Paths ahead to strengthen R&I for Europe's competitiveness

2026 EUA Research & Innovation Forum

Residence Palace, 155 Rue de la Loi, 1040 Brussels
2 December 2026

Draft programme *(as of October 2026)*

Europe stands at an important juncture in determining how to strengthen research and innovation as a foundation for its future competitiveness. Today's decisions on investment and priorities, alongside efforts to make the free movement of knowledge a reality, will shape Europe's ability to advance research and translate it into economic and societal value.

On 2 December 2026, the EUA R&I Forum will offer a valuable opportunity for exchange among R&I university leaders, stakeholders and policymakers. The afternoon event will feature two panel discussions on the role of research and innovation in a transforming Europe. Topics will include the next steps towards making the fifth freedom a reality through the ERA Act, as well as perspectives for Horizon Europe 2028-2034. These discussions will bring together experts from key EU institutions and R&I stakeholders, as well as leaders and experts from universities and business associations. The day will conclude with a networking reception from 18:00 to 19:30 CET.

Programme

Wednesday, 2 December 2026, **13:00-18:00 CET**, followed by a networking reception (18:00-19.30 CET)

13:00 – 14:00 *Registration & networking lunch*

14:00 – 14:20 **Welcome and opening remarks**

14:50 – 16:00 **Setting the scene**

14:50 – 16:00 **Panel 1: The European Research Area, making the fifth freedom a reality**

The first panel will bring together experts from key EU institutions and R&I stakeholders, focusing on the European Research Area Act and the next steps towards making the fifth freedom a reality:

- How will the ERA Act transform Europe's R&I landscape?
- How can the Act, in practice, achieve the free circulation of research, innovation and knowledge across the EU?
- What are the next steps in the process towards the adoption of the Act?

❖ **Senena Corbalán**, former Vice-Rector for Research, University of Murcia, Spain; Member of EUA's Research and Innovation Strategy Group

- **Magda De Carli**, Head of Unit, Spreading Excellence and Research Careers; Deputy Director for ERA & Innovation, Directorate-General Research and Innovation, European Commission
- **Jacqueline Grech**, ERA Forum Member State co-chair, Deputy Director, Strategy and Policy, Xjenza Malta
- **Emanuel Kulczycki**, Professor, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany; Head of Department, Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW)
- **Eszter Lakos**, Member of the European Parliament, Rapporteur for the Parliament's resolution on the upcoming European Research Area Act

Moderator: **Marcin Pałys**, Vice-President and Chair of the Research and Innovation Strategy Group, EUA; former Rector, University of Warsaw, Poland

16:00 – 16:30 *Coffee break*

16:30 – 17:50 **Panel 2: Shaping the next Horizon Europe programme, the state of play**

The second panel will feature a discussion with policy makers, business associations and universities on the evolving processes shaping Horizon Europe 2028-2034:

- What will be the programme's key topics and features?
- How will the interplay between Horizon Europe and the new European Competitiveness Fund work in practice?
- What budget can we expect?

- **Alexandre Affre**, Deputy Director General for Industrial Affairs, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, Business Europe
- **Andrea Höglinger,** Vice-Rector for Research, Graz University of Technology, Austria; Member of EUA's Research and Innovation Strategy Group
- **Colm O'Reardon**, Secretary General, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU
- **René Repasi**, Member of the European Parliament, Rapporteur for the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe 2028-2034
- **Regina Valutyté**, Vice-Minister of Science and Studies, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania

Moderator: **Vinciane Gaillard**, Director for Research and Innovation, EUA

17:50 – 18:00 **Closing**

18:00 – 19:30 *Networking reception*