

Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on the upcoming European Research Area (ERA) Act

- 1. Resolution tabled pursuant to Rule 142(5) of the European Parliament's Rules of procedure**
- 2. References:** 2025/2951(RSP) / B10-0156/2026 / P10_TA(2026)0068
- 3. Date of adoption of the resolution:** 10 March 2026
- 4. Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE)
- 5. Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution welcomes the forthcoming European Research Area (ERA) Act as a key opportunity to address structural challenges affecting the European Union's research and innovation (R&I) ecosystem and to give concrete effect to the "fifth freedom", the free circulation of researchers, scientific knowledge and technology across the Union. It situates the initiative within the broader objective of strengthening the Union's scientific and technological bases and enhancing competitiveness, namely in the context of the Single Market Roadmap 2028, and calls for alignment with existing and future initiatives, including under the European Education Area.

The resolution generally supports stronger Union action to address persistent single market fragmentation, underinvestment and uneven performance across Member States, while calling for improved framework conditions for research careers, for stronger and more inclusive innovation ecosystems promoting collaboration between Higher Education Institutions and Research Performing Organisations as well as with non-academic partners, including industrial and private partners, increased attractiveness of the Union for talent, and enhanced public and private investment, including strengthened funding for public research through Union programmes such as Horizon Europe. It proposes a two-track approach, combining continued voluntary cooperation under the ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027 with legislative measures, including the ERA Act and complementary initiatives, in order to provide the ERA with a binding and enforceable framework. It recommends that the ERA Act could take the form of a regulation under Article 179 TFEU.

The resolution, inter alia:

- supports stronger alignment of Union and national R&I priorities, improved cooperation between universities, research organisations, regions, Member States and industries, and a

reinforced governance framework for the ERA;

- calls for the inclusion of the Union target of investing at least 3 % of Union gross domestic product (GDP) in research and development (R&D) by 2030, complemented by national targets, roadmaps and to ensure complementarity of public and private investment;
- calls for stronger private participation in the Union R&I ecosystem, including through closer coordination and public-private partnerships, in order to address investment gaps, reduce market fragmentation and accelerate knowledge valorisation;
- recommends the use of planning instruments, measurable metrics, and robust monitoring, reporting and evaluation mechanisms, while ensuring an appropriate balance between research fields and between basic and applied research;
- highlights the need to remove barriers to the free circulation of researchers and knowledge, including through improved mobility, harmonised competency frameworks, mutual recognition of qualifications, facilitated visa procedures, and more attractive research careers, in particular for young and early-career researchers;
- stresses the importance of stronger and more inclusive European innovation and technology ecosystems, improved knowledge transfer and uptake of research results, and the need to address disparities among Member States, particularly those with lower R&I performance;
- reaffirms the importance of freedom of scientific research and institutional autonomy, and calls for the ERA Act proposal to be accompanied by a separate legislative initiative with a distinct legal basis to safeguard this fundamental freedom;
- urges the Commission and the Member States to advance gender equality and equal opportunities in R&I;
- stresses the need to ensure the open and secure circulation of knowledge, improved accessibility of research infrastructures, effective dissemination of publicly funded research, knowledge valorisation, research security and integrity, and the ethical and trustworthy use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence;
- calls for coherence and complementarity between the ERA Act and other Union initiatives, including the Innovation Act, the Pact for R&I, the Framework Programme and the European Education Area.

Overall, the resolution is supportive of the forthcoming initiative, while calling for an ambitious, binding and comprehensive

legislative framework, including stronger investment commitments, improved governance, enhanced framework conditions for researchers, and the safeguarding of fundamental values such as the freedom of scientific research.

6. Response to the requests in the resolution and overview of the actions taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:

In response to:

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3: The Commission welcomes the European Parliament's support for strengthening the European Research Area (ERA) and recognises the importance of addressing persistent fragmentation, insufficient coordination and structural barriers affecting the Union's R&I ecosystem. As announced in the Competitiveness Compass, the Commission is preparing a legislative proposal for a European Research Area Act (ERA Act), currently planned for adoption in the last quarter of 2026. The initiative aims to give concrete effect to the fifth freedom as a horizontal enabler of the 'One Europe, One Market' roadmap, and to move closer to a genuine single market for R&I. In preparing the proposal, the Commission is assessing the most appropriate legal instrument and scope of intervention, ensuring full respect for subsidiarity and proportionality in all measures.

The Commission also notes the Parliament's support for a two-track approach combining voluntary cooperation under the ERA Policy Agenda with legislative measures under the ERA Act, reflecting the view that voluntary coordination has delivered important progress but has not been sufficient to overcome structural fragmentation of the Union's R&I landscape. The Commission is now assessing how the respective roles and interaction of voluntary and legislative tools could be best defined in the future framework of the ERA.

Paragraph 4: The Commission fully shares the importance attached by the European Parliament to the promotion and protection of freedom of scientific research and institutional autonomy. Freedom of scientific research is a foundational condition for the functioning of the ERA and is explicitly guaranteed, together with academic freedom, under Article 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Commission is currently assessing policy and legal options in this area, building, inter alia, on the European Parliament resolution of January 2024, the European Parliament Academic Freedom Monitor 2025, the study on the promotion and protection of freedom of scientific research published in October 2025, the 2026 Report on guiding principles for fundamental academic values, and ongoing analytical work. The Commission considers that the protection of the freedom of scientific research should be ensured in the ERA Act, as a foundational condition for the functioning of the ERA, ensuring coherence, legal clarity and enforceability, alongside other binding provisions laid down in the Act.

Paragraphs 5, 6 and 7: The Commission agrees that sustained public and private investment in research and innovation is essential to strengthen Europe's competitiveness and to achieve the Union objective of investing 3 % of GDP in R&D. In this context, the ERA Act is expected to include measures aimed at anchoring national R&D investment commitments in Member States' policy frameworks, improving transparency and predictability, and strengthening coordination, monitoring and political follow-up. Options under consideration include plans for R&D investments and reforms, while fully respecting Member States' competences and the need for sound and sustainable public finances. The Commission also agrees that stronger private participation in the European R&I ecosystem is necessary.

Paragraphs 8: The Commission shares the view that improving framework conditions for research careers, mobility and knowledge circulation is essential to attract and retain talent in Europe. The Commission is currently examining possible measures in order to make Europe a more attractive and competitive destination for researchers, in line with the objectives of the "Choose Europe for Science" initiative, which aims to ensure that talent from within and outside the Union can build careers and thrive in a supportive and high-quality research environment.

Paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12: The Commission shares the Parliament's assessment that stronger coordination and governance are needed to reduce fragmentation and improve complementarity between Union and national R&I efforts and agrees that this is essential to strengthen Europe's global scientific and technological leadership. In this context, the upcoming ERA Act is expected to contribute to a more structured and institutionalised framework for strategic priority-setting and coordination, including by improving the coordination and alignment of Union and national priorities and investments, reinforcing monitoring and accountability, and enhancing the coherence and complementarity of instruments. The ERA Act will also aim to support cooperation between universities, research organisations, regions, industries and Member States as an underlying means for the completion of the ERA and the realisation of the 5th freedom of knowledge and innovation. Transnational collaboration in R&I is key for reducing fragmentation and regional disparities, contributing to build and connect strong R&I ecosystems across Europe.

Paragraph 13: The Commission shares the view that a functioning ERA requires the free circulation of researchers and knowledge across borders. The Commission is therefore currently assessing possible measures to improve framework conditions for research careers, mobility and interoperability across Member States and sectors, such as improved structural alignment and comparability of researchers' careers and paths, an improved research assessment framework, as well as the feasibility of a voluntary EU-level contract for hiring researchers. The Commission also recalls the importance of existing instruments and policy initiatives in this

field, including the 2023 Council Recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe, the Council Recommendation of 25 November 2024 on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education, the launch of the ERA Talent Platform, and the updated European Charter for Researchers. In parallel, the ERA Act will support cross-border collaboration and the effective circulation of knowledge across the Union.

Paragraph 14: The Commission is committed to the importance of advancing gender equality and equal opportunities in research and innovation. Gender equality has been a structural priority under the ERA and a reinforced requirement in Horizon Europe, notably through the implementation of Gender Equality Plans eligibility criterion. The ERA Act, together with the Action Plan for Women in Research, Innovation and Startups, will aim to contribute to strengthening the reach and effectiveness of these measures, in line with the broader objective of ensuring that Europe remains an attractive, open and inclusive research environment. The adoption of the EU Gender Equality Strategy (2026-2030) highlighted the Pay Transparency Directive as a game changer for tackling root causes of the gender pay gap and the Commission's support to Member States to implement this Directive.

Paragraph 15: The Commission agrees that the open and secure circulation of scientific knowledge, improved accessibility of research infrastructures, including seamless and secure access across national boundaries, effective dissemination of publicly funded research outputs (including data and subject to justified exceptions), knowledge valorisation, research security and the ethical and trustworthy use of emerging technologies are all essential dimensions of a well-functioning ERA. The Commission highlights the role of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) as a federated European data space for research and innovation, enabling Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR) and open access to publicly funded research data, strengthening cross-border collaboration, and supporting the development of a trusted and interoperable open science ecosystem across the Union. The Commission is assessing possible measures under the upcoming ERA Act to improve open access to publicly funded research outputs supported by infrastructures adhering to the FAIR principles. At the same time, the Commission is considering measures to avoid fragmented national approaches notably to research security and to ensure a level playing field across the Union, notably in the context of international cooperation.

Paragraph 16: The Commission agrees on the importance of ensuring coherence and complementarity between the ERA Act and related existing and forthcoming Union initiatives, including under the European Education Area. Horizon Europe will remain the primary Union instrument for supporting excellent and impactful

R&I. In parallel, the ERA Act is intended to provide a coherent legal framework to strengthen coordination, alignment and framework conditions across the Union, ensuring that Union-level initiatives and funding instruments are effectively complemented by sustained national commitments and reforms. More broadly, the Commission's objective is to contribute to the emergence of a genuine European Research and Innovation Union, in which excellence, investment, mobility and strategic alignment reinforce each other within a coherent and mutually supportive framework.