



YERUN Position Accompanying the Input to the ERA Act Public Stakeholder Consultation Questionnaire

YERUN (Young European Research Universities Network) welcomes the European Commission's stakeholder consultation on the [ERA Act](#) as a timely opportunity to strengthen and advance the coherence of Europe's research systems. Building on its [response](#) to the European Commission's call for evidence launched on 6 August, YERUN reiterates its long-standing commitment to a stronger, more integrated and operational European Research Area (ERA) as a key enabler of Europe's competitiveness, efficiency and innovation capacity.

While existing coordination mechanisms such as targeted policy, financial and technical support for structural reforms and 'soft' measures like exchanges of experience and policy dialogues⁽¹⁾ have been useful, they have proven insufficient. Structural barriers persist, including underinvestment in R&I, fragmented funding and regulatory frameworks, restrictions on researcher mobility, precarious careers for researchers and threats to academic freedom. These challenges continue to limit the free circulation of knowledge, researchers and innovation across Europe and, by extension, hinder Europe's R&I-driven competitiveness.

The ERA Act offers a unique opportunity to move from political aspirations to tangible reality. To achieve a true European Research Area, the Act must introduce common standards and enabling conditions across Member States in support of realising the fifth freedom, while ensuring that measures are consistent and can be effectively implemented throughout the EU. This is essential for young research universities, which are future-driven, deeply embedded in regional ecosystems and rely on coherent European frameworks to fulfil their role in talent development, research excellence and early-stage innovation.

YERUN stresses that the ERA Act should focus on improving EU-Member States alignment on a few but core research-related issues, while avoiding over-regulation and additional administrative burden for universities and research organisations. The ERA Act should function as an enabling framework that strengthens coherence across the European Research Area.

(1) [1bde0a38-7c86-4e6c-a4b8-7f9605d9e7e7_en](https://op.europa.eu/en/c/document/2020/08/06/1bde0a38-7c86-4e6c-a4b8-7f9605d9e7e7_en) (pp.3)

For these reasons, YERUN recommends that the ERA Act:

- **Strengthens investment in the research environment with** significantly increased and sustained public R&I funding through stronger, compulsory national commitments aligned with - and complementary to - EU programmes, and accompanied by incentives to mobilise private investment. This requires binding national R&I intensity targets including longer-term R&I funding for universities as catalysts for attracting private investment and in nurturing R&I ecosystems, as well as transparent expenditure plans and progress towards completing the Single Market, including the fifth freedom and the 28th Regime.
- **Improves EU-Member States coordination** by making effective use of existing instruments such as the ERA Forum and ERAC and avoiding the creation of new tools or structures that could increase the fragmentation of governance bodies and carry additional administrative burden, particularly for smaller and younger institutions.
- **Supports sustainable research careers and mobility** by taking action on the persistent cuts in research budgets which restrict Europe's research talent development. By addressing precarious employment conditions, improving the recognition of qualifications and reducing administrative and social security barriers to mobility, the ERA Act could provide the right framework to fully realise the potential of the fifth freedom. In this context, YERUN strongly supports the establishment of an EU Researcher Visa for third-country nationals with enhanced mobility rights.
- **Safeguards academic freedom and freedom of research** through EU-level protections complemented by minimum national standards, clear definitions of researchers' and institutions' rights and responsibilities and appropriate monitoring mechanisms, particularly in a changing geopolitical context.
- **Enables Open Science through research assessment reform** by promoting common European principles that recognise diverse research outputs and practices, reduce over-reliance on quantitative metrics and support qualitative evaluation. This should be supported by stable funding for open, independent infrastructures and publication models, including Diamond Open Access.

YERUN acknowledges that the public consultation touches upon additional issues that are relevant and related to a stronger and well-functioning European Research Area. At the same time, YERUN cautions against diluting the purpose of the ERA Act with matters that require coordination among Member States and would not benefit from being included in this Act or may be best placed in a different EU legislative package. Introducing issues that are not urgent and critical in advancing the ERA would delay the process and imperil its chances of successful negotiations with the co-legislators.

Finally, YERUN emphasises that research and innovation are distinct yet complementary components of the R&I ecosystem. The ERA Act should prioritise strengthening Europe's research base by fostering excellence, talent circulation, knowledge sharing and value creation (scientific, social and economic), while complementary initiatives, such as the Innovation Act, the Single Market and the proposed 28th Regime, should provide tailored mechanisms to boost innovation.

Addressed through dedicated legislative instruments, these elements can jointly contribute to a stronger and more comprehensive R&I ecosystem, enabling Europe to emerge as a leading global actor and develop a more attractive European Research Area, one in which talent and ideas can thrive.

- About YERUN -

YERUN - Young European Research Universities Network - founded in 2015 and based in Brussels, brings together excellence and value-driven young research universities. The network's objective is to strategically represent its members in the decision-making process at EU level, thus shaping their future and promoting their role in European societies. Further to its policy advocacy activity, the network also strengthens cooperation opportunities among its members in areas of mutual interest and raises their visibility via a dedicated communication strategy.

- YERUN Members -



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