



Commission adopts proposal for a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe

Questions and Answers

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*Research and
Innovation*

Will the Pact be legally binding?

The Commission envisions the Pact to be a single non-binding initiative in form of a Council Recommendation. It will constitute a renewed political commitment and, also through a more frequent and in depth monitoring, a stronger implementation of existing ERA priorities and the new priorities. The Pact brings together a range of ERA principles and values that Member States have previously committed to, notably through the adoption of Council conclusions.

Will Member States have to submit national action plans in the new European Research Area?

Compared to the former European Research Area governance, under the new European Research Area, the processes will be much simplified. The Commission proposes a light Union-level coordination and support mechanism. One of the major simplifications is that national action plans will not be required anymore. Member States can share elements about their reforms and investments through a new digital ERA policy platform. The platform, as well as the ERA scoreboard, will be sources of best practices to be shared among Member States and will inform the report of the Commission and country fact sheets on R&I performances in the EU.

Will there be a European Semester-like process?

No, the objective is to foster a future dialogue process with Member States, which would put an emphasis on sharing best practices, facilitating collaboration of all actors involved, and strengthening the partnership between the Union and its Member States. To this end, the Commission proposes to implement an enhanced and efficient monitoring and coordination mechanism to ensure progress towards the ERA priorities. This mechanism includes reporting based on the future ERA scoreboard produced by the Commission, setting up a dedicated ERA policy online platform where Member States can share elements on their investments and reforms, regular dialogues between the Member States and the Commission,.

How will joint policy actions be established?

A common ERA policy agenda will set out the jointly agreed ERA actions to be implemented in a coordinated manner. The ERA policy agenda will be clear and actionable, defining and describing each action with a view to its implementation (at the Union and/or national level). The actions of the ERA policy agenda should be closely aligned with the commonly agreed values and principles for R&I in Europe.

The Commission proposes that the common ERA policy agenda will be jointly agreed between the Commission and the Member States, informed by the ERA scoreboard and the strategic advice provided by the European Research and Innovation Advisory Committee (ERAC), and following appropriate engagement with stakeholders.

Why do we need R&D investment targets?

The Pact proposes that Member States confirm their intention to raise the Union-level investment in research and development (R&D), which will help accelerate the twin green and digital transformation, strengthen Europe's resilience and support our competitive edge. Already the Commission Communication on the ERA of September 2020 and the ERA Council Conclusions of December 2020 have addressed the role of R&D investment targets. Particularly, increasing the total expenditure on research and development to 3% of EU GDP has been re-affirmed by the Council. The goal has helped to maintain ambitions in relation to R&D efforts even throughout the crisis. Keeping the target is key to reinforce ERA and to make R&D efforts more visible in the context of the European Semester.

Will the values and principles of the Pact apply to third countries?

International cooperation continues to be an important geopolitical dimension of the European Research Area. Recently, the Commission has reaffirmed this in its Communication on the “Global Approach to Research and Innovation”. Global outreach is an important sub-area of the values and principles as well as of the priority areas proposed in the Pact. Mutually beneficial collaboration and joint activities on research and innovation with partners from third countries and regions will be based on the Union’s values and the principles laid out in the present Pact, in the UN Sustainable Development Goals and other pertinent international instruments.

The details of how the corresponding action and the application will look like will be further discussed with Member States and stakeholders in the second half of this year.

What role will the European Commission have?

As laid down in the Pact, there will be Commission support to Member States, from strategic planning to the implementation and monitoring - to ensure progress towards the ERA priorities. It is proposed that this will mainly be realised in co-creation through a dedicated ERA Forum.

More concretely, the Commission will report on the implementation of the ERA policy agenda as the basis for engaging in dialogues between Member States and the Commission. The Commission will provide further support through the Horizon Policy Support Facility (PSF) and the Technical Support Instrument (TSI), and will set up and be responsible for the ERA scoreboard as well as the dedicated ERA policy online platform. Last but not least, the Commission will – along with the Member States - share information on their policies and programmes that contribute to implementing the ERA policy agenda.