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NOTE

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

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 14 April 2015. This document replaces the draft conclusions set out in doc. 7042/15.

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 2011¹, 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 advice² on the review of ERA-related groups;
- the Commission's Communication on a reinforced ERA partnership for excellence and growth of 17 July 2012³, and the Council's response to this in its conclusions of 11 December 2012⁴;
- its Resolution on the advisory work for the ERA of 30 May 2013⁵, 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 2014⁶ of 5 December 2014, in which the Council invited ERAC to discuss and propose a reform of the ERA-related governance by 2015;

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 development and implementation of the ERA is currently undertaken by the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) and a number of different ERA-related groups⁷; ACKNOWLEDGES that there is a need for a more efficient and effective advisory structure for the implementation of the ERA with a strong and strategic role of the Member States in close partnership with the Commission and the relevant stakeholders;
2. In this respect TAKES NOTE of the discussions at the two extraordinary meetings of ERAC⁸, as well as the contributions from GPC⁹ and SFIC¹⁰; RECOGNISES that further work on an improved advisory structure is still needed;
3. AGREES that, in order 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 ERA-related groups should cover all the ERA priorities, which currently are:
 - Priority 1: More effective national research systems
 - Priority 2: Optimal transnational cooperation and competition
 - Priority 3: Open labour market for researchers
 - Priority 4: Gender equality and mainstreaming in research
 - Priority 5: Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge
 - Priority 6: International cooperation

⁷ The ERA-related groups currently include 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), the ERAC Working Group on Knowledge Transfer (KT), the Digital ERA Forum (DERAF) and the group of national points of reference on Open Access (NRP on OA).

⁸ ERAC 1214/3/14 REV 3, ERAC 1202/1/15 REV 1

⁹ ERAC-GPC 1302/1/15 REV 1

¹⁰ ERAC-SFIC 1355/15

4. NOTES that an adjustment of the objectives and the current mandates of ERAC and the ERA-related groups is needed and AGREES that these mandates should be periodically assessed and revised in order to reflect the progress in the implementation of ERA;
5. 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 ERAC and ERA-related Groups and to submit its assessment to ERAC; ENCOURAGES ERAC, with the support of the Commission, to strive for close interaction with any relevant groups;
6. UNDERLINES that the commitment by Member States in partnership with the Commission is a key driver for an enhanced efficiency and visibility of ERAC in fulfilling its mission to deliver early strategic advice to the Council, the Commission and Member States; ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of high-level representation of Member States and the Commission 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 and to the research and innovation policy preparation by the Commission;
7. RECOGNISES the role that ERAC, supported by its Steering Board, should play to ensure coordination between ERAC and the ERA-related Groups, coherence of their work plans and priority setting in order to achieve real synergies complementarities and impact; ENCOURAGES the ERA-related Groups to provide timely strategic and operational inputs to ERAC on research and innovation issues that are relevant to the development of their respective specific ERA priorities;

8. AGREES that the ERAC Steering Board should coordinate the advisory work of ERAC and the ERA-related groups and ensure overall coherence of the work programmes of ERAC and the ERA-related groups and their timetables for delivery. It should be responsible for preparing the meetings of ERAC. It should consist of the Vice-Chair of ERAC (chairing the Board), the ERAC Chair, the Chairs of the ERA-related 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;
9. NOTES that to ensure European added value, there is a need for coordinated work programmes for ERAC and the ERA-related Groups in order to maximise the impact of activities.
10. In this context, NOTES that ERAC and each ERA-related Group should develop its own work programme, agenda, activities and deliverables according to its mandate. These should then be discussed within the ERAC Steering Board and endorsed by ERAC to ensure overall coherence among the ERA-related Groups;
11. In order to better prepare for the review of the current advisory structure ASKS ERAC to
 - consider how to best ensure a stronger and more strategic role of Member States in the ERA governance;
 - discuss the concrete solutions for ERAC itself to address properly its strategic role and its operative responsibilities, including the role of its Steering Board;
 - reflect on how to streamline the advisory structure (number of groups, possible mergers, set of standard clauses of mandates) to appropriately cover the ERA priorities and to consider adjustments to the mandates of the ERA-related groups, including the scope of the mandate of its Working Group on Knowledge Transfer to include aspects such as open access and digital ERA;

with a view to preparing a proposal with possible alternative options on the ERA advisory structure by the end of 2015.