

Press Release:

The Future of ERA Hubs - Unlocking the Full Potential of European Research & Innovation Ecosystems

Brussels, Belgium – The *COOPERATE Project*, a pioneering initiative under Horizon Europe, is set to redefine the future of the European Research Area (ERA) by introducing the *ERA Hubs* concept—a cutting-edge, place-based, ecosystem-driven approach to fostering innovation and knowledge valorisation across European regions.

The ERA Hubs model connects diverse stakeholders—universities, industry, government, and civil society—within regional research and innovation (R&I) ecosystems. This quadruple-helix collaboration, aimed at bridging the gap between excellent research and real-world applications, will catalyze the co-creation of knowledge and spur innovation that is closely aligned with societal needs.

Connecting Research with Societal Impact

With the proposal for the *European Research Area Policy Agenda 2025-2027* placing a strong emphasis on improving the articulation between research, innovation, and higher education, the ERA Hubs initiative seeks to address the pressing need to connect excellent research with end-users and societal demands. While policy efforts have historically focused on national or EU-level coordination, the COOPERATE project recognizes the importance of *regional ecosystems*—the fertile ground where trust is built, knowledge is produced, and individuals are trained and employed.

Universities, as central hubs of knowledge and talent creation, are ideally positioned to lead the ERA Hubs. By fostering structured collaboration mechanisms, they will act as catalysts for enhanced connectivity between academia, industry, government, and civil society. These universities will provide the organizational framework for regular meetings aimed at aligning regional needs, priorities, and action plans on knowledge valorisation.

Tools for Transforming Regional R&I Ecosystems

The *COOPERATE Project* has developed a set of essential tools to support the operationalization of ERA Hubs, including:

- **Self-Assessment Tool:** A tool to measure the maturity of regional R&I ecosystems and benchmark their progress against other regions.
- **Playbook:** A comprehensive roadmap for effective knowledge valorisation at the regional level.
- **EU Platform Prototype:** An interactive platform that will foster interregional collaboration, inspire knowledge-sharing, and provide a space for mutual learning among regions.

These tools aim to empower regional stakeholders to unlock the full potential of their innovation ecosystems, enabling them to connect research with industry needs and ultimately create a more resilient, competitive, and innovative Europe.

Policy Recommendations for the Future of ERA Hubs

In light of recent EU reports—including the Draghi (2024) and Letta (2024) reports—the COOPERATE project calls for urgent action to close the innovation gap across European regions. It is crucial to connect regional R&I ecosystems and focus on enhancing knowledge valorisation at the regional level, particularly in areas where universities can play a pivotal role in unlocking the flow of knowledge between research and practical application.

Among the key recommendations from the COOPERATE project are:

1. **Development of Regional Knowledge Valorisation Roadmaps:** These roadmaps will help set R&I priorities and bring together stakeholders to focus on actionable and tailored policy plans.
2. **Governance Systems for Long-Term Stability:** A robust governance framework will ensure effective collaboration across all actors, ensuring that the mechanisms of knowledge valorisation remain sustainable and impactful in the long term.
3. **Connecting Diverse Ecosystems:** By linking less developed regional ecosystems with more mature ones, Europe can foster greater interregional exchange, ensuring that knowledge and tools developed in advanced ecosystems benefit the entire continent.

Building the Future of European Innovation

As part of the European Commission's Horizon Europe programme, the COOPERATE project represents a critical step toward making the ERA Hubs concept a reality. With the participation of leading universities—including the Eindhoven University of Technology, the project is set to run from January 2023 through June 2025, with the final outcomes expected to make a lasting impact on European R&I.

For more information, please visit www.cooperate-project.eu or contact:

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About COOPERATE Project

COOPERATE is a Horizon Europe-funded project designed to pilot and coordinate actions for the development of ERA Hubs. The project focuses on transforming regional R&I ecosystems into dynamic, collaborative environments for knowledge valorisation, innovation, and societal impact.