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European Research Area
Public consultation questionnaire

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

This public consultation forms an integral part of the preparation of the European Research Area Act (the 'ERA Act').
The Commission Communication on a Competitiveness Compass for the EU, adopted on 29 January 2025, included the ERA Act as one of the flagship actions aimed at 'closing the innovation gap' with other global economic powers. The ultimate objective of the ERA Act is to strengthen the capacity and performance of the EU's research and innovation ('R&I') ecosystem and to help the EU become the world's most attractive destination for researchers. The ERA Act aims to tackle enduring issues that hinder the efficiency and performance of the European R&I ecosystem, such as fragmented regulatory frameworks, disparities in research and development ('R&D') investment, and barriers to knowledge sharing and cooperation. Building on Enrico Letta's and Mario Draghi's 2024 reports, the ERA Act will be an opportunity to ensure the 'fifth freedom', the free circulation of researchers, scientific knowledge and technology in the EU's single market. The ERA Act will do this by tackling obstacles to this fifth freedom, through the uniform application of rules and the enforcement of EU policies to create a level playing field for researchers and innovators across the Member States. The ERA Act is closely linked to other initiatives announced in the Commission's Political Guidelines, in particular the proposal for a European Innovation Act.

The purpose of this public consultation is to collect feedback on the key challenges that the ERA Act aims to address and on potential solutions to tackle them by means of EU-level legislation. The issues addressed include:

- reaching public and private investment goals;
- aligning the policies and programmes of the EU and the Member States, and across the Member States;

- challenges related to upholding the fundamental values of the European Research Area;
- improving the framework conditions for research and researchers.

This consultation questionnaire is structured around the main areas and problems that fall within the scope of the future legislation. It will take a maximum of 25 minutes to complete the full questionnaire but you are also welcome to only respond to the sections that are relevant for you.

The results of this public consultation will be summarised in a report that will be published on the Have your say website. The results will also be analysed together with other data that is being collected through targeted stakeholder consultations and an impact assessment. At the end of the survey, you will have the possibility to upload a file with a more detailed contribution.

* **Please select the sections of the questionnaire to which you would like to contribute:**

- ☑ **1. Strengthen R&D investment and bring it up to the 3% GDP target to address the current lack of investment.**
- ☑ **2. Greater alignment of R&I investments, policies and programmes between the EU and Member States, and between Member States.**
- ☑ **3. Improve the general conditions for research and researchers in Europe.**
- ☑ **3.1. Upholding the fundamental values of the European Research Area: freedom of scientific research; gender equality and equal opportunities.**
- ☑ **3.2. Ensuring the free circulation of researchers and scientific knowledge: researchers' careers and mobility; free circulation of scientific knowledge; European research infrastructure consortia; knowledge valorisation.**
- ☑ **3.3 Aligning guidance on artificial intelligence (AI) in research.**
- ☑ **3.4 Improving consistency in approaches to international cooperation and research security across the EU.**

About you

* Language of my contribution

- Bulgarian
- Croatian
- Czech
- Danish
- Dutch
- English
- Estonian
- Finnish
- French
- German
- Greek
- Hungarian
- Irish
- Italian
- Latvian
- Lithuanian
- Maltese
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Romanian
- Slovak
- Slovenian
- Spanish
- Swedish

* I am giving my contribution as

- Academic/research institution
- Business association
- Company/business
- Consumer organisation
- EU citizen
- Environmental organisation

- ○ Non-EU citizen
- ○ Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
- ○ Public authority
- ○ Trade union
- ◉ Other

* First name

CAROLINE

* Surname

ALMERAS

* Email (this won't be published)

caroline.almeras@ectri.org

* Organisation name

255 character(s) maximum

ECTRI - European Conference of Transport Research Institutes

* Organisation size

- ◉ Micro (1 to 9 employees)
- ○ Small (10 to 49 employees)
- ○ Medium (50 to 249 employees)
- ○ Large (250 or more)

Transparency register number

Check if your organisation is on the transparency register. It's a voluntary database for organisations seeking to influence EU decision-making.

54191854341-51

* Country of origin

Please add your country of origin, or that of your organisation.

This list does not represent the official position of the European institutions with regard to the legal status or policy of the entities mentioned. It is a harmonisation of often divergent lists and practices.

- Afghanistan
- Åland Islands
- Albania
- Algeria
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- Andorra
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- Antarctica
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- Armenia
- Aruba
- Australia
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
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- Bangladesh
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- Equatorial Guinea
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- Eswatini
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- Finland
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- French Guiana
- French Polynesia
- French Southern and Antarctic Lands
- Gabon
- Georgia
- Germany
- Ghana
- Gibraltar
- Greece
- Libya
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Macau
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Malaysia
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- Mali
- Malta
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- Moldova
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- Montenegro
- Montserrat
- Morocco
- Mozambique
- Saint Martin
- Saint Pierre and Miquelon
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Samoa
- San Marino
- São Tomé and Príncipe
- Saudi Arabia
- Senegal
- Serbia
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- Singapore
- Sint Maarten
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Solomon Islands
- Somalia
- South Africa
- South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands
- South Korea
- South Sudan
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- Sudan
- Suriname

- Bhutan
- Bolivia
- Bonaire Saint Eustatius and Saba
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Botswana
- Bouvet Island
- Brazil
- British Indian Ocean Territory
- British Virgin Islands
- Brunei
- Bulgaria
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi
- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Cape Verde
- Cayman Islands
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Chile
- Greenland
- Grenada
- Guadeloupe
- Guam
- Guatemala
- Guernsey
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Heard Island and McDonald Islands
- Honduras
- Hong Kong
- Hungary
- Iceland
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran
- Iraq
- Ireland
- Isle of Man
- Myanmar/Burma
- Namibia
- Nauru
- Nepal
- Netherlands
- New Caledonia
- New Zealand
- Nicaragua
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Niue
- Norfolk Island
- Northern Mariana Islands
- North Korea
- North Macedonia
- Norway
- Oman
- Pakistan
- Palau
- Palestine
- Panama
- Svalbard and Jan Mayen
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Syria
- Taiwan
- Tajikistan
- Tanzania
- Thailand
- The Gambia
- Timor-Leste
- Togo
- Tokelau
- Tonga
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Tunisia
- Türkiye
- Turkmenistan
- Turks and Caicos Islands
- Tuvalu
- Uganda
- Ukraine

- China
- Christmas Island
- Clipperton
- Cocos (Keeling) Islands
- Colombia
- Comoros
- Congo
- Cook Islands
- Costa Rica
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Croatia
- Cuba
- Curaçao
- Cyprus
- Czechia
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Denmark
- Israel
- Italy
- Jamaica
- Japan
- Jersey
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan
- Kenya
- Kiribati
- Kosovo
- Kuwait
- Kyrgyzstan
- Laos
- Latvia
- Lebanon
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Papua New Guinea
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Philippines
- Pitcairn Islands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Puerto Rico
- Qatar
- Réunion
- Romania
- Russia
- Rwanda
- Saint Barthélemy
- Saint Helena Ascension and Tristan da Cunha
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United States
- United States Minor Outlying Islands
- Uruguay
- US Virgin Islands
- Uzbekistan
- Vanuatu
- Vatican City
- Venezuela
- Vietnam
- Wallis and Futuna
- Western Sahara
- Yemen
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

If you are contributing as an individual researcher, what is your main scientific field of research?

- Natural sciences
- Engineering and technology
- Medical and health sciences
- Agricultural and veterinary sciences

- Social sciences
- Humanities and the arts

The Commission will publish all contributions to this public consultation. You can choose whether you would prefer to have your details published or to remain anonymous when your contribution is published. **For the purpose of transparency, the type of respondent (for example, 'business association, 'consumer association', 'EU citizen') country of origin, organisation name and size, and its transparency register number, are always published. Your e-mail address will never be published.** Opt in to select the privacy option that best suits you. Privacy options default based on the type of respondent selected

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- **Public**

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1. Strengthen R&D investment and bring it up to the 3% GDP target to address the current lack of investment

The EU's R&D intensity, measured as the proportion of GDP spent on R&D, is still well below the target of 3% of GDP set by the European Council in Barcelona in 2002, despite the steady but slow progress made since then. In 2023, approximately EUR 381 billion was invested in R&D in the EU, which accounts for only 2.22% of the EU's GDP. The large disparities between Member

States (ranging from 0.5% to 3.6% of GDP) are partly due to the lack of private investment in R&D compared with other major economies (China, Japan, South Korea, United States, etc.). The low level of R&D intensity negatively affects the EU's competitiveness and, therefore, its socio-economic progress and the resilience of our society, and accentuates the R&D investment gap with other countries.

Meeting the EU's 3% target would require an additional investment of EUR 134 billion per year across the EU. Therefore, to achieve the 3% target by 2030, the EU would need substantial additional funding from both private and public sources, a better alignment and complementarity between public and private investments, and better coordination of policies at both national and EU levels.

Current situation

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
The EU's innovation gap with other major economies is largely caused by underinvestment in R&D.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
We should reduce disparities in R&D intensity between Member States, which create innovation gaps inside the EU.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Increasing R&D intensity should be a priority at EU level to boost socio-economic progress and competitiveness in the EU.	◉	○	○	○	○	○

Possible way forward

To what extent are the following suggestions appropriate for EU-level legislation to increase R&D intensity?

	Very appropriate	Somewhat appropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Somewhat inappropriate	Very inappropriate	No opinion
Define national R&D intensity targets, where public investments are solid obligations.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Ask Member States to write multiannual national plans or roadmaps for implementation and monitoring of progress towards R&D intensity targets.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Ensure the better use of public R&D investments to further mobilise private R&D investments.	○	◉	○	○	○	○

Please provide the reasoning behind your responses and/or additional suggestions. Are there any other key challenges regarding the need to increase R&D intensity or possible ways to address this challenge that you think should be considered?

2000 character(s) maximum

ECTRI welcomes the consultation on the European Research Area (ERA) Act and strongly supports the objective of increasing R&D intensity across the EU. While binding national R&D targets with public investment obligations represent progress, they must be accompanied by enforceable mechanisms. Without EU-level oversight, financial incentives, or sanctions, such targets risk remaining symbolic. A more effective approach would be to link national R&D commitments to access to EU funding programmes such as Horizon Europe or the Connecting Europe Facility, thereby ensuring accountability.
ECTRI also fully supports the introduction of multiannual national R&D roadmaps to better align national strategies with EU priorities, notably sustainable mobility, decarbonisation and digitalisation. These roadmaps should be mandatory, measurable and supported by clear milestones, KPIs and detailed budget allocations. By contrast, current proposals on mobilising private investment remain too vague. Public funding should be strategically designed to de-risk innovation and attract private capital.
Additional challenges include the “valley of death” in commercialisation, as only around 30% of EU academic patents are currently exploited. The ERA Act should include concrete mechanisms to bridge this gap. Fragmented access to research infrastructure also continues to hamper cooperation, particularly in Southern and Eastern Europe.
Overall, the three proposed measures are relevant. In particular, multiannual national plans can strengthen Member State commitment to increasing R&D intensity. However, the other two measures should be made more concrete: the main challenge is not merely setting R&D intensity targets, but mobilising private investment and ensuring the more effective use of public R&D funding. Annual reporting and assessment of national plans by CINEA or another EU agency could serve as an effective external implementation tool.

2. Greater alignment of R&I investments, policies and programmes between the EU and Member States, and between Member States

In addition to the lack of R&D intensity, the EU falls short of what it could achieve in R&D because policies and investment priorities are not sufficiently coordinated between Member States and between the EU and the Member States. R&I in Europe is governed at multiple levels, with policies and investment pursued at the local, regional, national and EU levels, scattered across ministries in different Member States.
Investments in R&D are often dispersed and poorly aligned between Member States, while only about 10% of total R&D spending is managed through EU-wide programmes. By contrast, competitors like the United States benefit from a single national strategy, leading to a more coordinated allocation of resources and the strategic alignment of investment priorities. This disparity is especially problematic for sophisticated and complex technologies such as AI, quantum computing or biotech. This fragmentation of European R&D investments makes it difficult for the EU to address common challenges by focusing on a coherent set of strategic areas, and leads to missed opportunities for collaboration and network effects.

Current situation

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
The lack of mechanisms to coordinate and prioritise research and innovation policies at EU level reduce the effectiveness of R&D investments.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
The existing institutional structures and instruments are insufficient to align policies and R&D investments across Member States, and between Member States and the EU, and to set out strategic priorities.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
EU spending on R&D is not well-aligned with key EU-wide policy priorities, e.g. industrial policy.	○	○	○	○	◉	○
Existing mechanisms that support R&D initiatives co-funded by different actors (notably European Partnerships [1]) are not sufficient to address the current needs for coordination and alignment.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
The system of European Partnerships is too complex and fragmented in terms of its implementation modalities.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
There are too many European Partnerships to ensure critical mass and strategic orientation.	○	◉	○	○	○	○

[1] *'European Partnership' means an initiative, where the EU, together with private and public partners, commit to jointly supporting the development, implementation and evaluation of a programme of activities, and where the costs are shared between all partners.*

Possible way forward

To what extent are the following suggestions appropriate for EU-level legislation to better align R&D investments, programmes and policies?

	Very appropriate	Somewhat appropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Somewhat inappropriate	Very inappropriate	No opinion
Create a coordination instrument to allow the EU and the Member States to set out their strategic R&D priorities together.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
The competencies of the ERA governance bodies (i.e. the ERA Forum and the European Research and Innovation Committee - ERAC) could be expanded and applied to the definition of strategic priorities and to the alignment of R&D investments and policies.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
The European Partnerships should concentrate a critical mass of funding in key strategic areas, which are aligned with the EU's priorities.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
The system of European Partnerships should be constructed in such a way that it is flexible enough to adapt to evolving EU policy priorities, for instance by re-orienting existing European Partnerships, possibly ending existing Partnerships or creating new ones.	○	◉	○	○	○	○

The system of European Partnerships should become more transparent and easier to use by creating and running partnerships in a harmonised way.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Key provisions for implementing European Partnerships should be included in the ERA Act.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
The respective roles of public and private actors should be taken into account in creating and running European Partnerships	○	◉	○	○	○	○

Please provide the reasoning behind your responses and/or additional suggestions. Are there any other key challenges regarding policy and investments alignment or possible ways to address them that you think should be considered?

2000 character(s) maximum

There is some bias in this part of the questionnaire, with an over-emphasis on the need of wide coordination and centralisation of R&D efforts, and a focus on technological developments, with the implicit assumption that it should to be spearheaded by the incumbent European industry in the relevant sectors. However, this approach is at odds with what recent evidence is providing, at least in the transport sector. Disruptive technologies (electric vehicles is an excellent example) are emerging from new players and from niche ecosystem. That does not need that public support to major European industrial players should be stopped, but rather that the research and competition policy should avoid putting too many eggs in the same basket, and should rather increase its support to research institutions and to niche ecosystems that are more likely to provide such disruptive research.

3. Improve the general conditions for research and researchers in Europe

3.1 Upholding the fundamental values of the European Research Area

In 2021, the Council of the EU agreed on a set of fundamental values underlying the revamp of the ERA in the Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe. The ERA must ensure that its fundamental values are respected in full throughout the EU in a consistent and fair manner. These values are the unquestionable promotion of the freedom of scientific research, and of ethics and integrity when carrying out R&I, and the promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities.

3.1.1 Freedom of scientific research

There is currently no harmonised EU-level legal framework that ensures the consistent and enforceable protection of freedom of scientific research in the Member States. Researchers and research institutions across the EU face a combination of pressures that, in practice, can limit the full exercise of freedom of research.
The absence of a clear and enforceable EU framework has contributed to uneven levels of protection of freedom of scientific research in the Member States. This has led to significant disparities between Member States, making the EU a less attractive destination for global research talent, and undermining the objectives of the ERA.

Current situation

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
There is no clear and enforceable legal protection for the freedom of scientific research in my country.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Higher education institutions and research-performing organisations lack enough autonomy from undue interference, whether political, economic, or otherwise. This undermines their ability to safeguard freedom of scientific research effectively.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Social and cultural pressures, including public criticism, online harassment or media backlash, can discourage researchers from addressing certain topics or sharing their findings openly.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Precarious employment and lack of stable career paths undermine the independence of researchers.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Europe needs stronger and more uniform legal safeguards to protect and promote freedom of scientific research.	◉	○	○	○	○	○

Possible way forward

To what extent would the following suggested measures be appropriate to address the identified problems?

	Very appropriate	Somewhat appropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Somewhat inappropriate	Very inappropriate	No opinion
Establish uniform, legally binding protection at the EU level for the freedom of scientific research.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Require EU Member States to implement minimum standards protecting the freedom of scientific research, while allowing some flexibility at Member State level.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
Define clear core rights for individual researchers and rights and obligations for research institutions.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Create mechanisms to enforce compliance with the freedom of scientific research, such as linking respect for this freedom to access to EU funding, including for research, or cutting EU funds when the freedom of scientific research is not respected.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Ensure that legal measures to protect freedom of scientific research also strengthen the autonomy of research institutions and promote transparent governance in research institutions.	◉	○	○	○	○	○

Complement legal measures with awareness-raising, education, and programmes to promote a culture of scientific freedom and integrity.	◉	○	○	○	○	○

Please provide the reasoning behind your responses and/or additional suggestions. Are there any other points you would like to make regarding the need to protect the freedom of scientific research and the potential way forward?

2000 character(s) maximum

ECTRI strongly supports robust, legally binding safeguards for scientific freedom across the EU. The lack of a harmonised legal framework has created fragmentation, undermining trust, mobility, and the credibility of European research. Research careers are uncertain and working conditions precarious in most EU countries, which deters scientific freedom.
Uniform, legally binding protection at EU level is essential to ensure consistent standards and prevent interference. Relying on minimum standards with national flexibility risks loopholes and weak enforcement; core principles like scientific freedom must remain non-negotiable. Clearly defining researchers' and institutions' rights is crucial for legal certainty, including freedom to publish, choose research topics, and refuse unethical instructions.
Linking compliance to access to EU funding, including grants and infrastructure programmes, is appropriate, as financial leverage provides effective incentives and real consequences when freedoms are violated. Strengthening institutional autonomy and promoting transparent governance is equally crucial, protecting both individuals and institutions from political or economic interference in leadership, budgets, and recruitment.
Legal safeguards should be complemented by awareness-raising, education, and culture-building, as lasting protection requires societal commitment. Researchers in sensitive fields like climate policy, transport safety, and public health face growing political or media pressure. ECTRI calls for an independent European Research Ombudsman to investigate violations and provide redress. Researchers subject to harassment should have access to EU-funded legal and psychological support. The ERA Act must enshrine freedom in law and enable researchers to exercise it without fear, ensuring Europe remains a global leader in open, ethical, and courageous science.

3.1.2 Gender equality and equal opportunities

Gender equality is a core value and key priority for the EU, and as such it is integral to European research and innovation. Since 2020, the EU gender equality policy in research and innovation aims to address intersections of gender with other social categorisations (e.g. ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation), as well as to promote geographical and sectoral inclusiveness, especially by involving the private sector. Despite significant efforts and some positive developments, there are still disparities in this area. To address this, gender equality plans have been introduced as a condition to receiving EU research funding. The plans require public bodies and research and higher education organisations to outline concrete actions and commitments to promote gender equality. However, private sector organisations (where the gender gap is largest) are exempt from producing gender equality plans, and the effectiveness of the plans varies across the EU.
To improve the quality of research and develop effective solutions that benefit society as a whole, research and innovation must not only welcome all talents but also consider gender and equal opportunities for other social categories, such as ethnicity, disability and age, in their content. Gender, however, is incorporated in less than 2% of scientific publications (She Figures

2024). These and other related issues underscore the need for a stronger EU framework to promote gender equality and equal opportunities in research and innovation, building on existing initiatives and ensuring a consistent approach across the EU.

Current situation

To what extent do you agree that the following problems should be addressed to promote and achieve gender equality and equal opportunities more effectively in research and innovation?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
The inadequate and fragmented uptake of gender equality policies across the EU (e.g. gender equality plans).	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Inconsistent national and limited EU-level frameworks for the monitoring and evaluation of gender equality policies and actions.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Insufficient consideration of gender and other social factors (e. g. ethnicity, disability, age) in research and innovation content.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Lack of support for researchers with caregiving responsibilities.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Lack of engagement of the private sector in addressing gaps in gender equality and inclusiveness.	○	◉	○	○	○	○

Possible way forward

To what extent are the following suggestions appropriate for EU-level legislation to promote gender equality and equal opportunities more effectively in research and innovation?

	Very appropriate	Somewhat appropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Somewhat inappropriate	Very inappropriate	No opinion
Establish legally binding minimum rules for gender equality plans, specifying the organisations that are required to implement them, the essential components of the plans, and the processes for national-level monitoring and compliance.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Set a minimum level of spending on gender equality policies and actions in research and innovation at EU, national, and organisational levels.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Incorporate considerations of gender and other social factors (e.g. ethnicity, disability, age) into public research and innovation programmes, with regular reporting and evaluation.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Develop legislation to make big private companies more involved in improving gender equality and inclusiveness.	◉	○	○	○	○	○

Include the cost of caring for dependents in public research funding programmes to help researchers with caregiving responsibilities to overcome barriers to participation and career progression.	◉	○	○	○	○	○

Please provide the reasoning behind your responses and/or additional suggestions. Are there any other key challenges regarding gender equality and equal opportunities or possible ways to address them that you think should be considered?

2000 character(s) maximum

While progress has been made, systemic gaps persist, particularly in research content and private sector engagement. We somewhat agree that gender equality plans are inadequately and fragmentedly implemented across the EU, as many public institutions adopt them without consistent monitoring or enforcement. Similarly, we acknowledge inconsistent national and EU-level frameworks for evaluation, which undermine accountability. We also somewhat agree that gender and other social factors - such as ethnicity, disability, and age - are still insufficiently considered in research content, despite evidence that inclusive research leads to better, more relevant outcomes. This is especially critical in transport and mobility research, where needs vary significantly across demographics. We somewhat agree that support for researchers with caregiving responsibilities remains inadequate, disproportionately affecting women.
We consider incorporating gender and social factors into public research programmes with regular reporting and evaluation as very appropriate. This ensures equality is embedded in scientific quality, not just policy. We also rate making large private companies more involved through legislation as very appropriate, as they are major innovation drivers yet remain largely exempt from gender equality obligations. Mandating transparency, reporting, and action plans for large firms would close a critical gap. Similarly, including caregiving costs in public research funding is very appropriate—it directly addresses structural barriers and supports career continuity.
However, we rate legally binding minimum rules for gender equality plans as only somewhat appropriate, as while standards are needed, they must allow flexibility for national contexts while ensuring core principles. We also rate setting minimum spending levels as somewhat appropriate, as funding targets are useful but require robust monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

3.2 Ensuring the free circulation of researchers and scientific knowledge

3.2.1 Researchers' careers and mobility

Attractive research careers in different sectors are a fundamental part of a fully-fledged European Research Area. Following the adoption of the Council Recommendation establishing a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe in December 2023, stronger legal measures can be considered to address specific issues which would help to strengthen research careers and improve the mobility of researchers across the ERA.

Current situation

To what extent do you agree that the following problems currently prevent research careers in the EU from being more attractive?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
Widespread use of fixed-term contracts, in particular because of project-based funding and /or national legislation.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Insufficient social security benefits for early-career researchers, notably PhD candidates.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Lack of support for researchers to develop their careers.	○	○	◉	○	○	○
National and organisation-level obstacles preventing seamless mobility between Member States (e.g. administrative and language barriers) and between organisations.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
Obstacles to the mutual recognition by Member States of researchers' academic qualifications for work purposes.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
Obstacles to the recognition by Member States of academic qualifications gained in non-EU countries.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
Obstacles for researchers from non-EU countries in obtaining visas to work in EU Member States.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
Obstacles for researchers from non-EU countries who have a work-related visa issued by an EU Member State to move to other Member States.	○	○	○	◉	○	○

Insufficient mapping of national and organisational career structures for researchers against the R1-R4 career profiles (R1 First-Stage Researcher; R2 Recognised Researcher; R3 Established Researcher; R4 Leading Researcher), with a negative impact on intersectoral and interoperable careers.	○	○	◉	○	○	○
Insufficient use of the R1-R4 career profiles in vacancies.	○	○	◉	○	○	○
Administrative complexities related to business trips for researchers (e.g. the need to complete A1 forms [2]).	○	○	○	◉	○	○

[2] *An A1 form is a portable document that, in line with Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 and Regulation (EC) No 987/2009, serves as proof of the social security legislation applicable to a person (employee or self-employed) temporarily working in a different Member State.*

Possible way forward

To what extent are the following suggestions appropriate for EU-level legislation to address the identified problems?

	Very appropriate	Somewhat appropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Somewhat inappropriate	Very inappropriate	No opinion
Ensure that national laws do not impede or overly complicate the ability of public sector employers to offer open-ended, indefinite or permanent contracts to researchers.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Ensure that researchers at all career stages, including PhD candidates, have the same level of social security benefits.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Develop an EU-level contract template for the recruitment of researchers, which employers in the public and private sectors can use voluntarily. This template would ensure that minimum standards are met, making positions more attractive to researchers and facilitating mobility, including between Member States.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Carry out measures to prevent practices that could lead to discriminatory behaviour against some researchers and make it more difficult to be mobile, such as the exclusive use of the local language of a Member State in job advertisements and employment contracts.	○	◉	○	○	○	○

Facilitate the automatic recognition (for work purposes) of the academic qualifications that a researcher gained in an EU Member State.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Increase the understanding and transparency of the skills and academic qualifications of researchers.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Facilitate the recognition (for work purposes) of the academic qualifications that a researcher gained in a non-EU country.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Facilitate the visa application process for researchers from a non-EU country and reduce the obstacles to their mobility within the EU.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
Carry out a mapping exercise to align national and organisational career structures with the R1-R4 researcher profiles.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
Ensure that all job vacancies addressed to researchers use the R1-R4 profiles.	○	○	◉	○	○	○
Reduce the administrative burden associated with researchers' business trips.	○	○	○	◉	○	○

Please provide the reasoning behind your responses and/or additional suggestions. Are there any other key challenges regarding enhanced research careers and mobility that you think should be considered, including national-level obstacles preventing seamless mobility across Member States?

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Salary differences lead to one-sided migration from poorer countries to richer member states, with the consequence that in some regions, the establishment of an efficient research landscape is hampered by continuous brain drain. Some feasible and flexible (e.g. not requiring too much bureaucracy) solutions should be explored to address this.

3.2.2 Free circulation of scientific knowledge

Despite progress in promoting open access, which has been driven especially by the open science policies and actions of the EU and the Member States, the proportion of scientific publications and research data available through open access remains well below targets. Legal and technical obstacles, and other barriers such as research assessments based on the quantity of publications in prestigious journals, are impeding access to, and reuse of research output. The lack of standardisation and interoperability of research data within and across scientific disciplines and across borders is a major obstacle to achieving the free circulation of scientific knowledge.

Current situation

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, which describe possible obstacles to ensuring access to and sharing of scientific knowledge?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
Insufficient open access to publicly funded peer-reviewed publications.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Certain publishing requirements (e.g. transfer of author rights or embargoes) may limit open access to publicly funded peer-reviewed publications.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Insufficient open access to publicly funded research data, software and other research outputs.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Barriers (technical, legal etc.) preventing efficient access to and the sharing and reuse of data and other research outputs across borders within the EU.	○	○	◉	○	○	○
Barriers (technical, legal, etc.) preventing efficient access to and the sharing and reuse of data and other research outputs between scientific thematic areas.	○	○	◉	○	○	○
Apart from legal constraints imposed by sector-specific or cross-cutting legislation on data management, there are additional barriers that impede researchers' access to publicly funded data that could be overcome with targeted legislation.	○	○	◉	○	○	○
Insufficient alignment between research institutions and between EU countries on the requirements for open access to publicly funded research.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
There is legal uncertainty over how researchers can share, access and reuse copyright-protected material or sensitive data for scientific purposes.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
Insufficient use of existing legal possibilities and market-based mechanisms to share, access and reuse copyright-protected material for scientific purposes.	○	○	○	◉	○	○

Rising costs for research institutions to access scientific information and publish in open access.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Insufficient information about agreements between public institutions and publishers on the supply of scientific information and open access publishing services.	○	○	◉	○	○	○
Current research assessment practices are primarily based on the number of publications in prestigious journals and do not take into account the intrinsic quality and impact of the research and the diverse contributions of researchers.	◉	○	○	○	○	○

Possible way forward

To what extent are the following suggestions appropriate for EU-level legislation to achieve the free circulation of scientific knowledge?

	Very appropriate	Somewhat appropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Somewhat inappropriate	Very inappropriate	No opinion
Research-funding organisations (RFOs) responsible for managing public research-funding and research-performing organisations (RPOs) that receive public funding should include in funding agreements requirements for immediate open access to and reuse of publicly funded scientific publications in public open access repositories as a condition to providing public funding for research.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Public RFOs and RPOs receiving public funding shall foresee requirements for researchers and/or their organisations to retain the necessary intellectual property rights to provide immediate open access and reuse of their research outputs.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Public RFOs and RPOs receiving public funding shall foresee, where relevant, requirements for data management plans and open access to research data and other research outputs under the principle '*as open as possible, as closed as necessary*'.	◉	○	○	○	○	○

Member States should ensure the findability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability (FAIR) of publicly funded research data and other research outputs, and their availability through secure and trusted digital environments.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Member States should ensure that research data is standardised and interoperable within and between different scientific disciplines and across borders.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Member States should ensure the further development of secure and trusted infrastructures for access to, sharing, reuse and preservation of scientific information and data.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
The applicable legal frameworks should be reviewed to improve legal certainty and facilitate open access, sharing and reuse of data for scientific purposes in a secure way that ensures privacy.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Publicly funded researchers should have facilitated access (e.g. in terms of technical requirements, available platforms or administrative procedures) to data under the common European data spaces.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Non-legislative measures should be implemented to improve the awareness and use of existing legal and market-based solutions that make it possible to share, access and reuse protected content for scientific purposes.	○	○	○	○	○	◉

Public RFOs and RPOs that receive public funding should create mechanisms to ensure that assessments of research, researchers and research organisations recognise the diverse outputs, practices and activities that help maximise the quality and impact of research.	◉	○	○	○	○	○

Please provide the reasoning behind your responses and/or additional suggestions. Are there any other key challenges regarding the free circulation of scientific knowledge or possible ways to address them that you think should be considered?

2000 character(s) maximum

3.2.3 European Research Infrastructure Consortia

A European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) is a legal entity set up under EU law to facilitate the establishment and operation of research infrastructures of European interest. The ERIC Regulation has made it possible to launch and integrate many research infrastructures at European level, which align national investments and research priorities, and pool resources and expertise.

Despite the widely recognised success of the ERIC instrument, which has resulted in the establishment of 32 ERICs so far, a number of issues in the current legislation have been raised both by EU Member States and by the scientific community (see, for example, the third report on the application of the ERIC Regulation).

To what extent do you agree that the following topics should be considered in view of a possible future amendment of the ERIC Regulation?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
The possibility for third countries other than associated countries and intergovernmental organisations to join an ERIC as of its establishment as founding members.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
The rules in the ERIC Regulation on the applicable law and jurisprudence may create problems either in the setting-up of new ERICs or the resolution of disputes within existing ones.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
Further harmonisation of the legal status of ERICs is needed to reduce discrepancies in the recognition by Member States of European Research Infrastructures under national law that hinder the ERICs' efficiency.	○	◉	○	○	○	○

Please provide the reasoning behind your responses and/or additional suggestions. Are there other key challenges regarding the ERIC regulation or possible ways to address them that you think should be considered?

2000 character(s) maximum

3.2.4 Knowledge valorisation

Despite the growing policy emphasis and guidance on knowledge valorisation, including the Codes of Practice on the management of intellectual assets, citizen engagement, industry-academia co-creation and standardisation to implement the Guiding Principles for knowledge valorisation, structural problems persist that hinder the efficient transformation of research results into societal and economic value.
Knowledge valorisation can have multiple aspects. Issues related to the commercialisation of the outputs of publicly funded R&I were tackled in the public consultation on the European Innovation Act. Therefore, this consultation focuses on other knowledge valorisation aspects.

Current situation

To what extent do you agree that the following problems currently prevent R&I in the EU from achieving optimum levels of knowledge valorisation?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
There are limited financial and non-financial incentives for researchers, higher education and research-performing organisations to valorise knowledge.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Academic reward systems are predominantly focused on publications and citations, with limited recognition for activities that create socio-economic impacts.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Higher education and research-performing organisations, and their researchers lack the capacity to collaborate with the private sector, public authorities and citizens, and to engage in standardisation activities.	○	○	○	○	◉	○
Dedicated support services in universities (e.g. knowledge and technology transfer offices, public engagement units and innovation offices) to facilitate effective knowledge valorisation are under-resourced.	○	○	◉	○	○	○
Many researchers lack the training and skills necessary to engage successfully with non-academic collaborators (industry, citizens, public authorities) as part of knowledge transfer and valorisation.	○	○	○	○	◉	○

Researchers' employment conditions lack flexibility for two-way mobility between academia and industry (e.g. short-term secondments) and to engage with external stakeholders (e.g. consulting, collaboration with societal actors and public authorities).	○	◉	○	○	○	○

Possible way forward

To what extent are the following suggestions appropriate for EU-level legislative action to address the identified problems?

	Very appropriate	Somewhat appropriate	Neither appropriate nor	Somewhat inappropriate	Very inappropriate	No opinion
Member States should set knowledge valorisation as a key priority in their research and innovation policies.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
If they haven't already done so, Member States should adopt policies aimed at incentivising researchers and universities to engage in knowledge valorisation activities.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Successful commercialisation, standardisation and engagement with policy makers and the public should be recognised and rewarded in the assessment and progression of research careers.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
If a university decides not to commercialise an invention, the researcher/inventor should be granted full rights to exploit it.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
More schemes for mobility between sectors should be created, allowing researchers to work in industry or the public sector for a certain period, and ensuring their right to return to their previous position.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
A competence framework for knowledge valorisation professionals in public research organisations should be defined.	◉	○	○	○	○	○

Member states should develop strategies and measures to upscale knowledge valorisation for informing the design of public policies.	◉	○	○	○	○	○

Please provide the reasoning behind your responses and/or additional suggestions. Are there any other key challenges regarding knowledge valorisation and possible ways to address them that you think should be considered?

2000 character(s) maximum

3.3 Aligning guidance on artificial intelligence (AI) in research.

Across the EU, research organisations and funding bodies have issued diverse and often conflicting guidelines on the use of AI in scientific research. As a result, research proposals involving AI are subject to varying requirements on ethics, transparency, intellectual property, data protection and data governance. This fragmented landscape creates uncertainty for researchers and complicates cross-border collaboration between researchers.

Current situation

To what extent do you agree that the following problems regarding the use of AI in research should be addressed?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
There is a lack of harmonised guidelines on the ethical and responsible use of AI in research across the EU.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Researchers face legal uncertainty and administrative burdens when using AI due to differing national and institutional guidelines.	○	○	◉	○	○	○
The fragmented landscape of AI-related codes of conduct undermines cross-border and interdisciplinary scientific collaboration.	○	○	○	◉	○	○
The current frameworks do not provide sufficient clarity on how to manage risks such as dual-use, reproducibility, or transparency in the use of AI in research.	○	○	◉	○	○	○

Possible way forward

To what extent are the following suggestions appropriate to address the identified problem, and which solutions and should be pursued through EU-level legislation?

	Very appropriate	Somewhat appropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Somewhat inappropriate	Very inappropriate	No opinion
Promote capacity-building to implement and monitor AI governance in research organisations.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Encourage alignment between national and EU-level research programmes on AI-related standards.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Embed in the ERA Act non-binding EU-wide principles and harmonised guidelines on the responsible and ethical use of AI in research.	○	○	○	◉	○	○

AI misuse whistleblowing mechanism

Currently, there is no EU-level mechanism to report concerns about the misuse of AI in scientific research. Researchers lack trusted and secure channels to raise the alarm when AI is used unethically or for (un)intended harmful purposes. This gap increases the risk that dangerous applications go undetected and undermines trust in the research system.

Current situation

To what extent do you agree that the following problems regarding the current lack of whistleblowing mechanisms for misuse of AI in research should be addressed?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
The absence of a dedicated mechanism to report misuse increases the risk that harmful or unethical applications of AI go undetected.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Researchers currently lack secure, trusted channels to raise the alarm when AI-based research outputs are repurposed for unintended uses.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
There is a lack of awareness among researchers of where and how to report concerns related to the misuse of AI in research.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Reporting channels, where they exist, are often not tailored to the specific risks and complexities of AI in research.	○	○	◉	○	○	○

Possible way forward

To what extent are the following suggestions appropriate to address problems with the potential misuse of AI, and should these solutions be pursued through EU-level legislation?

	Very appropriate	Somewhat appropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Somewhat inappropriate	Very inappropriate	No opinion
Create an EU-level whistleblowing mechanism specifically to report the suspected misuse of AI in research.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Link this whistleblowing mechanism to national authorities and research institutions to ensure that responses are well-coordinated.	◉	○	○	○	○	○
Create an independent EU body or contact point to manage cases of AI-related whistleblowing in research.	○	○	○	◉	○	○

Please provide the reasoning behind your responses and/or additional suggestions. Are there any other key challenges or problems regarding Artificial Intelligence guidance in research and possible ways to address them that you think should be considered?

2000 character(s) maximum

3.4 Improving consistency in approaches to international cooperation and research security across the EU

Openness, international cooperation and academic freedom are at the core of world-class research and innovation. However, with growing international tensions and the increasing geopolitical significance of research and innovation, researchers are increasingly exposed to security risks. With the adoption of the Council Recommendation on enhancing research security in May 2025, the EU has clear political (i.e. non-binding) guidance on how to ensure that international cooperation in research and innovation is both open and secure. However, there are still substantial differences in how research is safeguarded between and within the Member States. There are calls to set minimum requirements at EU level to ensure a level playing field.

Current situation

To what extent do you agree that the following problems should be addressed?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
The lack of a level playing field in the EU in safeguarding research and innovation against security risks.	○	○	○	◉	○	○

Diverging national approaches to research security, which potentially hinder cooperation between researchers in different Member States (e.g. overlapping and/or conflicting requirements).	○	○	○	◉	○	○
The lack of adequate safeguards for research security in some Member States exposes all of the EU to research security risks (‘weakest link’ scenario).	○	○	○	○	◉	○
Researchers in Member States with well-developed research security policies are at a disadvantage compared with researchers in Member States that do not have similar policies in place.	○	○	○	○	◉	○

Possible way forward

To what extent are the following suggestions appropriate for EU-level legislation to better safeguard against research and innovation security risks?

	Very appropriate	Somewhat appropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Somewhat inappropriate	Very inappropriate	No opinion
Recognise research security as a concern for all Member States that requires appropriate measures at national and EU levels.	○	◉	○	○	○	○
Set minimum requirements for a consistent approach to research security at national and EU levels.	○	◉	○	○	○	○

Please provide the reasoning behind your responses and/or additional suggestions. Do you see any other issues that need to be addressed to support a more coherent and consistent approach to international research and innovation cooperation in a way that is both open and secure?

2000 character(s) maximum

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Background Documents

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