Policy Brief — ERA Open Advice for the Evolving Dimensions of the European Research and Innovation Landscape

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1. Introduction

The VERA project aimed to underpin an adaptive, effective and well-resourced European research system that addresses societal challenges develops a strong science base and fosters innovation. In line with this endeavour, the project conducted a series of 'Strategic Debates' with key stakeholders in order to:

- Undertake a comprehensive assessment and renewal of the European Research Area (ERA) priorities.
- Promote stakeholders' discussions on key policy issues of relevance to the current/future European R&I landscape.

The VERA Strategic Debates involved the organisation of seven Focus Groups and a Symposium, engaging 123 participants from 28 countries representing the following ERA stakeholders: Society actors, University and research actors, Industry actors, Research funders, Coordinators of ERA actions and networks, Policymakers and International actors.

The first objective of this Policy Brief is to further position the ERA debate across Europe and within EU bodies, especially the European Commission. In particular, the Brief aims to provide timely 'food for thought' ahead of the 2015 meetings of the European Research and Innovation Committee (ERAC) leading to the ERA Roadmap. A second yet equally important objective is to provide a succinct summary of the main results of the VERA Strategic Debates – see *ERA Open Advice* (Popper et al., 2015), which offers a more comprehensive account of the VERA stakeholder engagement activities and their outcomes. The final objective of the Brief – and main contributions of the Focus Groups methodology – is to demonstrate the value of foresight as a proactive and systematic process capable of using the collective anticipatory intelligence of VERA Scenarios (see Teufel et al., 2013) to feed strategic debates on key aspects and policy issues shaping the future of the European R&I landscape.

2. The Big Picture

2.1. Rethinking ERA priorities and broadening the agenda

The VERA Strategic Debates come at a time when we seek a renewed momentum to support Europe's way out of the crisis and tackle grand challenges through an improved ERA. They offer a great opportunity to step back and raise a critical wake-up call on the very purpose, shape and ambition of ERA. In this Policy Brief we have captured the essence of ERA stakeholders' views on rethinking ERA priorities and broadening the agenda (see methodology box on page 6).

Overall, three key messages and a considerable number of policy issues have emerged: First, the existing ERA priorities are of great importance and should be further pursued. Second, however, there is a danger that the definition of those priorities is too limited and not flexible enough and thus must be revisited. Third, and even more important, the debate has led to the identification of new dimensions that have not been captured in the ERA discourse so far, but which deserve more policy attention and integration into the evolving dimensions of the European R&I landscape:[1]

1. Boosting research and innovation synergies
2. Strengthening the global influence of ERA
3. Promoting smart R&I evaluation
4. Improving the governance of the EU R&I system
5. Fostering relevant science-society engagement
6. Developing attractive and impactful research careers
7. Supporting knowledge co-creation and sharing
8. Achieving gender equality and social inclusion in R&I

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[1] The order of those dimensions reflects the order of importance resulting from a voting process in the focus groups.

9. Reinforcing ERA regional and local outreach

2.2. ERA Dimensions at a Glance

A major new dimension to be integrated into ERA strategies relates to the importance of *boosting research and innovation synergies* by promoting a more intense participation and inter-action of stakeholders throughout the innovation process, particularly in terms of industry-academy cooperation. The second most debated dimension was *strengthening the global influence of ERA*, which includes the development of a global variable geometry, a more systematic position of Europe vis-à-vis countries and regions outside Europe, and the growing role of global infrastructures. Interestingly, *promoting a smart R&I evaluation* attracted the attention of many stakeholders to the point that it became a dimension by itself, with stakeholders being very concerned about assuring transparent funding deci-sions and using evidence and reliable data to support European policies. As regards the existing priority on *consolidating the governance of the EU R&I system*, the discussion focused on R&I system coherence at EU level rather than on national R&I effectiveness, including the encouragement of more intense R&I actors' dialogue *across Europe*. Linked to this, a much broader and more systematic *science-society engagement* has been strongly advocated as another new ERA dimension. This debate is very close to the EU initiatives on participation in the context of responsible research and innovation and includes a call for more science- and research-oriented education pro-grammes at all levels.

In terms of *developing attractive and impactful research ca-reers*, as one of the existing priorities, the debate basically maintained the importance of 'an open labour market for re-searchers', however recognising the existing substantial differ-ences remaining across Member States (MS) and highlighting the importance of cross-European and cross-sectoral mobility, whereby especially support for cross-sectoral mobility has been a recurrent feature in a number of dimensions. The seventh dimension, though deeply connected to the first, is *underpin-ning knowledge sharing and co-creation*, which is seen as cru-cial for open innovation. This builds on the ERA priority on 'optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowl-edge'; however, a broader perspective was taken by including transdisciplinarity as a must-have component of the EU knowl-edge generation machinery (especially in the context of grand challenges). The dimension on gender issues was expanded and rebranded into *achieving gender equality and diversity in re-search*. In an increasingly socio-economically complex Europe, stakeholders saw the need to include empathy to minorities and multiculturalism as key elements of a much needed agenda on diversity. Finally, a ninth and new dimension fo-cused on *reinforcing ERA regional and local outreach* – with specific emphasis on regional cohesion, integration of region-specific and trans-regional challenges into the ERA agenda and regional cooperation. All of these dimensions are further dis-cussed in section 3 below.

2.3. ERA Policy Issues at a Glance

In synchrony with the dimensions agenda, a number of key policy issues have arisen (see section 3) and here we present their essence. Bridging ERA into a European research and inno-vation area is one of the key policy issues practically unani-mously endorsed by all ERA stakeholders. Somehow related to this was the issue of embedding small-scale innovation into ERA, for example, by encouraging entrepreneurial researchers to establish start-ups and SMEs. Another issue receiving broad stakeholders backing is the need for more and better global ERA agendas driven by variable geometry principles and excel-lence in research cooperation and infrastructures. In order to provide convincing responses to the ever-growing demands for evidence-based R&I policies, ERA stakeholders called for sound and transparent evaluations at all levels (ex-ante, mid-term, ex-post and ongoing) with new procedures to include citizens in peer review processes and impact assessments. Such evalua-tions are in line with demands for achieving research funding stabilisation and balancing –between basic, applied and 'blue sky' research, as well as the need to apply the variable geome-try approach to promising, emerging and consolidated R&I 'hot spots' in Europe. Further emphasising the drift towards citizen involvement in science, there is a general consensus between academy, international and policy actors about the importance of including citizens in national and EU R&I projects. This would support initiatives aimed at promoting more bottom-up as-sessments of social impacts of R&I and enlightening citizens about the opportunities and challenges of R&I, thus encourag-ing citizens to pursue scientific careers.

An additional set of policy issues emerged around the mobility of people and scientific knowledge. With regards to the former, most ERA stakeholders, especially policymakers and coordina-tors of ERA actions, share the view that new and more effective mechanisms should be promoting inter-sectoral motilities across the academy, industry and policy sectors. As for the latter, two different issues deserve particular attention: in-creasing and improving open access to publicly funded re-search outcomes and underlying raw data; and strengthening the digital ERA through the creation of self-sustainable and more impactful social media campaigns and communities. Despite the increasing recognition and gains that the gender agenda has achieved in the R&I policy arena at the national, EU and international levels, ERA stakeholders believe that much remains to be done in terms of monitoring and pushing for progress on gender issues. However, the most debated issue was the expansion of the equality dimensions so as to include a more serious agenda promoting greater diversity (i.e. ethnic, religious and cultural groups) and empathy to vulnerability (i.e. incorporating physical/mental disability issues) in R&I policy. Lastly, policymakers, research funders and coordinators of ERA actions agree that in spite of the perceived benefits of the smart specialisation strategy, the EU should be encouraging regions to find their own role in the EU and global R&I arenas.

3. Evolving Dimensions of the European R&I Landscape

3.1. Boosting research and innovation synergies

The Europe 2020 strategy recognises the potential of innovation for boosting the economic growth. Not surprisingly, the innovation paradigm has been profoundly embedded in the political discourse at EU level during the last years. However, and despite the broadly accepted relation between research and innovation, a full and systematic exploitation of their synergies is not integral part of the ERA concept and is yet to be achieved. The numerous initiatives aiming at this synergy reveal not only the potential of such connection but also how much remains to be done.

All ERA stakeholders stressed the importance of a more intense stakeholder participation and interaction throughout the innovation process, thus making the R&I cycle shorter, and increasing the alignment of results with societal needs. In this regard, industry-academy cooperation and entrepreneurship education are seen as decisive factors. Coordinators of ERA actions, policy and international actors positioned finance support and IP regulation as key aspects fostering innovation, which somehow corroborates the adequacy of some EC related initiatives like InnovFin or the Unitary patent process.

Policy issues

The urgency given by all ERA stakeholders to the need for more synergies between research and innovation is a reflection of the changed expectation as to the role of R&I policy across Europe with the persistence of the crisis. All stakeholders, especially academy, industry and policy actors, call for more innovation in Horizon 2020 as well as more stable funds for basic research with a strong demand for better synergies between the two. However, within VERA there has been very little debate on concrete policy issues that follow from this debate on research and innovation synergies. The main concrete policy concern is the need to guarantee a place for small scale innovation activity within ERA, as there is the perception of a danger that the ERA development is driven exclusively by big programmes, bundling, joint activities that are either geared towards industrial leadership of grand challenges. If ERA is about allowing scale, global leadership and tackling challenge, it must at the same time provide for bottom-up activities. A sound application of the subsidiarity principle may help to fill this gap.

3.2. Strengthening the global influence of ERA

An 'optimal transnational cooperation and competition' is the ambition of the second ERA priority. Given the horizontal nature of challenge-oriented research, the EC considers trans-EU cooperation a cross-cutting aspect alongside other ERA priorities, as it offers many opportunities for international collaboration. Its efficacy still needs to be evaluated, especially in relation to third countries.

Although cooperation across MS is at the core of ERA conception, ERA stakeholders suggested a more global approach was needed. A common European R&I position is found essential, particularly in relation with BRIC countries and emerging economies. The sustainability of research infrastructures (RIs) is a major concern, since RIs enable transcontinental cooperation to tackle large-scale problems. Further, RIs contribute to make visible the potential and strength of European research.

Policy issues

The main policy message is a strong call for a more systematic and open approach to reap the benefit of the global dimension for ERA through a global variable geometry. Based on experiences within ERA, there is a strong consensus amongst ERA stakeholders about the need for joint funding opportunities to enable cooperation with appropriate partners from outside the EU across all basic drivers of international cooperation (challenges, complementarities). Most stakeholders and in particular industry actors called for an explicit internationalisation strategy (including SMEs) that provides appropriate mechanisms for the different rationales of internationalisation. The second set of policy issues has to do with the enhanced role of infrastructure not only for reasons of efficiency, but to promote – as platforms – effective cooperation within and beyond Europe. While the basic idea is in line with the ESRFI agenda, all stakeholders demanded a more global orientation.

3.3. Promoting a smart R&I evaluation

Most ERA stakeholders considered sound evaluation practice as a core element supporting the ERA governance. A smart framework of regulation supports coherence of evaluation and monitoring activities within the EU, and provides principles for standardised application. Importantly, evaluation in R&I within ERA encompasses a broad spectrum ranging from national strategies and agendas to individual initiatives. The resulting complexity of evaluation is compounded by the need to deal with value-laden aspects and incorporating new social criteria.

ERA actors fundamentally called for the implementation of transparent evaluation processes. To this end, R&I assessments – either peer review advice or research funding decisions – need to be based on reliable, standardised and comparable data. Further, research impacts – and the validity of ERA itself – need better evaluations in terms of problem-solving capacity and value-added for citizens: the latter through the development of new social and value-related indicators; and the former by proving the value of coordination over competition and convergence over fragmentation.

Policy issues

A key message for policy is the need for sound and transparent evaluation, especially peer review, as a driver of R&I systems' modernisation (see discussion on governance issues in section 3.4). EU policymakers should take new actions to promote evaluation, not only in terms of the regular evaluation of Horizon 2020 instruments, but much more broadly. Coordinators of ERA actions expect the EU to push for more evidence-based decision-making underpinned by EU-wide evaluation and monitoring standards; where reliable, standardised and comparable data support national and EU legislation and priority-setting, with conscious and explicit use of evaluations. This includes the use and further development of creative approaches to measure societal impact of funded research in terms of problem-solving capacity and value-added for citizens.

3.4. Consolidating the EU R&I system governance

The rationale of the first ERA priority is to increase the 'effectiveness of national research systems' in Europe. While each country will find its own governance model for a more effective system, the ERA agenda suggests a range of research and inno-

vation funding principles such as appropriate peer review and a good balance between core, competitive and outcome-based funding. However, ERA stakeholders, especially policy actors, have predominantly focused their discussions on those aspects that ensure the R&I system coherence at EU level. In this respect, ERA coordination instruments (e.g. ERA-NETs) were found efficient to facilitate the convergence of national programmes, and potentially reinforce the indispensable system consistency for addressing grand challenges.

Integrating research and innovation could also improve the connection of ERA strategies with other EU policies. In this context, new funding models could contribute to the stability and sustainability of research initiatives. Promoting dialogues between R&I actors, either through stakeholders' platforms or foresight processes, was also considered crucial for a truly ERA consolidation.

Policy issues

Two main sets of policy issues emerge here: The first relates to funding stabilisation and balancing. Society actors, coordinators of ERA actions and policy actors stressed the importance of reinforcing fundamental research over the trend to focus on challenges or industrial benefit. This includes broadening of the funding base, not only by mobilising structural funds and support mechanisms, but by seriously considering more crowdfunding. The second set involves keeping the momentum as regards cooperation in research policy and funding, by improving the variable geometry approach, creating "real" hot spots in Europe and encouraging joint funding through EU and national sources. Research funders called for a much better harmonisation and coordination especially between the national and EU levels, respecting the subsidiary principle and avoiding coordination becoming an end in itself. To consolidate this, academy actors advocated for more systematic use of strategic intelligence on governance issues.

3.5. Fostering science-society engagement

The relation of society with scientific progress has changed during the last decades. From original assumptions that considered the public a mere beneficiary of scientific results, we have moved into a conception whereby society represents an important actor to be consulted on R&I policy processes. Now society has become a relevant stakeholder that actively contributes to policy formulation and agenda setting.

All ERA stakeholders called for more and real public engagement in R&I activities. They also referred to the importance of designing new citizens' participation enabling mechanisms. Further, public participation strategies have the potential of fostering responsible science and ensuring higher levels of integrity in research. In this regard, science- and research-oriented education programmes are essential to make these strategies sustainable. Universities third mission objectives may also include plans for reinforcing the academia-business mutual understanding, thus contributing to more efficient actor's interaction and engagement.

Policy issues

Policy actors, research funders and coordinators of ERA actions were the loudest voices demanding more effective participation of society in the definition of priorities and grand chal-

lenges. In addition, all stakeholders called for more experiments to include citizens more broadly within funded projects at EU and national levels, rolling out "transdisciplinary" science projects. This would strengthen universities' third mission and push for its re-orientation so as to appreciate social impacts at least equally to economic impacts. Furthermore, the educational aspect of citizens' engagement would enlighten citizens on the role of science in addressing grand challenges (and big data) as well as on the benefits and satisfactions of pursuing a scientific career.

3.6. Developing attractive and impactful research careers

This dimension is linked to the ERA priority on creating 'an open labour market for researchers: Facilitating mobility, supporting training and ensuring attractive careers.' Overall, Europe has significant achievements here, however, substantial differences remain across MS where the lack of open, flexible and merit-based career development processes hampers research integration and performance.

Most ERA stakeholders agreed that mobility facilitation together with open and cohesive labour market helps to improve the attractiveness of research careers. In particular, the promotion of harmonised career and training programmes at national and EU levels was seen as an important yet challenging aspect of this dimension. Another issue associated to career attractiveness is the need for family- and environmental-friendly mobility schemes with little or no negative impact on researchers' work-life balance and their overall carbon footprint. The promotion of cross-sectoral collaboration (public-private-academic sectors) – especially within MS – was seen as a possible way to address this issue and, at the same time, make research careers more impactful in terms of relevance.

Policy issues

While the aim of achieving an integrated labour market and excellent working conditions is very much supported, there is a feeling especially amongst coordinators of ERA actions, as well as policy and academy actors, that ERA is quite some distance away from achieving it. Better conditions for European and international mobility appear to be the most important concern. This seems to be an implementation problem as the call for improved conditions for cross-border mobility is consistent with the existing ERA initiatives, e.g. European Charter for Researchers, Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers or the EURAXESS network (publishing vacancies EU wide). Coordinators of ERA actions stressed the need for broader financial support for individuals and organisations on all aspects of mobility: acknowledging qualifications across Europe; harmonising post doctoral mobility rights across MS (making the EU attractive for excellent non-European researchers); and aligning recruitment practices with ERA principles. ERA stakeholders also called for more and easier inter-sectoral mobility, including a re-thinking of career paths and recognition practices between public and private sector research.

3.7. Underpinning knowledge sharing and co-creation

This dimension is aligned with the ERA priority on 'optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge, including via digital ERA'. The overall idea is to make publications, data and results of EU funded R&I projects available across MS, as part of standard Horizon 2020 guidelines.

All ERA stakeholders, in particular academy actors, paid considerable attention to several aspects already captured in the ERA agenda, e.g. knowledge transfer, digital ERA and e-infrastructures, and open access and research integrity. In this regard, industry actors reinforced the need to increase the effectiveness of conventional and emerging knowledge sharing channels (including digital research services) but also positioned the idea of developing a cross-sectoral collaboration culture within and across MS. To support this, the development of digital skills among research, policy and society actors was seen as an essential strategy.

Policy issues

All ERA stakeholders asked for more and improved open access, both as regards published articles and books and the underlying raw data. This includes the need to support different types of actors within their concrete organisations (e.g. librarians, researchers and university leaders), a European wide obligation to open all data of publicly funded projects and to provide support for this and to forbid the embargo of data. Further, there is now an opportunity for creating and taking advantage of a social media device to create ERA communities, to support partner searchers and knowledge transfer to foster ERA. Finally, and in line with the dimension on industry-science synergies (see section 3.1) and the dimension on career development (see section 3.6), all ERA stakeholders stressed the importance of more mobility between academia and industry as well as enhanced mobility between academia and non-university research as the major means for knowledge transfer.

3.8. Achieving gender equality and diversity in research

This dimension has been in the ERA landscape since 2002 and the EC Communication (2012) re-launched it as an ERA Priority with a focus on 'gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research'. Despite these efforts the 2014 ERA Progress Report shows 11 EU countries are still lacking specific policies on gender equality in public research.

The VERA debates recognised the significance of promoting gender equality in areas such as careers development, engagement in decision-making, and integration of the gender dimension in the content of research. However, ERA stakeholders, especially society actors, would like to see the equality debate moving beyond gender issues – and the coordination of progress – by including equally important aspects such as empathy to vulnerability (e.g. incorporating physical/mental disability issues in research) and consideration of multiculturalism (e.g. integrating religious, ethical and cultural perspectives in research). These aspects are particularly important in a context where the rise of extremist groups is often fuelled by cultural intolerance, especially in highly diverse European societies.

Policy issues

First, while gender equality is firmly embedded in the ERA strategy, this strategy has not been working well enough in the perception of many stakeholders, whereby the frustration partly seemed to reflect the fact that the ERA agenda in terms of gender is seen as being quite ahead of gender conditions in many parts of Europe and non-EU countries.

While gender is the most pertinent dimension, there appears to be a lack of strategy to include the diversity of ethnic, religious and cultural groups, which then could at the same time support the internationalisation agenda (see also section 3.2). Thus all stakeholder groups stressed the need to keep this on the agenda and be more rigorous in monitoring and pushing this dimension, to apply more distinct affirmative action and to raise awareness for gender and diversity issues. In so doing, ERA could be a means to push the gender and diversity agenda across Europe, to other research and innovation systems outside Europe and to other non-R&I areas of policy and society in general.

3.9. Reinforcing ERA regional and local outreach

This dimension has been somehow implicit in the ERA strategy and mainly addressed by the ERA Priority concerned with the optimisation of research programmes and priorities. In that sense, regional issues have been discussed in the context of the Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3), ERA-NETs, regional research infrastructures (RIs), among others.

There was a general consensus among ERA stakeholders about the need for a more explicit and dedicated regional dimension in ERA. Firstly, ERA cohesion and permeability aspects were discussed, in particular the challenges of providing less research-intensive regions with access to special ERA funding instruments. Secondly, the role of regional inclusion aspects such as their responsibility in the definition of national and EU level priorities, not just for S3-like initiatives, but also in the identification of region-specific and trans-regional challenges. Finally, Policy and industry actors emphasised the importance of the European Territorial Cooperation programmes, especially in terms of economic, environmental and social development of urban and rural regions in synergy with the European Regional Development Fund, the European Structural and Investment Funds, etc.

Policy issues

There is a remarkable shift in the perception of the regional dimension. The old cohesion vs. excellence debate has given way to the smart specialisation strategy. Regional convergence is not only defined as general catch up in capabilities, but considered as being a process of defining a region's relative advantages and challenges and/or its potential specific contribution to dealing with grand challenges. The smart specialisation approach is widely endorsed and even more efforts are asked for to let regions find their own role in the European and global landscape. However, there is a fear that this focus comes at the expense of the role of regions in the multi level governance and variable geometry landscape of ERA. Thus, initiatives are needed to support the ability to define and contribute to challenge-oriented approaches in conjunction with other regions or governance levels, and even engage in cooperative funding horizontally and vertically (region, MS, EU).

4. Conclusions

On the whole, the VERA Strategic Debates show that well-structured collective thinking processes can be used to bring stakeholders' concerns and insights into the EU R&I policy debate. The amount and quality of outcomes resulting from the VERA Focus Groups methodology (see box below) confirm that the scenario-based approach is a useful stepping stone for gathering future-oriented strategic intelligence.

Reflecting on these outcomes, it is possible to conclude that the *current set of ERA priorities remains an '***open debate***'*, which is the first reason for calling the report ERA Open Advice. It is a challenging venture to try to position nine *ERA dimensions*, thirty-eight *ERA key aspects* and over a hundred *ERA key actions*, in a policy context where six ERA priorities have been "already agreed" and discussed at the various ERAC plenary meetings in charge of drafting the ERA Roadmap to be sent to the European Council in May 2015. With great awareness of the challenge that this report faces in terms of informing, influencing or shaping the high-level ERA policy debates that will take place in the coming months and years, the authors decided to develop an extremely '**open approach**' to the analysis of R&I stakeholders' insights, which is reflected in the *high levels of transparency and traceability of multi-level policy recommendations* presented in this report. In addition, the report provides some guidance on how this approach can be used to promote a more '**open agenda**' which, regardless of the "official" set of ERA priorities, can *integrate multiple ERA reflections and H2020 perspectives*, thus offering to the policymaker different alternatives for actions. Another contribution is the fact that *ERA Open Advice* shows the way forward for those foresight practitioners who have not realised yet that, if policymakers need "evidence-based" policy advice, then there needs to be an '**open process**' with a *solid bridge connecting the anticipating and recommending phases of the foresight process*. Finally, the fifth element of the open advice was achieved with '**open access**' to the well-structured recommendations "dataset" that was used to prepare this report. Hopefully, the level of openness of the product and process outcomes of the VERA Strategic Debates will reinforce the uptake of participatory R&I governance in Europe.

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Methodology of VERA Strategic Debates

The VERA Strategic Debates were led by The University of Manchester as part of the 'ERA Strategies' Work Package.[2] The Strategic Debates involved the organisation of 7 Focus Groups and a Symposium engaging 123 participants from 19 MS (AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GR, HU, IT, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, UK), and 9 non-MS from Europe (NO, RS, RU, UA), Latin America (BR, CL, DO), Asia (TW) and Africa (BJ), including EC, OECD, UNESCO and UNIDO representatives. The identification of participants targeted 3 types of actors, drawing on the stakeholders' *salience model* (as used in VERA Communication Strategy, see Haegeman et al, 2012) :

- *Dominant* actors with the power and legitimacy to set change or veto ERA agendas; represented by policymakers, research funders, coordinators of ERA actions, as well as influential academy and industry actors.
- *Affected* actors with legitimacy and limited power to modify ERA priorities; represented mainly by selected society and academy actors.
- *Dormant* actors with potential future legitimacy in the shaping of ERA agendas; represented by some Society and International actors.

In Strategic Debate 1 four ERA scenarios[3] were used to stimulate structured discussions about the European R&I system by 2030.

- Scenario 1: Private Knowledge – Global Markets
- Scenario 2: Societal Challenges – Joint Action
- Scenario 3: Solutions apart – Local is beautiful
- Scenario 4: Times of Crises – Experts at the Wheel

The Focus Groups (FG) methodology consisted of five activities encouraging strategic debates on:

1. Opportunities and threats of ERA scenarios
2. Stakeholders' strategies vis-à-vis ERA scenarios.
3. Stakeholders' assessment and review of ERA priorities.
4. Impacts of stakeholders' actions vis-à-vis ERA priorities.
5. Stakeholders' insights on emerging policy issues.

The Strategic Debate 2 required the organisation of a two-day symposium involving Society, Academia, Industry, R&I funders, Coordinators of ERA actions, R&I Policymakers and R&I International actors.

- Backcasting-like prioritisation of policy actions. The main task was to bring some policy actions 'back to the present' by rating their relevance for today's context. The methodology consisted of two main activities focused on the policy actions generated in the FGs.
- Collective reflections on policy actions of relevance for today. This activity was organised in an interactive setting where different stakeholders debated on the importance of actions for ERA today, which after a clustering led to a final set of 31 policy actions; and second, to collectively flesh-out prioritised actions.

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2 See www.eravisions.eu/strategies

3 See www.eravisions.eu/scenarios