

Research & Innovation for the Future of Work (ERA4FutureWork)

Part of ERA action 11: An ERA for Green Transformation

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1. Description

Introduction

Human capital is a key resource of the 21st century. Economic, ecological, digital, demographic, and social transformations will drive not one but multiple futures of work.

New technologies will reshape millions of jobs in the EU. Some jobs risk being lost to these changes; others will be transformed and entirely new ones will be created, benefitting from complementarities between human workers and supporting technologies. As a result, the skills workers need will also be changing at an unprecedented speed.

At the same time, new forms of employment such as those created by the platform/gig economy are on the rise. They can create opportunities for personal growth, flexibility, or a higher income, but also increase risks associated with an unfair working environment, discrimination, lack of social protection and a difficult work-life balance. Occupational structures are shifting, often leading to polarisation in employment and wages, increasing inequalities.¹

Drivers of positive change, such as the greening of our energy supply and industrial production, will lead to labour reallocations, requiring new, fair and evidence-based approaches in policymaking for affected workers, particularly in the areas of skills and employment policies.

The employment landscape is also evolving in a variety of ways across the EU, widening the gap between regions and even between urban and peripheral areas within regions. Furthermore, the geographical impact of the COVID-19 crisis has been uneven and may widen regional inequalities that existed before the pandemic².

Finally, demographic changes force our societies to reflect on employment opportunities for young people, equipping them with the best tools to realise their potential. Developments such as the increase in (healthy) life expectancy within the EU, as well as the integration of migrants in EU societies, require the right mix of policies to ensure maximum employment under fair conditions.

Research and innovation is essential for providing a sound analytical underpinning for designing future-proof policies that fully grasp the new opportunities offered by technology, whilst successfully tackling emerging challenges.

¹ The changing nature of work and skills in the digital age – JRC report 2019; The new world of work - ESDE 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/esde2018>.

² The annual Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) review by ESDE 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=10039&furtherNews=yes>

	<p>There would be significant added value at EU level if Member States, stakeholders and researchers exchanged data, good practices, and information about their priorities. With such a dialogue as a basis, they would be able to validate a common priority list, in order to shape effective and scalable EU R&I policies and funding opportunities in the future of work domain (with possible links with ESF+).</p> <p>EU-level initiatives regarding the future of work are aligned with European values and fundamental rights and notably the European Pillar of Social Rights³. The possible scenarios for the future of work straddle across disciplines (humanities, social and natural sciences) and thematic fields (including human-centric technologies, data protection, employment legislation, social security, skills forecast and development, workers' well-being, etc.).</p> <p>Currently, although addressed to some extent in the European Semester, there is no convening space for EU policy makers and stakeholders to anticipate these changes, to inform policies (at EU, national, regional, and local levels) or to discuss prioritisation of research and innovation funding for the future of work.</p> <p><u>ERA4FutureWork: R&I-based policy design for the future of work</u></p> <p>ERA4FutureWork can become such a convening space to discuss prioritisation of R&I funding for the future of work and to use R&I results to inform policies (at national, regional, local and EU levels).</p> <p>Recent and reliable data on public R&I investment in the future of work by individual EU Member States are lacking. This hampers strategic priority setting for research funds at regional, national and EU levels (including Horizon Europe & Partnerships).</p> <p>The European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation recently made a first portfolio analysis on the future of work as defined by three EU 2030 targets of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.⁴ It found that the EU has invested close to €1.9 billion in a wide range of areas pertaining to the future of work, including social protection and economic competitiveness, under its Horizon 2020 R&I programme.⁵</p>
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³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights_en

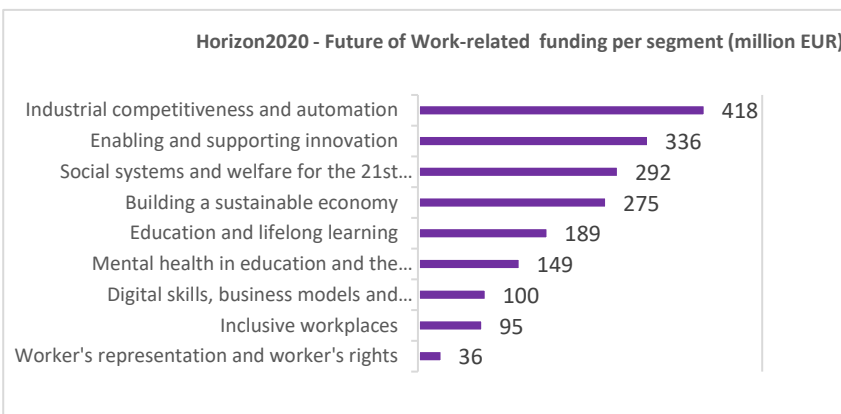
⁴ Targets: (1) at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 should be in employment by 2030; (2) at least 60% of all adults should be participating in training every year by 2030 and (3) a reduction of at least 15 million in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Cf. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en

⁵ Signature dates of projects in this analysis range from July 2014 to February 2021.

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At least 650 R&I projects with approximately 3.400 participating organisations were identified. This demonstrates the huge interest of a wide range of sectors in R&I projects affecting the future of work, from the quality of jobs, social protection, and next-generation manufacturing to the intersection of health and employment.



It also provides initial indications of potential gaps for future R&I funding, including green jobs, inclusive workplaces, occupational health and safety, re- and upskilling, social protection, ethical and trustworthy AI, the platform economy, and human-machine collaboration.

ERA4FutureWork: Proposed activities

This sub-action proposes two activities which complement each other and enable cross-border cooperation on R&I investments, decision-making and monitoring:

- 1. Improving the evidence base to support policymaking for R&I for the future of work:**
 - a) Expanding the portfolio analysis of past and ongoing, relevant EU-funded R&I projects to also cover new Horizon Europe actions.
 - b) Mapping equivalent R&I activities performed at local, regional or national levels by interested Member States, research organisations or social partners (e.g. through quantitative surveys, case studies and presentations).
 - c) Conducting a complementary/targeted gap analysis to identify knowledge gaps on R&I for the future of work. This analysis would take the form of a study, leveraging appropriate external expertise, in collaboration with interested Member States and associated countries, as well as with social partners.
- 2. Setting up an ERA4FutureWork R&I funding & investment policy dialogue** for strengthening Europe's collective capacity in R&I for the future of work, based on the created evidence base and subsequent gap analysis (at national, regional, local and EU levels, involving social partners and, where appropriate covering transnational aspects). This policy

	<p>dialogue would lead to a common understanding on future opportunities and challenges for employment in Europe and on priority areas for (joint) R&I investment at EU or national level.</p> <p>Expected outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Strategic gap analysis⁶ of the European R&I landscape for EU priorities in the future of work domain.B. Focused policy dialogue between EU Member States and national stakeholders, including social partners.C. A Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) reflecting the outcome of this dialogue (description of the challenges identified, scope of the dialogue, gaps identified, recommendations on key R&I investment priorities for the future of work). The SRIA will be concise and specific enough to be consulted, adapted or used voluntarily by interested R&I policymakers at all levels. <p>Proposed scope</p> <p>To provide ERA4FutureWork stakeholders with an initial basis for discussion, the EC will initiate the dialogue on some key emerging challenges for EU business and workers for which the input of R&I experts is highly needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Digital transition: Research aimed at improving the understanding of the opportunities and risks of digital technologies for work organization (e.g. AI/algorithmic management).2. Green transition: Research which identifies the skill developments and qualifications needed to create high-quality green jobs in industry, construction, and the circular economy, and which supports the design and promotion of innovative ways to ensure job-to-job transitions.3. Transition analysis: Research that identifies fundamental, lasting, and transformative post-pandemic changes in the nature of work (including new types of work, changes in the role and perception of work, work organisation, productivity and working conditions). <p>Member States will be able to propose their own priorities and shape the agenda as soon as the action begins.</p> <p>To ensure that the action benefits from early input and scales up quickly, the EC plans to hold expert workshops on these priority areas (activity 1c) already before the action's starting date (as of May 2022) and present intermediate results to the ERA Forum and stakeholders.</p> <p>Furthermore, the EC has already proposed to ESIR (Expert group on the economic and societal impact of research and innovation) to reflect on the above priorities and provide high level</p>
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⁶ Based on the groundwork done by the Servoz-report, the HLG on the Future of Work, reports by stakeholders (including social partners), actions of think-tanks etc.

	<p>recommendations for an EU R&I policy on the future of work, during its new mandate.</p> <p>Based on these preparatory actions, ERA4FutureWork will be ready for launch as soon as endorsed by an adequate number of Member States and Associated Countries.</p> <p><u>Synergies with other actions or policies (EU or national level)</u></p> <p>ERA4FutureWork closely follows some important principles laid down in the Council Recommendations for a Pact for R&I and the ERA Policy Agenda. It will contribute to the strengthening of evidence-informed policy making within ERA and to strengthening policy dialogues with and between Member States. It will increase the sharing of information about the implementation research, policies and investments in areas key to the ERA priorities, notably the digital and green transitions.</p> <p>ERA4FutureWork activities will also be relevant to all chapters of the European Pillar of Social Rights⁷ (EPSR) and develop synergies with actions foreseen in the EPSR Action Plan⁸ (ranging from access to the labour market to health and mental well-being in the workplace).</p> <p>This sub-action also builds on the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2021-24, particularly on the Key Strategic Orientations of Cluster 2 (e.g. Key Strategic Objective D: "Creating a more resilient, inclusive and democratic European society - Inclusive growth and new job opportunities")⁹.</p> <p>In the context of the European Year of Youth 2022, special attention will be given to young people's expectations for their future work.</p> <p>Depending on the evidence produced and the outcomes of the policy dialogue, further synergies with national or EU policies (e.g. the European Skills Agenda, the European Social Fund/Just Transition Fund, Europe's Digital Decade, ESF+ or other EU structural funds) may be explored.</p>
<p>2. Actors</p>	<p>The Commission (DG R&I & DG EMPL) will implement this sub-action. Complementary activities for Member States, associated countries or stakeholders could be organised or aligned to ERA4FutureWork, on a voluntary basis. Preparation and activities will be informed by the priorities of the Council Presidencies for 2022-2024 (respectively held by France, Czech Republic, Sweden, Spain, Belgium, and Hungary).</p> <p>To ensure a solid evidence base and wide consensus, the Policy Dialogue aims to invite the following actors from Member States and associated countries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives of the ERA Forum, including its seven stakeholder groups and observers.

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

⁸ <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/european-pillar-of-social-rights/en/>

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/funding/documents/ec_rtd_horizon-europe-strategic-plan-2021-24.pdf

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministries in charge of R&I policy.• Ministries in charge of employment, social and care policies, and industrial policy.• relevant Commission services and agencies involved in R&I or employment such as DG JRC, CEDEFOP (Department for VET and Skills), EU-OSHA (Prevention & Research Unit), European Training Foundation (Skills Identification and Development Unit) and Eurofound (Employment unit & Working life unit);• relevant departments of International Organisations such as the ILO and the OECD. <p>DG RTD E.5 and DG EMPL F.3 will also present ERA4FutureWork's objectives and progress to the following groups, in order to receive additional stakeholder feedback on aspects of R&I and employment policy priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Member State Programme Committees of Horizon Europe Clusters 1 (Health), 2 (Culture, creativity and inclusive society) and 4 (Digital, Industry and Space), which focus on work programme definition and monitoring implementation.• European social partners and European (sectoral) social dialogue committees. <p>Stakeholder engagement approach</p> <p>Interested MS/AC will be requested to authorise relevant experts in the field (with an R&I and/or labour policy background), to meet, deliberate and co-create the SRIA. The Commission will coordinate and support the drafting of the SRIA.</p>
3. Timing and milestones	<p>The ERA4FutureWork sub-action can be launched as soon as it is endorsed. The action is expected to last 16-18 months. During this period, 5-7 meetings between participants will be necessary. These meetings will function as milestones: experts will reflect on new drafts of the SRIA and decide on action points until the next meeting. During each meeting, there will also be dedicated slots for the actors listed above to present their relevant actions/best practices and discuss implications for policy and R&I on the future of work.</p> <p>The Commission will regularly report on the outcome of these meetings and the progress in implementing the action, to the ERA Forum and receive feedback by participating MS/AC and stakeholders.</p> <p>ERA4FutureWork comprises the following key milestones:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Kick off and set up ERA4FutureWork working method (Q3-Q4 2022)<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kick-off meeting.• Outcome of the preparatory workshops, expanded portfolio analysis of Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe investment on the future of work & initial gap analysis.• Presentation to the ERA Forum & to the Horizon Europe Strategic Programme Committees of the 3 Clusters.

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	<p>2. Build-up ERA4FutureWork R&I evidence base and scale-up policy dialogue (2022-2023), through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five to seven workshops to discuss findings (gaps, future challenges), invite presentations from select good practices at EU, national, regional or local levels and steer further research. <p>Other potential activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising EU-level debates and awareness-raising events ensuring participation of diverse relevant actors (R&I, social partners, academia, policymakers). • Measuring the public opinion on key challenges, solutions and aspirations regarding the future of work (e.g. Eurobarometer or other surveys on workers or European youth). <p>3. Publish Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda (SRIA) on the Future of Work & decide on next steps (first semester of 2024):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclude analysis of feedback from Member States, associated countries, stakeholders, and citizens. Prepare, propose and discuss the SRIA to ERA4FutureWork participants. • Publish SRIA and organise a public event to reflect on the outcomes and discuss potential avenues for investment and implementation. • Contribute to the European Commission's assessment for the ERA Policy Agenda and discuss with stakeholders a potential continuation of exchange and collaboration, based on their feedback and lessons learned.
<p>4. Funding</p>	<p>No significant investment is requested by MS, apart from engaging relevant national experts to attend meetings, share knowledge, provide feedback and guidance and co-draft the SRIA with the Commission, on a voluntary basis. Potential complementary national actions can be identified and linked to ERA4FutureWork.</p> <p>Horizon Europe budget could provide "seed money" to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design EU & MS analysis for R&I actions, based on but not limited to first EC portfolio analysis (experts). • Draft annual reports (EC & experts). • Provide logistics to set up meetings & events as foreseen in the above section.
<p>5. Expected impact</p>	<p>Making substantiated policy choices requires significant input from inter- and trans-disciplinary research, for which there exists great demand on all policy levels. Coordination between all levels to focus such R&I efforts would be of great benefit to governments, social partners, researchers, funding agencies, workers and citizens alike:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the policy dialogue, Member States and associated

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	<p>countries will have the opportunity to identify areas of joint interest, in which they can maximise the impact of R&I through collaboration and further alignment. They will also gain increased clarity on potential R&I disparities between MS or agree that some aspects are better dealt at a national or local level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policymakers and funding agencies at all levels will benefit from a comprehensive analysis of initiatives and gaps in existing research for the future of work. The ERA4FutureWork Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda can be a roadmap for investment decisions with the highest impact potential in years to come.• Social partners and R&I stakeholders will be able to raise awareness and initiate dialogues with workers and employers, helping them adapt to ongoing and future changes (such as the digital and green transitions), ensuring that the competitiveness of Europe's economy goes together with fairness and prosperity for its workers.• The European Commission will be able to propose future investment priorities for the future of work to the dedicated comitology structures (for example, Horizon Europe), helping translate R&I results into policies to the benefit of EU citizens and workers.
6. Monitoring	<p>Monitoring progress in ERA4FutureWork can be achieved through Commission and Member State reporting on the achievement of the following milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivery of a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Future of work.• extensive portfolio analysis and gap analysis on ongoing research at EU and national levels, underpinning the SRIA.• high-level meetings between the Commission, Member States, social partners and stakeholders to develop, steer, analyse and discuss the research and priorities for the future of work.• regular reporting by the Commission to the ERA Forum, regarding the action's progress.• A concluding high-level policy event to present the SRIA for the future of work to stakeholders and the public and discuss steps to bridge strategy and implementation.
7. Communication	<p>The European Commission can ensure a range of communication actions as ERA4FutureWork unfolds, aligned with the consecutive milestones achieved.</p> <p>This set of activities will be accompanied by a communication campaign by DG R&I and DG EMPL over the whole year, including videos, publications, and social media, next to other dedicated events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• News items on corporate pages & article in Horizon Magazine• Targeted use of short videos, fact sheets or projects Results Pack, depending on the content and message• Social media posts through corporate accounts (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publication of annual reports (2022, 2023, 2024) & SRIA (2024)• Policy sessions or presentations in the framework of the annual EU R&I days, presidency events and relevant Council & EP meetings• High-level policy event at the end of ERA4FutureWork (2024) <p>Upon official launch, DG R&I and DG EMPL can promote ERA4FutureWork widely, for example through¹⁰:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A news alert with Commissioners' quote, social media posts (e.g. GIF animated videos), short video clip by the Commissioner• Inclusion in the EIC, JRC, Commissioner's newsletters• Sharing the announcement with DG R&I and DG EMPL stakeholders (for example relevant committees, new EU missions boards, EU partnerships, National Contact Points, relevant HEU & H2020 project partners in collaboration with Executive Agencies etc.), as well as with EC & EP representations in MS <p>Communication actions by participating stakeholders at a national/local level will be possible, on a voluntary basis, based on their feedback, and expressed interest.</p>
8. Additional information	

¹⁰ The list is indicative.