



Position of the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI on the Communication from the European Commission on a new ERA for Research and Innovation

The European Research Area (ERA), founded in 2000, foresaw the creation of a single, borderless market for research, innovation and technology across the EU. After 20 years of its existence, the ERA has seen major achievements, particularly in areas such as Research Infrastructures, joint programmes and calls as well as in removing geographical barriers to researchers' mobility. Nonetheless, the progress towards the ERA has been slowing down and Europe has been facing multiple new challenges, both calling for impetus towards a new ERA.

The European Commission (EC) proposes four strategic objectives for a new ERA:

- (1) **Prioritising investments and reforms:** to steer, facilitate and align R&I efforts to accelerate the digital and green transformation of Europe's society and economy to increase competitiveness and the speed and depth of the recovery.
- (2) **Improving access to excellence:** towards more excellence and stronger R&I systems where best practice is disseminated faster across Europe.
- (3) **Translating R&I results into the economy:** to boost the resilience and competitiveness of economies and societies.
- (4) **Deepening the ERA:** to further progress on the free circulation of knowledge in an upgraded, efficient and effective R&I system.

Switzerland welcomes the EC's initiative in providing a Communication on a new ERA and hopes that this new strategic focus will revitalize the ERA, leading to an even stronger and more visible research and innovation landscape in Europe.

This EC initiative must, from a Swiss point of view, be taken up by all ERAC members by providing and discussing their views on the new ERA. Switzerland believes that shaping the new ERA in this participatory way is indispensable for safeguarding the ERA countries' ownership ERA

Switzerland and the European Union share a long-standing and successful cooperation in research and innovation for decades already. As an associated country, Switzerland shares and supports the goals of the European Research Area and participates actively in the ERA activities.

A strong European Research Area can play an important part in helping to solve the multitude of challenges that Europe is facing today. Switzerland backs the ambitious goals of the ERA, the new instruments under Horizon Europe, e.g. the Missions, and the increased focus on investments, which should help in achieving these set targets and common European interests.

Against this background, Switzerland particularly appreciates the proposed key action of the ERA Communication to re-affirm the 3% GDP EU **R&I investment** target and propose a new EU 1.25% GDP public effort target to be achieved by 2030 by the Member States. Sufficient funding for the ERA is crucial to fulfil its aspirations, which go clearly beyond the idea of a funding scheme coordinator. In addition to the increase in public investments for research and innovation, Switzerland supports also the focus to leverage and incentivise **private investments** in Europe.

Switzerland also shares the belief that the European Research Area can help to increase competitiveness in the European industry. A targeted and coordinated approach towards the prioritized areas, such as the green and digital transformation and the fight against the pandemic is comprehensible, necessary and supported by Switzerland. Furthermore, the new foreseen instruments to create a fruitful environment for the industry such as the Horizon Europe Partnerships and the European Innovation Council are supported by Switzerland and deemed valuable in building a stronger bridge with the private sector.

However, in order for Europe to tackle its challenges with full force, Switzerland believes it is important to allow for a **participation of all European players and industry** to strengthen the translation of innovation results into the economy. This enhancement of European coherence will support and reinforce European values, scientific sovereignty and common interests. Additionally, the importance and interdependency of **both bottom-up curiosity-driven as well as mission-and targeted oriented research in increasing European competitiveness should be stressed**: There is no real innovation without ideas from the pool of new knowledge which needs to be continuously fed by basic research. There lies another approach to tackling our common current European challenges in strengthening the bridge between science and society. Consequently, Switzerland strongly appreciates the emphasis on engaging citizens and civil society in the ERA and making them aware of the problems Europe faces and the potential science and society in Europe has to help to solve these problems.

Moreover, Switzerland strongly agrees that **scientific Excellence** must remain a central aim and indispensable element of the ERA. Switzerland welcomes the measures as foreseen in the ERA Communication to improve the **access to Excellence** across Europe. In order to harvest Europe's full scientific and innovation potential, it is important to mobilize the whole of Europe, deepen the ERA and connect existing ecosystems and researchers across Europe. Hence, Switzerland supports an **ERA that is open and flexible** and allows researchers to move and work with each other across borders and freely exchange scientific and technological findings across Europe.

Furthermore, Switzerland clearly shares the view that the ERA should not only ease mobility in science but also foster comprehensive approach for research careers and a holistic and modernising reward system in Europe. Against this context, Switzerland deems gender equality also as an important issue and therefore supports the implementation of inclusive gender equality plans in research organisations. Additionally, Switzerland cheers the strengthened focus on the skills mismatch through the creation of the European competence framework for research careers and also backs the ERA4You initiative. Finally, Switzerland welcomes the development of integrating the Euraxess services into an ERA Talent Platform in order to strengthen mobility schemes.

In this regard, Switzerland also strongly supports the continuous emphasis on **Open Science** which makes R&I systems more efficient, modernizes the publishing industry and allows a broader public to be involved in the scientific process. Consequently, Switzerland deems the European COVID-19 Data Platform a good example for fruitful European collaboration in this field.

Large-scale research infrastructures are a backbone of the ERA that, by contributing to knowledge sharing and innovation, help to tackle global challenges and foster regional development. They attract and connect the best researchers across the globe. Switzerland therefore greatly welcomes the aim to broaden scope of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI). However, Switzerland also believes a strong network and Forum of the best Infrastructures in Europe should be open to all countries in Europe in order to be truly successful for the competitiveness of the continent.

With regards to the **synergies of the European Research Area and the European Education Area**, Switzerland believes that education and research should have a reciprocal focus on each other and that they can be most effective together by enhancing each other's potential. However, the area of education and research compromise also different levels of decision-making. Thus, Switzerland believes the synergies should mainly focus on easing conditions, creating common standards, understanding and goals,

especially when it comes to initiatives that are supported under different programmes, such as the European Universities Initiative.

The European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) has taken on an important guiding and integrative role in the ERA over the last years. Switzerland hence supports the continuation of ERAC within an agile governance, having an oversight role of the day-to-day business and implementation working groups and projects within the ERA. A new, deeper and broader European Research Area can pave the way for a next-generation knowledge based-society and it can reinforce common European interest and manifest common European values in research and innovation, which Switzerland shares. In this context, Switzerland would like to continue to contribute and strengthen the ERA as well as common interests in research and innovation for Europe as a whole.