



Funded by
the European Union

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No.101131556



European Research Area: Fostering Greater Integration. Advancing Competitiveness.

Brussels, 18/19 September 2024

A European Commission conference,
supported by INSPIRING ERA

Conference report



Table of Contents

Project information	4
1. Executive summary	5
2. Introduction	7
3. Setting the scene.....	8
4. Fostering Greater Integration. Advancing Competitiveness. – A summary of the highlights of the ERA Conference.....	13
4.1. First conference day.....	13
4.1.1. Conference opening	13
4.1.2. Plenary discussion: ERA revamped: four years later	14
4.1.3. Plenary discussion: Inclusive gender equality: shaping the future	17
4.1.4. Plenary discussion: Scientific freedom & research security	20
4.1.5. Break-out session: Challenges and opportunities with the reforms of research assessment.....	22
4.1.6. Break-out session: Why now an ERA action on non-animal approaches in biomedical research and testing of pharmaceuticals?	23
4.1.7. Break-out session: Enhancing trust in science via citizen engagement	24
4.1.8. Break-out session: An ERA for energy: hydrogen and solar	25
4.1.9. Break-out session: A global policy perspective: AI in science in the world	27
4.1.10. Break-out session: Improving visibility of intergovernmental and national funding opportunities	28
4.2. Second conference day.....	29
4.2.1. Plenary discussion: Boosting R&I investments and reforms to secure Europe’s long-term competitiveness.....	29
4.2.2. Break-out session: Empowering research infrastructures and technology infrastructures as strategic assets and knowledge hubs in Europe	30
4.2.3. Break-out session: Breaking boundaries: how EIC is supporting start-ups and scaleups to secure long-term competitiveness and growth from ERA.....	32

4.2.4. Break-out session: Driving competitive sustainability through bioeconomy solutions	33
4.2.5. Break-out session: An ERA for climate and circular economy	34
4.2.6. Break-out session: Develop skilled researchers and innovators and attract talents in Europe	35
4.2.7. Break-out session: R&I policy to leverage industrial transformation and competitiveness	36
4.2.8. Closing session	37
5. Project exhibition - ERA success stories	40
6. Annex	48
6.1. Agenda	48
6.2. Mentimeter results	51
6.3. List of abbreviations	59

Project information

Project no.	101131556
Project acronym	INSPIRING ERA
Project full title	Breathing Life into the New European Research Area
Project partners	Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e.V. (DLR) Vetenskap & Allmänhet (VA) Centrum vedecko-technických informácií SR (CVTI SR) Narodowe Centrum Badań i Rozwoju (NCBR) Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft (FFG) Lietuvos mokslo taryba (LMT) Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) Ministrstvo za visoko šolstvo, znanost in inovacije (SI)
Funding scheme	CSA
Start date of project	December 1st, 2023
Duration	36 months
Deliverable	Conference Report
Authors	Philip Ackermann (DLR), Simone Becker (DLR), Roland Brandenburg (FFG), In-Sook Choi (DLR), Karolina Dutkiewicz-Garcia (NCBR), Kyle Galea (MCST), Helen Garrison (VA), Ylva Huber (FFG), Asta Juškienė (LMT), Gesa Karrenbrock (DLR), Luisa Kiwit (DLR), Matúš Lazar (CVTI SR), Maja Peharc (SI), Aurelija Povilaike (LMT), Peter Wachter (CVTI SR), Maciej Woszczyk (NCBR)
Due date of deliverable	November 2024
	Public

1. Executive summary

The conference “*European Research Area: Fostering Greater Integration. Advancing Competitiveness*”, held in Brussels in September 2024, provided a platform for over 400 in-person participants to discuss strategies for advancing European competitiveness through research and innovation (R&I). Organised by the European Commission and supported by the INSPIRING ERA project, this two-day event explored how the diversity of topics and research areas covered by the European Research Area (ERA) contributes to Europe’s competitiveness in the global arena. The event brought together stakeholders from all over Europe and different fields, including policy-makers, researchers, representatives of both research performing and research funding organisations, actors from the business sector and industry.

The themes discussed below reflect the breadth of topics explored during the conference, without implying a hierarchy of importance or priority.

Key themes and insights from the discussions:

- **Strengthening ERA’s foundations and realising the fifth freedom:** A key focus of discussions was the ongoing effort to enhance cross-border collaboration and facilitate the free movement of knowledge, researchers, and innovation across Europe. While participants agreed that significant progress has been made, challenges such as policy fragmentation and mobility barriers remain. Suggestions to overcome these challenges included proposals such as a 28th regime for researchers and strengthened governance structures.
- **Driving competitiveness through strategic investments and reforms:** Substantial investments in R&I were found to be essential for long-term economic growth and global leadership. Achieving the 3% GDP (gross domestic product) target for R&I investment was a recurring focus, alongside the need for robust public-private partnerships, efficient funding processes, and targeted investments in key technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), renewable energy, and biotechnology.
- **Inclusive gender equality:** Gender equality and inclusiveness are long-standing priorities within the ERA. With the introduction of the gender equality plan eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe and the publication of the “Zero tolerance code of conduct on counteracting gender-based violence in the EU research and innovation system”, progress towards gender equality was celebrated, alongside calls to address systemic barriers through intersectional and inclusive approaches. Ensuring equitable and inclusive career pathways and fostering diverse talent pools were underscored as vital for Europe’s competitiveness.
- **Protecting scientific freedom and enhancing research security:** Safeguarding scientific freedom while addressing challenges such as political interference and foreign influence is a key priority within ERA. Discussions emphasised the importance of maintaining openness in research while strengthening governance

to protect researchers' autonomy and mitigating risks associated with international collaborations. Transparent and inclusive science communication was recognised as crucial for building societal trust.

- **Building dynamic innovation ecosystems:** Translating research outputs into impactful innovations was a recurring theme in the conference's discussions. Strengthening ties between academia, industry, and policymakers was identified as essential for bridging the gap between research and commercialisation. Support for entrepreneurship, harmonised regulations, and targeted initiatives to promote start-ups and scale-ups were seen as necessary steps.
- **Advancing sustainability and the circular economy:** The role of the ERA in driving Europe's sustainability forward was central to many discussions. Participants underscored the importance of scaling sustainable solutions, such as hydrogen and solar energy technologies. Collaborative efforts, policy alignment, and scalable technologies were seen as necessary to achieve climate neutrality in Europe.

2. Introduction

On September 18 and 19, 2024, over 400 participants came together at the BluePoint in Brussels for the conference “*European Research Area: Fostering Greater Integration. Advancing Competitiveness.*”. The conference was held by the European Commission, supported by the EU-project INSPIRING ERA. The overall goal of the event was to bring together share- and stakeholders from all over Europe and representing many different sectors to jointly discuss the future of the ERA:

- With the first ERA Policy Agenda’s term ending and the next ERA Policy Agenda kicking off shortly, the conference provided a forum to review the progress made on implementing the ERA since its revitalisation in 2020. The conference also entailed an exhibition of 19 projects that received funding under Horizon Europe and that support the implementation of the ERA to showcase the success stories from the first ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024.
- Looking ahead, discussions also focused on the ERA’s contribution to Europe’s competitiveness and realising the “fifth freedom”, based on the recently published Letta and Draghi reports.
- Another central goal of the conference was to contribute to building a lively active ERA community, reaching actors beyond those already included and hearing from researchers and innovators whose daily work is impacted by the policies driving the ERA forward.

The event brought together a diverse community of share- and stakeholders, including researchers, innovators, representatives of research performing and research funding organisations, private sector actors and policymakers at European, national and regional level. The conference garnered great interest from the R&I community: While more than 400 people were able to follow the conference programme on-site, an additional approximately 640 people watched the livestream of the plenary sessions.¹ Reaching more than 1000 people from the R&I community in Europe through physical or virtual participation is an indication of the successful impact of the ERA Conference.

The conference was held in a lunch-to-lunch format and entailed inspiring speeches, engaging plenary debates and in-depth break-out sessions on selected ERA topics (see [annex](#) for a full agenda). All videos of the plenary debates and the speeches held in the plenary are available on the [INSPIRING ERA website](#) (also including some of the conference materials), the [ERA Policy Platform](#) and on the [Youtube Channel](#) of the European Commission, Directorate-General (DG) Research and Innovation.

The event was moderated by Katrina Sichel and included creative activating programme elements such as the project exhibition and a specially designed scavenger hunt where participants had to solve puzzles at various stations and work out a solution word. A small prize awaited the winners of the scavenger hunt.

¹ Visit the [INSPIRING ERA website](#) for photos and videos of the ERA Conference.

3. Setting the scene

The ERA was initiated in 2000 with the goal to address the fragmentation in the European R&I landscape and create a single market for research, innovation and technology across the EU. Since then, the ERA has been a cornerstone of the EU's R&I policy. The main goal of this European single market for research, innovation, and technology is to facilitate greater cross-border collaboration, the unhindered exchange of knowledge, insights, findings, and technologies, and the free movement of researchers; to pool resources; to provide optimal conditions in Europe for researchers and innovators; and to enhance synergies and coordination between national research policies and systems - in short: to realise the free movement of knowledge as the "fifth freedom" of the EU single market.

Since the ERA's inception in 2000, significant progress has been made towards achieving these objectives. The following is a selection of examples: Researchers' working conditions and cross-border mobility have been significantly improved, for example with the introduction of the European Charter and Code for Researchers in 2005 and its revision in 2023². Better alignment of national and regional R&I policies allows for a more efficient use of resources and strategic cooperation in key areas, such as climate change. Joint research infrastructures and a common strategic approach to their use and further development distinguish the ERA from other research locations. The signing of the [Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation](#)³ during the Slovenian Council Presidency in 2021 and the increased effort in promoting gender equality in R&I, such as mandatory gender equality plans in projects funded by Horizon Europe, have contributed to making R&I research and innovation in Europe fairer and more inclusive. Significant progress has also been made in improving open access to research data and findings, which in turn promotes the availability and reusability of scientific knowledge.

The success of the ERA relies on close cooperation between national and European levels. Each EU Member State is responsible for coordinating its own R&I policies to align with the overarching ERA goals. This allows flexibility, as countries can tailor the implementation of shared European priorities to their own national contexts. An open and transparent monitoring system ensures the tracking of progress and the evaluation of outcomes via the [European Research Area Policy Platform](#)⁴.

However, several challenges remain on the road towards a fully effective ERA. Fragmentation between European Member States and regions in R&I policies and performance persists and requires additional efforts on all levels. In order to accelerate,

² Council of the European Union. (2023). [Council Recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe](#). Brussels, 18 December 2023.

³ Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2021). [Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation](#). 26 November 2021,

⁴ [Link to the ERA Policy Platform](#)

strengthen and further encourage the implementation of ERA priorities, the European Commission kicked off the revitalisation of the ERA with its Communication “[A new ERA for research and innovation](#)” in 2020⁵. The Communication set out strategic objectives and actions to strengthen the ERA, support the green and digital transition and the recovery from the pandemic.

The strategic vision for the new ERA was reinforced in November 2021 with the adoption of the [Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research & Innovation in Europe](#)⁶ (hereafter referred to as Pact for R&I). With this Pact for R&I, the European Member States committed to revitalising and modernising the ERA: As one of the key pillars of the new ERA, the Pact for R&I sets out the main commonly agreed values and principles underpinning the ERA, affirms common investment targets (such as the target to invest 3% of the EU’s GDP into research and development (R&D) and defines 16 shared priority areas for joint action to shape the future of the ERA.

The Council of the EU also adopted [conclusions on a new governance framework for the ERA](#)⁷ to ensure its successful implementation. These Council conclusions also entail the very first [ERA Policy Agenda](#) for the years 2022 to 2024 that sets out 20 specific ERA actions which the European Commission, Member States and Associated Countries will implement together on a voluntary basis. These actions, paired with commonly agreed milestones, set the course for achieving the EU’s long-term ambitions in R&I, solidifying the ERA as the backbone of Europe’s global competitiveness and scientific leadership.

With the first ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 coming to an end, and the next ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027 already on the horizon, the European Commission’s conference “**European Research Area: Fostering Greater Integration. Advancing Competitiveness**”, held in September 2024 and organised with support from the INSPIRING ERA project, provided an opportunity to review the progress made and discuss what the coming years could look like for the ERA. A central goal of the conference was to include as many stakeholders as possible from many different areas and from all over Europe, to collect their valuable input and experiences in these discussions.

This conference was held at a crucial and dynamic time, with a new European Commission coming up and discussions on the next ERA Policy Agenda ongoing. The discussions were also influenced by the reports “[Much more than a market - Speed, Security, Solidarity](#)”⁸ and “[The future of European competitiveness - A competitiveness](#)”

⁵ European Commission. (2020). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions A new ERA for Research and Innovation*. Brussels, 30 September 2020.

⁶ Council of the European Union. (2021). *Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/2122 of 26 November 2021 on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe*. Brussels, 26 November 2021.

⁷ Council of the European Union. (2021). *Council conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area*. Brussels, 26 November 2021.

⁸ Letta, E. (2024). *Much more than a market*. Presented to the European Council on 18 April 2024. Jacques Delors Institute.



[strategy for Europe](#)⁹, developed and presented by independent expert groups chaired respectively by Enrico Letta (former Prime Minister of Italy and President of the Delors Institute) and Mario Draghi (former President of the European Central Bank and former Prime Minister of Italy). These reports inspired conversations on how to realise the fifth freedom and how the ERA could best contribute to increasing the global competitiveness of the EU. In the weeks and months after the ERA Conference, the European Commission's [Communication on the Implementation of the ERA](#)¹⁰ and the report "[Align, Act, Accelerate: Align, Act, Accelerate: Research, Technology and Innovation to boost European Competitiveness](#)"¹¹ by an independent expert surrounding Manuel Heitor (former Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education of Portugal and Professor at Instituto Superior Técnico) were published. In addition, the Council of the EU adopted [conclusions on strengthening the competitiveness of the EU, reinforcing the ERA and overcoming its fragmentation](#) under the Hungarian Council Presidency in November of 2024¹². As these papers were not published or adopted until after the conference, they naturally did not inform the discussions at the conference. Nevertheless, it is important to reference them here to complete the overall picture, as they will contribute to shaping the further development of ERA policy.

The ERA Conference provided a valuable platform to dive into deeper conversations on the priorities and initiatives that would shape the ERA in the coming years, together with stakeholders from all over Europe and beyond. The various speeches, plenary sessions and break-out sessions on selected ERA priorities allowed policy-makers, practitioners, representatives of research funding organisations as well as research performing organisations, research managers and industry/business actors to exchange their views, ideas and experiences with the ERA. The key messages of all sessions are briefly summarised in this report.

At the heart of the discussions throughout the conference were two themes: the implementation of the "fifth freedom" and strengthening Europe's competitiveness.

The concept of the "**fifth freedom to enhance research, innovation and education**" is not new - in fact, it was coined as early as 2007 by former European Commissioner for research Janez Potočnik in his [speech to the Informal Competitiveness Council](#)¹³. The

⁹ Draghi, M. (2024). [The future of European competitiveness - A competitiveness strategy for Europe](#). European Commission.

¹⁰ European Commission. (2024). [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Implementation of the European Research Area \(ERA\) - Strengthening Europe's Research and Innovation: The ERA's Journey and Future Directions](#). Strasbourg, 22 October 2024.

¹¹ The report drafted by an expert group surrounding Manuel Heitor had not been published at the time of the ERA Conference, but of course also plays a vital role for the future of the ERA. European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, [Align, Act, Accelerate: Research, Technology and Innovation to boost European Competitiveness](#), in: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024

¹² Council of the European Union. (2024). [Council conclusions on strengthening the competitiveness of the EU, reinforcing the European Research Area and overcoming its fragmentation](#). Brussels, 29 November 2024.

¹³ J. Potočnik. (2007). [Speech held at the Informal Competitiveness Council](#). Wuerzburg, 26 April 2007.

fifth freedom is the freedom of knowledge, the realisation of which requires the free mobility of researchers, their results, methods, process knowledge, technologies and funding. This concept was recently brought back into discussions on the ERA by the report ‘Much more than a market - Speed, Security, Solidarity’, prepared by an independent expert group surrounding Enrico Letta. This report stresses the importance of research, innovation and education and the diffusion of knowledge across sectors for the European single market. In the report, Enrico Letta calls for the drivers of R&I to be embedded at the core of the single market to help it compete in the new world order. That way, research, innovation and education would contribute effectively to strengthening Europe’s strategic autonomy, supporting economic resilience and global competitiveness.

The second key theme of the conference focused on the **contribution of R&I research and innovation to ensuring Europe's competitiveness**. Strengthening Europe’s competitiveness is one of the key objectives specified in the [Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024–2029](#), as proposed by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and later adopted by the European Council¹⁴. The report ‘The future of European competitiveness - A competitiveness strategy for Europe’ prepared by an independent expert group surrounding Mario Draghi was published right before the ERA conference and therefore also provided additional input for the discussions. In this report, Mario Draghi calls for a more cohesive “R&I union” with targeted funding for strategic technologies like AI, quantum computing, and renewable energy. According to Mario Draghi, such strategic investments will address both productivity and Europe’s dependency on foreign supply chains, especially in critical materials and digital infrastructure. By investing more in deep tech and energy-efficient solutions, Europe can also better navigate challenges like high energy costs and geopolitical instability, strengthening its internal market and reducing reliance on external resources, the report suggests. Mario Draghi's recommendations not only call for an increase in funding but also emphasise the need for EU-wide collaboration in designing a comprehensive plan for innovation, which would include contributions from Member States and the private sector.

The ERA Conference was centred around two guiding questions that served as common threads for all topic-specific discussions:

- 1) How can the ERA and its priorities contribute to the realisation of the fifth freedom?
- 2) How will it contribute to a more competitive Europe?

All plenary debates and breakout sessions covered different topics within the ERA, but these two questions served as the common basis. Aside from the revamped ERA, further focus topics addressed in the panel discussions were **gender equality and inclusiveness, scientific freedom and research security** as well as **R&I investments and reforms to secure Europe’s long-term competitiveness**.

¹⁴ European Council (2024). [EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029](#). Brussels, 27 June 2024.

INSPIRING ERA: Revitalising the European Research Area

INSPIRING ERA is a project funded by Horizon Europe and dedicated to revitalising the ERA through increased awareness, shared best practices, and faster adoption of ERA advancements. The project collaborates closely with EU Member States, Associated Countries, and stakeholders to support the successful implementation of ERA actions from the current and future ERA Policy Agenda:

Project Goals:

- **Share Insights and Recommendations:** Maximize and expand the uptake of insights from the ERA Policy Agenda by making findings accessible to European R&I audiences, policymakers, and society.
- **Foster Knowledge Exchange:** Strengthen mutual learning and collaboration through experiences that encourage the exchange of insights gained from implementing ERA actions.
- **Build a Community of Practice:** Establish a Europe-wide community for sharing lessons learned from ERA actions, promoting sustainable and effective implementation of ERA findings.
- **Inform about ERA:** Communicate the value and impact of ERA to a wider audience, translate policies into practical information for the R&I community.

INSPIRING ERA aims to turn these goals into tangible results, contributing to a dynamic ERA that benefits all citizens, researchers and innovators - in Europe and beyond.

Click [here](#) for the INSPIRING ERA website.

4. Fostering Greater Integration. Advancing Competitiveness. – A summary of the highlights of the ERA Conference

This following chapter summarises the most important aspects and messages of the plenary debates and break-out sessions held during the ERA Conference. A full agenda is available in the [annex](#).

4.1. First conference day

4.1.1. Conference opening

Speakers:

- Janez Potočnik, Co-Chair of the International Resource Panel, Member of the Club of Rome, and former Commissioner for Science and Research 2004 - 2010
- Marc Lemaître, Director-General at DG Research and Innovation, European Commission

Summary

The conference opened¹⁵ with an inspiring key note speech held by Janez Potočnik, the Co-Chair of the International Resource Panel and former European Commissioner for Science and Research (2004-2010), on the urgent need for systemic change to address global and European challenges and the role that the ERA can play in achieving this goal. The speech¹⁶ highlighted the interconnected crises of climate change, resource depletion, and inequality, calling for a transition to an economy rooted in ecological sustainability and social equity, respecting planetary boundaries and serving humans and societal needs in a resource-efficient manner. Janez Potočnik emphasised that this is a critical step to achieve European competitiveness. In order to make this transition possible, he underlined that EU-level governance structures and institutions must become more collaborative and adaptive, with a stronger ability and efficiency in adopting strategic decisions for the future of Europe.

Janez Potočnik acknowledged the achievements of the ERA and the progress made in realising the fifth freedom, which he considered essential components of ambitious strategic vision for Europe. The speech underlined the potential of the ERA to align research efforts with EU priorities, such as the energy transition, the circular economy and the sustainable use of resources. At the same time, Janez Potočnik stressed that the answer to common problems cannot only lie in innovative technology, but that society's consumption and use of natural resources must be addressed appropriately as well. The need to change course in order to stop incentivizing an unsustainable use of resources through policy requires a holistic system change, according to this speech.

In order to enhance the contribution that R&I can make towards this goal, Janez Potočnik called for an increase in funding for R&I in the form of a larger EU Framework

¹⁵ The recording of the “*Conference opening*” can be found under this [link](#).

¹⁶ A transcript of Janez Potočnik's full opening speech can be found under this [link](#).

Programme with a stronger focus on the delivery of the ERA, but also an increase in national investments on common priorities. The horizontal pillar of widening and deepening the ERA serves as a driving force for coordination of all EU Framework Programmes, and as such, plays an important role, Janez Potočnik argued. Together with a strong ERA governance, this would be a significant step towards creating a cohesive framework that integrates research with Europe's strategic goals.

In his closing remarks, Janez Potočnik stressed the importance of science-based policy-making and summarised the need to tackle the major blind spots of current policy efforts: pushing for a holistic system change, addressing the roots of the problem underlying our economies' overconsumption with market signals, disincentivising inefficient resource use and unsustainable behaviours and focusing more on the demand-side by complementing efficiency with sufficiency policies. Finally, Janez Potočnik called on the R&I community to support these efforts by driving change forward and pushing the boundaries of knowledge to new frontiers.

Subsequently, Marc Lemaître, Director-General for Research and Innovation at the European Commission, addressed the audience. In his speech, Marc Lemaître highlighted the 2020 reboot of the ERA, which resulted in two key outcomes: the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 and a new governance structure aimed at fostering better engagement from research-performing organizations through the ERA Forum. While significant progress has been made, much work remains to fully unlock the full potential Europe. Marc Lemaître emphasised the need to overcome the current lack of scale in R&I, citing the success of the European Research Council (ERC) as an example of what can be achieved when Europe moves beyond national boundaries. Marc Lemaître also noted that there has never been a better time for R&I, with high expectations for it to drive prosperity, sustainability, and competitiveness. According to Marc Lemaître, this moment presents a unique opportunity to reflect on challenges, lessons learned, and the path forward, aiming to develop stronger, more integrated R&I ecosystems and strengthen the ERA as a whole. He concluded by saying that the mission for the conference is to think big and bold to achieve the fifth freedom and realize a truly integrated ERA at scale. Marc Lemaître closed his speech by emphasising that this vision requires collective effort and collaboration.

4.1.2. Plenary discussion: ERA revamped: four years later

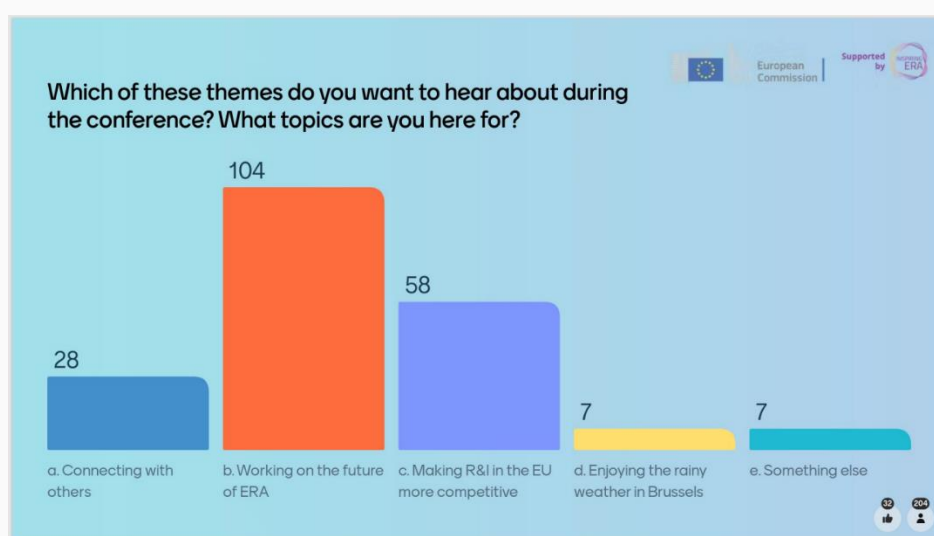
Speakers:

- Anna Panagopoulou, Director for ERA & Innovation at DG Research and Innovation, European Commission
- Anneke Kastelein, PhD candidate at Leiden University Medical Centre and part of the advisory board at PhD Network Netherlands
- Sergej Možina, Science attaché at the EU and Co-Chair of the ERA Forum
- Silvia Gómez Recio, Secretary General at Young European Research Universities Network
- *Nuno Maulide, Professor of organic chemistry at the University of Vienna (could not attend due to a delayed flight)*



Summary

The plenary debate titled “*ERA revamped: four years later*”¹⁷ gave the broader context and overview on ERA, by looking at the achievements made since the last ERA Communication of 2020 and outlining future challenges, such as the way forward in developing the fifth freedom. The panel gathered different perspectives and voices: Anneke Kastelein and Silvia Gómez Recio spoke from the viewpoint of academia, while Anna Panagopoulou from the European Commission and Sergej Možina, representing European Member States, shared the perspective of policy makers. The speakers addressed ERA’s potential to drive Europe’s innovation and competitiveness forward by encouraging more cross-border collaboration, supporting young researchers, and tackling structural barriers within and between European countries. Subsequent plenary debates took a more in-depth look at the different thematic areas of the ERA.



Graphic 1: Mentimeter results for the panel discussion “ERA revamped: four years later”

The debate started with the panellists’ perspectives on how the ERA has influenced the careers and opportunities of young researchers, highlighting both achievements and persistent issues. A central theme was the need for greater support for early-career researchers, particularly in securing fair compensation and stable employment pathways. The panellists argued that fostering a supportive environment for emerging researchers would enable them to focus on impactful work, ultimately benefiting Europe’s research landscape. In particular, Anneke Kastelein, a PhD candidate at Leiden University Medical Centre, underscored the importance of financial stability and mentorship for researchers, advocating for mechanisms that address precarity and provide career continuity across Europe.

¹⁷ The recording of the plenary debate titled “*ERA revamped: four years later*” can be found under this [link](#).

Silvia Gómez Recio, Secretary General of the Young European Research Universities Network, highlighted ERA's role in fostering a collaborative environment and emphasised the importance of bridges between sectors, countries, and EU policy-making bodies. She noted that with the ERA Forum, the approach to policy-making has increasingly moved from a reactive to a proactive and co-creative model, a shift which enhances stakeholder engagement and aligns policy with on-the-ground realities in research institutions. Silvia Gómez Recio's vision of the ERA included a stronger commitment to co-creation, achieved through dedicated resources and time for stakeholder engagement. This, she argued, would allow for more realistic, adaptive policy-making that considers the capacity constraints of different Member States and institutions.

The conversation also touched on the structural challenges that prevent seamless knowledge and researcher mobility in the ERA. Sergej Možina, Slovenian science attaché at the EU and Co-Chair of the ERA Forum, reflected on the discrepancy between the United States and the EU regarding researcher mobility and associated legal frameworks. According to him, Europe's fragmented legal landscape complicates cross-border researcher mobility, highlighting the need for a tailored legal framework for researchers, which Sergej Možina suggested could help realise the fifth freedom. Drawing inspiration from emerging proposals for a 28th regulatory regime for companies, he argued that establishing a parallel system for researchers could significantly advance ERA's goals by reducing bureaucratic obstacles.

Building on this discussion, Anna Panagopoulou from the European Commission stressed the importance of creating an integrated framework that balances the needs of established and newer/more recent research institutions. She noted that while prominent universities may already be well-positioned to conduct cutting-edge research, smaller and newer institutions often face greater challenges in accessing funding and research infrastructures. The ERA, she argued, could improve competitiveness by facilitating access to resources such as open-access data and large-scale research infrastructures for smaller universities, thereby enabling a more balanced European research ecosystem. She cited the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) regulation as a positive example of collective infrastructure-sharing that could benefit researchers across various institutions and regions.

Additionally, speakers stressed the need for investments and governance frameworks that support a thriving European R&I environment. Drawing from Mario Draghi's report on competitiveness, Sergej Možina identified three core areas for sustainable competitiveness: robust governance structures, effective legal frameworks, and strategic investments. He welcomed the current ERA governance including the ERA Forum, which has successfully integrated diverse stakeholders, but emphasised that a dedicated legal framework for research mobility would further solidify the ERA's goals. He also advocated for a more efficient pooling of resources in order to enhance the impact of R&I initiatives.

In discussing investments, Anna Panagopoulou argued that relying solely on EU funds is insufficient to sustain ERA's ambitions. She suggested an approach that encourages

Member States to foster local research ecosystems, with a particular focus on underfunded regions. Establishing centres of excellence across Member States, particularly in regions with limited research infrastructures, would help reduce inequalities within the European research landscape and prevent the concentration of talent and resources in a few top institutions. Such an inclusive approach would ensure that all Member States can contribute to Europe's scientific advancement.

In their closing statements, panellists urged the ERA community to remain bold and proactive in implementing these strategies. Sergej Možina encouraged all stakeholders to prioritise courageous decision-making, advocating for faster progress and adaptive approaches. Anna Panagopoulou echoed this sentiment, emphasising that policy efforts should focus on demonstrating the importance of R&I to Europe's economy and societal well-being. Anneke Kastelein and Silvia Gómez Recio concluded by calling on both policy-makers and researchers to actively engage in realising ERA's transformative potential through dialogue, inclusivity, and shared responsibility.

In sum, the debate underscored that the ERA's success lies in realising the fifth freedom through policies and structures that foster mobility, inclusivity, and resource accessibility across the European R&I landscape. The ERA framework must adapt to support diverse institutions, create stable pathways for young researchers, and reduce regional disparities, thus positioning the EU as a globally competitive, knowledge-driven economy.

4.1.3. Plenary discussion: Inclusive gender equality: shaping the future

Speakers:

- Gemma Irvine, Vice-President of Equality and Diversity at Maynooth University
- Irene Norstedt, Director for People Health & Society at DG Research and Innovation, European Commission
- Marcela Linková, ERA action 5 sub-group Member States' co-chair and Head of Research Department at Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences
- Mathieu Arbogast, Project manager at Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique

Summary

This session¹⁸ highlighted ERA's progress on promoting structural change via gender equality plans, inclusiveness and intersectionality and counteracting gender-based violence.

¹⁸ The recording of the plenary debate titled "*Inclusive gender equality: shaping the future*" can be found under this [link](#)

The panel recalled that inclusive gender equality in the ERA received a significant push in 2021 during the Slovenian Council Presidency with the adoption of the [Ljubljana Declaration](#) and a package adopted in the Competitiveness Council¹⁹ that created a favorable framework for further development. Achievements include the strengthened gender equality provisions in Horizon Europe, especially the introduction of the gender equality plans as an eligibility criterion²⁰, and, as one of major deliverables of ERA policy action 5, the launch of the [Zero tolerance code of conduct](#)²¹, which provides guidance on creating a European R&I environment free from all forms of gender-based violence. Irene Norstedt also highlighted the progress made in mainstreaming the gender dimension in research that receives EU-level funding. Also, the fact that gender balance is increasingly being considered in the composition of consortia shows the impact of the effort placed into gender equality and inclusiveness in research and innovation, Irene Norstedt pointed out.

According to Gemma Irvine, the requirement of Gender Equality Plans in Horizon Europe has contributed to turning gender issues into a collective responsibility rather than merely a women's topic, boosting male engagement while also increasing female representation among university professors and presidents²². She also pointed to the [EU Gender Equality Champions Award](#)²³ as an effective tool to engage more people and increase awareness for inclusion and equality. From an institutional perspective and in view of progress made within France's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Mathieu Arbogast argued that successes and tangible achievements towards inclusiveness are closely related to an integrated approach and policy within institutions.

The panel also highlighted the need to open gender equality towards inclusiveness and intersectionality as an important factor in addressing the multifaceted forms of discrimination and to reflect the bandwidth of individual experiences. Beyond gender, this also includes other factors such as ethnicity, religion, sexual identity and socioeconomic background. As Marcela Linková laid out, the importance of this becomes especially evident in relation to gender-based violence: The groups most at risk are marginalised people, women, members from the LGBTQI+ community, people from ethnic minorities, and people with chronic illness and disabilities. Gemma Irvine also underlined that

¹⁹ Council of the European Union. (2021). [New Pact and governance structure for the European Research Area \(ERA\)](#). Press release, 26 November 2021.

²⁰ European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, (2021). [Horizon Europe, gender equality - A strengthened commitment in Horizon Europe](#), in: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021.

²¹ European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, (2024). [Zero-tolerance code of conduct - Counteracting gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, in the EU research and innovation system](#), in: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

²² The European Commission recently published a study on the impact of gender equality plans on the ERA:

European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, (2024). [Impact of gender equality plans across the European Research Area](#), in: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

²³ With this award, the European Commission recognises the institutions with impactful gender equality plans. More information on the EU Award for Gender Equality Champions can be found under this [link](#).

to maximise talent in the ERA, equitable access is key. Inclusive gender equality plans emphasise support for all university community members. Intersectionality requires tailored support, recognising diverse backgrounds and unique challenges faced by individuals, such as financial pressures, cultural biases, or unrecognised qualifications, to bridge social and cultural gaps.

In terms of next steps, Irene Norstedt explained that the European Commission’s priorities include closing the gender gap in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), but also supporting career paths fulfilling the potential of diverse talents; continuing the EU Gender Equality Champions Award and developing a "champions league" to inspire further organisational commitment to equality and inclusiveness; and fostering intersectional approaches. Mathieu Arbogast also highlighted the need to address the shrinking pool of female applicants, particularly in fields like physics and computer science, which could impact future hiring; ensuring that research design and implementation consider gender; putting an even greater emphasis on the role of men and fatherhood as well; and combating "gender fatigue". Especially with regard to the topic of gender equality and inclusiveness, it is key to “ensure that gender equality plans are not a single policy cycle event”.

The panel concluded that gender equality isn’t a box to check but an on-going practice. With regard to European competitiveness, it also became clear that making use of skills and talents from all parts of society and cultivating a diverse talent pool can play a key role in giving Europe the competitive edge it needs to boost innovation, address societal challenges, strengthen R&I, and enhance Europe’s position in the global market.



Graphic 2: Mentimeter results for the panel discussion “Inclusive gender equality: shaping the future”

4.1.4. Plenary discussion: Scientific freedom & research security

Speakers:

- Alexander Grablowitz, Head of Unit at the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research
- Denise Roche, Advocacy Manager at Scholars at Risk Europe
- Gosse Simon Vuijk, Parliamentary Assistant at European Parliament
- Jan Palmowski, Secretary-General at The Guild
- Susanne Caarls, Head of Department Europe and International & Societal Impact and Open Science at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Summary

According to Denise Roche, who represented the organisation Scholars at Risk (SAR) academic freedom in Europe and first took the floor during the plenary debate on scientific freedom and research security²⁴, while generally still higher than in other regions, academic freedom in Europe is faced with notable challenges. Global data from the Academic Freedom Index and SAR indicate a decline in academic freedom worldwide, and Europe is no exception. The type of issues in Europe differs from other regions, Denise Roche explained. Rather than being faced with immediate repression like wrongful prosecutions, it is a combination of economic pressures, societal pressures, political pressures, and geopolitical pressures that contribute to the erosion of scientific freedom in Europe. This includes government interference in academic autonomy, litigation over research results, and efforts by political actors to influence the definition of what can be considered scientific as seen in Hungary with the banning of gender studies, or threats made to suspend funding for universities in Poland.

In view of these challenges, however, the panel also highlighted that awareness and actions around academic freedom are increasing, as highlighted, for instance, in the [report](#) by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Farida Shaheed, on the importance of academic freedom to the United Nations Human Rights Council²⁵.

Susanne Caarls, representing the Netherlands, and Alexander Grablowitz, representing Germany, highlighted that national governments play a critical role in protecting scientific freedom, which entails both the freedom to conduct research and freedom from threats or intimidation. According to Susanne Caarls, an important element in the protection and promotion of scientific and academic freedom is close contact with and support for research institutions and universities. In the Netherlands, the platform "[Safe](#)

²⁴ The recording of the plenary debate titled "*Scientific freedom & research security*" can be found under this [link](#)

²⁵ United Nations Human Rights Council. (2024). *The right to academic freedom - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Farida Shaheed*. A/HRC/56/58.

Science" was established to support threatened scientists. In Germany, the [Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research](#)²⁶, adopted during the German Council Presidency in 2020, has been integrated into both national and international policy discussions, Alexander Grablowitz reported. Germany's approach includes incorporating the Bonn Declaration in international science agreements with democratic and non-democratic countries alike, and fostering dialogue between science and society to help rebuild trust science. An example for this strengthened dialogue between science and society is the German annual science communication year, which in the year 2024 is focused on freedom.

At the same time, panellists also argued that the great threat to academic freedom in Europe still also originates from national governments. Gosse Simon Vujik pointed out that the European Parliament has been advocating for a stronger role for the EU in protecting academic freedom from national government overreach. Two key initiatives were highlighted: first, the inclusion of a reference to academic freedom in the Horizon Europe regulation, though it faced resistance and was considered too soft. Second, the European Parliament suggested legislative steps to better protect scientific research freedom across Europe, which still needs to be addressed by the European Commission.

Finally, the discussion turned to foreign interference, which can take different forms on European campuses. Special focus was put on three aspects: firstly, foreign governments harassing their own citizens that are active abroad, enacting extraterritorial laws that target entire communities; secondly, the enactment of blanket laws with extraterritorial effects that are designed to target whole communities, and thirdly, interference targeting even non-nationals researching topics that may be considered sensitive or a threat by the respective governments, deterring scholars from pursuing controversial subjects.

In terms of balancing openness in international cooperation and protection from foreign interference, the panel also turned to the issue of self-governance of research institutions. The [Council Recommendation on research security](#)²⁷ adopted in May 2024 emphasise balancing openness and security in international research cooperation. Jan Palmowski argued that a balanced approach should rely on promoting self-governance and fostering a culture of responsibility among researchers and academia rather than imposing strict rules. He also pointed to the need for structures within and across institutions to provide support and mitigate risks without stifling academic freedom and heavily restricting international cooperation in the process, as it could be observed in Australia. Susanne Caarls also emphasised that institutions should make their own decisions on who to collaborate with - but that national government should provide the necessary support structures and resources to make informed and balanced decisions.

²⁶ German Presidency of the Council of the European Union. (2020). [Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research](#). Adopted at the Ministerial Conference on the European Research Area, Bonn, 20 October 2020.

²⁷ Council of the European Union. (2024). [Council Recommendation on enhancing research security](#). Brussels, 14 May 2024.

Alexander Grablowitz praised the mutual learning and sharing of experiences among research institutions in this regard. However, much more cooperation with industrial actors would be needed, according to Alexander Grablowitz, since they are also engaged in a lot of international cooperation on R&I.

4.1.5. Break-out session: Challenges and opportunities with the reforms of research assessment

Speakers:

- Vinciane Gaillard, Deputy Director of Research & Innovation at European University Association
- Emmanuelle Gardan, Director of Coimbra Group office and co-lead of ERA action 4

Table hosts (world cafe):

- Mattias Björnmalm, Secretary General of the university association CESAER
- Ágota Dávid, Science and Technology Attaché at Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU
- Monica Dietl, Executive Coordinator at the Initiative for Science in Europe
- Elizabeth Gadd, Head of Research Culture and Assessment at Loughborough University and Vice-Chair of the Steering Board of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)
- Silvia Gomez Recio, Secretary General at the Young European Research Universities Network

Summary

The session highlighted that recent reforms in research assessment have led to positive developments, particularly in fostering dialogue and collaboration among research institutions, driving cultural change, and enhancing community engagement. The speakers pointed out that countries like Ireland and Slovenia have made notable progress. However, regional disparities persist, and challenges remain in implementing new frameworks, with senior researchers often resisting change and organisations lacking the necessary resources. Key positive changes mentioned by the speakers include the identification and dissemination of good practices and a holistic approach that integrates research careers and assessment. However, challenges such as resistance to change, overburdening researchers with peer review, limited mobility between sectors, and institutional resource gaps hinder progress, according to the discussion participants.

Potential solutions which were identified in the discussion include greater institutional leadership, stronger resource allocation, clearer evaluation criteria, and policies supporting diverse research contributions. Additionally, clearer and diversified assessment metrics, enhanced intersectoral mobility, and rewarding broader career competencies could improve both research assessment and career development. It was recognised

that a more integrated and transparent approach is essential for ongoing reforms. Further collaboration, clear communication, and national coordination to address these challenges and ensure equity across career stages and sectors were raised as further important points by the speakers.

4.1.6. Break-out session: Why now an ERA action on non-animal approaches in biomedical research and testing of pharmaceuticals?

Speakers:

- *Moderator:* Christian Desaintes, Scientific officer at DG Research and Innovation, European Commission
- Bas de Waar, Policy Officer at the Transition Programme for animal-free Innovation
- Marta Dias Agostinho, Executive Director at EU-LIFE
- Winfried Neuhaus, Principal Scientist at the Competence Unit Molecular Diagnostics of the Austrian Institute of Technology
- Sonja Beken, Coordinator at the Unit of non-clinical assessors at the Belgian Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products
- Philippe Hubert, Director at the French platform for the validation of methods for the characterization of endocrine disruptors (PEPPER)
- Orla Moriarty, Scientific Officer in Translational Sciences at the European Medicines Agency
- Maurice Whelan, Head of Unit Systems Toxicology at the Joint Research Centre, European Commission
- Nicolas Dudoignon, Chief Veterinary Officer at Sanofi

Summary

The session explored the need for an ERA action on New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) for biomedical research and pharmaceutical testing. The discussion emphasised the 3Rs (replacement, reduction, refinement) and the need to place scientists and researchers at the centre of policy-making to ensure effective coordination between scientific and regulatory bodies at both national and EU levels. The speakers, including Marta Dias Agostinho and Sonja Beken, highlighted the gap between technological advancements and regulatory practice, stressing the value of the proposed action as a platform, where researchers and policymakers can collaborate to develop realistic, actionable policies, potentially accelerating regulatory progress. From an industry perspective, Nicolas Dudoignon stressed the importance of a global approach, ensuring that Europe's initiatives on NAMs align with international efforts. Sonja Beken, representing a national regulator, emphasised the progress in science and technology but acknowledged gaps in practical implementation, highlighting the need for coordination in applying NAMs to safety testing and regulation, particularly with the upcoming pharmaceutical legislation that includes the 3Rs principle.

The session also explored how non-animal approaches may help improve the effectiveness of research. Sonja Beken and Nicolas Dudoignon highlighted the critical need for new models, with NAMs playing a significant role in the integration of AI and data. Orla Moriarty stressed the importance of an evidence-based approach in medicine, while Philippe Hubert, Maurice Whelan and Marta Dias Agostinho emphasised the need for validation processes to ensure reproducibility and credibility in research. Maurice Whelan pointed out that bias and unethical practices must be addressed, while Marta Dias Agostinho cautioned that researchers should not be bound by political timelines, particularly concerning validation. To make the decision and policy-making more effective, researchers should be involved.

Finally, the session examined the action's international dimension. Winfried Neuhaus and Sonja Beken emphasised the importance of harmonising regulations and the need for Europe to remain competitive while also fostering global collaboration. Maurice Whelan pointed to successful examples of cooperation in the U.S. and Taiwan. A key takeaway was the need to avoid duplicating efforts and instead focus on complementing international research.

In summary, the session highlighted the importance of validation, international collaboration, and regulatory alignment to advance NAMs in biomedical research and ensure their effective implementation across Europe and beyond.

4.1.7. Break-out session: Enhancing trust in science via citizen engagement

Moderator: Cissi Billgren Askwall, National Coordinator at the Swedish Research Council

Table hosts:

- Helen Garrison, Communications Manager at Public and Science Sweden
- Maria Hagardt, International Relations Manager at Public and Science Sweden
- Angela Simone, Coordinator at REINFORCING
- Jason Pridmore, Coordinator at COALESCE
- Anette Klinkert, Executive Director at European Science Engagement Association
- Agata Gurzawska, Research Manager at Trilateral Research

Summary

In the session on enhancing trust in science through public engagement (PE) and citizen science, participants discussed in small groups what the main drivers, opportunities, challenges and barriers could be to implementing PE in R&I across the ERA. The results of the discussions in the small groups were then collected and discussed with all session participants.

Key drivers of PE included bridging the gap between science and society by making science more relevant to citizens' lives and addressing societal issues through participatory approaches. PE was found to have the ability to foster trust in science and increase acceptance of policies and technologies that result from science, thereby contributing to countering scepticism. Collaborative efforts with civil society organisations were emphasised, leveraging their direct connection to citizens. Effective engagement strategies should be diverse and tailored to specific audiences. Creative engagement channels, such as citizen science and research cafes or researcher's night, were mentioned as good practices. Public engagement activities should include co-creation between citizens and researchers in the early stages of research processes. Trust-building between scientists and citizens, supported by inclusive science communication was seen as essential. Participants also stressed the need for supportive frameworks, including career incentives, relevant infrastructures, and appropriate training and education for these researchers who plan to engage with the public.

The discussion highlighted that challenges and barriers to the implementation of public engagement in R&I processes included difficulties in integrating relevant public engagement activities into existing funding frameworks – both nationally and across the EU - due to bureaucratic hurdles. Participants pointed out that establishing clear metrics and impact indicators is crucial to assessing PE's long-term societal benefits and guiding future efforts. Additionally, time and resource constraints, lack of skills and career incentives, and cultural resistance within academia were identified as factors which hinder researchers from actively getting involved in PE. Integrating PE methodologies early on into academic training and shifting institutional attitudes from viewing PE as an “add-on” to a core research element can help overcome obstacles. The reform of research assessment systems led by CoARA can contribute to aligning reward and recognition frameworks with public engagement in research. As regards citizens, additional incentives and recognition for participating in research processes were stressed by the participants as an important need. Finally, while there are some funding sources for engagement activities, it is often not sufficient or sustainable and does not allow for much trial and error.

4.1.8. Break-out session: An ERA for energy: hydrogen and solar

Speakers:

- *Moderator:* Davide Amato, Deputy Head of Unit, Clean Energy Transition Unit at DG Research and Innovation, European Commission
- Christoph Hünnekes, Chair of the Set Plan Implementation Working Group on Solar PVs
- Nadine May, Chair of the SET Plan Temporary Working Group on Hydrogen
- Luisa Revilla Trujillo, Programme Manager, CDTI

Summary

The session focused on two overarching questions: What are current trends and advancements in hydrogen and solar technology, and how can these technologies be scaled up to meet the growing demand for clean energy?

For hydrogen, it was noted that a 2022 hydrogen value chain document has been updated with strategic targets and an implementation plan. Hydrogen valleys were highlighted as key, with each EU country aiming for at least one by 2030, interconnected and integrated into the hydrogen landscape. Collaboration across sectors, such as steel and cement, is essential, alongside national and regional partnerships. Scaling up requires alternative technologies and existing infrastructure. A holistic, cross-sector approach is crucial, involving electricity-intensive industries like semiconductors and mobility.

Solar technologies can reduce CO₂-emissions and provide fuels and heat across sectors. Therefore, the discussion concluded that integrating solar thermal plants and developing technical infrastructure are crucial. Bridging the gap between innovation and market entry is essential to attract investors. Cross-sector collaboration, reliable energy distribution, and thermal energy storage are needed.

For solar technologies, it was noted that collaboration among groups like the European Energy Research Alliance (EERA) is crucial for developing an aligned implementation plan, using consistent Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track progress. According to the panellists, various funding schemes, including Horizon Europe and the Clean Energy Transition Partnership (CET Partnership), should support joint calls on special topics. Europe's photovoltaic (PV) industry lags behind China, but focusing on next-generation technologies like perovskites offers promise, speakers pointed out. The European Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET Plan) encourages cross-border collaboration, especially in areas like grid integration. Innovation is key for sustainable PV development.

During the session, it was also explored how the speakers' respective sectors can evolve in the framework of the SET Plan revamp. Regarding hydrogen, it was suggested that a participatory approach will contribute to strengthening the SET Plan. The speakers noted that active engagement is needed but requires resources, and that commitments are sometimes limited because of overlapping or shared competences such as between several ministries and related decision processes will automatically be slower.

Regarding solar thermal energy, the discussions highlighted that awareness of the ERA is low in some countries, requiring better visibility and political support. While PV has received more focus, all solar technologies are essential to address global challenges according to the speakers. They pointed out that decarbonisation and substituting critical raw materials across sectors are crucial, and stressed that Europe should leverage its capacities, staff, and infrastructure.

Finally, looking at solar PV, the session showed that industry is engaged through the co-programmed European Partnership on solar PV, while Member States collaborate via the SET Plan steering group. The SET Plan implementation working group fosters cross-border collaboration, though challenges remain, especially in grid integration.

4.1.9. Break-out session: A global policy perspective: AI in science in the world

Speakers

- *Moderator.* Maria Cristina Russo, Director for Global Approach & International Cooperation in R&I at DG Research and Innovation, European Commission
- Wendy J. Nilsen, Deputy Division Director at National Science Foundation (NSF)
- Alison Noble, Professor with a Fellowship at Royal Society (FRS)
- Dureen Samandar, Science Officer at International Science Council (ISC)

Summary

The discussions pointed out that AI, as a key digital technology with significant cross-sectoral applications, has been a massive disruptive force with regards to science. As highlighted in the breakout-session, this has necessitated a comprehensive and articulated approach by the scientific community globally towards ensuring that said disruption is positive, value-adding and does not come at the cost of neither scientific accuracy nor public trust in science. In this discussion, it was suggested that the EU can position itself to serve a strong role in a global multilateral push for responsible AI that is congruent with scientific values such as transparency, reproducibility and methodological clarity. The panel drew on the experiences of three different entities: The National Science Foundation (NSF, United States), the Fellowship of the Royal Society (FRS, United Kingdom) and the International Science Council (ISC, who's scope is global but focused on Australia, China and India with regards to case-studies).

Several good practices were put forward such as the NSF's funding of AI institutes in key strategic areas such as cybersecurity, biological sciences, education and precision agriculture, the FRS's focus on methodology and reproducibility and the ISC noting how several countries were focusing on human-centric AI and the roll-out of AI tools in fundamental research tied to the green transition and climate change. Skills and the need to build capacity were noted as recurring necessities towards a competitive AI ecosystem. Additionally, the potential of AI-enabled science to contribute significantly to the EU's competitiveness by enhancing scientific outputs in key strategic areas and curiosity-driven research was emphasised. This is predicated on the need to tackle critical issues for AI in science tied to sustainability (energy usage and fresh water) and more thematic issues (risk of substandard data-curation, abuse, inaccuracies etc).

4.1.10. Break-out session: Improving visibility of intergovernmental and national funding opportunities

Speakers:

- *Moderator:* Peter Haertwich, Head of Unit of the Common Service for Business Processes unit, European Commission
- Marko Piirso, Head of Department of Strategic Analysis at the Estonian Research Council

Summary

The breakout session titled *"Improving Visibility of Intergovernmental and National Funding Opportunities"* at the ERA Conference, moderated by Peter Haertwich, Head of Unit of the Common Service for Business Processes unit (European Commission), and Marko Piirso, Head of Department of Strategic Analysis (Estonian Research Council), focused on the capabilities and potential expansion of the Funding & Tenders (F&T) Portal. The portal, currently serving 3 million registered users, offers identity and access management, search functions, and mechanisms for displaying funding calls, including cascading ones. It was discussed that the portal could be further adapted for third-party use, such as allowing national governments to display their intergovernmental calls.

The session also explored the idea of linking national funding systems to the portal through an Application Programming Interface (API), potentially feeding call data automatically. Marko Piirso emphasised the efficiency of issuing international rather than national funding calls to address shared challenges. A representative from Hungary supported the inclusion of Horizon Europe partnership calls on the portal, while discussions highlighted a general interest in showcasing multilateral calls, such as those from ERA-NET partnerships.

Key challenges which were observed by the participants include the limited visibility of the F&T portal beyond its existing user base, the complexity of navigating funding opportunities, and reluctance from some national bodies to publish calls with multilateral elements. In a poll, five participants expressed interest in adding their calls to the portal, while 17 required further national discussions before proceeding. The session concluded with recommendations for improving the portal's visibility and user-friendliness, particularly for smaller institutions, and engaging with Science Europe to further develop these initiatives.

4.2. Second conference day

4.2.1. Plenary discussion: Boosting R&I investments and reforms to secure Europe's long-term competitiveness

Speakers:

- *Moderator*: Magda De Carli, Head of Unit and Deputy Director ERA and Innovation at DG Research and Innovation, European Commission
- Pascal Donohoe, President of the Eurogroup (video message)
- Balázs Hankó, Minister of Culture and Innovation, Hungary
- Elisa Rivera Mendoza, Director General for Planning, Coordination and Knowledge Transfer at the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities
- Michal Doligalski, Director for Innovation and Development at the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education
- Tuomas Saarenheimo, President of the Euro Working Group (EWG)

Summary

The debates of this plenary discussion²⁸ addressed the need to strengthen investments in R&I in Europe, and how to implement reforms to strengthen Europe's competitiveness.

The debate highlighted the need for investment in R&I to achieve long-term economic growth and global competitiveness. In a video message, President of the Eurogroup Pascal Donohoe emphasised the need to reach a 3% GDP investment target in R&I for Europe, a benchmark critical for competitiveness. He underscored the importance of mobilising both public and private funds and advocated for enhancing Europe's venture capital market to support start-ups and foster entrepreneurial growth. Elisa Rivera Mendoza discussed Spain's commitment to a 1.25% public R&I investment target and a total R&I investment of 3% of GDP by leveraging public-private partnerships. She highlighted four pillars: collective prioritisation of R&I, knowledge transfer, talent development, and strategic investments. Spain has enacted laws and funding mechanisms to advance R&I.

The panel underlined the importance of policy and structural reforms, as they are needed to streamline regulatory frameworks, making it easier to launch and fund innovation projects. Tuomas Saarenheimo addressed the need for more private R&I investment in Europe, identifying a shortfall in commercialising R&D outputs and creating global tech leaders. He suggested focusing on improving "framework conditions," including venture capital access through the Capital Markets Union and re-evaluating regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which may unintentionally hinder innovation. Balázs Hankó outlined Hungary's policy measures that

²⁸ The recording of the plenary discussion titled "*Boosting R&I investments and reforms*" can be found under this [link](#).

combine tax incentives, university-industry collaboration, and performance-based funding for universities. The creation of a state innovation fund and a focus on impact-driven research models, like the “John von Neumann Program” demonstrate Hungary’s approach to reforming and modernising its R&I ecosystem.

Building a skilled workforce is indispensable for Europe’s competitiveness. Elisa Rivera Mendoza stressed the importance of talent retention and skills development as a core R&I pillar. Spain has introduced plans to retain and attract talent, including reskilling initiatives, which are vital to meeting the digital and technological needs of the job market. Mendoza argued for a cultural shift within the private sector to foster R&I demand.

Furthermore, it was highlighted that investments should be prioritised in areas that support digital transformation and environmental sustainability. Balázs Hankó highlighted Hungary’s focus on digitalisation, green transition, and health as central themes in its R&I strategy, emphasising that universities and science parks are key to these goals. Hungary’s public-private approach includes tax reliefs to encourage high-risk research and strategic investments. Michal Doligalski added that Europe’s R&I priorities should include sustainability goals, positioning R&I as a driver for climate neutrality and decarbonisation through technological advances.

The session also highlighted that strengthening R&I collaboration across borders can maximise the competitive edge of Europe. Magda de Carli noted the collaborative efforts among EU directorates and Member States to boost R&I, emphasising the importance of addressing fragmentation and mobilising the necessary resource across programs. In her concluding remarks, she underscored that R&I is key driver of long-term competitiveness and we need to increase the quantity of investment, including public R&D investment, but also to improve the conditions for private innovation through structural reforms and new policies in order to build a well-performing innovation ecosystem and a cohesive and competitive European R&I landscape.

4.2.2. Break-out session: Empowering research infrastructures and technology infrastructures as strategic assets and knowledge hubs in Europe

Speakers:

- *Moderator*: Michael Ryan, Head of Division at Research Ireland, Executive Board Member at ESFRI
- Michael Arentoft, Head of Unit for Open Science and Research Infrastructures at DG Research and Innovation, European Commission
- Dominik Sobczak, Deputy Head of Unit for Industrial Research, Innovation and Investment Agendas at DG Research and Innovation, European Commission
- Francois Jacq, President at European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO)
- Edith Heard, Director General at European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL)

- Johan Hanssens, Secretary General at Department Economy, Science & Innovation of Flanders (EWI)
- Britta Redlich, Director at FELIX Laboratory, Vice-Chair at League of European Accelerator-based Photon Sources (LEAPS)
- Pia Sandvik, CEO at Teknikföretagen

Summary

Research and technology infrastructures provide crucial scientific and technological services, capacities and expertise that are essential for the success and competitiveness of the European research, innovation and industrial systems. They facilitate collaboration across Europe, enabling scientific and technological advancement and promoting advantageous framework conditions for innovation. The European Commission intends to present a strategy to strengthen the European research and technology infrastructure ecosystem. In view of this, the session showed a broad consensus among present experts that an integrated European strategy to boost effectiveness as well as synergies between these infrastructures is urgently needed.

According to the expert panel, key priorities for this strategy should include sustainable funding, improving transnational access and cooperation with new users, and leveraging new technologies like AI. The discussion also touched on ongoing efforts to map technology infrastructures, especially in clean energy and aviation technologies, to inform future policies. Participants pointed out that research and technology infrastructures have different purposes and needs: research infrastructures typically serve research and are driven by public R&I policy, while technology infrastructures serve industrial goals and are also driven by industrial policy. Nevertheless, in particular in some areas, research and technology infrastructures can offer similar services that can be complementary. Aligning them more effectively could create a more integrated ecosystem that boosts research, innovation and technology development across sectors.

Regarding funding, experts pointed to various aspects. For one, it was argued that for sustained investment, a joint strategy should serve both academia and industry and consider the entire innovation chain, underpinned by adequate funding schemes. Secondly, it was suggested that intelligent funding schemes which combine public and industrial funds are needed. Thirdly, it was highlighted that Europe needs a common vision to avoid dilution of available funds across national budgets.

Beyond funding, improving transnational access to research and technology infrastructures, particularly for industries, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups, and new users, and raising awareness for the importance of infrastructures among stakeholders and policymakers were highlighted as central concerns that the new strategy should address. Equally important is the need for skills development, especially in emerging areas like AI and big data, where expertise is still lacking. As such, training researchers, engineers, and young professionals was considered a key challenge that research and technology infrastructures can help with. It was concluded that an effective strategy should pinpoint gaps, create a roadmap on where to invest and

how to improve access, develop flexible and efficient standards to create reliability, and establish frameworks supporting the entire innovation chain.

4.2.3. Break-out session: Breaking boundaries: how EIC is supporting start-ups and scaleups to secure long-term competitiveness and growth from ERA

Speakers:

- *Moderator:* Keith Sequiera, Head of the Unit at European Innovation Council
- Michiel Scheffer, President at European Innovation Council Board
- Katuska Cruz, Expert in the Mutual Learning Exercise on Knowledge Valorisation at Agência Nacional de Inovação (ANI)
- Nicklas Bergman, Deep Tech Angel Investor, Member of EIC Fund Investment Committee
- Rana Sanyal, Chief Security Officer and Co-Founder of RS Research, Winner of EIC Women Innovators Prize 2024

Summary

Europe's ability to transform high-quality research into market-ready solutions is crucial for maintaining its competitive edge in the global landscape. The discussion underscored the valorisation process, which translates research into economic and societal benefits, highlighting the need for a robust framework encompassing regulation, funding, and entrepreneurial training. The ERA and the European Innovation Council (EIC) were acknowledged by the speakers as pivotal in this transition, providing essential support for research commercialisation. However, challenges such as fragmented regulations, insufficient support for women entrepreneurs, inconsistent national efforts, and inadequate early-stage start-up assistance continue to impede progress.

To address these issues, the creation of a unified European legal framework was recommended, enabling start-ups to scale seamlessly across Member States. Entrepreneurial training programs and internships for researchers were also highlighted as crucial for bridging the gap between research and commercial outcomes. Aligning national and regional strategies with broader European initiatives ensures a coherent and supportive environment for innovation ecosystems, participants pointed out. Increasing targeted support for underrepresented groups, particularly women and minority entrepreneurs in deep tech fields, is vital to ensure diversity and inclusion.

Although the EIC has made strides in de-risking investments and attracting venture capital, additional regulatory harmonisation and policy changes are needed to simplify market access and enhance early-stage funding opportunities, the speakers argued. The discussion concluded that by streamlining these processes and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among researchers, Europe can build a dynamic ecosystem that maximises research impact and drives economic growth.

4.2.4. Break-out session: Driving competitive sustainability through bioeconomy solutions

Speakers:

- *Moderator:* Claire Skentelbury, Director General at European Association for Bioindustries
- Arttu Luukanen, Senior Vice President at Solar Foods
- Lena Grimm, Researcher at Fraunhofer Gesellschaft
- Michael O'Donohue, Director at Industrial Biotechnology Innovation and Synthetic Biology Accelerator (IBISBA) and at French National Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (INRAE)

Summary

The session on "Driving Competitive Sustainability through Bioeconomy Solutions" explored the challenges and opportunities of building a resilient, competitive bioeconomy in Europe. The moderator opened by questioning how to integrate supply chains across national and global scales for true competitiveness.

Speakers from research institutions and SMEs highlighted the importance of knowledge and technology transfer in developing sustainable bioeconomy solutions. For instance, the Carbon2Chem project demonstrates how early industry involvement ensures practical and competitive outcomes. However, regulatory hurdles and market entry difficulties, particularly in the EU, remain significant barriers. An SME representative noted that while European funding initiatives like important projects of common European interest (IPCEI) are helpful, slow regulatory processes undermine competitiveness, as seen with a two-year delay for a patent approval in the EU compared to eight months in Singapore.

Several speakers emphasised the need for cross-border collaboration and better infrastructure access across the EU, highlighting that Europe risks falling behind the U.S. and Asia. Regulatory frameworks were repeatedly called out for being misaligned with industry needs, particularly in the context of bio-based materials and biotechnology.

Scaling up biobased solutions was another key issue during the discussion, with calls for better financing mechanisms and integrated circular economy approaches. Participants agreed that Europe needs to rethink its socioeconomic framework to foster innovation in the bioeconomy, warning that failure to do so could result in losing talent and innovation to other regions.

The session wrapped up with a call for a holistic, integrated approach from the European Commission to support bioeconomy research and ensure Europe's leadership in sustainable biotechnological innovations. "Possibilism", as a "more realistic version of optimism", flavoured the conclusions.

4.2.5. Break-out session: An ERA for climate and circular economy

Speakers:

- *Moderator:* Rosalinde van der Vlies, Director of Clean Planet at DG Research & Innovation, European Commission
- Janez Potočnik, Co-Chair at International Resource Panel, Member of the Club of Rome, former Commissioner for Science and Research 2004-2010
- Adel el Gammal, Secretary General of the European Energy Research Alliance (EERA)
- Timo Rittonummi, Deputy Director General, Energy Department at the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs

Summary

This breakout session started with a presentation by former Commissioner Janez Potočnik on the state of play of natural resources and the need for more circular economy policies; he emphasised the necessity of founding an international resources agency to monitor the process and formulate measures to be implemented. Establishing such an agency could be very beneficial from a global perspective and in particular from a European perspective: Circular economy is an instrument for decoupling growth from material and energy consumption, and it could contribute to strengthening European competitiveness. In addition to building a global leadership in selected areas (thanks to technological advantage), fostering blue-sky research and low technology readiness level (TRL) research with the potential for breakthrough innovation, it would also contribute to overcoming the mid-technology barriers.

As cost of inaction is enormous (costs of extreme weather events, fossil fuel subsidies etc.), the speakers stressed that Europe also needs to think economically in the long term. Focusing primarily on the short term (e.g. low fuel prices) will drive up costs further in the future. However, in order to shift to a more long-term view, the social gap of knowledge or acceptance needs to be addressed more effectively. Thus, advancing technology is not enough. Janez Potočnik underlined the need for societal behavioural change and adapting the way in which we think about consumption and efficient resource use.

During the panel discussion, the speakers recognised that the necessary team spirit in Europe exists but that there is the need to harness it more effectively; improving collaboration between the European and the national level, academia and industry, as well as building further trust. The session concluded that while existing policies are moving the process in the right direction, they need to be accelerated significantly. That also poses multiple technological challenges for researchers (e.g. dematerialisation), but also in the field of policy-building, including the supply's regulation and introduction of supply-side solutions.

4.2.6. Break-out session: Develop skilled researchers and innovators and attract talents in Europe

Speakers:

- *Moderator:* Emmanuelle Gardan, Director at Coimbra Group of Universities
- Luisa Henriques, Senior Policy Analyst and Advisor to the Board of Directors at Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT)
- Peter Rasmussen, Head of the Technology Transfer Office at Aalborg University
- Sebastian Dahle, Assistant Professor at University of Ljubljana and Advisory Board member at the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (EURODOC)
- Martin Paidar, Associate Professor at University of Chemistry and Technology Prague (UCT)
- Jerry Sheehan, Director of the Directorate for Science, Technology and Innovation at Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Summary

This breakout session made clear that researchers are at the heart of the ERA and fundamental contributors to knowledge economies in Europe. Therefore, it is crucial to attract and retain talents, and to promote their skills, also in view of fostering innovation and addressing global challenges.

During the discussion, it was pointed out that to achieve an attractive and sustainable labour market for researchers and innovators in Europe, the focus should be on comprehensive implementation at all levels of the new standards for research careers established by the [Council Recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe](#), as well as of the revised European Charter for Researchers (2023). Next to already developed implementation mechanisms and instruments, such as for example the HR Excellence in Research award and the [European Competence Framework for Researchers](#) (Research-Comp), it is important that a new ERA action on research careers in the ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027 supports this transformative effect, including with the support of communities of practice and reliable data on R&I careers in Europe.

Several existing practical examples which go in this direction were presented. For instance, the Danish Open Entrepreneurship programme and the European Hydrogen Academy, both demonstrate the importance of alternative career paths for researchers. As emphasised, an increasingly challenging environment also requires the promotion of training and new skills as well as a more secure job context. For a supportive evidence base, for example, the [Research and Innovation Careers Observatory](#) (ReICO), seeks to create a dynamic information hub that tracks and analyses trends in R&I talent, career paths, and mobility.

4.2.7. Break-out session: R&I policy to leverage industrial transformation and competitiveness

Speakers:

- *Moderator:* Alexandr Hobza, Chief Economist at the DG for Research & Innovation, European Commission
- Dorota Pawlucka, Board Member of A.SPIRE, Global Alliances Manager at COVESTRO AG
- Marta Lima Basto, Subdirector-General of DG for Economic Activities, Portugal
- Nathalie Errard, Senior Vice President, Head of EU and NATO affairs at Airbus
- Nathalie Martin-Hübner, Vice President, Governmental Affairs, Robert Bosch GmbH
- Niklas Blomberg, Executive Director at Innovative Health Initiative, Joint Undertaking

Summary

This session focused on Europe's need to close the R&I investment gap with the U.S. and China, particularly in the context of political and economic challenges. Nathalie Martin-Hübner emphasised the importance of simplifying public funding processes, implementing broader tax incentives, and reinforcing capital markets to keep investments within Europe, suggesting to put the European innovation community in the driver's seat to bridge the R&I gap. The discussion also highlighted the need for deeper public-private partnerships and reducing bureaucratic barriers that currently deter industries from engaging in EU projects.

Nathalie Errard pointed to the need for more substantial investment in clean aviation technologies, such as hydrogen aircraft. The cost of decarbonisation is significant, requiring dedicated EU programs to support these innovations. She emphasised that Europe has the potential to lead globally, but must invest in crucial technologies and listen to industry leaders to enhance competitiveness.

The session also addressed synergies and cross-collaboration between different initiatives like partnerships, mutual learning exercises and communities of practice. Marta Lima Basto discussed Portugal's initiatives, including decarbonisation roadmaps and public-private cooperation projects that aim to transform the economy. She emphasised for example the importance of risk management and access to capital as key benefits of the model. Niklas Blomberg highlighted how public-private partnerships to enhance competitiveness by addressing public health needs and scaling healthcare solutions, supported by co-funding and fostering cross-sector innovation. He stressed the trust-building potential (between different actors, but also trust in high-tech) of public-private partnerships in healthcare, and their importance in overcoming regulatory challenges and fostering innovation. Dorota Pawlucka pointed to the energy crisis as a major challenge but stressed that cross-industry collaboration is vital to meeting circularity and climate neutrality goals.

Finally, the session explored best national and international practices. Marta Lima Basto showcased Portugal's success in industrial decarbonisation, emphasising the role of innovation, digitalisation, and collaboration across sectors. She stressed the need for coordinated efforts from businesses, policymakers, and social partners to decarbonise industries and improve economic productivity.

The session indicated that closing Europe's R&I investment gap requires simplifying funding processes (especially reducing administrative burdens), fostering public-private partnerships, and investing in key technologies like hydrogen and AI. Collaborative efforts between industry, government, and academia are essential to enhance Europe's competitiveness, achieve sustainability goals, and lead in global innovation.

4.2.8. Closing session

Speakers:

- Barbara Weitgruber, Director-General for Scientific Research and International Relations at Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research
- Marc Lemaître, Director-General at DG Research and Innovation, European Commission

Summary

The goal of the closing session²⁹ was to consolidate the main insights with regard to the progress in the ERA discussed during the conference, and to emphasize the next priorities for advancing the ERA in order to achieve the fifth freedom and a more competitive ERA.

Barbara Weitgruber pointed out that the ERA has achieved an important momentum, which is reflected throughout the conference. She highlighted that the co-creative approach between the Member States, the European Commission and stakeholders were significant, and how the ERA has become more tangible and concrete. She referred to the exhibition of projects reflecting the ERA actions as one example of the ERA becoming more visible, and that concretization was achieved through initiatives such as the Council recommendations regarding research careers or CoARA.

As emphasised by Barbara Weitgruber, the visibility of the ERA has also become better due to national activities. She referred to Austria as an example as Austria has adopted a national action plan and holds regular forums and symposiums for stakeholders to strengthen a consistent dialogue. In the Austrian case, the objectives regarding the ERA are included in three-year performance agreements with universities and research organisations, which leads to a stronger accountability on national level. The possibility for Member States to learn from each other despite their different settings, which the Mutual Learning Exercises (MLE) organised by the Policy Support Facility of the European Commission create the space for, was pointed out by Barbara Weitgruber as a highly valuable format, where priorities such as scientific freedom and

²⁹ The recording of the "Closing Session" can be found under this [link](#).

value-based cooperation are emerging as areas of joint interest among the Member States.

Marc Lemaître equally welcomed the enthusiasm towards the ERA and pointed out that the EU and the Member States are at a crucial moment to go further and beyond than what has been achieved already in the past 25 years. In order to expand the joint endeavours for the ERA, he underlined several priorities: Talent retention and strengthening conditions for researchers will remain key in order to make Europe the most attractive destination for researchers, particularly in fields that are critical for global competitiveness such as AI. As a second dimension, Marc Lemaître emphasised that progress needs to be done to work on a European scale of research infrastructures as a segment pertaining to the conditions for researchers. The third dimension highlighted by Marc Lemaître resonated with the perspective underlined by Barbara Weitgruber, the question how Member State can look beyond their individual parameters and work towards a better alignment to achieve the ERA, for instance in terms of funding, as national contributions complementing the European level are key. Borrowing from the term “Team Europe” in external relations, he pointed out that a coalition of willing people is crucial to achieve key areas sustainability and competitiveness, ranging from hydrogen and solar to AI.

Barbara Weitgruber pointed out that there has been an incremental progress, but not a complete shift of a paradigm in regards of the question what Member States could do better to realise the fifth freedom, and how the European Commission and other European institutions could recalibrate their focus. She also added that the EU Mission letter³⁰ or the Draghi report are emphasising that the European Commission, the Member States and the European Parliament can create a moment to elevate their actions towards a next level, as opposed to continuing the same pathways.

Marc Lemaître underlined the importance of having a shared ambition together as Member States and the EU institutions on the question about how ambitious they intend to be, and that boldness and a decisive acceleration in regards of quality and intensity of the shared ambitions are needed. He referred to the significance of the perspectives launched in the EU Mission letter in this regard and the necessity of joining forces not only between Member States or the EU, but along the entire stakeholder ecosystem.

Three participants from the audience spontaneously joined the speakers for the following final questions: John Edwards, Secretary-General of the European association for the Applied Sciences in Higher Education (EURASHE), asked which steps need to be taken in order to safeguard the fifth freedom. Marc Lemaître acknowledged that the single market for R&I is not yet fully realised and requires significant effort. He highlighted the need for a competitive dynamic and a decentralised network of innovation

³⁰ European Commission. (2024). *Mission letter by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, to Ekaterina Zaharieva, Commissioner-designate for Startups, Research and Innovation*, Brussels, 17 September 2024.

hubs rather than just a few concentrated centres, and that better cohesion policies are needed, such as a more strategic approach to "innovation valleys".

Tatjana Panteli, Head of the EuroTech Universities Alliance, commented that researchers and innovators are both critical for competitiveness, and that challenges persist in creating a true single market for innovation, including inconsistent start-up procedures across Member States that hinder progress, and that collaboration across the entire ecosystem is essential. Barbara Weitgruber responded by agreeing on the importance of aligning support for researchers and innovators as part of the ERA in addition to the measures already put into place such as the Council conclusions on knowledge valorisation³¹ or the EU Guiding Principles for Knowledge Valorisation³². Furthermore, she emphasized the importance of venture capital referring to the Draghi and Letta reports, the necessity for shared efforts at the EU level.

Anneke Kastelein, PhD candidate at Leiden University Medical Centre and part of the advisory board at PhD Network Netherlands, asked why the ERA is so little known among the researchers and whether this was intentional. She furthermore asked how researchers can hold the EU accountable to ensure that the numerous initiatives of the EU for researchers benefit them in practice. Barbara Weitgruber explained that an inclusive approach is put into practice in the case of Austria, which involves all stakeholders in annual ERA symposiums, and that a performance review regarding the implementation of the ERA is embedded into the public institutions' performance practices. She added that there is the need to involve student unions and younger researchers into the ERA initiatives in order to enhance accountability. Marc Lemaître recognized the issue with regards to the visibility, and pointed out how the ERA Forum is an example of a broad participation where it is possible to discuss all perspectives seen as important for the ERA in an open manner. He furthermore pointed out that the reports on the ERA reflect both progresses but also challenges in order to strengthen transparency. He acknowledged that the ERA and innovation has been often perceived as separate, which has been for instance reflected in the fact that the New European Innovation Agenda (NEIA) was separately published, or that the EU Mission Letters refer to an ERA Act and an Innovation Act. However, he pointed out that both are opportunities to set high ambitions for the R&I landscape in Europe. He underlined that impact, regarding innovation, but also societal and economic impact in terms of competitiveness, should be a top priority, and that it is necessary to strengthen the ways how research can lead to innovation leading to more competitiveness.

³¹ Council of the European Union (2024). *Council conclusions on Strengthening knowledge valorisation as a tool for a resilient and competitive industry and for strategic autonomy in an open economy in Europe*. Brussels, 23 May 2024.

³² Council of the European Union (2022). *Council Recommendation (EU) 2022/2415 on the guiding principles for knowledge valorisation*. Brussels, 2 December 2022.

5. Project exhibition - ERA success stories

The exhibition of success stories in the ERA was a central part of the ERA Conference. 19 Horizon Europe projects from across Europe showed how they are contributing to the goals and priorities set for a sustainable and competitive ERA. The projects represented inspiring success stories that illustrate the scope and diversity of activities within the ERA, contributing to the actions prioritized in the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024. The exhibition also included success stories covering Research and innovation actions (RIA) under Horizon Europe.

Project overview and participants at the exhibition³³

BEYOND - Beyond Bad Apples



Website: <https://beyondbadapples.eu/>

BEYOND joins the ongoing work in Europe towards nourishing a research culture that follows the highest standards of research ethics and research integrity and fosters public trust in science. The project is an integral part to strengthen the culture and quality of knowledge valorisation in the ERA.

Project representative: Keziah Chanyisa Khayadi Dasha (Centre for Medical Ethics, University of Oslo)

CARDEA - Enabling professionalisation of research management



Website: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/cardea/>

CARDEA is a group of professionals with a proven track record in the delivery of initiatives to support research staff within their own universities and organisations. The overall objective of CARDEA is to enable the professionalisation of research management as a valued career choice within the ERA.

Project representative: Olivia O'Leary (University College Cork)

³³ The digital adaptation of the exhibition is available on the [INSPIRING ERA homepage](#).

COOPERATE - Coordinating and Piloting actions towards ERA-Hubs as inter- and intra-regional ecosystems for knowledge production



Website: <https://www.cooperate-project.eu/>

COOPERATE's overall objective is to develop and pilot the ERA-Hub concept, based on the vision and success stories developed within the EuroTech Universities Alliance and their R&I ecosystems. This project is shaped along the policy documents and guidelines concerning the ERA, Responsible Research and Innovation and National and Regional R&I policies, European Industrial Strategy, European Green Deal and the 2030 Digital Compass.

Project representative: Els Van de Velde (IDEA Consult)

DIOSI - Training Early Career Researchers



Website: <https://diosi.eu/>

The DIOSI project proposes a full cycle concept on doctoral education, from the development of a new joint doctoral educational programme, through the provision of training on Open Science and Open Innovation & Entrepreneurship for doctoral candidates and early career researchers, making a crucial contribution to strengthen researchers' careers in the ERA.

Project representative: Margaux Kersschout (University of Antwerp)

EOSC Association - Advancing Open Science in Europe



Website: <https://eosc.eu/>

The EOSC Association works to advance Open Science in the service of creating new knowledge, inspiring education, spurring innovation and promoting accessibility and transparency. EOSC is pivotal in order to expand and foster open science in the ERA.

Project representative: Kathrin Winkler (European Commission)

The ERIC Forum Implementation Project



Website: <https://www.eric-forum.eu/about-the-eric-forum-implementation-project/>

The ERIC Forum Implementation Project brings together the ERIC community to strengthen its coordination and enhance collaborations between the partners. One of its major outcomes is to frame the necessary knowledge to support Research Infrastructures in the ERA interested to explore the ERIC legal framework and ERICs in preparation with various aspects.

Project representatives: Elisa Baioni (CERIC-ERIC), Maria Rujano (ECRIN)

EURAXESS - supporting researchers in motion



Website: <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/>

EURAXESS is a European initiative delivering information and support services to professional researchers. The EURAXESS portal consolidates all relevant information pertaining to the planning of researchers' careers in Europe, ranging from the access to services to the introduction of EU-tools. It serves as a central element to strengthen careers and mobility in R&I in the ERA.

Project representatives: Dalila Coviello (European Commission), Slaven Misljencevic (European Commission)

GIANT LEAPS

Website: <https://giant-leaps.eu/>

GIANT LEAPS is accelerating the transition from animal-based to alternative dietary proteins to work towards a safe, health-promoting and sustainable food system. GIANT LEAPS engages with a wide range of stakeholders to promote societal, economic and policy changes to reduce the footprints and environmental impacts of our food system and improve the health and well-being of European citizens, hence strengthening green transition and sustainability in the ERA.

Project representative: Paul Vos (Wageningen Food & Biobased Research)

HEAVENN - H2 Energy Applications in Valley Environments for Northern Netherlands

Website: <https://heavenn.org/>

HEAVENN is a large-scale programme of demo projects bringing together core elements: production, distribution, storage and local end-use of hydrogen into a fully-integrated and functioning "H2 valley", that can serve as a blueprint for replication across Europe and beyond. The main goal is to make use of green hydrogen across the entire value chain, while developing replicable business models for wide-scale commercial deployment of hydrogen across the entire regional energy system, strengthening the priority of a green transition in the ERA.

Project representative: Geerte de Jong (New Energy Coalition)

HiLASE Centre of Excellence

Website: <https://www.hilase.cz/en/projekty/hilase-centre-of-excellence/>

HiLASE aims at pushing the boundaries of laser technologies and to serve as a bridge between the academic world and industry. The HiLASE Centre of Excellence exemplifies how local and regional players increase the potential to reduce regional disparities



and weaknesses in R&I field in the Czech Republic, thus contributing to the goal to amplify access to R&I across the EU.

Project representative: Lukáš Masopust (Czech Academy of Sciences)

InnoRenew CoE



Website: <https://innorenew.eu/about/project/>

InnoRenew targets renewable materials and sustainable buildings, specifically innovative approaches to wood and its use, with the goal of transferring scientific knowledge into industrial practice. The InnoRenew Centre of Excellence is furthermore another project that strengthens the priority of access and excellence across the ERA.

Project representative: Lea Primožič (InnoRenew CoE)

INSPIRE - Building Europe's Centre of Excellence on Inclusive Gender Equality in R&I



Website: <https://www.inspirequality.eu/>

INSPIRE develops innovative tools and knowledge to address intersecting inequalities across the public and private sectors and geographical regions in Europe, and contributes to the strengthening of gender equality and inclusiveness in the ERA.

Project representative: Koen Van Laer (Hasselt University)

OTTER - Learning science outside the classroom for a sustainable future



Website: <https://otter-project.eu/>

OTTER's objective is to render education outside the classroom more popular. Together with educators, the project aims at improving the scientific knowledge of students and familiarizing them with STEAM subjects. The project exemplifies an approach to strengthen citizen science in the ERA.

Project representative: Catalina Vrabie (Geonardo Environmental Technologies)

Plastic Pirates - Go Europe!



Website: <https://www.plastic-pirates.eu/>

PlasticPirates EU focusses on upscaling the successful citizen science initiative “Plastic Pirates - Go Europe!” (www.plastic-pirates.eu) to interested EU Member States and Associated Countries. In doing so, the project aims to raise awareness among citizens and, in particular, young citizens, in larger parts of Europe on the impact and benefits that R&I can have on their daily lives, fostering the topic of citizen science in the ERA.

Project representative: Meritxell Abril Cuevas (BETA Technological Center)

REINFORCING - Responsible tErritories and Institutions eNable and Foster Open Research and inClusive Innovation for traNsitions Governance



REINFORCING

Responsible tErritories and Institutions
eNable and Foster Open Research and inClusive
Innovation for traNsitions and Governance

Website: <https://www.reinforcing.eu/about>

REINFORCING project will award 96 grants to boost institutions scaling up their experience with Open and Responsible Research and Innovation (ORRI). Mentoring, matchmaking services and training modules are part of the project’s offer, in line with the project’s overall objective to make ORRI a central point of knowledge and expertise that is easily accessible, up-to-date and tailored to community needs. The project supports the advancement of open and responsible R&I in the ERA.

Project representative: Angela Simone (Fondazione Giannino Bassetti)

Una Europa - Una.Resin



Website: <https://www.una-europa.eu/about/una.resin>

Una.Resin aims at instigating and growing pilot initiatives to build a common ecosystem of R&I of Una Europa, an alliance of eleven leading European research universities. The project mutually enhances Una Europa’s Erasmus+ pilot project, 1Europe,



which is similarly taking steps to build a university ecosystem by testing Joint Innovative formats for education and mobility.

Project representative: Nick Ollivère (Una Europa)

UniSAFE - ending gender-based violence



Website: <https://unisafe-gbv.eu/>

The UniSAFE project aims to produce better knowledge on gender-based violence in research organizations and universities and translate it into operational tools and recommendations for higher education, research organisations and policymakers by investigating the mechanisms of gender-based violence. The project makes a crucial contribution to enhance gender equality in the ERA.

Project representative: Lut Mergaert (Yellow Window)

XR4Human - Responsible development and uptake of XR technologies



Website: <https://xr4human.eu/>

XR4Human project aims to establish living guidelines on ethical and related policy, regulatory, governance and interoperability issues of extended reality technologies within a European community of practice. The project work will pave the way towards a strong and competitive ecosystem led by European companies for the wider deployment, adoption and acceptance of extended reality technologies, contributing to the goal of strengthening cutting-edge innovation in the ERA.

Project representative: Nicole Sarla (National and Technical University of Athens)

ZOOM - 3Os and IP awareness raising for collaborative ecosystems



Website: <https://zoom4u.eu/>

ZOOM aims to raise awareness on the importance of intellectual property generation and management in collaborative innovation ecosystems which rely on the three key assets of open source software, open (source) hardware, and open data. The project contributes to strengthen a sustainable, trustworthy and sovereign practice for open data in the ERA.

Project representative: Matteo Frigeri (Centre for IT & IP Law @KU Leuven)

6. Annex

6.1. Agenda



Supported by



Visit the ERA Policy Platform
#EURResearchArea

European Research Area

Fostering Greater Integration. Advancing Competitiveness.

Conference at the BluePoint, Brussels



DAY 1: Wednesday, 18 September

12:00 – 13:30	Lunch, including registration												
Plenary sessions moderated by Katrina Sichel													
13:30 – 14:00	Conference opening Janez Potočnik, <i>former Commissioner for Science and Research 2004 - 2010</i> Marc Lemaître, <i>Director-General at DG Research and Innovation</i>												
14:00 – 14:45	ERA revamped: four years later Anna Panagopoulou, <i>Director for ERA & Innovation at DG Research and Innovation</i> Anneke Kastelein, <i>PhD candidate at Leiden University Medical Centre and part of the advisory board of the PhD Network Netherlands (PNN)</i> Nuno Maulide, <i>Professor of organic chemistry at the University of Vienna</i> Sergej Možina, <i>Slovenian science attaché at the EU and Co-Chair of the ERA Forum</i> Silvia Gomez Recio, <i>Secretary General of Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN), Belgium</i>												
14:45 – 15:15	Inclusive gender equality: shaping the future Gemma Irvine, <i>Vice-President of Equality and Diversity in Maynooth University, Ireland</i> Irene Norstedt, <i>Director for People: Health & Society at DG Research and Innovation</i> Marcela Linková, <i>ERA Action 5 subgroup Member States' co-chair, Czechia</i> Mathieu Arbogast, <i>Project manager at Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), France</i>												
15:15 – 16:00	Scientific freedom & research security Alexander Grablowitz, <i>Head of Unit at the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research</i> Denise Roche, <i>Advocacy Manager at Scholars at Risk Europe, Ireland</i> Gosse Simon Vuijk, <i>Parliamentary Assistant at European Parliament, The Netherlands</i> Jan Palmowski, <i>Secretary-General of The Guild, Belgium</i> Susanne Caarls, <i>Head of Department Europe and International & Societal Impact and Open Science, at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, The Netherlands</i>												
16:00 – 16:10	Official opening of the project exhibition: Marc Tachelet, <i>Director of European Research Executive Agency (REA)</i>												
16:10 – 16:30	Coffee break and networking												
16:30 – 18:00	Parallel thematic sessions: <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 5px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #00AEEF; color: white; padding: 2px;">Archimedes</th> <th style="background-color: #00AEEF; color: white; padding: 2px;">Darwin</th> <th style="background-color: #00AEEF; color: white; padding: 2px;">Vesalius</th> <th style="background-color: #00AEEF; color: white; padding: 2px;">Newton BC</th> <th style="background-color: #00AEEF; color: white; padding: 2px;">Einstein ABC</th> <th style="background-color: #00AEEF; color: white; padding: 2px;">Edison</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;"> Challenges and opportunities with the reforms of research assessment – <i>Speakers:</i> - Vinciane Gaillard - Emmanuelle Gardan <i>Table hosts:</i> - Ágota Dávid - Elizabeth Gadd - Mattias Björnmalm - Monica Dietl - Silvia Gomez Recio </td> <td style="padding: 2px;"> Why now an ERA action on non-animal approaches in biomedical research and testing of pharmaceuticals? – <i>Speakers:</i> - Bas de Waard - Marta Dias Agostinho - Maurice Whelan - Orla Moriarty - Philippe Hubert - Sonja Beken - Winfried Neuhaus - Nicolas Dudoignon </td> <td style="padding: 2px;"> Enhancing trust in science via citizen engagement – <i>Speakers:</i> - Cissi Billgren Askwall <i>Table hosts:</i> - Anna Maria Fleetwood - Agata Gurzawska - Angela Simone - Anette Klinkert - Helen Garrison - Jason Pridmore - Maria Hagardt </td> <td style="padding: 2px;"> An ERA for energy: hydrogen and solar – <i>Speakers:</i> - Bernd Biervert - Nadine May - Christoph Hünnekes - Luisa Revilla Trujillo </td> <td style="padding: 2px;"> A global policy perspective: AI in science in the world – <i>Speakers:</i> - Alison Noble - Dureen Samandar Eweis - Wendy J. Nilsen </td> <td style="padding: 2px;"> Improving visibility of intergovernmental and national funding opportunities – <i>Speakers:</i> - Marko Piirsoo - Peter Härtwich </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Archimedes	Darwin	Vesalius	Newton BC	Einstein ABC	Edison	Challenges and opportunities with the reforms of research assessment – <i>Speakers:</i> - Vinciane Gaillard - Emmanuelle Gardan <i>Table hosts:</i> - Ágota Dávid - Elizabeth Gadd - Mattias Björnmalm - Monica Dietl - Silvia Gomez Recio	Why now an ERA action on non-animal approaches in biomedical research and testing of pharmaceuticals? – <i>Speakers:</i> - Bas de Waard - Marta Dias Agostinho - Maurice Whelan - Orla Moriarty - Philippe Hubert - Sonja Beken - Winfried Neuhaus - Nicolas Dudoignon	Enhancing trust in science via citizen engagement – <i>Speakers:</i> - Cissi Billgren Askwall <i>Table hosts:</i> - Anna Maria Fleetwood - Agata Gurzawska - Angela Simone - Anette Klinkert - Helen Garrison - Jason Pridmore - Maria Hagardt	An ERA for energy: hydrogen and solar – <i>Speakers:</i> - Bernd Biervert - Nadine May - Christoph Hünnekes - Luisa Revilla Trujillo	A global policy perspective: AI in science in the world – <i>Speakers:</i> - Alison Noble - Dureen Samandar Eweis - Wendy J. Nilsen	Improving visibility of intergovernmental and national funding opportunities – <i>Speakers:</i> - Marko Piirsoo - Peter Härtwich
Archimedes	Darwin	Vesalius	Newton BC	Einstein ABC	Edison								
Challenges and opportunities with the reforms of research assessment – <i>Speakers:</i> - Vinciane Gaillard - Emmanuelle Gardan <i>Table hosts:</i> - Ágota Dávid - Elizabeth Gadd - Mattias Björnmalm - Monica Dietl - Silvia Gomez Recio	Why now an ERA action on non-animal approaches in biomedical research and testing of pharmaceuticals? – <i>Speakers:</i> - Bas de Waard - Marta Dias Agostinho - Maurice Whelan - Orla Moriarty - Philippe Hubert - Sonja Beken - Winfried Neuhaus - Nicolas Dudoignon	Enhancing trust in science via citizen engagement – <i>Speakers:</i> - Cissi Billgren Askwall <i>Table hosts:</i> - Anna Maria Fleetwood - Agata Gurzawska - Angela Simone - Anette Klinkert - Helen Garrison - Jason Pridmore - Maria Hagardt	An ERA for energy: hydrogen and solar – <i>Speakers:</i> - Bernd Biervert - Nadine May - Christoph Hünnekes - Luisa Revilla Trujillo	A global policy perspective: AI in science in the world – <i>Speakers:</i> - Alison Noble - Dureen Samandar Eweis - Wendy J. Nilsen	Improving visibility of intergovernmental and national funding opportunities – <i>Speakers:</i> - Marko Piirsoo - Peter Härtwich								
18:00 – 21:00	Reception and dinner												





- 48 -

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No.101131556



Funded by the European Union



Supported by



Visit the ERA Policy Platform
#EURResearchArea

European Research Area Fostering Greater Integration. Advancing Competitiveness.

Conference at the BluePoint, Brussels



DAY 2: Thursday, 19 September

9:00 – 9:30	Welcome coffee					
9:30 – 10:00	Conference opening by Katrina Sichel Keynote speech by Iliana Ivanova, <i>Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth</i> Signature of funding agreement on Research and Innovation Careers Observatory (ReICO) between the Commission and OECD , represented by Anna Panagopoulou, <i>Director for ERA & Innovation at DG Research and Innovation</i> , and Jerry Sheehan, <i>Director of the Directorate for Science, Technology, and Innovation at OECD</i>					
Panel discussion						
10:00 – 10:45	Boosting R&I investments and reforms to secure Europe's long-term competitiveness moderated by Marc Lemaître, <i>Director-General at DG Research and Innovation</i> Balázs Hankó, <i>Minister of Culture and Innovation, Hungary</i> Elisa Rivera Mendoza, <i>Director General for Planning, Coordination and Knowledge Transfer at the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities</i> Michal Doligalski, <i>Director responsible for innovation and development at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland</i> Tuomas Saarenheimo, <i>President of the Euro Working Group (EWG)</i>					
10:45 – 11:00	Coffee break and networking					
11:00 – 12:00	Parallel thematic sessions:					
rooms	Archimedes	Darwin	Vesalius	Newton BC	Einstein ABC	Edison
	Empowering research infrastructures and technology infrastructures as strategic assets and knowledge hubs in Europe - <i>Speakers:</i> - Britta Redlich - Edith Heard - François Jacq - Johan Hanssens - Michael Ryan - Pia Sandvik	Breaking boundaries: how EIC is supporting startups and scaleups to secure long-term competitiveness and growth from ERA - <i>Speakers:</i> - Katuska Cruz - Keith Sequeira - Michiel Scheffer - Nicklas Bergman - Rana Sanyal	Driving competitive sustainability through bioeconomy solutions - <i>Speakers:</i> - Arttu Luukanen - Claire Skentelbery - Lena Grimm - Michael O'Donohue	An ERA for climate and circular economy - <i>Speakers:</i> - Janez Potočnik - Adel el Gammal - Timo Ritonummi	Develop skilled researchers and innovators and attract talents in Europe - <i>Speakers:</i> - Emmanuelle Gardan - Jerry Sheehan - Luisa Henriques - Martin Páidar - Peter Rasmussen - Sebastian Dahle	R&I policy to leverage industrial transformation and competitiveness - <i>Speakers:</i> - Dorota Pawlucka - Marta Lima Basto - Nathalie Errard - Nathalie Martin-Hübner - Niklas Blomberg
12:00 – 12:45	Closing session Barbara Weitgruber, <i>Director-General for Scientific Research and International Relations at Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research</i> Marc Lemaître, <i>Director-General at DG Research and Innovation</i>					
12:45 – 14:00	Closing lunch					



List of Speakers:

DAY 1

Parallel thematic sessions

Challenges and opportunities with the reforms of research assessment

Vinciane Gaillard, Deputy-Director of Research & Innovation at European University Association (EUA), Belgium
 Emmanuelle Gardan, Director of Coimbra Group office and co-lead of ERA Action 4, Belgium
 Ágota Dávid, Science and Technology Attaché at Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU
 Elizabeth Gadd, Head of Research Culture and Assessment at Loughborough University and Vice-Chair of CoARA Steering Board, UK
 Mattias Björnmalm, Secretary General of the university association CESAER, Belgium
 Monica Dietl, Executive Coordinator of the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE), France
 Silvia Gomez Recio, Secretary General of the Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN), Belgium

Why now an ERA action on non-animal approaches in biomedical research and testing of pharmaceuticals?

Bas de Waard, Policy Officer of the Transition Programme towards Animal-free Innovation at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature, The Netherlands
 Marta Dias Agostinho, Executive Director of EU-LIFE Alliance of Independent Research Institutes
 Maurice Whelan, Head of Unit Systems Toxicology at the Joint Research Center (JRC) of the European Commission, Italy
 Nicolas Dudoignon, Chief Veterinary Officer at Sanofi, France
 Orla Moriarty, Scientific Officer in Translational Sciences at the European Medicines Agency (EMA), The Netherlands
 Philippe Hubert, Director of the French platform for the validation of methods for the characterization of endocrine disruptors (PEPPER)
 Sonja Beken, Coordinator of the Unit of non-clinical assessors at the Belgian Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products (FAMHP)
 Winfried Neuhaus, Principal Scientist in the Competence Unit Molecular Diagnostics of the Austrian Institute of Technology

Enhancing trust in science via citizen engagement

Cissi Billgren Askwall, Coordinator at Swedish Research Council
 Anna Maria Fleetwood, Senior Advisor External relations the Swedish Research Council
 Agata Gurzawska, Coordinator Project VERITY
 Angela Simone, Coordinator Project REINFORCING, Italy
 Anette Klinkert, Executive Director EUSEA, Germany
 Helen Garrison, Communications Manager Public and Science Sweden
 Jason Pridmore, Coordinator of Project COALESCE, The Netherlands
 Maria Hagardt, International Relations Manager at Public and Science Sweden

An ERA for energy: hydrogen and solar

Bernd Biervert, Head of the Clean Energy Transition Unit at DG Research and Innovation
 Nadine May, Chair of the SET Plan Temporary Working Group on Hydrogen, Germany
 Christoph Hünnekes, Chair Set Plan Implementation Working Group on Solar PVs, Germany
 Luisa Revilla Trujillo, Programme Manager, Spanish Center for Technological Development & Innovation (CDTI)

A global policy perspective: AI in science in the world

Alison Noble, Professor with a Fellowship of the Royal Society (FRS), United Kingdom
 Dureen Samandar Eweis, Science Officer at International Science Council (ISC), France
 Wendy J. Nilsen, Deputy Division Director, Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE) at National Science Foundation, United States

Improving visibility of intergovernmental and national funding opportunities

Marko Piirsoo, Head of Department of Strategic Analysis, Estonian Research Council
 Peter Härtwich, Head of the Common Service for Business Processes Unit at DG Research and Innovation

DAY 2

Parallel thematic sessions

Empowering research infrastructures and technology infrastructures as strategic assets and knowledge hubs in Europe
 Britta Redlich, Director of the FELIX Laboratory, Vice-Chair of League of European Accelerator-based Photon Sources (LEAPS), Germany
 Edith Heard, Director General at European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), United Kingdom
 François Jacq, President of European Association of Research and Technology Organisations, France
 Johan Hanssens, Secretary-General, Department Economy, Science & Innovation (EWI) of Flanders, Belgium
 Michael Ryan, Head of International Division at Research Ireland and ESFRI Executive Board Member
 Pia Sandvik, CEO at Teknikforetagen, Sweden

Breaking boundaries: how EIC is supporting startups and scaleups to secure long-term competitiveness and growth from ERA

Katuska Cruz, Networks and Technological Valorisation Coordinator at Agência Nacional de Inovação (ANI), Portugal
 Keith Sequeira, Head of the European Innovation Council Unit at DG Research and Innovation
 Michiel Scheffer, President of the European Innovation Council Board
 Nicklas Bergman, Deep tech angel investor and member of EIC Fund investment committee, Sweden
 Rana Sanyal, CSO and Co-Founder of RS Research, Winner of EIC Women Innovators Prize 2024, Türkiye

Driving competitive sustainability through bioeconomy solutions

Arttu Luukonen, Senior Vice President Solar Foods, Finland
 Claire Skentelbery, Director General at European Association for Bioindustries (EUROPABIO), Belgium
 Lena Grimm, Researcher at Fraunhofer Institut, Germany
 Michael O'Donohue, Director of IBISBA, Head of Division TRANSFORM, INRAE, France

An ERA for climate and circular economy

Janez Potočnik, former Commissioner for Science and Research 2004 - 2010
 Adel el Gammal, Secretary-General at European Energy Research Alliance, Belgium
 Timo Ritonummi, Deputy Director General at Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Finland

Develop skilled researchers and innovators and attract talents in Europe

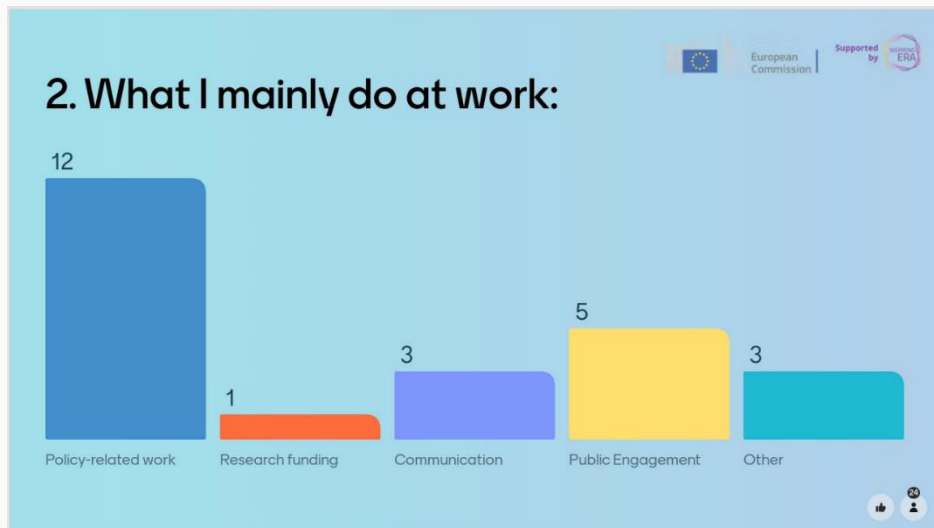
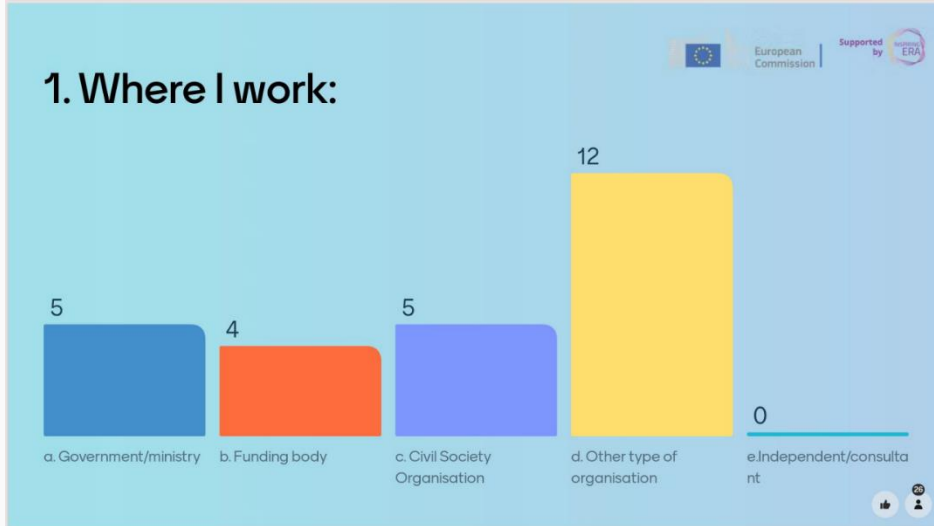
Emmanuelle Gardan, Director of the Brussels office at Coimbra Group, Belgium
 Jerry Sheehan, Director of the Directorate for Science, Technology, and Innovation at OECD, France
 Luisa Henriques, Senior Policy Analyst and Advisor to the Board of Directors at FCT, Portugal
 Martin Páidar, Assoc. Prof. at University of Chemistry and Technology Prague, Czechia
 Peter Rasmussen, Head of the Technology Transfer Office at Aalborg University, Denmark
 Sebastian Dahle, Assist. Prof. at University of Ljubljana & Advisory Board member at Eurodoc, Slovenia

R&I policy to leverage industrial transformation and competitiveness

Dorota Pawlucka, Global Alliances Manager at COVESTRO AG Hubs4Circularity, Germany
 Marta Lima Basto, Subdirector-General of Directorate-General for Economic Activities, Portugal
 Nathalie Errard, Senior Vice President, Head of EU affairs at Airbus, France
 Nathalie Martin-Hübner, Head of Governmental Relations at Robert Bosch GmbH, Germany
 Niklas Blomberg, Executive Director at Innovative Health Initiative, Sweden

Break-out sessions on the first conference day:

Enhancing trust in science via citizen engagement



4. Drivers and opportunities for PE

European Commission | Supported by ERA

Reward	Counterbalancing the emphasis on industry & economic competitiveness	Definitions	Making Transitions work, safeguarding democracy,
Trust	Co creation between scientists and population	Interested in topic, previous engagement as a researcher, interest in open science, EOSC, Citizen science	- PE can support local, regional and national innovation ecosystems, which can enhance local or national policies.- Collaborations need trainings to qualify researchers and partners

👍 👤

4. Drivers and opportunities for PE

European Commission | Supported by ERA

Trainings are important for policy makers, civil society, economy and researchers. Actors in engagement should come from all areas of the Quadruple Helix.	Trust goes in many directions, not just between citizens and scientists. We need to be aware of different cultures and circumstances and methodologies.	Utilise business more - utilise their expertise, knowledge of citizens	Utilise intermediaries - CSOs, interest groups etc to reach and engage citizens
Good PE happens if you have good framework conditions	Use citizens as a sounding board to drive evidence based policy, better understand their concerns	Diverse approaches of PE are useful to collect opinions from different publics	...

👍 👤

4. Drivers and opportunities for PE

European Commission | Supported by ERA

1. Researchers & Unis: impact of research - research to implementation, benefits for researchers 2. Citizens: Seeing the results of their engagement in practice 3. Governance: trust in policy	Impact of research in real life	Science based policy
---	---------------------------------	----------------------

👍 👤

5. Challenges and barriers for PE

European Commission | Supported by ERA

Variety of Stakeholders	Training for academics to engage with the public	Lack of incentives for citizens to engage / funding of incentives	Lack of time and skills. Lack of sustainability in funding.
Disinformation and fake news	Lack of clarity in the narrative, expectations are often not clear for scientists and evaluators (RRI, Open Science, Citizen Science)	Traditional understanding of academic excellence as opposed to a rather open and confusing concept with a lack of clear indicators. Impact maybe longterm and is hard to measure	Language used to communicate scientific topics to citizens

Like | Profile

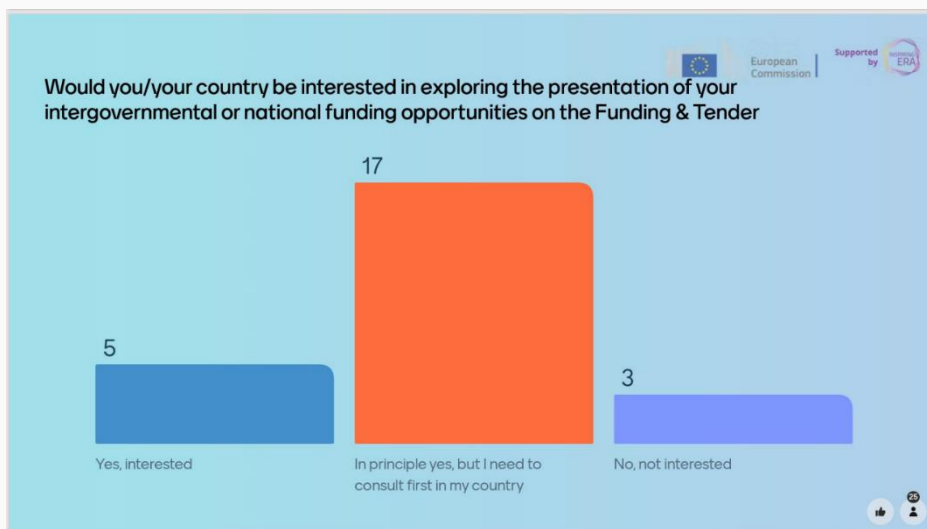
5. Challenges and barriers for PE

European Commission | Supported by ERA

Bureaucratic hurdles across border may prevent collaborations.	Communication	Cultural resistance	Incentives and rewards for researchers
Infrastructure and facilities	Clear definitions, trainings and support	Clear definitions of what we want, with whom, why. What is citizen science? What is public engagement? When to involve them? How? What is the process? Where to do it?	

Like | Profile

Improving visibility of intergovernmental and national funding opportunities



Break-out sessions on the second conference day:

Empowering research infrastructures and technology infrastructures as strategic assets and knowledge hubs in Europe

What are the main issues that the EU strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures should address?

European Union | Supported by ERA

Access and collaboration	Coherence with ESFRI	Synergy	Sustainability
Attractive careers	Cooperation across the ERA, including associated countries.	Facilitate mobility	Member States leadership and ownership

1 10

What are the main issues that the EU strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures should address?

European Union | Supported by ERA

Sustainable funding, including for access and stronger coordination of national and European RI policies and investment	Need to interconnect and scale at European level	Societal impact, cooperation, public engagement, science communication	Visibility of infrastructures among the research community and others.
Accelerating funding	Political clarification on TIs	Inspiration for funding & businessmodels.	RIs & TIs have their own reasons of being and could and should coexist.

1 10

What are the main issues that the EU strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures should address?

European Commission | Supported by ERA

Collaboration of RIs with industry is not the same as the user needs of industry for TIs (technology scale up and testing).	Solve coordination issues in the grey area that is being felt between RIs & TIs.	Avoid investing public funding into TIs that- industry is prepared to invest in- industry has not identified as needed	Raising Awareness that RIs are essential partners in a lot of Pillar 2 projects
Investment coordination	Clarify relationship between ESFRI and TIs.	Promotion	Technological foresight

1 10

What are the main issues that the EU strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures should address?

European Commission | Supported by ERA

A	Sufficiently focused research bets
---	------------------------------------

1 10

In one/two words, what is the main issue that the EU strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures should address?

European Commission | Supported by ERA

10 responses

Word cloud content:

- societal impact
- interconnectivity
- member states leadership
- investments
- coherence with esfri
- ecosystem coherence
- policy clarification
- scaling
- funding

1 10

What actions should be taken at EU level and what should rather be done at national or infrastructure level?

EU: coordinationNational: funding

EU: common policy definition and fundingNational : local declinaisons and funding



Breaking boundaries: how EIC is supporting start-ups and scaleups to secure long-term competitiveness and growth from ERA

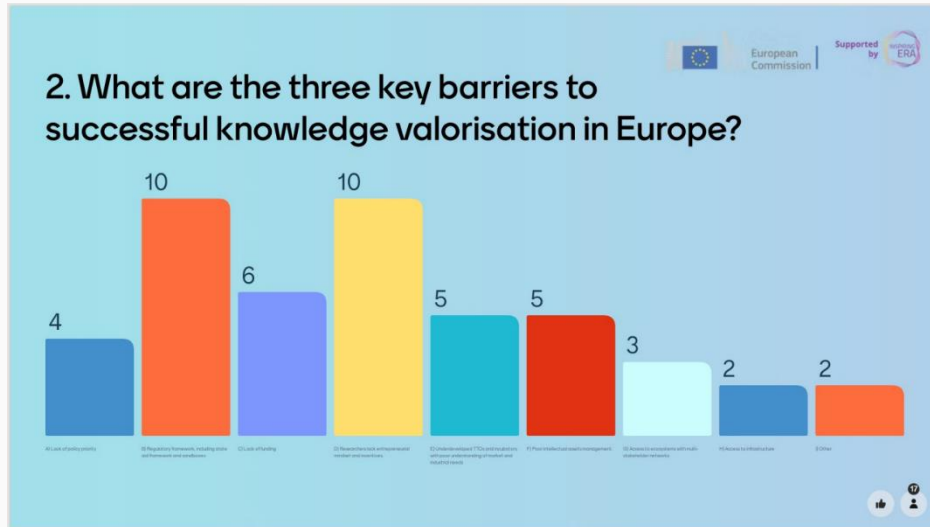
1. How mature do you consider the ecosystem for knowledge valorisation across Europe to be?

5.6

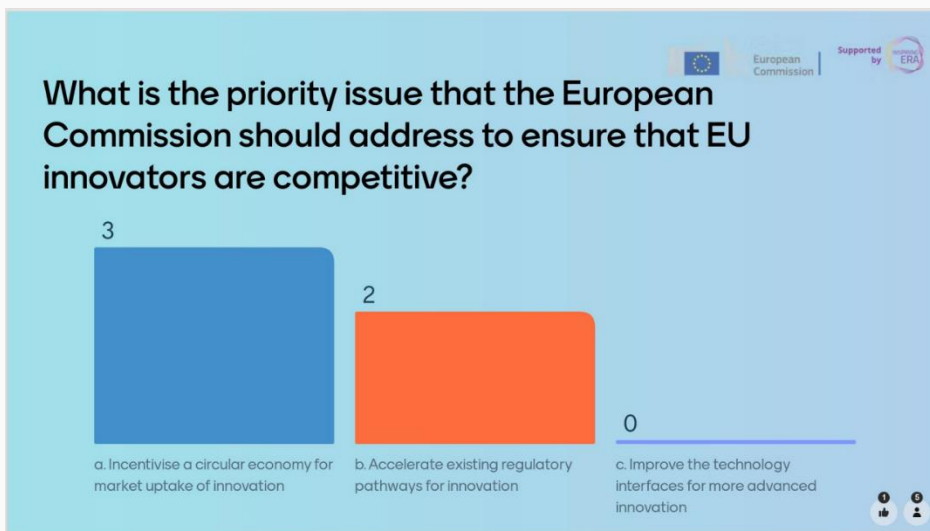
almost not existing

very mature





Driving competitive sustainability through bioeconomy solutions



6.3. List of abbreviations

3Rs	Replacement, reduction, refinement
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ANI	Agência Nacional de Inovação
API	Application Programming Interface
CET Partnership	Clean Energy Transition Partnership
CoARA	Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment
DG	Directorate-General
EERA	European Energy Research Alliance
EIC	European Innovation Council
ERA	European Research Area
ERC	European Research Council
ERIC	European Research Infrastructure Consortium
EU	European Union
F&T	Funding & Tenders
FP10	Framework Programme 10
FRS	Fellowship of the Royal Society
GDP	Gross domestic product
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IPCEI	Important Projects of Common European Interest
ISC	International Science Council
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LGBTQ+	Initial for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer community and additional identities
MLE	Mutual Learning Exercise
NAM	New Approach Methodologies
NEIA	New European Innovation Agenda
NSF	National Science Foundation
Pact for R&I	Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe
PE	Public engagement
PV	Photovoltaic
R&D	Research and Development
R&I	Research and Innovation
ReICO	Research and Innovation Careers Observatory
ResearchComp	European Competence Framework for Researchers
RIA	Research and innovation action

SAR	Scholars at Risk
SET Plan	European Strategic Energy Technology Plan
SME	Small and medium enterprises
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TRL	Technology Readiness Level