



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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Subject:	Draft Council Conclusions on European Research Area Progress

Delegations will find attached draft Council Conclusions on European Research Area Progress with a view to the discussion by the Research Working Party at its meeting on 10 February 2014.

Draft Council Conclusions on European Research Area Progress

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

- Its Conclusions of 29 May 2008 on the "Ljubljana Process - Towards realisation of ERA"¹ in which it sets out general orientations on ERA and of 2 December 2008 on the definition of a 2020 vision for ERA²;
- 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"³ confirming that a well-functioning and coherent ERA is an integral part of the Innovation Union to strengthen the knowledge base in Europe;
- Its Conclusions of 11 December 2012⁴, endorsing the Commission Communication on 'A reinforced European research area partnership for excellence and growth'⁵, including the setting-up by the Commission of a robust ERA Monitoring Mechanism, followed by a first Commission ERA Progress Report 2013⁶, acknowledging the state-of-play of ERA implementation at both national and European level;

¹ Doc. 10231/08

² Official Journal C 25, 31.1.2009, p.1-4

³ Doc. 17165/10

⁴ Doc. 17649/12

⁵ Doc. 12848/12

⁶ Doc.13812/13

- The Conclusions of the European Council of 3-4 February 2011⁷ which 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 2012⁸, and recalled in its Conclusions of 29 June 2012⁹ and of 18-19 October 2012¹⁰;
 - The Conclusions of the European Council of 24-25 October 2013¹¹ which note the need to accelerate structural reforms of national systems and to strengthen progress monitoring based on robust data provided by Member States in view of obtaining a full European Research Area by the end of 2014;
 - The need for close cooperation with Associated Countries in the development of ERA, and NOTING their contributions to the ERA Progress Report;
1. ACKNOWLEDGES that 2014 is an important year for the reinforced ERA partnership for excellence and growth between Member States, stakeholder organizations and the European Commission. A solid ERA foundation has been built and Horizon 2020 as a central element of ERA provides fresh momentum – it is now the time to step up efforts to promote the further development of ERA to reinforce excellence across the whole of Europe, thereby increasing Europe’s global competitiveness and capability to successfully tackle grand societal challenges.

⁷ Doc. EUCO 2/11

⁸ Doc. EUCO 4/3/12 REV 3

⁹ Doc. EUCO 76/12

¹⁰ Doc. EUCO 156/12

¹¹ Doc. EUCO 169/13

2. WELCOMES the ERAC Opinion on the first ERA Progress Report 2013¹² and ERAC's key messages, in particular the emphasis on ~~using and valuing~~ **taking into account** the diversity of national research systems between the different Member States and also within the different countries as an asset for Europe, which should be built upon for the future implementation of the ERA. UNDERLINES, in this context, ERAC's finding that the use of legislation **at the European level** to address obstacles to the ERA is not widely supported by the Member States and should occur only where a clear and significant need is ~~agreed~~ **justified**.
3. ACKNOWLEDGES that the ERA Progress Report 2013 provides a good initial analysis of the state-of-play of the implementation of the ERA priorities in the Member States and at European level. The report shows that much has already been achieved towards the construction of ERA, and also gives a first indication of possible areas for future action.
4. REAFFIRMS that the ~~realisation~~ **further development** of the ERA in the context of the Innovation Union is a necessary component of the Europe 2020 strategy to create growth and jobs.

¹² Doc. 1201/14

5. EMPHASIZES the crucial role of the Member States in further strengthening the ERA and therefore ENCOURAGES them to take an even stronger ownership of building ERA through taking stock of their national systems and identifying ~~national reforms and actions, to be implemented~~ including in cooperation with stakeholder organizations, e.g. through national and, ~~where applicable,~~ regional research and innovation strategies; ~~taking into account where appropriate~~ **and relevant** smart specialisation strategies, **to be implemented** ~~with proposals for action which may, where appropriate, be implemented~~ as part of the National Reform Programmes in the context of the European Semester. **In this context NOTES that ERA ministerial conferences could provide important ideas on the political level.**
6. UNDERLINES that reforms of research **and innovation** systems are at the heart of ERA and that the Member States should accelerate national reforms, where necessary, to boost the EU's potential in research, development and innovation.
7. CONSIDERS that fiscal consolidation at the expense of the R&D will endanger future growth and job creation and EMPHASISES the need to pay attention to the quality, efficiency and composition of research **and innovation** spending in order to make the most of its impact on the new phase of growth in the European Union and to derive maximum value from public money invested in research and innovation. ~~To this end, ENCOURAGES the Member States to consider, where appropriate, the use of open calls for proposals evaluated based on international peer review.~~
8. RECOGNISES that while the EU funding programmes foster transnational cooperation of research among the Member States, it is primarily for the Member States to define ~~common and/or~~ shared strategies and unlock national resources to achieve higher impact of research in a context of limited public research funding available.

9. ~~ENCOURAGES the Member States to mobilise research stakeholder organisations at national level, in the spirit of the reinforced ERA Partnership, to further contribute to the ERA Monitoring and data collection.~~

In view of the way forward, the Council:

10. ~~NOTES the 2014 call for completing the ERA and INVITES the Member States and~~ **in close cooperation with** the Commission, in line with the ERAC opinion and working through ERAC, to develop by the end of 2014 ~~the “ERA Agenda 2020”,~~ **an ERA roadmap at European level** -which should serve as a flexible instrument to **the purpose of** facilitate**ing** and reinforce**ing** the efforts undertaken by the Member States by providing: a shared understanding of the strategic objectives over the next few years and a set of tools and best practices to support the Member States in developing and implementing their national policies in ways which correspond with their respective specificities and priorities. Accordingly, ~~ENCOURAGES~~ **CALLS ON the** Member States **to take fully into account the ERA implementation** when developing their national strategies ~~to take full account of ERA implementation.~~ **This may include the development of national ERA strategies.**

Based on the ERA progress report, the Council CONSIDERS that, **inter alia,** the specific issues listed below should be taken into account in developing the ~~ERA Agenda 2020~~ **ERA roadmap:**

- **the use, where appropriate, of open calls for proposals evaluated based on international peer review;**

- the progress made by ESFRI to fulfil its new mandate and ~~the need to put forward as soon as possible a prioritisation amongst~~ **its continuing efforts in order to prioritise** the projects of the ESFRI roadmap as well as ~~the need to develop common principles for establishing, updating and reporting on national research infrastructure roadmaps;~~
- ~~stepping up the efforts for allocating investments in global research infrastructures of European interest;~~
- aligning, where possible, national strategies and research programmes with the strategic research agendas developed within the Joint Programming Initiatives to cope with major societal challenges and improving the interoperability between national programmes to facilitate transnational cooperation and sharing of information about activities in priority areas;
- promoting a wider uptake of the innovative doctoral training principles, **on a voluntary basis,** including, where appropriate, through use of the European Structural and Investment Funds;
- using open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices with regard to research positions;
- fostering mobility of researchers **across different sectors,** in particular between academia and industry;
- stepping up the efforts to systematically mainstream gender equality and the gender dimension in R&I policies and programmes;

- supporting open access to scientific publications as well as developing ~~and implementing~~ an effective approach for research data which takes into account all relevant interests;
 - promoting and implementing e-Infrastructures as an enabler of digital Science in the ERA, ~~with the purpose to creating a seamless online space for efficient crosscutting research collaboration, the creation, access and sharing of scientific knowledge resources;~~
 - fostering effective knowledge transfer in research and innovation between public and private sectors.
11. Given that the external dimension is an integral part of the ERA, ASKS the Commission to adequately address this important aspect in the ERA Progress Report 2014 and beyond, both at EU and Member State level, notably by moving towards the integration of an “international cooperation ~~monitoring mechanism~~” **dimension** into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism.
12. CONSIDERS that the foundations of the ERA should be reinforced and broadened particularly through making full use of the opportunities offered by structural funds to strengthen Member States’ research and innovation capacities, thereby fostering the inclusiveness of the ERA.

13. EMPHASIZES the importance of monitoring ERA progress, also in close connection with the European Semester and CALLS ON the Commission to further improve the ERA Monitoring Mechanism in close cooperation with the Member States **and research stakeholder organisations** as well as to undertake the necessary measures to reduce administrative burdens for national administrations and stakeholders such as **gradual alignment, where appropriate, with** relevant processes of Eurostat and, where applicable, OECD and CONSIDERS that the principle of reporting on a two-year cycle after 2014 should be pursued.
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