



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 17 February 2012**

**6537/12**

**RECH 54**

**NOTE**

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From: Commission

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To: Delegations

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Subject: ERA Framework: Areas of untapped potential for the development of the  
European Research Area (ERA) – results of the public consultation  
- Information from the Commission

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Delegations will find, in annex, a note from the Commission on the above-mentioned topic.

**ERA Framework: Areas of untapped potential for the development of the European Research Area (ERA) – analysis of the results of the public consultation**

Between 13 September and 30 November 2011, the Commission conducted a broad public consultation aimed at gathering views and evidence from stakeholders on the key obstacles that need to be overcome, as well as on the best ways to address them, in order to achieve a well-functioning ERA by 2014. The responses received help the Commission identify the priority areas to address in its forthcoming proposal for an ERA Framework, in which it will set out the instruments and measures to be taken to fully realize ERA.

590 replies to a comprehensive on-line questionnaire and 101 free-format contributions, including contributions from Member States and Associated Countries, as well as from key European and/or international research organisations were received. Researchers account for 51% of the online responses, while private organisations, research funding and performing organisations, national and regional governments and international organisations made up the other half of the respondents. These included most of the main research stakeholder organisations and ad hoc contributions from 16 EU Member States

Overall, there is overwhelming support for pursuing the development of the European Research Area and for action on all ERA dimensions to complete ERA by 2014. Problems and deficiencies in relation to research careers and mobility emerge as a clear priority even when factoring out the dominant proportion of responses from individual researchers to the on-line questionnaire. Furthermore, the responses from national and European organisations which represent the interests and views of significant numbers of research stakeholders as well as the official responses from Member States also point to cross-border operations, Open Access and international co-operation as important priorities.

The findings of the Public Consultation were presented and discussed with high-level research stakeholder representatives and policy-makers, top researchers and business leaders at the "ERA conference 2012, Fostering Efficiency, Excellence and Growth" organised on 30 January 2012 in Brussels.

Below is a summary of the main messages from the preliminary analysis of the responses for some of the main themes:

- **Researchers:**
  - Researchers' **careers and mobility** is regarded as the most important area in which the EU should step up its efforts most urgently in order to achieve the ERA by 2014
  - There is a need to **attract and retain more leading researchers** and to provide all researchers with better skills, especially for the business sector
  - The **working conditions and career prospects** of public sector researchers are not attractive enough
  - The lack of **portability of publicly-funded grants** is the most important impediment to researchers' international mobility, while the lack of open and transparent **recruitment procedures** is regarded as one of the main barriers. Pensions and social security rights were also cited as an obstacle by a significant percentage of respondents.
  
- **Cross border operation of research:**
  - It is necessary to **coordinate research at transnational level** to raise research quality, reduce costs and tackle grand challenges. Joint Programming Initiatives and Alliances between research Institutes are considered appropriate mechanisms
  - Much more **political will** is required to support joint research programmes
  - Better **access to information on initiatives** available for cross-border operation and their benefit is necessary for research actors and stakeholders
  - **Minimum rules** for ensuring interoperability of funding schemes are required to facilitate cross-border research such as common principles, rules for grant/ funding applications, evaluation and reporting, as well as synchronisation of calls for proposals

- **Research Infrastructures:**
  - Developing **more synergies** between European and national actions is considered necessary for an optimum exploitation of existing research infrastructures
  - EU support for **trans national access** to research infrastructures should be increased
  - Strengthening the **inter-operability** of instruments and of scientific data at EU level is also regarded as important
  - Increasing **public funding** and the role of the EU in helping Member States to reach agreements on the **costs of construction and operation** are considered to be the top priorities to realise the next generation of infrastructures
  - ESFRI emphasised the importance of research mobility in the success of RIs and the significant role of RIs in researchers' training
  
- **International dimension:**
  - The global attractiveness of Europe as an S&T location (for researchers, companies, and investment) could be increased by **reducing the fragmentation** of the European market and by improving **employment and career prospects** for researchers, including third country researchers, in the EU
  - Improved **information sharing and coordination** between international R&D policies and programmes of the EU and of the Member States; the development of a common EU-MS strategy for international Science and Technology cooperation and of coordinated initiatives by the EU and the Member States vis-à-vis third countries have been identified as the most important steps which should be taken by the EU and its Member States to maximise the benefits from international S&T cooperation
  - Many comments underline the **importance of openness** towards third countries with regard to other ERA-related topics, such as the mobility of researchers, scientific excellence, global challenges, Knowledge Transfer, and research infrastructures

- **Open Access:**
  - Open Access to **scientific publications and data** enhances knowledge circulation and needs to be improved
  - National Open Access policies and their coordination in the ERA are insufficient
  - In addition, researchers are **not sufficiently aware** of Open Access to research results
  - The actions suggested at EU level to remedy existing barriers include increasing stakeholders' awareness, facilitating the exchange of best practices and setting standards for the establishment of repositories and data-sharing practices. Respondents see a key role for the European Commission in co-ordinating national initiatives, and in monitoring and promoting Open Access policies to publications and data
  
- **Knowledge Circulation/Knowledge transfer (KT):**
  - Universities and public research organisations should be given incentives to develop and implement strong Knowledge Transfer **strategies and structures**
  - Awareness of researchers about **Intellectual Property** and Knowledge Transfer opportunities is weak
  - Private firms have difficulties to access public research results or competences. Knowledge Transfer Offices and professionals could play a stronger role
  
- **Managing and monitoring the ERA Partnerships:**
  - Ensuring a closer **cooperation and coordination in policy development** and implementation of ERA is considered to contribute to reducing the research and innovation deficit and inefficiency in the EU
  - Strong support for more **synergies and increased coordination** between European and national/regional research agendas and programmes

- More **information, simplification and transparency** about ERA instruments and initiatives are needed
- Widespread support for a **higher participation of stakeholders** in ERA processes, mainly through dedicated working groups

The reports analysing the responses to the public consultation can be found on the ERA portal:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/consultation/era-summary-reports\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/consultation/era-summary-reports_en.htm)

A report on the outcome of the ERA conference of 30 January 2012 will be soon available on the Conference website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/consultation/era-wrap-up-event\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/consultation/era-wrap-up-event_en.htm)