

EARTO Response to the EC Consultation on ERA

30 September 2024

To answer the European Commission's [public consultation](#) on the European Research Area (ERA), EARTO would like to bring forward some key issues to the Member States and the European Commission regarding the current challenges as well as the evolution of ERA.

Lessons Learned

Reflecting on the past four years of ERA and its ongoing development, it is essential to address the lessons learned and outline a strategic path forward that strengthens Europe's competitiveness on the global scale to ensure that the ERA effectively supports the full spectrum of RD&I activities. Accordingly, EARTO members would like to highlight the following points:

- 1. A lack of coordination between already existing EU initiatives and ERA Actions with the risk of redundancy.** While some ERA Actions have been well-coordinated with existing national and regional initiatives, there remains a tendency for duplication of efforts, particularly with actions that overlap with the current EU Framework Programme (FP), Horizon Europe. This has led to stakeholders' fatigue and inefficiencies in resource allocation. Moving forward, it is crucial that new ERA Actions are carefully designed to represent the voices and views of all Member States, as well as complement and build upon existing initiatives while avoiding redundancy and ensuring that they address the specific needs of the Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) and industry.
- 2. The ERA and its new Policy Agenda should embrace the whole RD&I spectrum in a balanced way, from basic research to technology maturation to innovation scale-up/deployment.** The ERA's focus has been heavily skewed towards academic research, often neglecting the critical role of RPOs and their unique business models. For instance, we identified this issue when discussing topics linked to the career of researchers, research security, etc. This has resulted in a real disconnect between ERA Actions and the practical needs of RPOs as well as of industry.
- 3. To enhance the relevance and impact of ERA, it is imperative to adopt a more inclusive approach that fully integrates the contributions of Research Performing Organisations (RPOs), which include Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs).** This means developing actions aiming at leveraging their expertise in applied research, technology maturation, and innovation scale-up, which are essential for translating scientific knowledge into tangible industrial applications. **Viewing the new European Commission President von der Leyen [Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024–2029](#), we expect this to be even more pressing in the next ERA Policy Agenda and would require developing new types of actions crossing over to other policy areas (industrial, climate, etc.) using/linking to wider capabilities within Member States (and not mainly those of Ministries of Science & Education as it is the case today) and the European Commission.** The next ERA Policy Agenda would need revamping taking those needed changes into consideration.

The Way Forward

As we look ahead to the future of ERA, EARTO offers some key recommendations that align with the EU's policy priority for boosting EU competitiveness within the ERA Framework.

- 1. Strengthen EU RD&I as a Pillar of Competitiveness:** The EU should commit to RD&I as a cornerstone of its industrial and economic policies. This requires not only maintaining but also increasing public investment in RD&I to stimulate private-sector participation and reduce Europe's dependence on global competitors for critical technologies. The next ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027 should develop and exploit effective synergies between EU, national, and regional Programmes to leverage technologies, and exploitable solutions and maximise the impact of RD&I investments. In parallel, there should be a concrete roadmap set for each Member State with the support of the European Commission to achieve the 3% EU GDP R&D investment. In addition, ERA's Policy Agenda should be closely aligned with the EU's industrial strategy, ensuring that RD&I efforts directly contribute to the competitiveness and resilience of European industries.
- 2. Enhance Technology Infrastructure Investments:** To support the development and maturation of key technologies, the EU should prioritise investments in Technology Infrastructures (TIs). EARTO strongly advocates for the continuation of ERA Action 12 on Accelerating R&I investments for Europe's Industrial Transformation and Competitive Sustainability, which will be coordinated within the

upcoming EU strategy on TIs. These infrastructures are vital for enabling the scaling and commercialisation of innovations. In addition, EARTO is calling for a specific instrument for TIs under the next EU MFF of €10 billion to support future investments and bring the gap in capabilities compared to Europe's global competitors.

3. **Foster Collaborative RD&I and Knowledge Transfer:** The ERA should focus on enhancing collaborative RD&I efforts that bridge the gap between basic research and industrial application. This includes strengthening the role of RTOs in technology transfer and knowledge valorisation, particularly through improved intellectual property management and support for pre-commercial procurement. The capabilities of RPOs networked within the [TTO Circle](#) managed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) should be a key asset for this.
4. **Create a Coherent and Transparent Governance Framework:** The ERA governance should be largely improved and streamlined to avoid overlaps and ensure transparency. The roles of different fora, including the ERA Forum and the Horizon Europe comitology, should be clearly defined to prevent duplication and ensure that all stakeholders, including RTOs, are adequately represented and engaged in the decision-making process. In addition, the ERA governance should engage Member States' representatives from several Ministries linked to RD&I, such as innovation, industry and economic affairs.
5. **Support the European Commission's efforts to make research careers in Europe more attractive and sustainable:** A structured approach is needed to ensure the good functioning of research careers across industries and RTOs, not only in academic institutions. Efforts today mainly focused on academic research careers with no link to the current issues encountered by RTOs, for example in terms of [researchers' mobility](#).

EARTO Members are actively discussing with their national ministries and funding agencies at different levels the various actions taken within the ERA Framework. EARTO remains committed to supporting the European Commission and Member States in achieving the goals of fostering a more resilient and competitive Europe and looks forward to continued collaboration in shaping the future of the ERA to ensure its successful development.

Latest EARTO papers on ERA:

- [EARTO Policy Recommendations 2024-2029: No EU Tech, No EU Competitiveness](#)
- [EARTO Inputs to the New ERA Policy Agenda](#)
- [EARTO Inputs for a European Framework for Research Careers \(Comments to Technical Document\)](#)
- [EARTO Paper Position Paper on Current Hurdles to Mobility of Researchers](#)
- [EARTO Position Paper on Research Security - Inputs to the EC Call for Evidence for EC proposal for a Council Recommendation](#)

EARTO - European Association of Research and Technology Organisations

Founded in 1999, EARTO promotes RTOs and represents their interest in Europe. EARTO network counts over 350 RTOs in more than 31 countries. EARTO members represent 150,000 highly-skilled researchers and engineers managing a wide range of innovation infrastructures.

RTOs - Research and Technology Organisations

From the lab to your everyday life. RTOs innovate to improve your health and well-being, your safety and security, your mobility and connectivity. RTOs' technologies cover all scientific fields. Their work ranges from basic research to new products and services' development. RTOs are non-profit organisations whose core mission is to produce, combine and bridge various types of knowledge, skills and infrastructures to deliver a range of research and development activities in collaboration with public and industrial partners of all sizes. These activities aim to result in technological and social innovations and system solutions that contribute to and mutually reinforce their economic, societal and policy impacts.

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