



**Brussels, 16 December 2016
(OR. en)**

15647/16

**ERAC 1
RECH 351
COEST 340**

'I' ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
Subject: Involvement of Armenia, Georgia and Tunisia as observers in the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC)

1. The Agreement for the association of Tunisia to Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2014-2020, was signed on 1 December 2015 and entered into force on 13 April 2016, following ratification by the Tunisian parliament.
2. The Agreement for the association of Armenia to Horizon 2020 was signed on 19 May 2016 and entered into force on 7 November 2016 following ratification by the Armenian parliament.
3. The Agreement for the association of Georgia to Horizon 2020 was signed on 29 April 2016. As from this date, this Agreement is provisionally and retroactively applicable as from 1 January 2016.

4. The European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) is a strategic policy advisory committee whose principal mission is to provide timely strategic input to the Council, the Commission and Member States on research and innovation issues that are relevant to the development of the European Research Area. At its 32nd meeting on 2 December 2016, the Committee agreed that, in accordance with the practice applied to countries associated to the EU Framework Programme for research and innovation, Armenia, Georgia and Tunisia may be invited to take part in Committee meetings as observers in accordance with Article 6.3 of the Rules of Procedure of ERAC¹. However, before giving Armenia, Georgia and Tunisia observer status to ERAC, the Permanent Representatives Committee should be informed. With regard to this, the Working Party on Research was informed as the competent preparatory body.
5. If Armenia, Georgia and Tunisia are invited to attend as an observers to ERAC, their representatives will participate under the same conditions as other countries that are associated to the EU Framework Programme, i.e., without voting rights, on an ad-hoc basis², and covering their own expenses. The observer status would also apply to participation, as appropriate, in ERAC's dedicated configurations, i.e., the High Level Group for Joint Programming (GPC) and the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC).
6. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to take note of the intention of the ERAC co-Chairs to invite representatives of Armenia, Georgia and Tunisia as observers to ERAC, as well as the intention of the Chairs of ERAC's dedicated configurations, GPC and SFIC, to invite them as observers to these two groups.

¹ Doc. 1207/16.

² On certain items, the ERAC co-Chairs could reserve participation to Member States only.