



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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C(2021) 4851 final*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion on the Communication on A new ERA for research and innovation {COM(2020) 628 final}.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Camera Deputaților to the approach proposed in the Communication on a new ERA for research and innovation and agrees with the Camera Deputaților's focus on turning excellent research results into disruptive innovation and fully mobilising technological and research capacities in less developed regions.

Putting forth a new level of ambition towards a revitalised European Research Area is the way forward if Europe is to remain globally competitive and innovative while, at the same time, committed to creating a more equitable and sustainable world. With the adoption of the Council Conclusions on the new European Research Area on 1 December 2020, the Council of the EU endorsed the vision of the Commission and supported most of the proposed actions. Earlier this year, the Commission established the European Research Area Forum for Transition in the form of an informal expert group of Member States' representatives - to help finalise the new European Research Area governance framework and jointly prepare a European Research Area policy agenda setting out the priority actions to achieve the new European Research Area.

For overcoming disparities in research capacities, cohesion policy funding and the Recovery and Resilience Facility can be mobilised. Horizon Europe, while remaining a competitive research and innovation programme based on excellence and impact, will also continue with measures dedicated to low research and innovation performing countries through its Widening programme that will benefit from an increase in funding to reach nearly 3 billion euro for the 2021-2027 period. Synergies across all EU funding programmes in support of research and innovation and with national and regional funding schemes are promoted and will become easier than in the past. Additionally, the

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European Committee of the Regions has been granted observer status at the European Research Area Forum for Transition to ensure the cooperation and feedback with the European regions.

In support of the Camera Deputaţilor's position, the new European Research Area and the European Education Area will work in synergy with a view to developing a European Strategy for Universities, which would be prepared in cooperation with stakeholders and Member States, encompassing all sector's missions (education, research, innovation, service to society). The aim is to empower the higher education sector in Europe to improve cooperation, develop a common vision and strategies, and share resources, capacities and practices, for instance on attractive research careers, Open Science, ensuring equal opportunities, reinforcing transfer of knowledge and talents to other sectors and society.

The Commission is monitoring the university alliances developed under the European Universities Initiative, supported by Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020, as they are a key testbed for the future of the higher education sector. It is already visible that this type of integrated networking between higher education institutions helps building solid interactions not only between universities but also within and between local ecosystems, enabling stronger cooperation and the flow of talent and knowledge.

In the context of the new European Research Area, the Commission will deliver, by the end of 2024, in partnership with Member States and research organisations, a toolbox of support for research careers. This includes:

- *The definition of a taxonomy of researchers' skills, and the update of the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations classification (ESCO). In particular, the Commission is developing a list of researchers' skills and occupations to be included into the ESCO classification, where the research profession is still underrepresented. The new taxonomy will be transposed at national level through the European Employment Services (EURES), and will be used by Europass for all the services the new platform provides.*
- *A Researchers Competence Framework, in order to identify and define the researchers' competences, and to make the full recognition of the researcher's profession a reality. It will allow researchers to know what competences they need for a successful career development, to self-assess, and receive targeted training. This will facilitate job search and inter-sectoral mobility, thus offering more opportunities to researchers and reducing precarity, and fostering at the same time knowledge transfer and innovation.*
- *A mobility scheme to support exchange between industry and academia and to encourage researchers towards entrepreneurship, business creation and citizen science. The ERA4You initiative will introduce measures to reinforce inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary mobility, strengthen academic-business cooperation and the involvement of the private sector in training and skills development of researchers.*

- *A one-stop-shop market place for researchers, based on the current EURAXESS services, network and portal, but with enhanced governance, portfolio and tools to make it more usable, more interactive (also with the European Employment Services) and better fit to manage talents and connect them locally with fellow professionals and research and innovation employers and funders: the ERA Talent Platform.*

In full support also of the Camera Deputaților's position on open access to publications and research results, the Commission wishes to stress that, following a pilot in the seventh Framework Programme for Research, it has made open access to publications mandatory for the past seven years, during Horizon 2020. The European Commission has financed many projects (such as OpenAIRE or FOSTER) that provided comprehensive public information and support on open access. Together with the open access obligations, other Open Science requirements are now part of Horizon Europe and the European Commission has been fully covering them in its most recent public webinars (available on YouTube). Currently, the Commission is also using its Twitter account Open Research Europe (@OpenResearch_EU) to inform its followers of open science and open access and clear up some misconceptions.

For four years between 2016 and 2020, the Commission convened the Open Science Policy Platform (OSPP), a High-Level Advisory Group that advised the Commission on how to develop Open Science. That Advisory Group produced a report in 2020. The Global Young Academy (GYA) was represented through its Co-Chair and a second member, both also active in the Global Young Academy working group on Open Science.

The Commission agrees with the Camera Deputaților's Opinion that social inclusion in research and innovation is important in terms of excellence, relevance, and improving trust in science. As part of societal engagement, particular emphasis is put to ensure that the processes of engagement are inclusive and appropriately diverse, including recommending working with dedicated interlocutor organisations that have the trust, reach and expertise necessary for high-quality engagement practices.

The Commission shares the concerns of the Camera Deputaților arising from the agglomeration of economic and innovative activities in capital cities and metropolitan areas. It is indeed broadly acknowledged that the main obstacle for the necessary transitions that cities will have to engage for sustainability and climate neutrality is not so much lack of technologies but the capacity to implement them. The present silo-based form of governance, designed and developed for traditional city operations and services, cannot drive the ambitious but necessary transitions.

Horizon Europe fosters research and innovation for systemic and holistic urban transformations underpinned by innovative, integrated and multi-level governance and integrated cross-sectoral planning and design to promote a deep and continuous collaboration between all relevant actors and stakeholders, with the citizens at the centre. For example, the mission Board for the Horizon Europe 'Climate Neutral and Smart Cities' mission, (an expert group) has proposed the introduction of a Climate City Contract as a way to formalise innovative city governance models and citizens'

engagement for the design and rolling out of climate-neutrality roadmaps by the cities. The mission Board proposed a contract be signed by the Mayor, on behalf of the local government and local stakeholders, by the Commission and by national or regional authorities. Such a contract would make every city participating in the mission commit to design and roll out a roadmap to reach climate neutrality by 2030 whilst actively involving citizens in the development, implementation and monitoring of the process. Such an approach will reduce the silo mentality, eliminate fragmentation and build inclusiveness, trust and legitimacy of the necessary actions. The Commission is currently assessing the five mission proposals before deciding on their roll-out.

On responsible research and innovation, the Commission supports a flexible approach, adapted to the perspectives of stakeholders at national and local levels, and agrees that it is important for the development of responsible research and innovation agenda. The Commission has stressed the benefits of quadruple helix approaches, which include actors from science/academia, public authorities, businesses/industry, and civil society/citizens, when and where possible. A portfolio of projects supported under the Science with and for Society part of Horizon 2020 aims to help align smart specialisation strategies with the needs, values and expectations of society through quadruple helix collaborations; this portfolio of actions will directly reach around 10% of European regions and develop an evidence base for further action in the coming years.

The Commission will continue engaging with citizens and stakeholders at all stages, notably through dedicated workshops and during the next Research and Innovation Days in June 2021.

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

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Mariya Gabriel
Member of the Commission*