

The ERA at a glance

European Commissioner Philippe Busquin [launched the idea](#) of the European Research Area back in November 2000. “*The problem is not money but fragmentation of the efforts carried out at European level,*” he had said. “*So it is imperative that we mobilise resources and create a movement towards coherence of research policies in Europe.*”

This statement introduced the [European Research Area \(ERA\)](#), which aims to create a unified research area open to the world, and to enable the free circulation of researchers, scientific knowledge and technology. Most importantly, ERA is based on the European internal market.

Within ERA, National Action Plans have been developed based on the following six priorities:

- More effective national research systems
- Optimal transnational cooperation and competition, including ‘jointly addressing grand challenges’ and ‘research infrastructures’
- An open labour market for researchers
- Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research
- Optimal circulation, access and transfer of scientific knowledge
- International cooperation

Background and process

The [history of the ERA](#) between 2000 and 2020 can be divided into three phases.

In the third phase in 2014, 2 years after the adoption of its communication on [a reinforced European Research Area \(ERA\) partnership](#), the Commission reported that EU countries and stakeholders had made good progress in delivering the ERA but more effort would be needed.

In 2015, the European Council [reaffirmed its commitment](#) to a fully operational ERA and endorsed the [ERA Roadmap 2015-2020](#). This was a living document to guide EU countries in structuring their implementation of the ERA priorities at national level. It called on EU members to implement the ERA roadmap through appropriate measures in ERA national action plans and strategies. Monitoring of ERA roadmap implementation has been integrated into the ERA progress reports, on the basis of headline indicators proposed by the European Research and Innovation Advisory Committee ([ERAC](#)).

The new ERA

A [new Communication](#) was introduced in September 2020 with an aim to relaunch and revitalise the ERA in order to:

- make it future-proof
- make it better able to address the major challenges of the digital and green transition
- increase Europe’s resilience following the Covid-19 crisis.

In late 2021, the Council of the EU adopted a [Pact for Research and Innovation](#) with values and principles guiding research and innovation and priority areas for joint action as a first key achievement. In addition to this, the [new ERA Policy Agenda](#), annexed to the [Council conclusions on the ERA governance](#), sets out [20 concrete ERA actions](#) for the period 2022-2024 to contribute to the priority areas defined in the Pact for Research and Innovation. The

actions are clustered into the four priority areas defined in the Pact for Research and Innovation, [visualised and presented also by DG Research and Innovation](#) at the Meeting of the Western Balkans Steering Platforms on Education and Training & Research and Innovation in 2023.

The Council Conclusions on the future governance of the ERA recognise the role of the [ERA Forum](#) as the body responsible for enhancing coordination towards the effective implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda, supporting the Commission and the Member States in the delivery of the ERA Actions. Stakeholders, also in the Western Balkans, can engage in the implementation of the ERA by participating in the ERA Forum or committing to the ERA actions – as pointed out by DG RTD's ERA Forum Team on ["How and why should stakeholders from the Western Balkans actively participate in the ERA?"](#)

Another important initiative of the ERA is the [Knowledge Exchange Platform \(KEP\)](#), which was relaunched as KEP 2.0 in 2020 in accordance with the plan for a new ERA. The aim of KEP is to support the EU's policy ambition of creating dialogue and synergies between Horizon Europe and other funds, and also to provide a Europe-wide forum for informing regions and cities of the new European Research Area.