



## Setting the horizon for a stronger and renewed ERA: EU-LIFE recommendations

Since its creation in 2013, EU-LIFE is a strong supporter of the European Research Area (ERA) and an active stakeholder supporting its policy and implementation. EU-LIFE has participated in the ERA stakeholders' platform and its "doers" groups since 2015, and had regular dialogue with the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC).

EU-LIFE is an organisation focused on research institutes and its core values are shared with the values of the ERA. We promote and develop initiatives with respect to ERA, engaging our community of practice as real "ERA-at-work". We lead projects that make ERA a reality, building a common commitment towards gender equality and diversity in science, fair and transparent research evaluation, promotion of research careers at all levels, talent retention and mobility, professional technology transfer, high ethics standards, and open science. We do this by openly sharing information, developing guidelines and protocols, collaborative projects, exchange of students and staff among the 15 EU-LIFE members and associated partners in 15 European countries and by reaching out to national and European stakeholders.

In view of the upcoming communication of the European Commission on the ERA, and based on previous interactions with ERAC, EU-LIFE welcomes publicly the initiative to re-think and re-design the ERA and hereby presents its views on the key aspects for its future.

### ERA strategy

- EU-LIFE welcomes the initiative to re-design the ERA narrative and in particular, **the clear reinforcement that knowledge is at the centre of ERA**. Innovation is about delivering solutions based on new knowledge. We strongly support the notion that **directionality is important but focus on the research ecosystem is the critical basis**. In other words, to achieve innovation and effectively address global challenges, we need the right ecosystem in place. ERA should be about developing and nurturing this rich ecosystem.
- **We welcome the drive to strengthen knowledge as culture in our society:** ERA should speak to the heart of citizens and be at the centre of the European ideal. We strongly support the narrative of "knowledge as culture", given the current context of post-truths and alternative facts and the lack of science-driven policies during the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Articulation with open science is paramount.** Likewise, we support special attention to **inclusiveness and widening** across Europe as they are the basis to a sustainable ERA.

### Member States', European and institutional levels are all crucial

- It is, however, essential to strike **the right balance between** strengthening the ERA at the Member States (MS) level and at the European level. **Leaving knowledge and research solely at the national level is a dangerous strategy** that does not serve the needs of the citizens and should not be pursued.
- Therefore, leverage of the ERA depends also on a **renewed strategy at European level**, beyond monitoring national implementation. This includes a clear **framework and reasonable resources at the European level** – in Horizon Europe and beyond, since realisation of the ERA requires transversal synergies with many different sectors.
- It is urgent to address what **needs to change to ensure political ownership and commitment at both Member States' and European level**. Namely, a more federated approach regarding coordination of policies such as on taxes and pensions to support circulation of people.
- We support **some flexibility regarding national approaches providing it comes with clear commitments** (at a political level and long standing, i.e., not subject to ever-changing, short governing cycles) and **with clear milestones of implementation** (including resources, investment).
- A key omission in the narrative is activity at the institutional level. It is crucial to include **the institutional level as a driver of the ERA** since institutions - research performing organisations, universities, and industry - are the ultimate enablers and providers of the ERA's aims.
- **Include international stakeholder organisations in the dialogue** more often and sooner. We recommend ensuring continuity of contributions and expertise built since 2000, for example the ERA stakeholders platform (with a revised format).

### Implementation measures

- At the implementation stage, measures should evolve from **“launching change” to “supporting and evaluating change in practice”**. This means planning for long-term supervision of change where change and long-term monitoring should be happening - not only on paper, not only measuring indicators.
- We propose that the ERA should collate **case studies and existing examples** of good practice that can inspire countries, regions, locals and institutions. Role models should be highlighted to showcase the added value and inspire others as to how the ERA can work at each level. There are several initiatives - EU-LIFE is an example – that show how the ERA can work in practice.



For more information contact

Dr. Marta Agostinho, EU-LIFE Coordinator

Email: [marta.agostinho@eu-life.eu](mailto:marta.agostinho@eu-life.eu); Mobile: [+34619570820](tel:+34619570820)

## About EU-LIFE

EU-LIFE is an alliance of research centres whose mission is to support and strengthen European research excellence ([www.eu-life.eu](http://www.eu-life.eu)). EU-LIFE members are leading research institutes in their countries and internationally renowned for producing excellent research, widely transferring knowledge and nurturing talent. The basis for the foundation of EU-LIFE was the perception that there was a gap in the science policy landscape regarding the representation of independent research centres. Since its foundation in 2013, EU-LIFE has become a stakeholder in European policy participating regularly in the EC policy dialogue.

## EU-LIFE Partners

Center for Genomic Regulation (**CRG, Spain**) | Central European Institute of Technology (**CEITEC, Czech Republic**) | European Institute of Oncology (**IEO, Italy**) | Flanders Institute For Biotechnology (**VIB, Belgium**) | Friedrich Miescher Institute for Biomedical Research (**FMI, Switzerland**) | Institut Curie (**IC, France**) | Institute for Molecular Medicine Finland (**FIMM, Finland**) | Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência (**IGC, Portugal**) | International Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology in Warsaw (**IIMCB, Poland**) | Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine in the Helmholtz Association (**MDC, Germany**) | Research Center for Molecular Medicine of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (**CeMM, Austria**) | The Babraham Institute (**Babraham, United Kingdom**) | The Netherlands Cancer Institute (**NKI, The Netherlands**) | The University of Copenhagen Biotech Research & Innovation Centre (**BRIC, Denmark**) | Institute of Molecular Biology & Biotechnology (**IMBB FORTH, Greece, Associate Partner**)