).

The 2015 Roadmap is intended to guide Member States during the period 2015-2020 in developing ERA National Action Plans in accordance with six agreed 'ERA priorities':

- More effective national research systems
- Optimal transnational cooperation and competition, including 'jointly addressing grand challenges' and 'research infrastructures'
- An open labour market for researchers

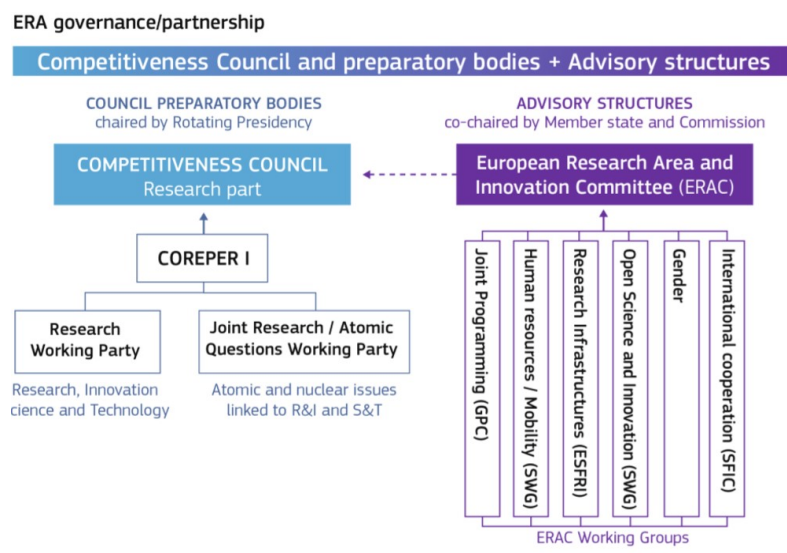
- Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research
- Optimal circulation of, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge, including ‘knowledge circulation’ and ‘open access’
- International cooperation

In 2019, the Commission reported that progress towards a well-functioning ERA continues but seems to be slowing down, while large disparities between countries persist. This means there is still considerable room for further improvement and for a reflection on how to accelerate, strengthen and further encourage implementation of ERA priorities. In response, the Council invited the Commission to present a communication on the future of the ERA by mid-2020.

ERA governance and ERAC

ERAC (the European Research Area and Innovation Committee) is a policy advisory body assisting the Council, the Commission and Member States in the field of research, innovation and technological development. It is co-chaired by the Commission’s Director-General for Research and Innovation and an elected representative from a Member State.

Its mandate (last revised in October 2015) is to provide strategic advice on any research and innovation issue relevant to the development of the European Research Area (ERA). This usually takes the form of ERAC Opinions addressed to the Commission and to the Council, which can be furthered by Council conclusions calling for the Commission and the Member States to take action.



Examples of achievements of ERA so far

Research infrastructures:

- Development of a robust and effective mechanism for European policy making, the European Roadmap for Research Infrastructures, widely known as the ESFRI Roadmap, for the setting of priorities for the upgrading of the existing and the joint establishment of new research infrastructures of European interest and the pooling of knowledge, resources and funding across Member States and Associated Countries for their long-term operation and use.

- The five editions of the ESFRI Roadmap to date (2006, 2008, 2010, 2016 and 2018) have resulted in the development of 55 European Research Infrastructures, of which 37 have already been implemented, across all fields of science and technology ranging from Energy and Environment to Health, Food and Social and Cultural Innovation, mobilising close to €20 billion in investments.
- Establishment of Twenty One new European Research Infrastructures based on the EU Regulation introduced in 2009, the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC).
- The European Roadmap for Research Infrastructures has also had an important impact on fostering a strategic approach to Research Infrastructures at national level, as 22 Member States have prepared national roadmaps in recent years, many of them following the ESFRI methodology and in growing alignment with the European priorities.
- Development of a European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures, Principles and Guidelines for Access and Related Services

Open labour market for researchers:

EURAXESS, formerly known as ERA-MORE, was launched in 2003 as a transnational initiative to address barriers to researcher mobility and enhance scientific collaboration between Europe and the world. Designed as a comprehensive tool-set, it provides access to a complete range of information and support services that are structured around the following four pillars:

- **The EURAXESS Services network** is present in 40 European countries and has more than 600 support centers for researchers, assisting them free of charge on mobility and career development issues. Today the EURAXESS centers deal with over 450,000 mobility related issues per year. Researchers request assistance mainly for entry conditions, accommodation, taxation, health insurance, as well as funding opportunities. Researchers can also benefit from career guidance, coaching and training sessions provided by the EURAXESS centers specialized in this field.
- **EURAXESS PORTAL** is a comprehensive recruitment tool for researchers, research organisations and private industry players with a demand for research personnel. The portal lists research job vacancies, funding and hosting opportunities throughout Europe. The EURAXESS portal has over 100.000 registered users and more than 16.000 registered organisations. In 2018, over 68.000 research jobs were listed on EURAXESS, and the portal was improved with a new section including Career Development resources for researchers and research supporting institutions. The EURAXESS PORTAL is very popular among web users, it currently registers more than 1.6 million page views per month.
- The main central EURAXESS PORTAL is complemented by 40 **EURAXESS NATIONAL PORTALS** with country specific information about living and working as a researcher in those specific countries.
- **EURAXESS WORLDWIDE** is the international arm of the EURAXESS initiative. Through their websites, monthly newsletters, events and missions, the EURAXESS Worldwide officers promote Europe as a research destination and attract international talent, while developing and animating a network of researchers. EURAXESS Worldwide has dedicated teams in the following countries and regions: ASEAN (focus on Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC, focus on

Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Colombia), China, India, Japan, Korea and North America (US and Canada).

- **CHARTER AND CODE.** The European Charter for Researchers is a set of general principles and requirements, setting out the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as their employers and funders. The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researcher provides for transparency of the recruitment and selection process, ensuring equal treatment of all applicants and includes obligations for employers and funders. There are four main pillars in the Charter and Code: working conditions, recruitment, career development and ethical and professional aspects.
- Their role is to strengthen the European Research Area, by contributing to the development of an attractive, open and sustainable European labour market for researchers where the framework conditions allow for recruiting and retaining high calibre researchers.
- The **HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS (HRS4R)** is the tool for the implementation of the Charter and Code. Via a monitored procedure mechanism, institutions obtain the “HR Excellence in Research Award”, which is then displayed on the adverts published on EURAXESS portal, on the institutions’ website, and on the promotional material. To-date, over 500 organizations have received the “HR Excellence in Research Award” and over 100 are in the process.
- Creation of RESAVER: the first pan-European multi-employer occupational pension fund. Mobile researchers often lose occupational pension rights. RESAVER tackles this barrier to mobility by allowing researchers to remain affiliated to the same pension fund while moving between countries, and facilitates international collaboration between organizations that perform research.
- RESAVER became operational in mid-2017 and since then organisations from the Netherlands, Italy, Hungary, Austria and Belgium have decided to join.

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research:

- Positive changes are under way in many countries and for several Member States, the drafting of an ERA National Action Plan was their first opportunity to define gender equality objectives and measures. However, progress is slow and uneven across the ERA and efforts to increase the enrolment and retention of women in science, implement work-life balance policies, reduce the gender pay gap and remove obstacles to women’s career progression as well as better integrate the gender dimension in R&I content are still needed in order to achieve this ERA priority.
- Adoption of guidance to help Member States implement gender targets and quotas in R&I decision making position and professorships.
- The 2018 ‘She Figures’ report on gender in R&I, shows overall improvement. Gender balance has practically been reached in terms of PhD graduates. However, a glass ceiling persists in most ERA countries and efforts to promote institutional change are still needed.
- The Helsinki call for action which resulted from the Finnish Presidency conference on ‘Research and Innovation Excellence through gender equality: New pathways and challenges’ held on 23-2’ October 2019 stressed the need for gender equality and gender mainstreaming to be embedded in the core of the future European Research Area.

- This strengthening of the priority on gender equality within the ERA is also very much in line with the strong priority put by the new EC President on gender equality, and equality in all its senses, in her mandate, with the creation of a Commission Task Force on Equality led by the Secretariat General and an upcoming new EC Strategy on gender equality which will be addressing research-oriented topics such as gender and AI, gender and climate change and gender and health.

Optimal circulation of, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge, including 'knowledge circulation' and 'open access':

- Establishment in 2018 of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) as a common, federated, European framework for storing and sharing publicly-funded research data. Plans for its full-scale development after 2020 should be finalised with Member States and stakeholders in the second half of 2020.
- Adoption in 2018 of the revised Recommendation on access to and preservation of scientific information in initially adopted in 2012 as part of the 'ERA package'.

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