



ERA FABRIC

From Pilots to Policy: Weaving the Fabric of a Competitive, Integrated ERA

Lessons Learned & Future Pathways for Strengthening R&I Ecosystems in the next MFF

Anchoring Impact, Efficiency, and Cross-Border Synergy in the New ERA Policy Agenda



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HORIZON-WIDERA pilot project (2023-2025)

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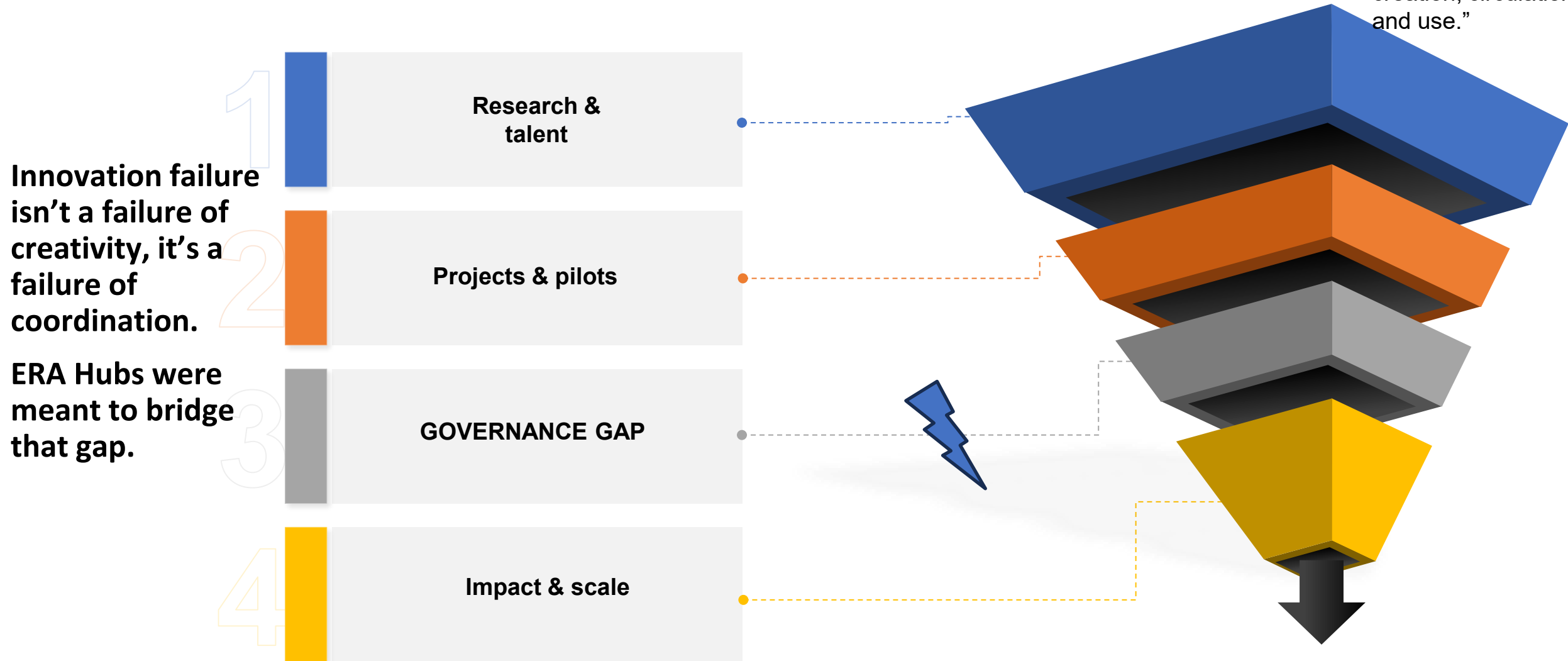
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The concept may fade, but the challenges persist

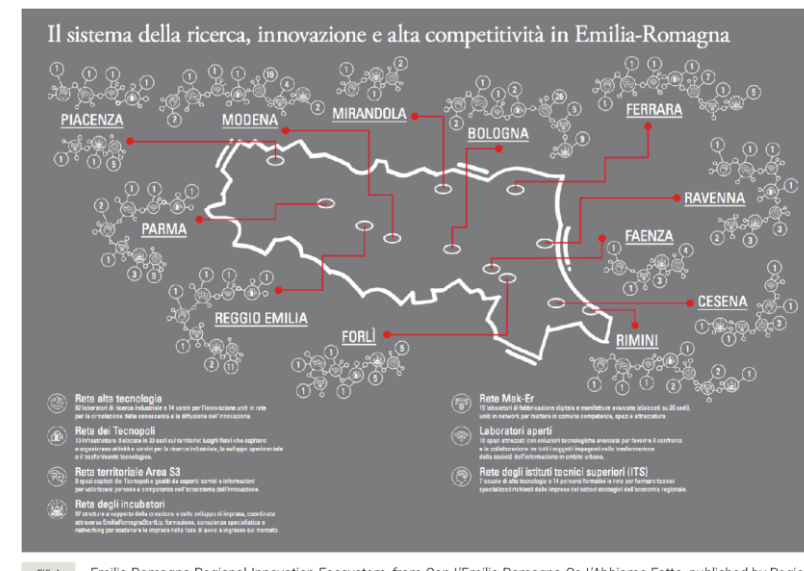
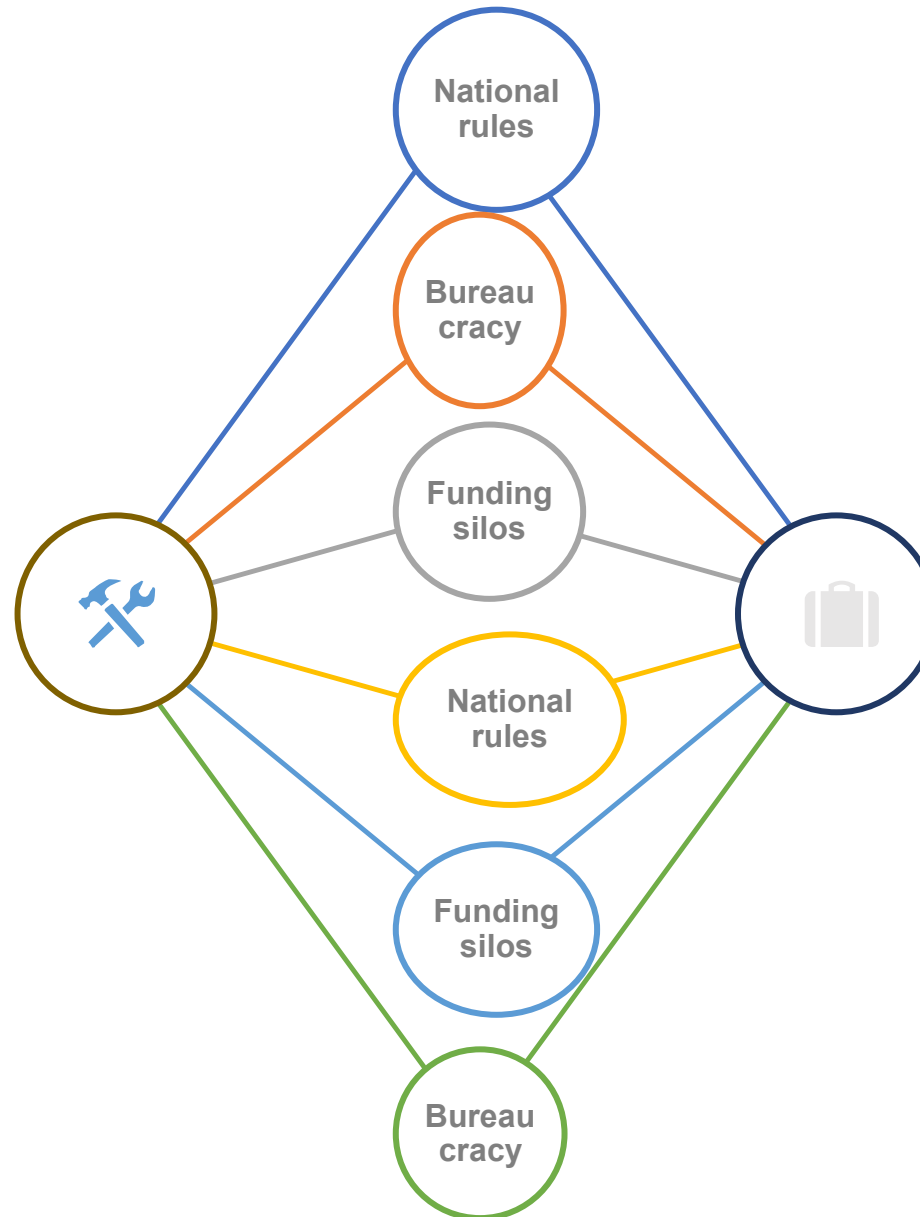
- **ERA Hubs were never the goal:** they were a *response* to systemic barriers to innovation diffusion and knowledge valorisation.
- **Fragmentation, governance misalignment, and inefficiencies in translating research into socio-economic value** continue to block Europe's full innovation potential.
- These barriers threaten **competitiveness, strategic autonomy, and impact**, core priorities for FP10 and the upcoming MFF.

The governance gap and reconnecting with the policy

COM/2020/628:
“Build a networking framework to strengthen excellence and maximise the value of knowledge creation, circulation and use.”



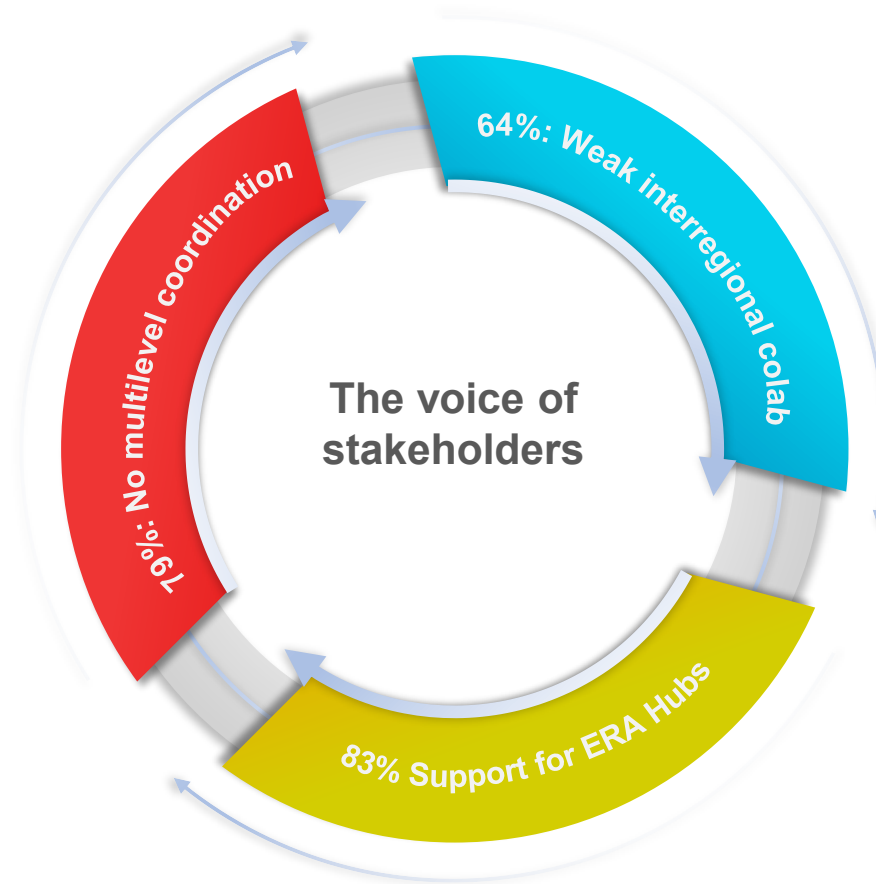
We collaborate internationally but govern locally



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What stakeholders told us: innovation needs orchestration, the system isn't broken, it's misaligned

"The system does not lack clarity or funding, it lacks connectivity"



Over **700**
stakeholders

Across **200+**
organisations

Covering **research,**
policy, business,
and civil society

4 modes of ERA Hubs / 4 modes of regional innovation governance

Innovation Transfer Hubs

- Balanced engagement and power
- Drivers: Universities, RTOs
- Features: Valorisation, SME support
- Tools: IP facilitation, testbeds, matchmaking

Policy uptake labs

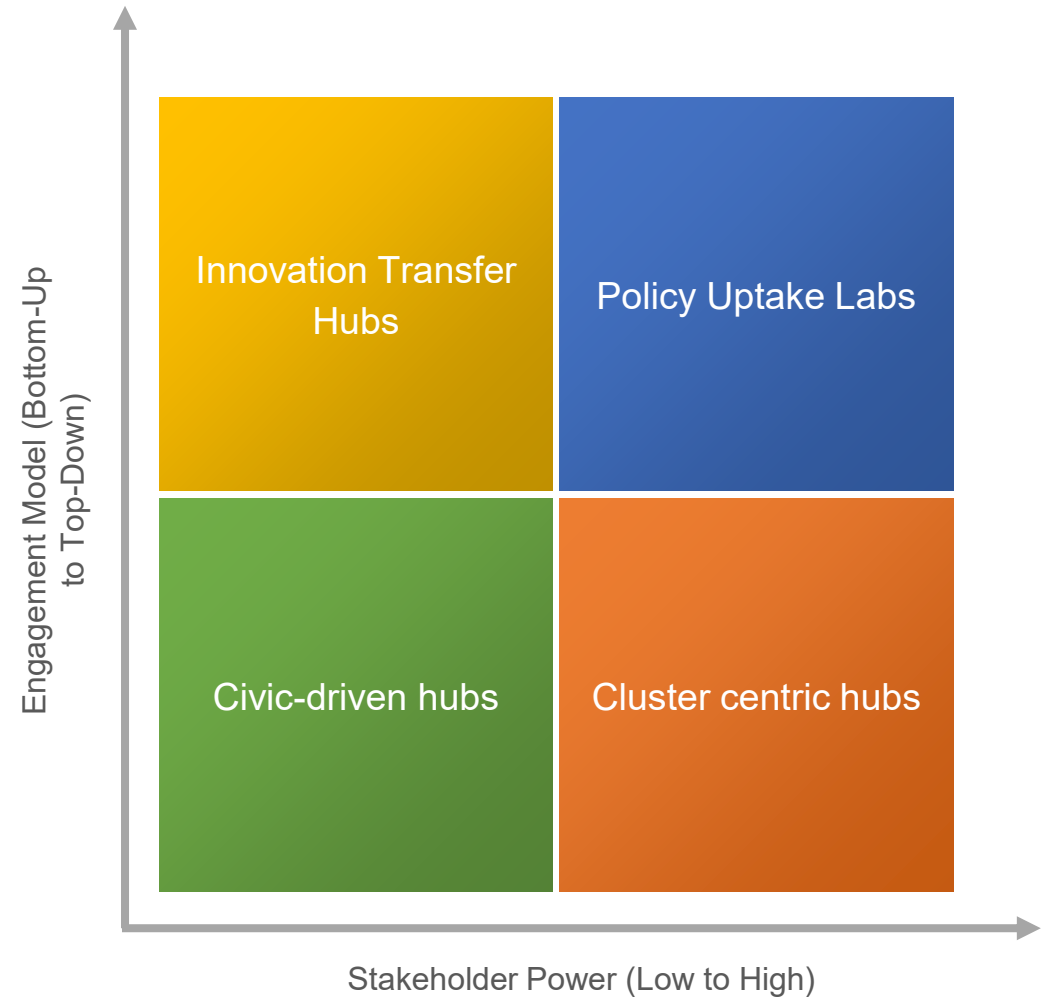
- Drivers: Regional/National policymakers
- Features: Governance prototyping, learning loops
- Tools: Regulatory sandboxes, evaluation platforms

Civic-Driven Hubs

- Drivers: Civil society, community orgs
- Features: Legitimacy through participation, foresight
- Tools: Co-creation workshops, civic engagement platforms







Cluster-centric Hubs

- Drivers: Industrial or RTO clusters
- Features: Market relevance, S3 anchoring
- Tools: S3 alignment, funding integration, governance platforms



Tool Category	Civic-Driven	Cluster-Centric	Innovation Transfer	Policy Uptake Labs
Stakeholder Engagement & Foresight	✓ Civic Platforms, Participatory Foresight	⚙️ Quadruple Helix Mapping	⚙️ R&I Brokerage Events	⬆️ Foresight for Regulation
Governance & Coordination	🧩 Local Anchor Networks	✓ Regional S3 Boards	✓ TTO-SME Linkers	✓ Evaluation Committees
Knowledge Transfer Instruments	⬇️ Limited Role	✓ Cluster-based IP Pools	✓ IP Facilitation, Living Labs	⚙️ Tech Policy Pilots
Funding Mechanisms	🧩 Social Innovation Funds	✓ RIS3-driven Vouchers	✓ Applied Research Grants	✓ Co-funded Public Pilots
Learning & Policy Feedback	🧩 Community Peer Learning	⚙️ Benchmarking Tools	✓ Co-evaluation Platforms	✓ Governance Feedback Loops

One typology, one toolbox? Not quite.

Policy Barrier	Urgency Level	Description
1. Fragmented Multi-Level Governance	 Critical	Lack of vertical coordination across EU, national, and regional levels prevents integrated policy implementation and alignment of Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3).
2. Administrative Complexity & Overload	 Critical	Complex procedures for accessing funding and reporting disincentivize engagement, especially for smaller stakeholders.
3. Misaligned Funding Instruments	 High	Structural funds and Horizon Europe are not well coordinated, leaving hubs without appropriate support mechanisms.
4. Absence of Feedback & Learning Loops	 Moderate	Pilots lack mechanisms for institutional learning and policy adaptation, leading to low policy responsiveness.
5. Unbalanced Ecosystem Representation	 Moderate	Civic actors and SMEs are underrepresented in governance processes, which skews tool development and implementation priorities.
6. Weak Incentives for Cross-Border Work	 High	Interregional collaboration is essential but rarely incentivized adequately in national or EU calls.

Why ERA hubs struggle? It's not about the ideas

**“We will focus more on policy and less on programmes.”
EC President, 2024**

Action	Justification
Treat ERA HUB logic as governance infrastructure	Needed for cross-border R&I coordination
Embed “one set of rules” flexibly	Ensure ERA logic adapts to regional contexts but avoid over-standardization
Design Competitiveness Fund KPIs with governance focus	Ensure funding supports systemic enablers, not only tech
Link S3 updates to multilevel policy alignment tools	Ensure vertical policy coherence
Fund technical assistance and peer-review for ecosystem maturity	Build long term capacity for regional innovation governance

Concrete actions the European Commission should take in FP10 / next MFF

From prototypes to policy

The business case for coordinated innovation governance



Governance Model

Clearly defined lead actors and co-governance logic. Formal roles for regional, national, and EU actors. Integration of quadruple helix principles from the start.

01



Value Proposition

What public good does the hub create? Who benefits and why should they invest? Tangible outputs: alignment capacity, brokerage, IP valorisation, etc.

02



Financing & Resource Strategy

Mix of funding streams: Structural Funds, Horizon, national schemes. Service-based revenue potential (e.g., brokerage, IP support). In-kind commitments and private/public co-financing models.

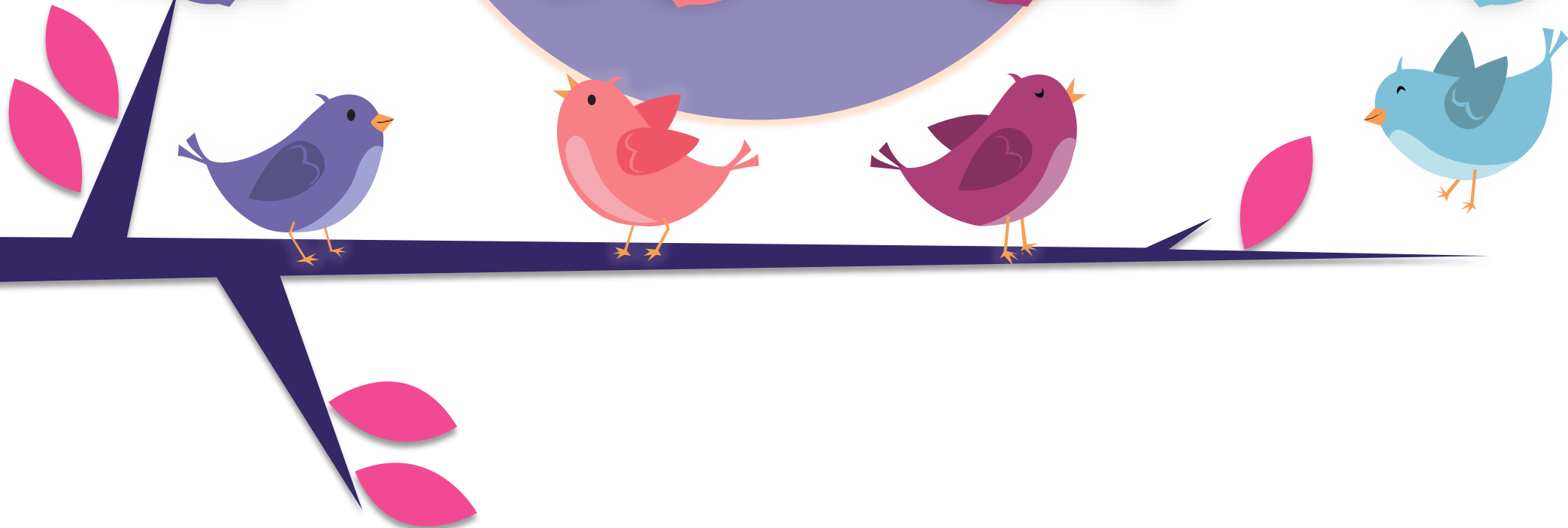
03



Scalability & Risk Mitigation

Conditions for expansion to new regions or sectors. Scenario planning and operational fallback plans. KPI-linked learning loops and flexible adaptation pathways.

04



Adoption Roadmap

1. Regional Validation

- Finalize regional policy alignment (S3, RIS, IP strategies).
- **Integrate ERA Hub governance functions**, like stakeholder panels, alignment platforms, monitoring tools, into existing regional innovation structures (e.g., development agencies, universities, clusters).
- Test business plan frameworks under various typologies (e.g., ForestWISE, ART-ER, INESC TEC/Produtech).



2. National Anchoring

- Align ERA Hub mechanisms with national innovation and cohesion strategies.
- Empower innovation agencies and ministries to act as coordination backbones.
- Pilot co-funding schemes blending ESIF, national programmes, and Competitiveness Fund logic.



3. EU Uptake & Horizontal Integration

- Feed ERA FABRIC outputs into FP10 design—especially for ecosystem mobilisation, governance interoperability, and cross-border S3 strategies.
- Integrate the Toolbox (D4.1) into EU-wide policy support instruments (e.g. smart specialisation platforms, knowledge valorisation codes).
- Advocate for harmonised rules and clear criteria for ERA Hub recognition and funding eligibility.

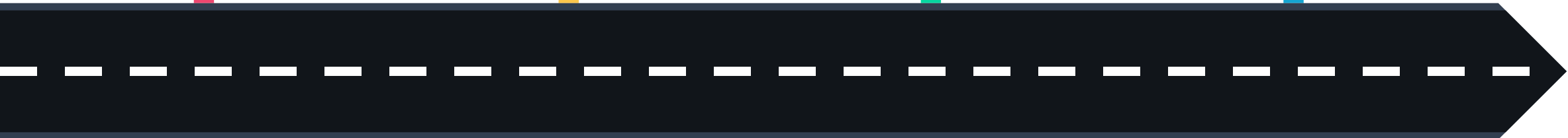


Key messages

ERA Hubs don't require new institutions, they require smart integration of what already works.

The EC's "more policy, fewer programmes" approach must now prioritise governance innovation.

What's needed is not more fragmentation, but a unified, tested logic that aligns R&I ecosystems across levels.



ERA FABRIC isn't proposing new money, it's proposing better returns on what we already spend.

Strategic actions: aligning policy, practice and performance

Regional & Local Actors

- Finalise business plan validation using typologies and self-assessment
- Institutionalise tested tools through agencies, universities, RTOs and other RPOs, clusters.
- Lead cross-border partnerships under new S3 logic or ERA-Cohesion and FP10 bridges.



European Commission

- Integrate ERA Hub principles into FP10 governance frameworks.
- Use the Competitiveness Fund to co-finance governance capacity, not just tech
- Adopt ERA FABRIC Toolbox into Knowledge Valorisation Codes and ERA Policy Frameworks.

National Governments

- Translate tested governance tools into national R&I strategies and structural fund programmes
- Embed multi-level governance mechanisms into National Strategic Plans (2025–2027).
- Pilot horizontal governance mandates across ministries and S3 managing authorities

From hubs to fabric, let's turn learnings into leverage

- ERA Hubs were a vehicle, what we truly need is **governance that enables transformation.**
- The language may have shifted **from ERA Hubs to competitiveness, resilience, critical mass**, but the **needs remain the same.**
- Let's not abandon the tools we've built. Let's **translate them into the DNA of FP10 and the next MFF.**

**This is how we build the future ERA: one ecosystem, one alignment,
one impact at a time.**

Thank You for Your Attention!

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