

## EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

# WRITTEN INPUT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PACT FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN EUROPE

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ERRIN welcomes the proposal to adopt a *Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe* to reinforce the commitment towards widely shared research and innovation policies and principles as well as making the governance process more effective and impactful.

### What are your views on the proposed list of values and principles for the ERA?

ERRIN and its members continue to bring forward three key principles for the ERA, which should be reflected in the Pact to achieve maximum impact of European research and innovation:

- **To widen the scope of the ERA to include innovation**

“Working better” should mean more impact, which can be achieved by strengthening the innovation dimension of the Pact. The ERA should take a holistic approach that includes the full range of activities related to the knowledge economy – from frontier and challenge-driven research to innovation – which should also be reflected in the values and principles of the Pact.

Similarly, to successfully implement ERA actions and deliver on its priorities Europe needs a skilled workforce. Emphasis should thus be put on the coordination between research, innovation, and education policies including concrete links with the European Higher Education Area and the role of regions in creating strong learning environments close to the citizens.

- **To integrate a place-based research and innovation ecosystem approach in the ERA**

There is increasing recognition that collaboration between different actors is essential to accelerate research and innovation. This is further reflected in new instruments and programmes across different parts of the MFF: European Digital Innovation Hubs (Digital Europe), European Innovation Ecosystems (Horizon Europe), and Interregional Innovation Investment (Cohesion Policy). ERRIN sees a clear opportunity for the ERA to bring these initiatives together under one roof. To do so, the ecosystem approach needs to be referenced in the category “working together” and especially in the principles “societal responsibility” and “value creation”.

- **To apply a multi-level governance model where the regional and local levels are included**

The renewed ERA and the Pact provide an excellent opportunity to go beyond its role of facilitating the interaction between the European Commission and Member States and to create further complementarities with the regional and local levels as well. Regions lead,

promote, and financially support research and innovation agendas. Regional and local authorities are also key in implementing research results and in deploying and sustaining innovation. The regional level should thus be explicitly recognised in the principles “Coordination, Coherence and commitment” and “Inclusiveness”.

## **What are your views on the proposed areas for the development of joint ERA policy actions?**

ERRIN fully supports the four proposed priority areas and appreciates the spirit of partnership that is being brought forward with the ERA policy actions.

To further strengthen the proposed areas, we would like to underline the following notions that should be included in the joint ERA policy actions:

- **Applying the principle of an ecosystem approach in practice**
  - **Developing the concept of the ERA Hubs in the Pact**

The ERA Communication introduces the concept of ERA Hubs to recognise the importance of place-based research and innovation ecosystems. To fully bring in the ecosystem approach it needs to be recognised in the values and principles (Pact 1) and in practice in the joint actions (Pact 2).

To that end, ERRIN proposes to develop the ERA Hubs concept further in the Pact for example via the creation of a sub-group. We would welcome the opportunity to work on this together with the Committee of the Regions as well as interested Member States and other ERA stakeholders.

- **Challenge-based ERA actions**

ERRIN welcomes the idea to set up challenge-based ERA actions that would further coordinate the EU’s actions in response to a particular issue. Challenge-based research and innovation call for extensive cooperation between those who develop solutions, those who test them, and those who produce and manage them, and those who use them. Thus, engaging the full range of actors in the research and innovation ecosystem – public administrations, private sector, knowledge providers, civil society – is necessary to deliver long-lasting and impactful solutions. The Horizon Europe missions provide a concrete example on how to engage local and regional research and innovation ecosystems to tackle a common challenge.

- **Coordination of research and innovation agendas and funding complementarities**

ERRIN welcomes the priority to advance concerted research and innovation investments and reforms and asks for this deepened strategic collaboration to include the regional level. It is also important to note that research and innovation priorities need to be coordinated to achieve funding complementarities, which requires a stronger dialogue between the different levels of government. In Member States where Smart Specialisation strategies are developed at the regional level, these can serve as a concrete tool to coordinate policy priorities and thus achieve complementary investments. The role of Smart Specialisation strategies therefore goes far beyond creating synergies with industrial policy.

## Views on the investment targets?

For the ERA to make European research and innovation more impactful and to achieve its goal of adding free movement of knowledge to the fundamental freedoms in Europe, the level of ambition in the Pact needs to be raised. The Pact should therefore define concrete objectives and commitments. It should also, in line with the communication “A new ERA for Research and Innovation”, confirm the investment target of 3% of EU GDP dedicated to research and development.

Also, coordinating and aligning investment priorities at various government levels is crucial. Such a coordination must start with a policy dialogue – including the regional dimension also in this part of the Pact. Therefore adopting the principle of multi-level governance is essential throughout the Pact from the values and principles to implementation and monitoring.

## Implementation and monitoring

The role of the European Commission, Member States, the European Parliament, regional authorities, and stakeholder organisations should be clarified. There needs to be a structured, transparent, and inclusive process to involve stakeholder organisations both in the development of the Pact and in the ERA governance. The ERA governance should also reflect its widened scope including innovation and engage with stakeholder organisations representing the full range of research to innovation actors. This would ensure greater ownership of the Pact and raise its visibility across the EU. The ERA governance and how it is organised in the member states at national level is also crucial.

The national ERA plans as a key delivery mechanism for the ERA. They will provide an excellent opportunity to seek synergies with the regional research and innovation policy instruments, notably smart specialisation strategies. The potential for synergies and coordination should be taken into consideration when the key elements and the structure of the national ERA plans will be developed and designed.

## Further information

[ERRIN policy recommendations on the renewed European Research Area \(June 2020\)](#)

[ERRIN](#) (European Regions Research and Innovation Network) is a Brussels-based platform that gathers around 120 regional organisations in more than 20 European countries. ERRIN aims to strengthen the regional and local dimension in EU Research and Innovation policy and programmes. ERRIN supports members to enhance their regional and local research and innovation capacities and further develop their research and innovation ecosystems.