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**NOTE**

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From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on the review of the European Research Area advisory structure

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Delegations will find attached draft Council conclusions on the review of the European Research Area advisory structure with a view to the discussion by the Research Working Party at its meeting on 16 March 2015.

**Draft Council conclusions on the review of the European Research Area advisory structure**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

- its conclusions on the development of the European Research Area (ERA) through ERA-related groups of 1 June 2011<sup>1</sup>, which reconfirmed the need for strengthened coordination between the ERAC and the ERA-related groups, and stressed the need to pursue all relevant improvements in this cooperation in line with the outcome of the ERAC's advice<sup>2</sup> on the review of ERA-related groups;
- the Commission's Communication on a reinforced ERA partnership for excellence and growth of 17 July 2012<sup>3</sup>, and the Council's response to this in its conclusions of 11 December 2012<sup>4</sup>;
- its Conclusions on the advisory work for the ERA of 30 May 2013<sup>5</sup>, in which the Council agreed to review the statuses, the mandates and the reporting lines of those ERA-related groups that have been established by the Council by the end of 2014 and invited the Commission and the ERAC to consider whether such a review is required in relation to the groups they have established;
- its Conclusions on the ERA progress report 2014<sup>6</sup> of 5 December 2014, in which the Council invited ERAC to discuss and propose a reform of the ERA-related governance by 2015;

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1 11032/11  
2 ERAC 1206/11  
3 12848/12  
4 17469/12  
5 10331/13  
6 16599/14

1. RECALLS that the advisory work for the ERA is currently undertaken by seven different ERA-related groups<sup>7</sup>; ACKNOWLEDGES that there is a need for a more efficient and effective governance structure for the implementation of the ERA with a strong and strategic role of the Member States in close partnership with the Commission;
2. In this respect TAKES NOTE of the proposals made by ERAC on the basis of discussions at two extraordinary meetings<sup>8</sup>, as well as the contributions from GPC<sup>9</sup> and SFIC<sup>10</sup>;
3. AGREES that, in order to cover the ERA priority objectives and to reflect the importance of the policy and implementation advice in the framework of the ERA governance, in particular with a view to the coherent implementation of the ERA Roadmap, the existing ERA-related groups should reflect the six ERA Roadmap priorities thus renaming them into "ERA Priority Groups" in the following manner:
  - Priority 1: More effective national research systems (ERAC)
  - Priority 2: Optimal transnational cooperation and competition
    - a) jointly addressing societal challenges (High level Group on Joint Programming (GPC))
    - b) research infrastructures (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI))
  - Priority 3: Open labour market for researchers (Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility (SGHRM))
  - Priority 4: Gender equality and mainstreaming in research (Helsinki Group on Gender in Research & Innovation (HG))

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<sup>7</sup> The ERA-related groups include the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC), the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), the Strategic Forum for International Science and Technology Cooperation (SFIC), the High Level Group on Joint Programming (GPC), the Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation (HG), the ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility (SGHRM) and the ERAC Working Group on Knowledge Transfer (KT).

<sup>8</sup> ERAC 1214/3/14 REV 3, ERAC 1202/1/15 REV 1

<sup>9</sup> ERAC-GPC 1302/15

<sup>10</sup> ERAC-SFIC 1355/15

- Priority 5: Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge, including via digital ERA (ERAC Working Group on Knowledge Transfer (KT))
  - Priority 6: International cooperation (Strategic Forum for International S&T cooperation (SFIC));
4. NOTES that an adjustment of the mandates of the ERA Priority Groups is needed and that the mandates should have a limited time;
  5. AGREES that the role of the ERAC Steering Board needs to be strengthened and that the Chairs of all the ERA Priority Groups should be members of the ERAC Steering Board, with the aim of working together in partnership;
  6. NOTES that each ERA Priority Group shall develop its own work programme, agenda, activities and deliverables according to its mandate. These shall then be discussed and agreed within the ERAC Steering Board to ensure overall coherence among the ERA Priority Groups;
  7. NOTES that to ensure European added value, there is a need for coordinated work programmes for the ERA Priority Groups in order to maximise the impact of activities.

#### ERA Priority Groups established by the Council

8. REPLACES the mandates of the ERA Priority Groups that have been established by the Council, namely ERAC<sup>11</sup> and its dedicated configurations GPC<sup>12</sup> and SFIC<sup>13</sup>, with a new mandate as set out in Annex that shall take immediate effect and repeal the existing mandates of these groups;

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<sup>11</sup> 10331/13

<sup>12</sup> 16775/08

<sup>13</sup> 16763/08

9. UNDERLINES that the level of commitment by Member States is a key driver for an enhanced efficiency and visibility of ERAC in fulfilling its mission to deliver early strategic advice; ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of high-level representation of Member States in ERAC in order to ensure the Committee's effectiveness and impact; ENCOURAGES ERAC to be proactive towards anticipation of policy topics that could efficiently contribute to the preparation of policy debates in the Competitiveness Council;
10. RECOGNISES the role that ERAC should play to ensure coordination between the ERA Priority Groups, coherence of their work plans and priority setting in order to achieve real synergies and impact; AGREES that the other ERA Priority Groups shall report regularly to ERAC, providing timely strategic and operational inputs to ERAC on research and innovation issues that are relevant to the development of their respective specific ERA priorities;
11. AGREES that ERAC, in its coordinating role, shall advise and report directly to the Council, the Commission and Member States. It shall do this on its own initiative or at the request of the Council or the Commission.

#### Other ERA Priority Groups

12. INVITES ERAC to redefine and broaden the scope of the mandate of its Working Group on Knowledge Transfer to include aspects such as open access and digital ERA; and INVITES the Commission to adjust the mandates of SGHRM and Helsinki Group as necessary without delay;
13. INVITES ESFRI to adjust its mandate, as referred to in paragraph 4, and to continue supporting a coherent and strategy-led approach to policy-making on research infrastructures in Europe and to facilitate multilateral initiatives leading to a better use and development of research infrastructures; to advise on the prioritisation of the infrastructure projects listed in the ESFRI roadmap and to ensure the follow-up of the implementation of already ongoing ESFRI projects including developing and assessing strategies and plans to ensure their sustainability;

14. RECALLS that the EU research and innovation policy landscape includes a number of advisory structures providing inputs and expertise and INVITES the Commission to carry out an inventory to identify any possible overlaps with ERA Priority Groups and to adjust as necessary; ENCOURAGES ERAC and the ERAC Steering Board, with the support of the Commission, to strive for close interaction with any relevant groups;

Rules of procedure and review of mandates

15. INVITES all the ERA Priority Groups to draw up common rules of procedure in agreement within the ERAC Steering Board without delay;
16. AGREES to review the updated mandates of the ERA Priority Groups no later than in 2017 as appropriate.

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**MANDATE OF THE**

**European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC),**

**High Level Group on Joint Programming (GPC) and**

**Strategic Forum for International Science and Technology Cooperation (SFIC)**

**Missions**

1. The principal mission of **ERAC** is to provide early and timely strategic input to the Council, the Commission and Member States and to provide a platform for strategic debate on the whole spectrum of European research and innovation policy issues.
2. With respect to its mission, ERAC shall, in particular:
  - provide, at an early stage, advice on the identification and design of strategic priorities for policy initiatives on research and innovation relating to the development of the ERA, including the EU Framework Programmes and other relevant EU, national and intergovernmental initiatives;
  - contribute to the preparation of the policy debates of the Competitiveness Council;
  - provide advice on broad orientations for possible future policies and for interaction between existing policies at international, EU and national level contributing to the development of the ERA;
  - monitor the progress of the ERA, while having regard to the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity, with special attention to the efficiency, accessibility, transparency and coherence of its instruments and initiatives, including those defined in the EU Framework Programmes, notably taking into account the criterion of European added value;

- identify the need for independent, quantitative and qualitative assessments of ERA-related policies and use the results of such assessments to make recommendations for greater and better progress of the ERA;
  - contribute, where relevant, to promoting the coordination of national research and innovation policies and to ensuring that national policies and EU policy are mutually consistent;
  - contribute to preparing any ERA ministerial conferences convened and organised under the auspices of the Member State holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union;
  - in accordance with the ERA Priority 1, contribute to strengthening the evaluation of research and innovation policies and seeking complementarities between, and rationalisation of, instruments at EU and national levels.
3. In addition to ERAC's principal mission, it shall coordinate with the other ERA Priority Groups to monitor the implementation and follow-up of the ERA Roadmap. It shall also coordinate with the other ERA Priority Groups to promote mutual learning exercises and the exchange of best practices relevant to the ERA.
4. In accordance with the ERA Priority 2a the principal mission of **GPC** is, through improved cross-border collaboration between national research actors within and across the Joint Programming Process (JPP) and the resulting initiatives, to reduce fragmentation and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, make best use of resources and help provide the benefits of scale required to tackle issues which require large concerted efforts.



Its main activities shall focus on:

- promoting alignment of national, regional and European strategies, programmes and activities for research and innovation with the strategic research and innovation agendas developed as the results of the JPP;
- improving the interoperability among European, national and regional research and innovation programmes/activities, thus facilitating transnational cooperation and also the sharing of information about activities in priority areas for societal challenges;
- advising on the potential of the joint programming process for new themes identified to address major challenges and enhancing transnational collaboration;
- supporting the existing Joint Programming Initiatives in the implementation of the Framework Conditions and Voluntary Guidelines and encouraging the exchange of good practice.

5. In accordance with the ERA Priority 6 the principal mission of **SFIC** is to facilitate the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA, with focus on the external dimension of the European Union and Member States' research and innovation activities, by the sharing of information and consultation between its members (Member States and the Commission) with a view to identifying common priorities which could lead to coordinated or joint initiatives, and coordinating activities and positions vis-à-vis third countries and within international fora.

Its main activities shall focus on:

- developing and implementing appropriate joint strategic approaches and actions for international R&I cooperation on the basis of national priorities;
- systematically sharing and structuring information and good practice on international R&I cooperation activities and objectives, including those derived from bilateral S&T agreements with third countries by Member States, Associated Countries and the Union;

- pooling and sharing relevant knowledge concerning third countries as well as ensuring regular consultation between the members in order to identify their respective objectives and common priorities in terms of R&I cooperation with third countries, also in line with the Multi-Annual Roadmaps process; and
- information exchange and networking with scientific advisors in key third countries.

### **Members and observers**

6. ERAC, GPC and SFIC shall consist of one high-level representative from each Member State who is responsible for the relevant research and innovation policies and the Commission.
7. ERAC, GPC and SFIC may invite representatives of the countries associated to the EU Framework Programme to participate in its meetings as observers for particular agenda items. They may also invite other observers, if particular items so require.

### **Organisation**

8. ERAC, GPC and SFIC shall meet regularly at least four times per year.
9. The ERAC Steering Board shall coordinate the advisory work of the ERA Priority Groups and ensure overall coherence of the work programmes of the ERA Priority Groups and their timetables for delivery. It shall also be responsible for preparing the meetings of ERAC. It shall consist of the Vice-Chair of ERAC (chairing the Board), the ERAC Chair, the Chairs of the ERA Priority Groups, two members elected from among the representatives of Member States of ERAC by a majority of its component members for a period of two years as well as representatives of the incumbent and of the incoming EU Presidency.

10. ERAC shall be chaired by the Commission. The Vice-Chair of ERAC shall take over the chairmanship on agenda points related to ERAC's contribution to the preparation of policy debates of the Competitiveness Council. The Vice-Chair of ERAC shall be elected from among the representatives of Member States of the Group by a majority of its component Members for a period of two years, which is renewable once.
11. The Chair and Vice-Chair of GPC and SFIC shall be elected from among the representatives of Member States of the Group by a majority of its component Members for a period of two years, which is renewable once.
12. The Secretariat of ERAC, GPC and SFIC as well as the ERAC Steering Board shall be provided by the General Secretariat of the Council. The primary role of the Secretariat is to assist the Groups in their operations. In particular, the Secretariat assists the respective Chair in the preparation and circulation of draft agendas, summary conclusions of meetings and related documents.
13. The Commission shall support the work of ERAC, GPC and SFIC and the ERAC Steering Board within the remit of its competence.
14. The working language for the Groups shall be English.
15. ERAC, GPC and SFIC may set up ad-hoc working groups for a limited period of time with specific tasks to deal with questions relevant to their mandates. These groups shall be supported by a Member State or the Commission services.
16. ERAC, GPC and SFIC shall draw up common rules of procedure in agreement with the ERAC Steering Board.

## **Reporting**

17. All ERA Priority Groups shall report regularly to ERAC on research and innovation issues that are relevant to their specific ERA priority.