



## COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

### 1. THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA IN A NEW CONTEXT

The European Research Area (ERA) was launched in 2000, in the context of the Lisbon strategy, to address the fragmentation of the EU's research and innovation system, which at the time consisted of the juxtaposition of the national R&I systems and an EU level funding programme.

It aims at building a common scientific and technological area for the EU. Creating a single market for research and innovation fostering free movement of researchers, scientific knowledge and innovation, and encouraging a more competitive European industry. This involves restructuring the European research landscape towards more cross-border cooperation, continent-wide competition, building of critical mass and coordination, and the improvement of national research policies and systems.

Since 2009, achieving the ERA has also become an explicit Treaty objective, as expressed in Article 179 TFEU.

#### *The ERA: 20 years on*

Over the past 20 years, the European Research Area has seen major achievements.

The work of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) resulted in the development of plans for 55 European Research Infrastructures, of which 37 have already been implemented, across all fields of science, mobilising close to EUR 20 billion in investments.

Jointly addressing common challenges through coordination and pooling of resources has resulted in more than EUR 7 billion of national investments in joint research programmes since 2004, with current annual joint spending of EUR 800 million.

Significant progress has been made in removing the geographical barriers to researchers' mobility and the fragmentation of research careers in Europe, driven by the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers already adopted by 1242 organisations. In addition, the EURAXESS initiative supports researcher mobility and career development by delivering information and support services to professional researchers.

The ERA has enhanced access to open, free of charge, re-usable scientific information through the Open Science initiative and the recently launched European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) creating a cloud area for research data in Europe allowing for better science through open and collaborative knowledge sharing.

At the same time, the progress towards the ERA objectives has been slowing down and further improvement could be achieved in key areas.

The slowing of progress raises concerns when ambitious national funding and reforms, supporting a strong collective governance structure, are needed for Europe to engage in stronger action in the economic recovery.