New initiatives to empower research careers and to strengthen the European Research Area

Brussels, 13 July 2023

Today, the Commission unveiled a comprehensive set of measures targeted at strengthening the European Research Area (ERA) and making it more resilient, appealing, and competitive. These will contribute to a priority action of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024, namely to promote attractive and sustainable research careers.

These initiatives will bring substantial benefits to 2 million researchers across Europe by supporting stable and well-paid work opportunities. Early-career researchers and other European research talents, in particular, will be encouraged to stay in Europe while addressing issues of precariousness in their careers. Simultaneously, efforts will be made to position Europe as an enticing destination for international talents, further bolstering its attractiveness on the global stage.

The set of measures includes:

- A proposal for a Council Recommendation that establishes a new European framework for research careers;
- A new Charter for Researchers, replacing the 2005 Charter and Code for Researchers with new and revised principles;
- The European Competence Framework for Researchers (ResearchComp), to support inter-sectoral mobility of researchers.

Through its support for research talents, the Commission aims to fortify the entire research and innovation system in Europe. By enhancing the attractiveness and effectiveness of research careers, the foundation is laid for ground-breaking research and the development of cutting-edge technologies. This, in turn, ensures Europe's competitiveness in vital sectors, including health, defence, digital technologies, and green technologies.

A European framework for research careers

Strengthening research careers is the most pursued objective of Member States in the ERA Policy Agenda. The proposed Council Recommendation addresses challenges of research careers in Europe with an all-sector approach, in line with the May 2021 Council Conclusions on research careers and based on consultations with all relevant stakeholders. Aspects covered include:

- A definition of researcher and of the research professions, and the recognition of their value;
- Improved recruitment and working conditions, including measures to increase the use of permanent contracts;
- Researchers skilled for inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary careers and for entrepreneurship and innovation;
- Fair career development and progression;
- Measures for a balanced circulation of talents;
- Strengthened support actions in support of research careers;
- Effective monitoring of research careers through a dedicated observatory.

A new Charter for Researchers


The European Charter for Researchers was a set of general principles and requirements which specified the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/or funders of researchers. The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers consisted of a set of
general principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and/or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers, complementary to those outlined in the European Charter for Researchers. 1444 organisations across Europe have endorsed the previous Charter and Code principles.

The new Charter builds on the above, with updated principles and a streamlined structure. It is addressed to researchers as well as research employers and funders in the public and private sectors. It will be a key instrument of EU’s policy to boost attractive researchers’ careers and it will facilitate implementation by research performing and research funding organisations, fostering good working conditions for researchers at all career stages.

**ResearchComp**

ResearchComp is the first EU Competence Framework for Researchers, and a key initiative in the context of the European Year of Skills. In line with the new ERA Communication and the European Skills Agenda adopted by the Commission in 2020, it will promote equipping researchers with a set of transversal skills necessary for careers in all sectors of the society, including academia, businesses and industry, public administration, or the development of own start-ups. The new website will support the development of adapted doctoral training and of targeted training opportunities, including via micro-credentials. It will also allow researchers to have a clear overview of their transversal skills and to upskill where necessary.

ResearchComp is the first new tool developed by the Commission to further strengthen research careers. New instruments are in the pipeline, equally supported by the Council Recommendation proposed today. This includes the ERA Talent Platform as an online one-stop-shop for researchers acting as entry point to a number of services; a Research and Innovation Careers Observatory to monitor careers with updated data and evidence, contributing to improve the research and innovation system and develop evidence-based policies; and an investment strategy to support organisational change, calling research and innovation labour market players to join forces for more attractive research careers.

**Next Steps**

Member States will discuss the Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation, including the new Charter for Researchers, with a view to the final adoption by the Council.

The Commission will follow up on the implementation of the provisions of the Council Recommendation once adopted, and it will support the uptake and use of ResearchComp to maximise its benefits. The Commission is already working on the improvement and development of other initiatives in support of research careers, including EURAXESS, an ERA Talent Platform, RESAVER, and an observatory on research and innovation careers which will allow to monitor effects of the implementation of the Council Recommendation proposed today. In addition, the Commission is developing a pilot, anticipated in 2024, testing principles for an investment strategy to support organisations throughout the ERA territory with implementing the European framework for research careers and the Charter for Researchers.

**Background**

The 2020 Commission Communication on 'A New ERA for Research and Innovation' underlined the importance of adequate framework conditions to support research careers in Europe. It referred to a toolbox of measures, including the development of a European Competence Framework for Researchers, which is also an action of the new Skills Agenda.

The Council Conclusions of May 2021 on 'Deepening the European Research Area: Providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions and making brain circulation a reality' requested the Commission to make a proposal based on a comprehensive framework addressing challenges related to research careers in all sectors, as a possible evolution of the Charter and Code for Researchers.

Today's set of measures is the result of years of consultations with Member States and stakeholders, including as of 2022 in the context of the ERA Forum. It is also based on studies contracted by the Commission or by third parties, including the OECD.

**For More information**

European research area (ERA)

European Research Area Policy Agenda (2022 – 2024)

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research.
Quotes:

This commitment will bring benefits to 2 million researchers. It supports research careers and strengthens the European Research Area for a competitive innovation landscape. By acting together with the Member States, academic sector and industry, we can improve working conditions to ensure that this generation of scientists and innovators stays and thrives in Europe.

Margrethe Vestager, Executive Vice-President for a Europe Fit for the Digital Age - 13/07/2023

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