



# European University Alliances in ERA and Horizon Europe

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# Framework conditions for Excellence in R&I

- **European Research Area (ERA)**
  - ➔ Pact for R&I, 1. ERA Policy Agenda (2022-2024), ERA Communication 2024
  - ➔ COM proposal for a council recommendation for the 2. ERA Policy Agenda (2025-27)
  - ➔ Discussion on a legislative proposal for an ERA Act
- **Horizon Europe** supporting institutional transformation / collaboration of Higher Education Institutions
- Ongoing discussion on the structure of the **next Multiannual Financial Framework** and the positioning of R&I / **Framework Programme 10**.
  - ➔ articulation with ERA as a tool to supports its implementation

# The new ERA: towards a single market for knowledge

## *ERA Policy Agenda: 20 actions along 4 priority areas*

### DEEPENING A TRULY FUNCTIONING 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. International cooperation, reciprocity

### TOGETHER FOR TWIN GREEN AND DIGITAL TRANSITION, AND INCREASING SOCIETY'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ERA

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



### AMPLIFYING ACCESS TO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION EXCELLENCE ACROSS THE UNION

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

### ADVANCING CONCERTED R&I INVESTMENTS AND REFORMS

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

# Universities in the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024

## Action 13: Empower Higher Education Institutions

- Acknowledges the role of European universities in driving the green and digital transition and aims at empowering them to take an active role on this front.
- Strongly interrelated with the achievement of the European Education Area by 2025. Seeks to offer new ways for universities and researchers to work, cooperate and innovate across borders, and aims at ensuring Europe's role and competitiveness on the global stage in research and innovation.

**→ Outcome too much focused on future EU level support for higher education institutions, little uptake by Member States to design e.g. national excellence initiatives and support national / institutional reforms and investments in the sector.**

# ERA - Next steps and the broader context

## ERA Policy Agenda 2025-27

- Non-binding instrument: Council Recommendation or Council conclusions
- Encouraging voluntary collaboration and commitments on certain ERA activities
- Adoption planned for **May 2025**

## ERA Act

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

## ERA in Horizon Europe

- Excellence based funding framework
- WIDERA work programme specifically supports the implementation of relevant parts of ERA Policy Agendas

# Next ERA Policy Agenda 2025-27: Commission proposal

## ERA structural policies

*'long-term ERA policies, which are not confined to individual policy agendas but still have a three-year workplan'*

1. Enabling open science
2. Research infrastructures
3. Inclusive and intersectional gender equality
4. Making research careers more attractive and sustainable
5. Research assessment
6. Upscaling knowledge valorisation capacities
7. Global Approach to R&I
8. SET Plan as a key component of ERA
9. **Improving the articulation between R&I and higher education within ERA unleashing the full potential of European R&I ecosystems**
10. Enhancing trust in science through citizen participation, engagement and science communication
11. Improve EU access to excellence

## ERA actions

*'which are new and to be completed within the three-year policy agenda'*

1. Equity in open science
2. Advancing the European science for policy ecosystem
3. AI in science in the EU
4. Enhancing research security
5. Accelerating R&I investments for Europe's industrial transformation and competitive sustainability
6. Accelerating new approach methodologies to advance biomedical research and testing for medicinal products and medical devices
7. A harmonised and coordinated framework to support integrity and ethics in R&I
8. An new era in research management

## Structural Policy (**under negotiation**) : Improving the articulation between R&I and higher education within ERA unleashing the full potential of European R&I ecosystems

### Objectives:

- Achieve better coherence between strategies, policies, programmes and funding for R&I and higher education. Closer cooperation and dialogue between those two areas at EU, national, regional and institutional levels;
- achieve stronger and more connected regional R&I systems and reduction of European innovation divide;
- improve knowledge, indicators and tools for implementing comprehensive cross-sectoral strategies, aligning innovation with broader societal goals;
- higher level of awareness on and improved complementarity between research and education;
- reduce fragmentation and regional divide within Europe's R&I landscape;
- strengthen cooperation between academic, public and private entities.

### Expected outcomes

- Development of recommendations drawn up to design and implement strategies at institutional, regional, national and European level;
- The identification of current legal obstacles at regional, national, and European levels; of principles and main components necessary for the development of the legal framework for establishing the fifth freedom; recommendations for consolidating European HEIs at the forefront of global R&I;
- The 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 (higher education-related) strategic alignment.

# Support to University Alliances under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe

- Horizon 2020: 39 out of the 41 first EUA received funding supporting the R&I dimension (max EUR 2 million)
- Horizon Europe Widening: European Excellence Initiative - competitive calls for cooperation, related to the ERA Policy agenda, open to all types of alliances, including but not limited to the European Universities alliances.
  - A pilot call in 2021 funded 9 proposals for a total of EUR 18 million, one of which addresses an EUA not supported under the Horizon 2020 programme.
  - Under the 2023 Call, EUR 54 million support 12 projects, including 6 proposals from EUA. Each project will receive between EUR 2 million and EUR 5 million for a 4-year operation.
  - A last call planned for 2025, with a substantial budget of EUR 80 million
- In addition, European Universities alliances are eligible to compete for other opportunities to fund transformative aspects (Widening and ERA Part) and collaborative research and innovation activities.

**The Universities participating in the EUA have received funding for R&I from the Framework Programme (FP7 – Horizon Europe) of around EUR 39 billion.**





- The higher education sector is key in putting the ERA principles and priorities in practice!
- How can European University Alliances contribute to structural changes leading to modernised and more competitive R&I systems – at institutional, local and national level? Can HEIs from less performing regions benefit and accelerate?
- How can European universities become more attractive for international talent (students, researchers, leaders) and investments?
- How can an ERA Act / EU law best support the fifth freedom, and which areas are interesting for HEIs/EUA in this context?