## LEAPS Position on European Research Area Act (January 2026)

As Europe's leading synchrotron and free-electron laser facilities, LEAPS members serve thousands of researchers from across the EU and beyond and act as essential cornerstones of the European research ecosystem, fostering cross-border collaboration and the emergence of multidisciplinary networks. LEAPS therefore strongly supports the objectives of the European Research Area (ERA) and its ambition to reinforce excellence, integration and impact through a coherent and effective policy framework. LEAPS urges policymakers to seize this moment and agree on bold, actionable measures to secure Europe's position as a world leader in science.

- Achieving ERA objectives requires increased and reliable public investment in research. The ERA Act should therefore include a binding commitment for Member States to invest at least **3% of GDP in research and innovation**, with transparent monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
- The ERA Act should enable stronger EU-level coordination of research infrastructures, **aligning EU, national and regional funding instruments** to support long-term planning, upgrades and sustainability. This coordination must encompass both ESFRI landmarks and national research infrastructures of European relevance, recognising their complementary roles and shared contribution to Europe's strategic capabilities.
- **ESFRI should be reinforced** as the central strategic coordination platform for the European research infrastructure landscape, with a stronger link between roadmapping, EU funding instruments and national implementation. At the same time, the ERA Act should explicitly **acknowledge the strategic importance of national research infrastructures** that provide transnational access and deliver services essential to the European research and innovation ecosystem. Their long-term operation and technological evolution require stable and predictable support, including mechanisms that reflect their European mission even when governance remains national.
- The ERA Act should explicitly address the need to **reduce administrative burden on European research infrastructures**, recognising their public-interest mission. EU and national legal acts should be adapted to the specific nature of RIs and avoid imposing compliance obligations designed primarily for private-sector actors. One example is the Energy Efficiency Act (EnFfG) in Germany where an exemption for research facilities safeguarding scientific performance was introduced.
- **Administrative barriers for researchers must be reduced**, in particular for cross-border mobility. Requirements such as obtaining an **A1 form for short-term European** business travel, as well as legal and administrative complications linked to cross-border and mobile work, undermine researcher mobility and run counter to ERA objectives.
- The ERA Act should **facilitate the entry and mobility of researchers from non-EU countries**, by streamlining visa and residence permit procedures and ensuring smoother mobility within the EU for research purposes, in line with the goals of an open and attractive ERA.

- The ERA Act should support the establishment of an EU-level mechanism for **reporting suspected misuse of artificial intelligence in research**, ensuring transparency, accountability and trust, while safeguarding scientific freedom and avoiding unnecessary administrative burden.
- In line with Open Science principles, the ERA Act should **strengthen Diamond Open Access** as a sustainable and preferred model for publishing publicly funded research, while promoting FAIR research data practices that are proportionate, discipline-sensitive and context-driven, recognising that full standardisation and interoperability across disciplines and borders is not always feasible or desirable.
- **Sustained support is needed for research infrastructures** of European relevance — whether nationally operated facilities open to users beyond their borders or infrastructures governed at European level — to ensure their long-term operation, technological evolution and continued contribution to Europe's scientific leadership. A balanced and coordinated approach across all levels of governance is essential to maintain Europe's capacity to address global challenges, foster innovation and remain at the forefront of scientific discovery.

***LEAPS aisbl – the League of European Accelerator-based Photon Sources - is the network of all Synchrotron Radiation and Free Electron Laser user facilities in Europe. These unique facilities work like giant microscopes, harnessing the power of electrons to produce extremely bright light beams from THz to X-Rays that scientists can use to study everything from viruses to novel battery materials. LEAPS facilities serve a broad scientific community of more than 35,000 researchers in Europe.***