

**Question for oral answer O-000031/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 136

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on behalf of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

Subject: A new ERA for research and innovation

The European Research Area (ERA), initially launched in 2000 under the Treaty of Lisbon, underwent a revitalisation process in 2018. This represented an effort to create a single, borderless market for research, innovation and technology across the EU. The objective of creating a genuine single market for research reconfirms the goal of realising an average spending level for research of 3% of GDP. Research ministers have reaffirmed their commitment to reaching this target by 2030.

In order to achieve a strong research base in Europe, we need consistent efforts. We would therefore welcome concrete answers from the Commission to the following questions:

1. Will the Commission take decisive steps to speed up the delivery of a toolbox providing support for all researchers' careers, currently scheduled for the end of 2024? How exactly will the Commission help to improve conditions for researchers and provide sustainable career paths, especially for young researchers? What steps will the Commission take in order to monitor and uphold academic freedom in the EU?
2. How does the Commission intend to align, leverage and incentivise private investments in order to complement current ERA resources and boost R&I spending in order to accelerate the green and digital transitions, and a resilient and socially fair recovery? Will there be a dashboard for following the returns on investments? Have any public safeguards along these lines been envisaged? How can NextGenerationEU funds be used to incentivise partnerships between academia and the private sector for innovation?
3. How exactly will the Commission help to reduce the gap between the Member States which are lagging behind the EU average over the next five years? What precisely would a dedicated work stream in the ERA Forum aimed at supporting Member States performing less well in terms of R&I entail?

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Virginijus Sinkevičius, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, I would like to thank honourable Members because the oral question they raise today gives me the opportunity to present the ongoing actions in a number of areas identified in our communication on the European Research Area (ERA) last year. First of all, the Commission attaches the highest importance to research careers, as researchers and their activity are fundamental for the full implementation of a reinforced European Research Area, and for the development, growth and resilience of our society. We have already started working on the update of the definition of the taxonomy of researchers' skills and on the update of the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification. We intend to complete this work by the end of this year. In particular, the Commission is developing a list of researchers' skills and occupations to be included in the ESCO classification with a view to improve the representation of the research profession. The new taxonomy will be transposed at national level for the European mobility portal, EURES, and it will be used by Europass for all the services the new platform provides. Both initiatives will contribute to a better recognition of the research profession and will provide the necessary conditions for researchers at all career stages, including young ones, to be equipped with the skills and competencies they need for a successful career.

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions will remain the main EU instrument for researchers' career development and mobility. The new Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions further emphasise the role of excellent doctoral training programmes beyond academia, as well as the involvement of other sectors, namely businesses and SMEs, in order to ensure better career prospects for early career researchers. Another important element of the toolbox will be the ERA for You initiative. Currently at the design stage, this mobility scheme is designed to support exchanges between industry and academia and to encourage researchers towards entrepreneurship. The one-stop-shop portal, based on the new current EURAXESS services network and portal, will also be developed to help researchers with all their needs. The ERA Talent Platform will have enhanced features to make it more usable, more interactive and better fit for the purpose. As regards the academic freedom, the new ERA communication underlined the Commission's