

YERUN Welcomes the ERA Policy Agenda 2025–2027: A Renewed Commitment to a Stronger European Research Area

YERUN (the Young European Research Universities Network) welcomes the formal agreement reached today by the Competitiveness Council to adopt on 26-27 June the second European Research Area (ERA) Policy Agenda 2025–2027 as a [Council Recommendation on the ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027](#).

Drawing upon the Pact for R&I priority areas for joint action and the implementation outcomes of the first ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 as a basis, this second ERA Policy Agenda (EPA) outlines a renewed and more structured framework for strengthening the ERA in the coming years, combining long-term structural policies with targeted actions embedded in national and European policy research and innovation (R&I) systems to respond to evolving challenges in R&I.

Building on its active involvement in shaping and supporting the ERA governance since its relaunch in 2020 (see [YERUN's contribution to the previous EPA here](#)), YERUN recognises the **ERA Policy Agenda (EPA) as a valuable framework for translating shared European research and innovation (R&I) goals into concrete outcomes**. YERUN will continue working on enabling the framework conditions for research careers; taking steps towards the reform of research assessment through our active role in CoARA; promoting efforts to advance in open science; strengthening the links between research and education to foster more integrated and effective knowledge ecosystems, with universities as central actors; advancing the fifth freedom as critical to the ERA's success across all governance levels, or enhancing European research security through our active participation in various initiatives (such as co-organising the EU Flagship Conference), among other topics. Although not all elements included in the EPA 2025-2027 align with YERUN's priorities, we look forward to continuing our contribution, both as the voice of young research universities and as a proactive actor in implementation.

Towards a More Structured and Operational ERA: New EPA Architecture

The new EPA introduces a **clearer and more coherent structure, advancing from the previous cycle**. The current structure reflects previous recommendations put forward by YERUN (see [A new start: ERA Policy Agenda structure post-2024](#) for greater insights into the rational and definitions of the new ERA architecture). YERUN was one of the first organisations to push for the creation of what we called 'ERA pillars' - and are now known as structural policies. YERUN welcomes the division into:

- A forward-looking **policy narrative** that sets the overall ambitions of the ERA in a rapidly changing global landscape;
- A set of **structural policies** that address systemic enablers and pillars for a strong ERA; and
- **Targeted actions** focused on emerging or pressing R&I issues.

Equally important - and long advocated by YERUN - is the **collaborative approach and structured engagement** embedded in the ERA Forum. This includes co-creation among the European Commission (EC), Member States (MS), Associated Countries, and stakeholders, which is essential for a stronger ERA and effective implementation. YERUN remains proud to serve as a representative of the R&I sector, alongside the European University Association (EUA). This joint role continues to reflect YERUN's commitment to inclusive ERA governance.

Key considerations and recommendations

YERUN stands ready to contribute to the **implementation of both structural policies and actions**, representing the voice of young research universities and their interests at the European level. However, the following considerations are essential for the successful development of the ERA and the effective implementation of the second EPA:

As reiterated, YERUN strongly endorses the stakeholder engagement approach embedded in the ERA Forum's working methods. To build on these effective practices, and as [previously highlighted by YERUN](#), there is a pressing need for greater citizen involvement and more structured stakeholder engagement to enhance the quality and legitimacy of policymaking. In this regard, YERUN calls for **increased efforts to strengthen national-level dialogue mechanisms with stakeholders across MS**. YERUN will work to further support this effort.

In line with [our longstanding position](#), while MS retain the flexibility to decide how they will voluntarily contribute to each action and structural policy, **YERUN underscores the importance of sustained national commitment as a necessary precondition to any debate on the EPA's implementation**. The commitment of MS is essential as the success of the ERA ultimately depends on coherent and consistent action across governance levels. Without clear and sustained national engagement, even the most well-designed policies risk falling short of their potential. National ownership ensures that ERA priorities are embedded in domestic strategies, that resources are allocated appropriately, and that structural reforms are not only adopted but also maintained over time. It also builds trust among stakeholders and between institutions, creating the conditions necessary for an integrated ERA. Recognising the diverse capacities and national contexts of MS, YERUN had consistently advocated from the outset for a more limited, focused and targeted set of actions - designed to be both manageable and realistically implementable.

In light of this, strong synergies among MS and between the European Union (EU) and the national level are essential to ensure that the benefits of ERA implementation are widely felt - across all levels of governance, within societies and at the local level. The variation in national R&I systems across MS poses difficulties for effective collaboration. In this context, YERUN calls for the **ERA Act to legislate on reducing fragmentation amongst MS and to [realise the fifth freedom](#)** to integrate research, innovation, knowledge and education into the European Single Market.

YERUN agrees with the priority area of the Council Recommendation on **boosting R&I investments and adopting structural reforms**. We strongly call for the inclusion of a provision within the ERA Act that would **commit MS to achieving the 3% GDP target for R&D investment** -

a goal that remains unmet by many. Binding commitments at this level are essential to ensure the credibility, impact and long-term success of the ERA. In that line, **substantial investments in European R&I will in turn have positive effects on the ERA and its attractiveness**, not only to retain European researchers but also to attract latent from abroad. In this sense, initiatives at the EU level, such as the '[Choose Europe for Science](#)' 500 million package for 2025-2027, proposed by President Ursula von der Leyen during her speech La Sorbonne on 5th May, are celebrated.

Furthermore, ensuring a genuinely inclusive approach is essential for the ERA. YERUN supports the EPA's priority and emphasis that MS and the EC should remain supportive of the **full involvement of countries associated to the Horizon Europe programme and of EU-level umbrella stakeholder organisations** in implementing the second ERA Policy Agenda.

Lastly, YERUN welcomes the **integration of the EPA with other EU frameworks** - such as Horizon Europe, the European Education Area and the Digital Europe Programme - for a holistic implementation, while ensuring transparency and progress monitoring through instruments like the **ERA Scoreboard and Dashboard**.

Conclusion

YERUN welcomes the adoption of the Council Recommendation and the continued commitment of the EC and the MS to work collaboratively with associated countries and stakeholders. We value the evolving approach to **stakeholder engagement**, which is fostering more structured and inclusive dialogues at regional, national and European levels.

YERUN is proud to have been **one of the first organisations to push for the creation of structural policies**, and we remain committed to supporting long-term reforms in key areas such as research careers, research assessment, education-research collaboration, the strengthening of R&I ecosystems, etc. To realise these ambitions and build a **strong R&I system that is well supported at both national and European level**, stronger MS commitments and adequate resourcing are needed. Finally, implementing the **fifth freedom** will be key to achieving an integrated and effective ERA.

YERUN reaffirms its full **commitment to co-shaping and co-implementing the second EPA**, and to building an ERA that enables Europe's universities to contribute fully to societal progress, innovation, and sustainable development. A strengthened ERA, shaped and implemented in collaboration with universities, is fundamental to Europe's capacity to deliver excellence in R&I and remain competitive.

- 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 -



YERUN, Young European Research Universities Network, May 2025

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