

EGI.eu Brief Paper on ERA Communication

The European Research Area (ERA) is a unified research area open to the world based on the free circulation of researchers, scientific knowledge and technology in Europe. The European Commission's 2012 Policy Communication on the European Research Area (ERA)¹ should lead to a significant improvement in Europe's research efficiency and effectiveness in order to promote growth and job creation. The measures in the Communication will have to be implemented by EU Member States, the European Commission and Research Organisations to ensure the completion of ERA by 2014 as called for by the European Council.

The ERA will focus on five key priorities:

- More effective national research systems
- Optimal transnational co-operation and competition
- An open labour market for researchers
- Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research
- Optimal circulation and transfer of scientific knowledge

The new ERA document takes a more pragmatic approach by wanting to reinforce an ERA partnership - deeper, wider and more efficient than to date - between Member States, the Commission and **research stakeholder organisations**. The explicit role for research stakeholder organisations is new and important. It should be investigated whether EGI qualifies for the role of research stakeholder organisations.² Some of the relevant research stakeholders identified by the EC are the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO), the European University Association (EUA), the League of European Research Universities (LERU), Nordforsk, Science Europe (SE). They signed with the Commissioner a Joint Statement³ to work towards completing ERA.

Effective Investment in and use of Research Infrastructures is the most relevant section for EGI: Excellent research depends upon world-class facilities and research infrastructures (RIs), **including ICT-based e-infrastructures (eRIs)**. eRIs in particular enable increasingly prevalent data-intensive collaborative research by geographically dispersed teams - **eScience**.

In regard to **ERIC**, there are new developments within ERA Communication Paper:

- Investment is required beyond the means of individual countries - pooling of regional, national and European Union funds is thus necessary, **particularly for ERIC RIs**, including distributed facilities requiring the participation of as many countries as possible with world class national and regional capacity
- The Commission commits to support through **Horizon 2020 the access to RIs** as well as the on-going overall integration of **EU RIs particularly those awarded ERIC status**.

In addition, the EC is committed to set of measures related to **ESFRI and e-IRG**:

- Encourage Member States to link RI roadmaps to the **ESFRI** roadmap and smart specialisation strategies in Structural Funds co-financed research and innovation programmes, reinforcing the capacity of less favored regions to host and participate in RIs of pan-European and international interest
- Develop in cooperation with **ESFRI, e-IRG** and other stakeholders a Charter of Access setting out common standards and harmonized access rules and conditions for the use of RIs
- Define with **ESFRI, e-IRG** and other stakeholders common evaluation principles, impact-assessment criteria and monitoring tools which can be applied in regional, national and European programmes to help combine funds from different sources
- Work with **e-IRG to promote the alignment of EU and national approaches to eRI development and use**

The Section on Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge of the ERA Communication states:

- As most knowledge creation and transfer uses digital means, all barriers preventing seamless online access to **digital research services for collaboration, computing and accessing scientific information (e-Science) and to e-infrastructures** must also be removed by promoting a **digital ERA**.
- The Commission is committed to:
 - Establish **open access** to scientific publications as a general principle for all EU funded projects in **Horizon 2020**
 - Propose a **roadmap for e-infrastructure development to support e-Science** through open access to research tools and resources

The Commission will develop a robust ERA monitoring mechanism (EMM) and the first annual ERA progress report will be in 2013.

In terms of key terms relevant for EGI, ESFRI is mentioned 10 times, e-Infrastructure 3 times, eRIs (ICT-based e-infrastructures) two times and ERIC four times.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/pdf/ere-communication/era-communication_en.pdf

² Federative and representative bodies of public and private research actors (including researchers, universities, funding and performing organisations) and their members.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/pdf/ere-communication/joint-statement-17072012_en.pdf