



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**RECH 343  
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**NOTE**

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From: Presidency

To : Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

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Subject: *Preparation of the Council ("Competitiveness") of 10-11 October 2012*  
European Research Area (ERA)

- a) Communication from the Commission on a reinforced European Research - Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth
  - b) Communication from the Commission : Towards better access to scientific information: Boosting the benefits of public investments in research
  - c) Commission Recommendation on access to and preservation of scientific information
    - Policy debate
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**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. In February 2011, the European Council called for the completion of the European Research Area by 2014:

“Europe needs a unified research area to attract talent and investment. Remaining gaps must therefore be addressed rapidly and the European Research Area completed by 2014 to create a genuine single market for knowledge, research and innovation. In particular, efforts should be made to improve the mobility and career prospects of researchers, the mobility of graduate students and the attractiveness of Europe for foreign researchers.”

In March 2012, the European Council “agreed that efforts must be stepped up with a view to completing the European Research Area by 2014; in this connection the European Council welcomed the Commission's intention to propose an ERA framework in June 2012”.

On 17 July 2012, the Commission published its Communication “A reinforced European Research Area partnership for excellence and growth”, together with a Communication “Towards better access to scientific information: Boosting the benefits of public investments in research” and a “Commission Recommendation on access to and preservation of scientific information”. At that occasion, the Commission and five major research organisations committed themselves to take action within their remit, to deliver on some of the key ERA objectives.

2. The Commission proposed the following European Research Area priorities: effective national research systems; optimal transnational cooperation and competition; an open labour market for researchers; gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research; and facilitating access to - and free circulation - of knowledge.
3. Over the years, progress has been made towards a European Research Area, through important European Union led and Member States led initiatives, such as the 6th and 7th Framework Programmes, initiatives of Art 185 TFEU, joint programming initiatives and European Research Infrastructure Consortia. Nevertheless, progress has been uneven in different dimensions of ERA as well as across Member States.
4. Recognizing that most research in Europe is funded and carried out nationally, progress in ERA depends not only on the Union level institutions and EU funding instruments such as Horizon 2020, but also on Member States, as well as on national institutions which often enjoy considerable autonomy. Cooperation and coordination are needed not only at each of those levels (European, national, scientific/research organization) but also between the three levels.

5. Broader and more rapid access to scientific publications and data will make it easier for researchers and businesses to build on the findings of public-funded research. This will boost Europe's innovation capacity and give citizens quicker access to scientific discoveries. Following the first step of making open access to scientific publications a general principle of the Horizon 2020 programme, the Commission recommends to the Member States to take a similar approach to the results of research funded under their own domestic programmes.

## II. QUESTIONS FOR THE POLICY DEBATE

In the light of the overall context described above, the Presidency invites the Council ("Competitiveness – Research part") on 10 October 2012 to address the following questions:

- a. Would you agree that a reinforced partnership between Member States, the Commission and research stakeholder organizations, coupled with transparent monitoring closely connected to the European Semester, is the most effective approach towards realizing the ERA?
- b. Would you agree that the proposed priorities for ERA are key in terms of their contribution to lasting step-changes in Europe's research performance and effectiveness? Would you agree that close monitoring is required to ensure delivery of the targets set?
- c. Would you agree that adopting principles of, and investing in open access to scientific publications and, where appropriate, also open access to scientific data is an important direction for ERA in order to achieve optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge?