

EERA Input for the EC Communication on European Research Area

EERA welcomes the Commission initiative to relaunch the European Research Area to support EU research coordination on, among other policies, the digital and green transitions. The ERA's relaunch should serve the double purpose of **advancing EU R&I potential and competitiveness**, as well as **supporting knowledge-based policy making**.

In the post Covid-19 recovery, sustainable energy technologies have the potential to constitute a key driver for economic development, accelerating the transition to a greener, more efficient energy system. Moreover, sustainable energy technologies have proven to be an economic sector that is highly resilient to the impacts of this crisis, providing a clear indication of an effective R&I investment direction for the future of Europe.

More in detail, EERA is putting forward the following suggestions, as input for the EC Communication on the future of ERA:

1. Support public investments in energy R&I to boost research in essential areas addressing key societal challenges, such as the Clean Energy Transition

- As a research community, EERA strongly advocates for a knowledge-based policy-making process, relying on experts' advice for identifying research investment priorities contributing to key societal challenges. The scientific community has an important role in advancing low and medium TRLs research and consequently advise policymakers to support the development of effective and innovative policies.
- In the energy sector, the ERA can leverage on the R&I priorities identified through existing frameworks coordinating energy research in Europe to support public investments. These include the EERA Joint Programmes, the SET-Plan and the Horizon Europe Partnerships, in particular the Clean Energy Transition Partnership.

2. Improve cross-border R&I collaboration avoiding overlapping and improving processes for a better use of European resources, by leveraging on existing frameworks such as the SET-Plan and the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs)

- The ERA should facilitate the identification of opportunities for international or cross-regional collaboration, as well as their implementation. In the energy sector, the SET-Plan Implementation Plans (IPs) and the NECPs can be fundamental instruments for the identification of common interests for future research, international partnerships, and consequentially for the convergence of national efforts.
- A support in the engagement of EU-13 countries in the energy research sector is needed. This goal can be achieved with a better capillarization of the information about



EU research priorities and funding opportunities as well as with the establishment of ad-hoc mechanisms to facilitate EU-13 participation in funding programmes.

- The digital transformation across all R&I sectors can provide for a free flow of data able to grant fast R&I responses. Digitalisation and open data are indeed key priorities of the green energy sector, also being included in the Commission's Energy System Integration strategy as a pivotal process to achieve a full network interoperability. Digitalisation also provides new opportunities for energy consumers, granting a flexible consumption across different sectors, contributing to an efficient integration of diverse technologies.

3. Supporting a more effective knowledge transfer and technology implementation mechanism through closer collaboration between Research and Industry

- Facilitating the dialogue between Research and Industry is a fundamental step towards a more efficient innovation ecosystem, ensuring a smooth laboratory-to-product transition. In this sense, the SUPEERA project (Support to the coordination of national research and innovation programmes in areas of activity of the European Energy Research Alliance) managed by EERA is working towards the acceleration of the uptake by industry, matching the common pathways between energy expertise capacities and industrial stakeholders.

