NEW ERA ACTIONS FOR THE ERA POLICY AGENDA 2025-2027

TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

This template follows up on the debate in the ERA Forum on 25 May, in which Forum representatives agreed on a coordinated approach towards the definition of new actions for the ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027. It builds on a gap analysis exercise in which the ERA Forum assessed, which parts of the Pact for Research and Innovation are already covered by the Policy Agenda 2022-2024 and where there should be additions.

Forum representatives are invited to distribute this template among actors at national level to collect input for potential new actions for the ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027. The priority areas of the Pact for Research and Innovation and content of the Policy Agenda 2022-2024 should be taken into account when filling in this template.

The results of the national process should be then fed into the gap analysis document by Forum representatives by **23 August 2023**. This will help to prepare the overall assessment for the ERA Forum meeting of September.

Action title: *(Please use as a maximum two lines.)*	**Building trust in science** for a stronger and more democratic European society
Description of the action *(Please explain the proposed action in a simple, clear and communicable narrative).*	Trust in science is indispensable for a well-functioning democratic discourse as well as for political decision-making at large. By extension, trust in science is the foundation for overcoming the global challenges of our time. To increase public trust in science, public engagement of scholars has turned into a growing field of public and political interest across Europe. Whereas science in general is highly trusted across Europe (cf. Eurobarometer 2021), there are alarming indicators for polarisation and populist attacks against scientists. This includes incidents of hate speech, verbal attacks and offenses against publicly visible scientists in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, direct threats as well as more subtle forms of intimidation. This calls for political action to the protection and defence of researchers under attack. Another promising avenue to increase trust in science is the direct involvement of citizens into research processes. Citizens science campaigns have proven to be effective when it comes to create stronger public understanding for and a closer connection to the scientific world. What is more, the experiences during the covid-19-pandemic have proven again the key role for media in translating complex scientific knowledge into trustworthy information for citizens and political decision makers. Factual journalistic reporting on science can lay the ground for a fair political debate around contentious topics. To increase trust in science and support researchers, media and citizens when dealing with another, a number of measures are suggested: 1. A mutual learning exercise– via the sharing and debating of experiences and good practices – and the formulation of common policy recommendations to support science

	against attacks. In this light, the action will seek to promote the exchange of effective policy approaches and best practice formats on how scholars as well as higher education and research institutions (HERI) under attack can best be protected. This would make national and European policies and initiatives on this issue sharper and more impactful, as policy makers will be able to see what actions have worked and what have not worked in other countries, what kinds of framework conditions would need to be in place, and what strategies and actions could be transferrable to their own national context. These could also lead to greater coherence and possibly more synergies. Guidelines for dedicated action on the protection of scholars and HERI resulting from this MLE could have a significant and sustainable positive effect on the science community and could even serve as support for countries that did not participate actively in the MLE. 2. A scientific study to arrive at a better understanding of science denial and its origins in order to support efforts to develop targeted strategies to prevent and counteract it. Accompanying measure to the MLE on protecting scholars from attacks. 3. Follow-up on the feasibility analysis for a federated "EU Science Media Network" under ERA Action 14 of the previous ERA Policy Agenda. Deployment of the results of this feasibility study and implementation of the recommendations leading to a more European approach to science communication, specifically science journalism. 4. Identification of suitable citizen science projects that can be scaled up to a European level: Based on the successful Europeanized citizen science project "Plastic Pirates – Go Europe", this initiative seeks to lay the foundation for further Europeanisation of projects currently performed on the national level. Building on the results of the MLE on citizen science 2022/2023, criteria for the scaling up of citizen science projects were developed and can be applied in a selection process conducted by the Commission, Member States and experts. Special attention should be paid to a balanced group of participants that represent both urban and countryside areas as well as minority groups.
Actors *(Please explain who would take part in the action and who would benefit from it).*	The Commission and the Member States would be the main actors of the initiative. At Commission level, relevant services are DG RTD (citizen science), DG EAC and DG CONNECT (Science media center), as the action bridges into both the cultural and digital remit. At the Member State level, both national ministries, science organisations as well as higher education and research institutions should play a

	strong role in supporting researchers, as well as for scaling up citizen science projects and implementing science communication and journalism recommendations.
Expected impact *(Please describe the expected impact of the action (including outside the scientific community), paying attention to the fact that it needs to focus on concrete results and reachable deliverables).*	This action has a real tangible added value for the scientific community across the EU since science populism and changing public trust in science is a shared phenomenon to all European societies. In addition, gaining improved insights into the drivers of the public losing trust in science and conclusions for science communication can be directly applied in future situations. The impact of this action targets not only individuals and institutions that make up the European Research Area, but also addresses directly European citizens, by increasing their participation in R&I processes and improving scientific literacy in the general public. Concrete expected outcomes include: - Evidence-based prevention and mitigation of science denial (based on study results) - Effective protection of scholars and researchers against attacks (publication of guidelines and the results of the MLE) - Europeanisation of one or more citizen science projects with special attention to a more representative participation that includes both urban and countryside areas as well as social minority groups (based on selection process) - Improved collaboration on European level on science journalism (based on results of feasibility analysis)
Why do we need this action? *(Please indicate the need for this action in view of implementing the Pact for R&I and achieving the ERA objectives and explain why its objective cannot be reached through existing programmes/ activities. What is the action's added value at national and European level as well as for stakeholders? How does it make a change and how is co-creation ensured?)*	Recent incidents of hate speech, verbal attacks and offenses against publicly visible scientists in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic call for political action to foster the protection and defence of scholars under attack. Disinformation and science denial can present a serious threat to the functioning of our society and even to democracy itself. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown how difficult it is to reverse the loss of public trust in science and evidence-based political decisions and how polarizing this can be for a society. Therefore, taking a preventative approach is the best way to counteract the trend we see towards denial of scientifically proven facts and even attacks against individual researchers. This initiative presents a multifaceted approach by strengthening public science literacy through the engagement of citizens in research and innovation processes, improving science journalism and science communication and sharing best practices and lessons learned on how to support science against attacks. This proposed action contributes to priority two of the Pact for R&I, namely "*Taking up together the green and digital transformation with impact on society, and increasing society's participation in the ERA*", more specifically the active citizen and

	societal engagement in all dimensions of R&I. It also links up with and builds on the progress made by ERA Action 14 of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024, that set out to bring science closer to citizens. Increasing public engagement in R&I processes not only increases the understanding and relationship between science and society, but also has the potential to significantly improve the quality of scientific research as well as political decision-making. The topics addressed in this action are cross-cutting issues to all fields of research and innovation and therefore will benefit all EU programmes. The Commission, Member States, research organisations, higher education institutions and the wider R&I community are all directly affected by public trust in science and have to address this in their interactions with the public. Therefore, this action will inform and contribute to measures on all levels targeting public engagement, public trust and protecting scientists from attacks. Since a wide variety of actors will be involved in this action, a co-creation approach can be followed.
Additional information *(For example, timing and milestones, which already could be envisaged, can be indicated.)*	