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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations

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Subject: Draft Council Conclusions on 'A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth'

Delegations will find attached draft Council Conclusions on 'A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth' with a view to the discussion by the Research Working Party at its meeting on 29 October 2012.

**Draft Council Conclusions on A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for
Excellence and Growth**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

- Its Resolution of 15 June 2000 establishing a European Research Area (ERA)¹ following the European Council held on 23 and 24 March 2000² which agreed on the Lisbon strategy;
- Its Conclusions of 29 May 2008 on the "Ljubljana Process - Towards realisation of ERA"³, in which it set out general orientations on ERA and of 2 December 2008 on the definition of a 2020 vision for ERA⁴;
- Its Conclusions of 29 May 2009 on "first steps towards the realisation of the ERA Vision 2020"⁵, its Resolutions of 3 December 2009 on the "enhanced Governance of the ERA"⁶, of 26 May 2010 on the "developments in the governance of the ERA"⁷, and the Council Conclusions of 31 May 2011 on the "development of the ERA through ERA-related Groups"⁸;
- Its Conclusions of 26 November 2010 on the "Europe 2020 flagship initiative Innovation Union: Accelerating the transformation of Europe through innovation in a fast changing world"⁹ confirming that a well-functioning and coherent ERA is an integral part of the Innovation Union to strengthen the knowledge base in Europe;

¹ OJ C 205, 17.7.2000, p.1.

² Doc. 100/00

³ Doc. 10231/08

⁴ Official Journal C 25, 31.1.2009, p. 1-4.

⁵ Doc. 9956/09

⁶ OJ C 323, 31.12.2009, p. 1-4.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/docs/en/council-resolution-on-era-governance_26-05-10.pdf

⁸ Doc. 10525/11

⁹ Doc. 17165/10

- The Conclusions of the European Council of 3-4 February 2011¹⁰ that confirmed that Europe needs a unified research area to attract talent and investment and called for the completion of the ERA by 2014, including by addressing any remaining gaps in order to create a genuine single market for knowledge, research and innovation, as confirmed by the European Council of 2 March 2012¹¹, and recalled in its Conclusions of 29 June 2012¹² and of 18-19 October 2012¹³;
 - The ERAC opinion on the "development of an ERA Framework" of 9 December 2011¹⁴; and the ERAC opinion on "the relationship between the ERA and Horizon 2020" of 30 August 2012, calling for good coordination in implementation and monitoring of ERA policy and Horizon 2020 at EU and national level¹⁵;
1. REAFFIRMS that the realisation of ERA within the Innovation Union is a necessary component of the EU 2020 strategy to create growth and jobs, even more in times of important budgetary constraints for the EU and its Member States, to increase the level of excellence of Europe's public research system and maximise the return on public R&D investments. ACKNOWLEDGES the substantial progress in achieving the ERA since its launch in 2000, and STRESSES the urgency to step up the progress across the Union to contribute towards strengthening the Union's science base.
 2. WELCOMES the Communication of the Commission "A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth" of 17 July 2012¹⁶ and its key priorities and actions identified on the basis of a broad stakeholder consultation and AGREES with the choice to reinforce the existing partnership to make rapid and far-reaching progress on these priorities, therefore INVITES Member States, stakeholder organisations and European Commission to cooperate in that context to realise ERA.

¹⁰ EUCO 2/11
¹¹ EUCO 4/3/12 REV 3
¹² EUCO 76/12
¹³ EUCO 156/12
¹⁴ ERAC 1215/11
¹⁵ ERAC 1207/12
¹⁶ Doc. 12848/12

3. ACKNOWLEDGES the first step towards this deepening and broadening of the ERA partnership, as expressed by a number of important research stakeholder organisations¹⁷ in a Joint Statement, and subsequently signed Memoranda of Understanding and other expressions of willingness to work towards completing ERA¹⁸.
4. RECALLS that the external dimension is a vital, cross-cutting and integral part of ERA and that deepening and strengthening the partnership between the Commission and the Member States will therefore be an important element of the strategic approach towards enhancing and focusing EU international cooperation in research and innovation. EMPHASISES the relevance for achieving ERA of the Communication of the Commission “Enhancing and focusing EU international cooperation in research and innovation: A strategic approach”¹⁹.
5. Recalling its ambition to realise strong synergies between innovation, research and education policies and stakeholders for a better functioning of the knowledge triangle, in order to foster excellence of science and unleash the full innovation potential of Europe, CONSIDERS that achieving the ERA reinforces the Union's modernisation agenda for higher education²⁰ and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)²¹ and EMPHASISES the need to complement and step up the ERA related actions in the context of the implementation of the Innovation Union²².

¹⁷ European University Association (EUA), League of Research Universities (LERU), European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO), Nordforsk and Science Europe.

¹⁸ Unilateral declaration Science Europe; earlier MoUs signed with CERN (2009), EMBL (2011), Statement of intent signed with EIROforum (2010).

¹⁹ Doc. 14000/12

²⁰ Doc. 16746/11

²¹ Bucharest Communiqué, 26-27 April 2012.

²² Doc. 16834/10 and doc. 18244/11

More effective national research systems

6. CONSIDERS that open national-level competition is crucial to deriving maximum value from public money invested in research. NOTES the existence of best-practice performance which all Member States should attain in order to overcome divergences in research performance across the EU, involving allocating research funding through open calls for proposals, evaluated by panels of independent experts, and assessing the quality and outputs of research-performing organisations and teams.

Optimal transnational co-operation and competition

7. STRESSES the need for the EU to act urgently and coherently to achieve the scale of effort and impact needed to address, efficiently and effectively, our grand challenges with the available public research funds.
8. NOTES the commitments shown since 2009 by Member States to addressing grand challenges by the Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) and the remaining challenges in implementing the Strategic Research Agendas developed under the JPIs.
9. EMPHASISES that transnational research and innovation should be enabled by fostering and exploiting synergies between national programmes and with international programmes, by strategically aligning national funds and other funds at EU level, rather than cross-border funding per se.
10. WELCOMES the Communication as a basis for a strengthened partnership in the field of research infrastructures, leading to economies of scale, encouragement of scientific excellence and higher attractiveness for top researchers from all around the world.

11. CONSIDERS that excellent research depends upon world-class facilities and research infrastructures, including e-infrastructures, and that such research infrastructures attract talent and stimulate innovation and business opportunities, furthermore, e-infrastructures enable compute- and data-intensive collaborative research, and remote access to resources and equipment.
12. STRESSES that transnational access to research infrastructures remains a priority for the research community across Europe and NOTES the need for common standards and harmonized access rules and conditions for the use of research infrastructures and for continued EU support to transnational access activities.
13. EMPHASISES the need for renewing and extending the mandate of ESFRI to adequately address the existing challenges and also to ensure the follow-up of implementation of already on-going ESFRI projects after a comprehensive assessment, as well as the prioritisation of the infrastructure projects listed in the ESFRI roadmap.

An open labour market for researchers

14. RECALLS the need to realise a genuine European research labour market, and NOTES that one of the most important remaining challenges is the realisation of transparent, open and merit-based recruitment, which would make research careers more attractive and foster mobility and ultimately research quality.
15. EMPHASISES the need to overcome obstacles that include inadequate human resources policies within research organisations, such as a lack of innovative doctoral training, inadequate gender equality practices, social security obstacles, insufficient academia-business mobility and a lack of fair recognition of academic diplomas.

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research

16. UNDERLINES that both national and EU-level strategies should be strengthened in order to end the considerable underuse of female talent and too limited participation of talented and highly skilled women, as well as that the integration of a gender dimension into the design, evaluation and implementation of research is still too limited to effectively foster research and innovation excellence.
17. NOTES the intention of the Commission to propose in 2013 a Recommendation to Member States with common guidelines on institutional change to promote gender equality in universities and research institutions.

Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge

18. UNDERLINES the importance of Open Access and that broader and more rapid access to scientific publications and, where appropriate, data will help researchers and businesses to build on the findings of publicly funded research, boosting Europe's innovation capacity and provide citizens thus with quicker access to scientific discoveries. EMPHASISES the relevance for achieving ERA of the Communication "Towards better access to scientific information: Boosting the benefits of public investments in research"²³.
19. CONSIDERS that more should be done to foster knowledge transfer between public research institutions and the private sector in the context of Open Innovation.
20. EMPHASISES that as most knowledge creation and dissemination uses digital means, barriers to online access to digital research services for collaboration, computing and accessing scientific information (e-Science) and to e-infrastructures must be addressed to promote a "digital European Research Area". Moreover, transfer of knowledge should also be factored into research cooperation with non-EU countries.

²³ Doc. 12847/12

Conditions for success

21. INVITES Member States to identify the national reforms and actions needed for achieving ERA in the context of the Innovation Union and to present these reforms and their subsequent implementation in a report on national ERA measures, where appropriate in the National Reform Programmes starting from the 2013 European Semester, to cooperate with national research stakeholder organisations in implementing the necessary measures and to contribute actively to the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the achievement of ERA.
22. ENCOURAGES research stakeholder organisations to take responsibility for the implementation of the ERA actions addressed to them in the ERA Communication.
23. NOTES the intention of the Commission to implement a number of actions in the context of the reinforced ERA partnership, in close cooperation with Member States where appropriate and to support Member States and stakeholder organisations with the implementation of their relevant actions, including by ensuring inclusive ERA policy by structured dialogue with research stakeholder organisations and relevant civil society bodies.
24. CONSIDERS that achieving ERA will require monitoring of ERA progress in close connection with the European Semester, as well as top-level steering by the Council, informed by regular dialogue with all stakeholders and annual feedback from monitoring of implementation and evaluation of ERA progress, INVITES therefore the Commission to develop a robust ERA monitoring mechanism (EMM), in close cooperation with the Member States, based on indicators for all the actions and monitoring of national ERA policy reforms and their implementation.

25. EMPHASISES the need to maintain overall consistency between this mechanism and other relevant monitoring activities, in particular of the Innovation Union and Horizon 2020²⁴, and the need to avoid unnecessary burdens for Member States and research organisations by additional data gathering; WELCOMES in this regard the intention by the European Commission to explore available data on ERA progress to the full extent and to streamline all R&I monitoring activities in a single European Research and Innovation Observatory.
26. INVITES Member States via ERAC, while consolidating input by other ERA related groups, to contribute to the monitoring of ERA progress based on exchange of best practices and mutual learning from national actions and reforms made to achieve the ERA.
27. NOTES the progress in the review of the mandate of the European Research Area Committee (ERAC)²⁵ and CONFIRMS its intention to take a position on this review as soon as possible in 2013.
28. NOTES the intention of the Commission to ensure that the implementation of Horizon 2020 helps to consolidate the completion and functioning of ERA from 2014 onwards, by ERA-compliant actions relating to, in particular, researcher careers and mobility, gender, cross-border cooperation, open access, digital research services, knowledge transfer and research infrastructures.
29. WELCOMES the intention by the Commission to prepare a first annual ERA progress report by the end of 2013, to be transmitted to the Council and the European Parliament, with a first comparison between the 2012 baseline and the actions announced by Member States following the ERA Communication, and an assessment of progress and impact thereafter, from 2014 onwards.

²⁴ ERAC advice on the relationship between the ERA and Horizon 2020 of 30 August 2012 Doc. 1207/12.

²⁵ Council Resolution on Developments in the Governance of the ERA of 26 May 2010. Doc. 10255/10.