



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 30.5.2013  
C(2013) 3089 final

*Dear President,*

*The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission 'A reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth' {COM(2012) 392 final}, and apologises for the delay in replying.*

*The Commission appreciates that the Bundesrat welcomes the Commission's considerations on the further development of the European Research Area (ERA), and that the Bundesrat supports the objective of increasing the efficiency and excellence of public research systems, establishing the free circulation of researchers and allowing the free movement of scientific knowledge. The optimisation of Europe's research performance will contribute to growth and job creation.*

*The Commission confirms that the national research systems form the basis of the ERA and that they should be more open to each other and interconnected on a voluntary basis as long as this proves successful. Overall, substantial progress has been made in Europe in recent years; however, further reforms or actions are necessary, either in certain ERA dimensions or in certain countries, to bring the ERA to a higher level of performance and effectiveness. The Commission agrees that the diversity and specificities in each Member State should be taken into account and that efforts should focus on areas where the potential of Europe's research systems, at regional, national or European level, can be better exploited.*

*The Commission recognises that Germany has been a constant, supportive and active partner in building up and consolidating the ERA since its creation. The Commission values the long-lasting good practices already established in Germany in several ERA priorities such as transparent allocation of funds, including competition and peer-review, evaluation of research bodies, or open, transparent and merit-based recruitment of researchers. The sharing of these best practices will be of utmost value while intensifying mutual learning between Member States.*

*As pointed out in the Opinion, the research organisations and research funding bodies will act within the limits of their respective autonomies and jurisdictions as set by national authorities. The Commission considers it necessary that national authorities and research organisations as well as research funding bodies work together on their priorities and the best approaches to implement the ERA at national level.*

*Mr Winfried KRETSCHMANN  
President of the Bundesrat  
Leipziger Straße 3 - 4  
D - 10117 BERLIN*

*The Commission proposes to support the Member States and research organisations with the implementation of their relevant actions and within the scope of its legal competence. The Commission does not intend either to control the situation or to regulate areas outside its competence, as indicated in the Opinion. Nevertheless the Commission has to monitor the progress, in close cooperation with Member States, as requested in the Council conclusions adopted on 11 December 2012 and as also requested in the Opinion.*

*The Commission will set up and run a robust ERA monitoring mechanism with the purpose of limiting the administrative burden on the Member States and Stakeholder Organisations. It will cooperate with EUROSTAT and national statistical offices. However, where data is not provided or not available, the Commission may need to interact with research institutes and universities, as well as national authorities.*

*As announced in the Communication and confirmed in the Council Conclusions of 11 December 2012, the ERA monitoring will be performed in close connection with the European Semester. National reforms and their implementation will be reported in the National Reform Programmes starting from the 2013 European Semester. In cooperation with the European Research Area Committee (ERAC), the Commission will prepare a first annual ERA progress report in September 2013. The report will enable to identify at national level areas where further progress and reforms are needed.*

*The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Maroš Šefčovič  
Vice-President*