

Position Paper: EaP Panel on Research & Innovation

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1. For the last 15 years, EU has been providing EaP countries with generous assistance in the sphere of Research and Innovation (R&I), showcasing and explaining the existing tools available in EU, as well as ensuring access of EaP countries to them (e.g. Horizon 2020, Erasmus, COST – European Cooperation in Science and Technology, PSF – Policy Support Facility, COSME – Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises)

Despite continuous support, results from all the relevant countries are not encouraging. We **observe the EaP countries’ national research systems¹ decline**, which has a negative effect on research organisations ability to benefit from these tools.

2. All six EaP countries experience similar problems in the field of R&I:
 - Many years of under-funded research, and as a result, continuing negative trends of the research systems indicators
 - Lack of coordination among policy makers, executive agencies, academia, business and civil society in resolving key strategic issues, related to R&I development
 - Inconsistent regulations, as well as rights of key players, especially of research organisations
 - Lack of appropriate procedures on the assessment of R&I activities
 - Outdated research infrastructure and facilities
 - Brain drain – particularly among young scientists
 - Lack of efficient mechanisms of research commercialization, as well as of data and knowledge sharing, particularly among the authorities, scientific community, economic actors and society.

These are the main shortcomings, or barriers, for integration into European Research Area (ERA) and development of effective cooperation between research and industry. The majority of them are listed in PSF missions’ recommendation for Moldova (2016), Ukraine (2017) and Georgia (2018). General policy recommendation for implementing further reforms should be “cross-governmental”, embedding R&I policy in the overall economic policy. In practice, it can only work if both research and economic policies elaboration are accompanied by adequate funding. It is important to be aware of the “four Cs” of R&I policy implementation: coordination, concentration, collaboration and coherence.

3. The EaP programmes give various opportunities for aligning relevant national strategies with the corresponding EU R&I strategy. However, we find that steps taken in this direction are insufficient – as they have not lead to significant results. None of the EaP countries has an effective R&I strategy. Only Ukraine and Moldova has adopted a “roadmap” for the integration into ERA. Other EaP countries need to start their work on this issue. **None of**

¹ See e.g. <https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/library/analysis-national-research-systems-composite-indicator-scientific-and-technological-research>

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EaP countries ensures financial and organisational support for development and implementation of national R&I strategies.

This is despite an existing basis for strategies development and possible alignment with EU strategy, namely, in the form of:

- **Association Agreements:** Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Georgia
 - **Agreement for the Association to Horizon 2020:** Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Georgia
 - **Horizon 2020 PSF reports:** The Peer Reviews of the Research and Innovation Systems (Moldova, 2016; Ukraine, 2017); Specific Support to Policy Reform (Georgia, 2018)
 - **ERA Roadmap for 2015–2020:** Roadmap for Ukraine's Integration into the European Research Area (ERA-UA), approved on 22 March 2018 – Moldova's integration roadmap was approved by the government on 8 November 2018
4. Since weak national research systems are the key obstacles, hindering progress in R&I in the EaP countries, their integration into ERA becomes an important benchmark of success. There is a need to identify common pitfalls, mistakes and their causes – which could serve as a solid preparation to draw common recommendations and measures, applicable to all EaP countries.
5. The EU sees the European research and e-infrastructures as the primary tools for internationalisation of research. The EaP countries do not participate in the majority of the European research infrastructures. To comment on the condition of the general scientific infrastructures, e-infrastructures also are not developing either – except GÉANT, which is supported by the GN4 and EaP Connect projects.

In the EaP countries, the Open Science concept is not addressed at the legislative level. There is a lack of collaboration with the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI). In turn, one could say that the Eastern Partnership region is not ready for a new stage in the development of research infrastructures – European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), launched on 23 November 2018 in Vienna. One of the main conclusions of the mutual learning exercises (MLEs)^{2,3} “Open Science – enabling systemic change through mutual learning” is that “national strategies for the implementation of Open Science are essential to better understand and align the links between Open Science policies and general STI policies. ERA should be the central platform for the development of national OS strategies”.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. The EaP CSF delegation expresses its concern – particularly on the **absence of national R&I strategies, systematic underfunding and declining trends** in national research systems in EaP countries.

² <https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/library/mle-open-science-final-report-altmetrics-and-rewards>

³ <https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/library/mle-open-science-summary-article-enabling-systemic-change-through-mutual-learning>

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2. The EaP CSF delegation **recommends the introduction of research-based R&I policies in EaP countries** as a clear programme agenda linked to a long-term sustainable and secure development of the region. In this light, EaP countries should gradually increase national GERD⁴ to a level, which corresponds to that of the European countries.
3. At the intergovernmental level, **EaP initiative R&I coordination activities** would be helpful towards the development and implementation of R&I strategies at the national level. This would further contribute to aligning the relevant national strategies corresponding to EU's own R&I strategy.
4. ERA integration should become the driver of R&I policy development activities of EaP Initiative, focused particularly on the national research systems. A welcomed first step would be an ERA-EaP high-level conference on developing EaP countries national research systems. Our suggestion is to organise this event in 2019 under auspices of the EaP R&I Panel or in any other appropriate format. We suggest to conduct a detailed study to identify common pitfalls, mistakes and their causes – which could serve as a solid preparation to draw common recommendations and measures, applicable to all EaP countries that will summarise the experience of countries in the preparation of innovative infrastructure (technology parks, incubators, etc.), R&I legislation and strategies.
5. A good first step to bring OS agenda to the region could be a pilot project, Eastern Partnership Open Science Cloud Hub (EaP OSC Hub), which would consolidate Grid and Cloud clusters of the region with key OS stakeholders to inform about the opportunities that come with EOSC. What is more, it could provide research services and support the development of research centres and e-infrastructures in the region as a part of ERA. The Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility (PSF) gives Member States and Associated Countries the opportunity to request and take part in MLE, addressing EOSC development policy challenges.

More Information

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) is a unique multi-layered regional civil society platform aimed at promoting European integration, facilitating reforms and democratic transformations in the six Eastern Partnership countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Serving as the civil society and people-to-people dimension of the Eastern Partnership, the EaP CSF strives to strengthen civil society in the region, boost pluralism in public discourse and policy making by promoting participatory democracy and fundamental freedoms.

For more information, please visit the EaP CSF website at www.eap-csf.eu

⁴ General expenditure to research and innovation as a percentage of GDP