17. Action 17: Enhance public research institutions' strategic capacity

1.1.   Purpose of the Action and expected outcomes

Action 17 aims at enhancing the training and skills development of research management staff, foster the management competences of researchers and innovators, increase networking of research managers and promote the recognition of the R&I management profession at institutional and government levels.[1]

A strong community of R&I managers plays a crucial role in supporting high-performing research entities, local ecosystems, and regions. It is essential to provide support to this community and bridge the gaps that exist in regions lagging behind. By ensuring excellence across the entire ERA, the flow of talent and investments can be facilitated.

The European Commission aims to establish robust management capacity and guidance for the stakeholders involved through the Research Management Initiative. This initiative, under Horizon Europe, will support research management by facilitating the European network for research and innovation managers, exploring certification and training programs, and providing policy support for Member States through mutual learning platforms on research management.[2]

The primary outcome expected from Action 17 is the implementation of a Research Management Initiative, which will involve at least 100 public research performing and research funding organisations and their research management staff in networking programs.

1.2.   Implementation of the Action

Horizon Europe's approach to supporting research management initiatives is consistent with Action 17 of the ERA Policy Agenda. This commitment to promoting best practices in research management, open science, and innovation is reflected in various projects and initiatives implemented under Horizon Europe. The EOSC has emerged as a significant catalyst for actions and policies on research management under the Horizon Europe program.

The **Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA),** published in 2022 by ESOC, provides a comprehensive roadmap for the next seven years. It outlines a vision to establish an operational 'Web of FAIR data and services' for science. It aims to transform research management by creating an open and trusted environment for accessing and managing publicly funded research data and digital outputs. This transformative approach seeks to change how researchers access and share digital knowledge throughout the research lifecycle, leading to advancements in research data management and scientific progress. The SRIA represents the collaborative efforts of research-performing organisations, research-funding organisations, research infrastructures, research libraries, and research associations which have actively participated in the co-creation process.[3]

One notable project is **RITrainPlus**, which builds upon the previous RItrain project (2015-2020). RITrainPlus focuses on developing the skills and competences of research infrastructure managers through the implementation of Continuous Professional Development courses (CPDs), the creation of a foundation for the long-term provision of highly qualified personnel for managing research infrastructures and the establishment of a European School for the Management of Research Infrastructures.[4] Additionally, Horizon Europe's **Science with and for Society** (SwafS) and its **Responsible Research and Innovation** (RRI) program support the development of best practices and promote the integration of responsible research and innovation principles into research management.[5]

Horizon Europe contributes to through the **EIT's (European Institute of Innovation and Technology) HEI Initiative**, which supports higher education institutions by providing expertise, coaching, access to the EIT

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[1] ERA Portal Austria, 17 Enhance public research institutions' strategic capacity, available at: https://era.gv.at/era-policy-agenda/explanatory-documents

[2] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ec_rtd_era-policy-agenda-2021.pdf, p.19.

[3] Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), 2022, available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f9b12d1d-74ea-11ec-9136-01aa75ed71a1

[4] https://ritrainplus.eu/ritrainplus-project

[5] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/international/european-research-area/horizon-2020/swafs

innovation ecosystem and funding. The goal is to assist these institutions in developing innovation action plans that align with their specific needs, further enhancing their strategic capacity in research management.[6]

Moreover, under the specific call *'HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-20: Towards a Europe-wide training and networking scheme for research managers'*[7], two Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) projects were initiated in 2022. The first project, **CARDEA**, coordinated by the University College Cork, aims to professionalise research management as a valued career choice within the European Research Area[8]. CARDEA is developing a careers and competences framework for research managers at European level.

The second project, **RM ROADMAP**, led by EARMA (European Association of Research Managers and Administrators), seeks to connect existing European networks through an innovative community platform for research management.[9] RM ROADMAP developed a network of 'RM Ambassadors' in over 40 countries, who will support the establishment or maintenance of national communities of research managers, structurally liaise with national policy makers, collect the needs and develop actions to improve upskilling.

Twinning actions prioritise establishing Research Support Offices, enhancing the research management capacities and administrative skills of the technical and administrative staff working in institutions from Widening countries, with more than 100 projects funded per Twinning Call[10]. This programme strengthens networking among research institutions in Widening countries, serving as coordinators, and their top-tier European Union counterparts by connecting institutions from different Member States or Associated Countries.[11]

Information from the 2023 OECD STIP Survey suggests that **policy instruments related to Action 17** predominantly fall under direct financial support, as illustrated in Figure 1. Governance instruments constitute the second most common type, followed by collaborative infrastructures and policies relying on guidance, regulation, and incentives. No policies utilising indirect financial support were identified across the 27 Member States.
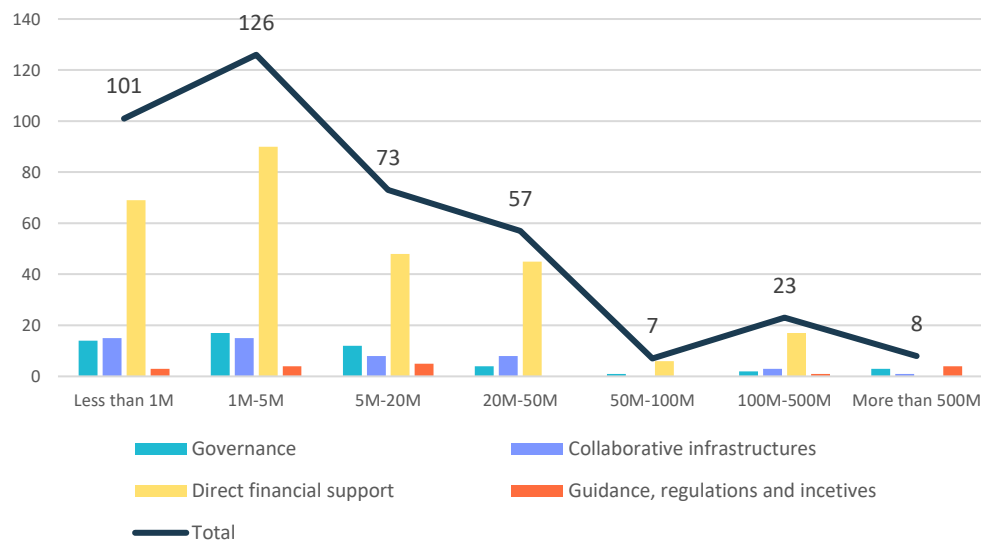

Figure 1: Action 17: Distribution of budget per policy instrument

National policy example

[6] https://eit-hei.eu
[7] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-widera-2021-era-01-20
[8] https://www.ucc.ie/en/cardea/aboutus
[9] https://www.astp4kt.eu/about-us/kt-news/mapping-the-future-of-research-management.html
[10] https://rea.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-grants/horizon-europe-widening-participation-and-spreading-excellence/twinning_en
[11] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-widera-2023-access-02-01

As illustrated in the STIP survey, current policy debates related to Action 17 indicate that **Latvia**, for example, is making significant efforts in enhancing research management. The establishment of the Innovation and Research Management Council in 2022 fostered closer cooperation among key institutions, overseeing the implementation and management of research, development, and innovation policies, including RIS3.[12] The involvement of the Latvian Investment and Development Agency (LIAA) has been strengthened, with additional tasks focusing on the systematic engagement of LIAA in developing RIS3 value chain ecosystems and playing a leading role in future scenario development and strategic research.

Similarly, in **Czechia**, the Government programme statement in 2022 aims at enhancing research management and prioritise science, research, and innovation. The government will focus its efforts on improving the research management system, human resources, funding, technology transfer, and publicity.

The "sponsors" of ERA Action 17 (Germany, Hungary, and the university sector), together with experts in the ERA Forum, developed a set of recommendations for target action at country level and European level to increase the recognition of the profession and develop research managers' training activities as well as improve accessibility to these. Further activities within ERA Action 17 will focus on capacity building, especially in less R&I intensive regions of Europe, and on further rolling out the networking, upskilling and recognition activities.

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[12] https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ris3-guide

KEY FINDINGS ERA PRIORITY 4: ADVANCING CONCERTED RESEARCH AND INNOVATION INVESTMENTS AND REFORMS

SUMMARY BOX: KEY FINDINGS ERA PRIORITY 4

The ERA Priority 4 aims to promote investment on innovation and research, in order to guarantee long-term development in this regard. This priority entails three different actions related to the process of identification, observation, and implementation of ERA. Nonetheless, the minimum number of commitments required was not reached in two of the actions, and therefore, ERA Priority 4 currently involves only Action 19: *Establish an efficient and effective ERA monitoring mechanism.* The quantitative indicator available for this priority, share of public R&D expenditures financed by the private sector has experienced a slight decrease over the period 2010-2020.

Key findings by action

ERA Action 19 has the target to establish a new ERA Monitoring Mechanism. This involves developing an ERA Scoreboard, an ERA Dashboard, regular EU level and national reports as well as an online ERA Policy Platform. Within the ERA Forum, EU Member States, Associated Countries, R&I stakeholders and the European Commission worked in co-creation to set up the new monitoring mechanism. All elements of the monitoring mechanism will be available by the end of 2023.

PROGRESS TOWARDS THE OBJECTIVES FOR ERA PRIORITY 4

ERA Priority 4 aims to promote investment in innovation and research, in order to guarantee long-term development in this regard. The original ERA Policy Agenda entails three different actions under this Priority. However, ERA Priority 4 currently covers only Action 19: *Establish an efficient and effective ERA monitoring mechanism.*[13]

Among the core aspirations of this priority, is the creation of a monitoring mechanism to evaluate the progress and the performance of the Member States in relation to them, to inform about the evolution of ERA. Such system consists of four elements: ERA Scoreboard, ERA Dashboard, country reports and the present EU level report.

The quantitative indicator available for this priority, share of public R&D expenditures financed by the private sector has experienced a slight decrease over the period 2010-2020. A more detailed analysis is provided below.

Sub-priority 4.1: Coordination of R&I investments

In view of setting the baseline with regard to this priority, it becomes crucial to understand the financial collaboration between the public and private sector in view of enhancing investments in R&I. As such, the analysed indicator entails **the share of public R&D expenditures financed by the private sector**. As illustrated in Figure 36, the indicator has experienced a slight decrease at the EU level from 8.54% in 2010 to 7.87% in 2020.

At the country level, values show great divergence across the Member States with countries such as Cyprus or Malta below EU average while others, including Belgium or Germany, show values constantly above the EU average. More than half of the EU Member States have experienced a decreasing trend, following the EU tendency, evidencing an overall reduction in the share of public R&D expenditures financed by the private sector.

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[13] Action 18 was subsumed under other actions, including Actions 16 and 20; Action 20 was partly put on hold, as it did not fulfil the necessary requirement to "secure the commitment of at least half of Union Member States" as requested in the Council Conclusions of November 2021.
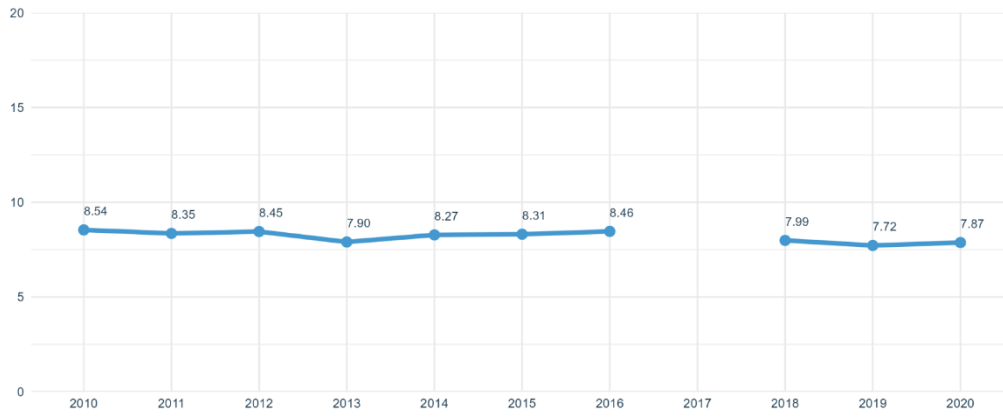
Figure 36: Share of public R&D expenditures financed by the private sector