



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations
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 20 January 2014.

Draft Council Conclusions on European Research Area Progress

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

- 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"¹ 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 2012², endorsing the Commission Communication on 'A reinforced European research area partnership for excellence and growth'³, including the setting-up by the Commission of a robust ERA Monitoring Mechanism, followed by a first Commission ERA Progress Report 2013⁴, acknowledging the state-of-play of ERA implementation at both national and European level;
- The Conclusions of the European Council of 3-4 February 2011⁵ 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 2012⁶, and recalled in its Conclusions of 29 June 2012⁷ and of 18-19 October 2012⁸;

1 Doc. 17165/10
2 Doc. 17649/12
3 Doc. 12848/12
4 Doc.13812/13
5 Doc. EUCO 2/11
6 Doc. EUCO 4/3/12 REV 3
7 Doc. EUCO 76/12
8 Doc. EUCO 156/12

- The Conclusions of the European Council of 24-25 October 2013⁹ 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;
1. NOTES that 2014 is a decisive 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.
 2. WELCOMES the ERAC Opinion on the first ERA Progress Report 2013¹⁰ and ERAC’s key messages, in particular the emphasis on using and valuing 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 European level to enhance the ERA is not widely supported by the Member States.
 3. ACKNOWLEDGES that the ERA Progress Report 2013 provides a good initial analysis of the state-of-play of the implementation of the five 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 of the ERA in the context of the Innovation Union is a necessary component of the Europe 2020 strategy to create growth and jobs.

⁹ Doc. EUCO 169/13

¹⁰ 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 in cooperation with stakeholder organizations, e.g. through national research and innovation strategies with clear milestones and proposals for action which may, where appropriate, be implemented as part of the National Reform Programmes in the context of the European Semester.
6. 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 and composition of research 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. To this end, ENCOURAGES the Member States to consolidate, where appropriate, the use of open calls for proposals evaluated based on international peer review.
7. RECOGNISES that while the EU funding programmes foster transnational cooperation of research among the Member States, it is first and foremost for the Member States to define common strategies and unlock national resources to achieve higher impact of research in a context of limited public research funding available.

In the context of the five ERA priorities, the Council wishing to put special EMPHASIS on the specific issues listed below:

8. WELCOMES the progress made by ESFRI to fulfil its new mandate and to put forward by the middle of 2014 a prioritisation amongst the projects of the ESFRI roadmap.
9. ENCOURAGES the Member States to step up their efforts for allocating investments in global research infrastructures of European interest.

10. ENCOURAGES the Member States to improve interoperability between national programmes to facilitate transnational cooperation and INVITES the Member States in consultation with the Commission to develop common principles for establishing, updating and reporting on national research infrastructure roadmaps.
11. UNDERLINES the need for the Member States to promote a wider uptake of the innovative doctoral training principles, including, where appropriate, through use of the European Structural and Investment Funds.
12. INVITES the Member States to ensure that all research positions are subject to open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices.
13. RECALLS the need for the Member States to foster all forms of mobility, including between academia and industry.
14. UNDERLINES the need for the Member States to step up their efforts to systematically mainstream gender equality and the gender dimension in R&I policies and programmes and to provide incentives for structural changes in their research organisations including universities.
15. NOTES the Commission's and the Member States' support to open access to scientific publications and INVITES the Commission and the Member States to develop and implement an effective approach for research data which takes into account different scientific areas and business-related interests, and promote their sharing and long term preservation.
16. ENCOURAGES the Member States to further promote and implement e-Infrastructures as an enabler of digital Science in the ERA, with the purpose to create a seamless online space for efficient crosscutting research collaboration, the creation, access and sharing of scientific knowledge resources, as a pre-requisite to achieve excellence in research and innovation.

17. UNDERLINES that reforms of research systems are at the heart of ERA and that the Member States should accelerate national reforms to boost the EU's potential in research and development.
18. 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:

19. INVITES the Member States and the Commission, in line with the ERAC opinion and working through ERAC, to develop an ERA roadmap at European level by the end of 2014 – the “ERA Agenda 2020”, which should serve as a flexible instrument to facilitate and reinforce the efforts undertaken by the Member States by providing: a shared understanding of the strategic objectives over the next few years, operational objectives, planning 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. Therefore, ENCOURAGES Member States to identify their national priorities and accordingly develop national action plans for the implementation of those ERA priorities, taking into consideration national policy objectives.
20. 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” into the ERA Monitoring Mechanism.
21. 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.

22. EMPHASIZES the importance of monitoring ERA progress, also in close connection with the European Semester and CALLS ON the Commission to further develop and refine the ERA Monitoring Mechanism in close cooperation with the Member States keeping in mind measures to reduce administrative burdens for national administrations and stakeholders such as 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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