



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 28.3.2022  
C(2022) 2037 final

Mr Bodo RAMELOW  
President of the Bundesrat  
Leipziger Straße 3-4  
D – 10117 BERLIN

*Dear President,*

*The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe {COM(2021) 407 final}.*

*The Commission would like to inform the Bundesrat that the Council adopted the Commission's proposal on 26 November 2021<sup>1</sup>. On the same day, the Council also adopted Conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area, which include an ERA Policy Agenda with 20 actions to be carried out between 2022 and 2024.*

*The Pact presents a new level of ambition towards a revitalised European Research Area by setting out commonly agreed values and principles for Research and Innovation (R&I) in Europe and identifying priority areas for joint action. These areas cover old and new fields for European Research Area action, including open science, research infrastructures, gender equality, careers and mobility of researchers as well as global engagement. The Pact also provides recommendations on prioritising investments and reforms as well as on policy coordination and monitoring. This is the way forward if Europe is to remain globally competitive and innovative, while at the same time true to its common values in creating a more equitable and sustainable world.*

*The Commission welcomes the support of the Bundesrat to the Pact, as well as its considerations on increasing joint investments, upholding values-based European and international cooperation and fostering synergies between the European Research Area (ERA), European Education Area and other policies as key to strengthening the European academic, research and innovation capacities.*

*The Commission also welcomes the comments regarding joint efforts by the Members States in the European Research Area to address Europe's recovery from the pandemic crisis and European and global health, climate and environmental challenges. The Pact represents an important political signal to boost investment and values-based collaboration within the EU*

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 431, 2.12.2021, p. 1–9.

*and between the EU and the rest of the world. For each of the global challenges we face, our success depends on science and technological development to provide answers and solutions, and we need more than ever to work together, across disciplines and geographical borders in order to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.*

*More detailed replies to the Bundesrat's opinion can be found in the attached annex.*

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

*Yours faithfully*

*Maroš Šefčovič  
Vice-President*

*Mariya Gabriel  
Member of the Commission*

## **Annex**

*The Commission has carefully considered each of the issues raised by the Bundesrat in its Opinion and is pleased to offer the following clarifications.*

### Paragraph 3

*The Commission agrees that social acceptance of science is crucial. As the Covid-19 pandemic has shown, the production and dissemination of research results is more important than ever, as is public trust in the answers that science provides. In this respect, the Pact sets out, for the first time, a list of ten values and principles to underpin collaboration in research and innovation.*

*One of the values and principles is “societal responsibility” listed under the headline of working together (paragraph 1(j)), for which the following is stated: “Striving to be responsive to society’s needs to expand collective capacities and achieve greater societal and environmental impact and to increase trust and commitment in science and innovation by engaging stakeholders, local communities and citizens in the design and implementation of R&I policies, by enhancing science communication activities and by ensuring that those policies are adaptable, flexible and able to adjust to unexpected challenges.”*

### Paragraphs 4 and 12-17

*The Commission agrees with the Bundesrat’s position on the involvement and inclusion of Universities in the governance, design and implementation of the new European Research Area. Indeed, Universities and other stakeholders have been involved in the preparatory discussions regarding the Pact, the ERA governance and the ERA Policy Agenda. Furthermore, the Council Conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area, of 26 November 2021, call for the regular involvement of stakeholders in the work of the future ERA Forum.*

*The Commission also agrees with the Bundesrat’s opinion as to the important role of universities in the European Research Area and seeks to promote the improvement of framework and funding conditions for transnational cooperation to support them in achieving their aspirations. The Pact explicitly mentions synergies between the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area, as well as sectorial policies and industrial policy, in order to boost innovation ecosystems.*

*All four priority areas of the Pact give outmost importance to the joint development of actions fostering the role of Universities in the new European Research Area and a European research, education and innovation culture. Universities will have a crucial role to play in many of the European Research Area joint actions.*

*Regarding the Bundesrat’s reference to the European Universities initiative, the Commission will inform on the main outcomes of the mid-term review of the first European Universities alliances in the course of 2022, with a view of the further development of the ‘European Universities’ and their full and ambitious potential. A policy approach on future EU level support for the research and innovation dimension of the European Universities Initiative will*

*be co-designed together with the ERA Forum and higher education sector, taking into account the review results. This links to the ERA Policy Agenda action 13, aiming to “empower higher education institutions to develop in line with the European Research Area, and in synergy with the European Education Area” (EEA). To ensure synergies between education and research and innovation, discussions will take place within the existing EEA and ERA governance structures. In the meantime, a 2022 Erasmus+ call on the European Universities initiative has been launched with a budget of EUR 272 Mio to support existing alliances to continue building their long-term vision, achieve sustainable cooperation, as well as to support other higher education institutions to join existing alliances, or to form new alliances.*

*Another point that the text refers to is the joint efforts for the training of researchers, talent circulation, competences and skills, much needed for the completion of the knowledge triangle and ensuring Europe’s competitive position in the world of science and technology enterprise.*

*The Pact is designed to complement Member States’ efforts in creating a researchers-centred, values-based, excellent as well as impact-driven research area. It respects Member States’ practices and accommodates a differentiated approach reflecting Member States’ different economic, financial and social situations as well as the diversity of research systems and their respective institutions and organisations. It recognises that different national, regional or local conditions could lead to differences in how the recommendations are implemented.*

#### Paragraph 5

*Regarding the Bundesrat’s reference to the need for an impact assessment, it should be pointed out that this proposal was announced in the roadmap accompanying the Commission Communication on “A New ERA for Research and Innovation”<sup>2</sup>, and that it therefore relies heavily on the analytical work and evidence supporting that Communication in the form of a Commission Staff Working Document<sup>3</sup>. The proposal was also, to a great extent, guided by the discussions that took place in the Commission expert group “ERA Forum for Transition”, as well as with stakeholders.*

#### Paragraphs 6-8

*The Bundesrat’s comments on the interaction between research, innovation and industry are welcome. Indeed, the Pact for Research and Innovation refers to “Synergies with sectorial policies and industrial policy” (paragraph 2(j)), but also more broadly to “Challenge-based ERA actions” (paragraph 2(h)), with a view to supporting Europe’s resilience and sustainability goals of the green transition and digital transformation.*

*As to researchers’ careers, the Pact specifically foresees “Researchers’ careers and mobility and research assessment and reward systems” as a priority area (paragraph 2(d)), and the Council included several relevant actions in the ERA Policy Agenda, in particular actions 3*

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<sup>2</sup> COM(2020) 628 final

<sup>3</sup> SWD(2020) 214 final

*(on the reform of the Assessment System for research, researchers and institutions) and 4 (on attractive and sustainable research careers, balanced talent circulation and international, transdisciplinary and inter-sectoral mobility).*

#### Paragraph 9

*The Commission concurs that it is important to strike a balance between fundamental and applied research. This is particularly important in the principle of the pursuit of excellence, in paragraph 1(e), last sentence: “public support should recognise that fundamental research is essential for ensuring excellence, attractiveness and the competitive edge of R&I ecosystems and should strike a balance between ‘curiosity-driven’ and ‘mission-oriented’ research”.*

#### Paragraph 10

*The Pact for R&I identifies, in paragraph 2, Priority areas for joint action in the Union. It is on the basis of these priority areas that the Council defined the ERA Policy Agenda with 20 specific actions (annexed to the Council conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area, adopted on 26 November 2021). These actions are purely voluntary, and indeed Member States will need to decide whether they wish to participate in them or not. This discussion is currently ongoing in the newly-established ERA Forum.*

#### Paragraph 11

*The Commission suggestion of committing 5% of national public R&D funding to joint programmes and European Partnerships by 2030 (an increase from about 1%), which had already been made in the Communication on “A new ERA for Research and Innovation”, has the purpose of helping Member States to focus and align public R&D efforts, including with Missions and Partnerships. In the Pact, Member States take note of this proposal.*

#### Paragraph 18

*The Commission thanks the Bundesrat’s support for open science. The implementation of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) and the Pan-European Research Infrastructures of the European Strategy Roadmap for Research Infrastructures will support open science practices, services and tools, which are essential to build trust, enable a secure environment for transnational access to and sharing of knowledge, data and information across the European Research Area and with third countries.*

#### Paragraph 19

*As to the monitoring and evaluation mechanism, the Commission understands the Bundesrat’s concerns, and points out that it will co-design this framework with Member States in the ERA Forum, in order to present it to the Council by mid-2022, as requested in the Council conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area. Furthermore, the Pact has clearly established that such a mechanism must consist of “simpler and less burdensome policy tools and processes” (paragraph 7).*

*According to the Council recommendation on the Pact, the main elements of the new European Research Area monitoring and evaluation mechanism will include: a policy online*

*platform, a scoreboard, a dashboard and regular reports to be prepared by the Commission. The purpose of the policy online platform will be for the Commission and Member States to share information on their current and planned policies and programmes that contribute to implementing the ERA Policy Agenda, and more broadly contribute to the principles and priorities set out by the Pact. Finally, the Council recommendation on the Pact envisages that the Commission should review the implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda every 18 months and provide annually to each Member State a report on its progress.*

#### *Paragraphs 20-21*

*Regarding the Bundesrat's reference to the current form of research policy making, the Commission fully acknowledges the multiplicity of research policy bodies and the need to ensure appropriate involvement of Member States and stakeholders in the new European Research Area Governance structure. In line with the Council Conclusions of November 2021, the Commission set up recently the new ERA Forum. The ERA Forum will be the body responsible for implementing actions in the ERA Policy Agenda. It is co-chaired by the Commission and a Member State representative with the purpose of enhancing ownership and more efficient implementation of the renewed European Research Area.*

*Importantly, the Forum will ensure regular and representative involvement of multiple European Research Area stakeholders in the new governance and ensure representative involvement of seven types of stakeholders (Universities and other higher education institutions, research and technology performing organisations, Research and Innovation intensive businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises, individual researchers and innovators, including at early- and middle-stages of their carriers, research infrastructures, Research and Innovation funding organisations and academies of science).*

*The objective is to foster a future dialogue process with Member States and stakeholders at the national and European level, which will put an emphasis on sharing best practices, facilitating collaboration of all actors involved, and strengthening the partnership between the Union and its Member States.*