Resolution on a new ERA for Research and Innovation

2021/2524(RSP) - 08/07/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 634 votes to 5, with 57 abstentions, a resolution on a new ERA for Research and Innovation.

The completion of the European Research Area (ERA) by achieving the free movement of researchers and free circulation of scientific knowledge and technology is a key priority for the European Union. The ERA should contribute to the EU's multiple strategies and international commitments, such as the SME and Digital Strategies, the European Green Deal and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Objectives

Parliament welcomed the Commission communication on a new ERA for Research and Innovation (R&I) setting out the strategic objectives and actions to be implemented in close cooperation with the Member States, in order to prioritise investments and reforms in R&I, to reach the 3 % of GDP goal, to improve access to excellence for researchers across the EU and enable research results to reach the scientific community, society and the real economy.

Member States are called on to adopt a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe that includes the following commitments to be achieved by 2030:

- to increase public spending on R&I from the current average level of 0.81 % of GDP to 1.25 % in a manner coordinated across the EU;

- to increase national public R&D funding of joint programmes and European partnerships from its current level of just below 1 % to 5 %; and to jointly agree on the priority areas for ERA action (horizontal as well as thematic).

Funding

Parliament believes that the review of the ERA should include a horizontal approach for strengthening cooperation between research institutions, including universities. It called for **increased budgetary support for university alliances**, as well as the establishment of an enabling framework that allows alliances to develop in a flexible manner.

Member States are called on to translate the 'new ERA' into concrete policies and funding actions aimed at contributing to the 'green' and 'digital' twin transitions, the implementation of an ambitious European Green Deal and industrial strategy, a resilient recovery and unmet medical needs.

Funding and synergies

The resolution stressed that in view of the fact that Europe is facing pressing societal, ecological and economic challenges, aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis, it is high time to retool the ERA in order to deliver on Europe's recovery and build a new socially, economically and environmentally resilient model for the EU.

It called for:

- an **increase in the national budgets** devoted to R&I including in clean energy technologies, thereby fostering national objectives and funding targets that indicate concrete and relevant pathways to 2030 and 2050;

- clear, simple and practical guidance and streamlined tools for Member States on how best to implement the synergies between European funding instruments in the national and regional contexts;

- better aligning and reinforcing R&I investments through exploiting synergies with the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the 'ERA Hubs' and other R&I-related hubs such as the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Innovation Hubs, the Digital Innovation Hubs and networks, such as the AI Digital Innovation Hubs, among others, and the European Enterprise Network.

Careers

The resolution stressed the importance of empowering women and girls to enter STEM careers. Member States are encouraged and research organisations, including universities, to support flexible working conditions and arrangements for both women and men in R&I, including support for the equal sharing of care responsibilities, and to review the assessment of researchers' performance in order to eliminate gender bias.

The Commission and the Member States should strive for talent circulation as a balanced circular movement of researchers, thereby tackling the problem of the 'brain drain'. Parliament highlighted the importance of incentive schemes encouraging the mobility of researchers (ERASMUS+, Marie Skodowska-Curie actions, European Research Council).

The Commission is called on to:

- develop a toolbox to support research careers in order to enhance mobility, develop competences and skills, provide targeted training courses and improve employability;

- identify and break down the persistent barriers faced by researchers when they consider moving to other European countries and regions.

While emphasising the essential role of skills, Parliament considered that 'putting knowledge first' represents one of the crucial pillars of the new ERA. It stressed the role of universities in promoting lifelong learning, skilling and re-skilling in order to enhance opportunities for all workers and meet the skills needs of the labour market arising from the green and digital transitions and in contributing to a swift recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.