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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations

Subject: Draft Council conclusions on the governance of the European Research Area

Delegations will find attached a Presidency text on the draft Council conclusions on the governance of the European Research Area with a view to the discussion by the Research Working Party at its meeting on 4 October 2018.

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

ON THE GOVERNANCE OF THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

- its Conclusions of 2012 on “A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth”¹ in which the existing ERA Priorities were agreed;
- the Conclusions of the European Council of 2013² calling for a full European Research Area by the end of 2014 as a political objective to accelerate structural reforms of national systems;
- its Conclusions of May 2015 on the “European Research Area Roadmap 2015-2020”³ which formed the basis for the subsequent ERA National Action Plans of Member States;
- its Conclusions of December 2015 on a “Review of the European Research Area advisory structure”⁴ in which a first triennial review process of the ERA advisory structure is scheduled for 2018;

1 Doc. 17649/12
2 Doc. EUCO 169/13
3 Doc. 9351/15
4 Doc. 14875/15

- its Conclusions of December 2015 on “Advancing gender equality in the European Research Area”⁵ which emphasised the need to foster sustainable cultural and institutional changes in the ERA national action plans, or to develop strategies to implement the ERA Roadmap and give priority to achieving gender equality and including the gender dimension in R&I content and programmes;
 - its Conclusions of December 2017 “From the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020 towards the ninth Framework Programme”⁶ in which the Council reiterated the importance of continued joint efforts by Member States and the European Commission for further developing and strengthening the European Research Area, and emphasised the role of the Framework Programme as the main instrument to support the objectives and implementation of ERA;
 - its Conclusions of 29 May 2018 on “Accelerating knowledge circulation in the EU”⁷, in which the Council expressed the importance of further advancing Open Access and Open Science policies within the Framework Programme and beyond, called for long-term sustainability of research infrastructures, and underlined the role of the European Open Science Cloud in knowledge dissemination;
1. ACKNOWLEDGES that realising the European Research Area (ERA) will decisively contribute to increasing the effectiveness, consistency and overall performance of the European research and innovation system, and that achieving ERA requires a systemic approach; WELCOMES, in this context, the efforts undertaken by Member States and the European Commission since the Council Resolution of June 2000⁸ by which ERA was established following the European Council of March 2000⁹;

5 Doc. 14846/15

6 Doc. 15320/17

7 Doc. 9507/18

8 OJ C 205, 17.7.2000, p.1.

9 Doc. 100/00

2. REITERATES the importance of a close partnership between the Member States and the European Commission in jointly working towards the realisation of ERA, including linking ERA Priorities and the 9th Framework Programme Horizon Europe and reaching out to the countries associated to the Research Framework Programme (Associated Countries) and to relevant stakeholders from science, business and society;
3. HIGHLIGHTS that by 2018, progress towards ERA has been achieved in all ERA Priorities, representing important milestones for the European Research Area; STRESSES the relevance of state-of-the-art evidence provided in 2018 that helps building ERA on the basis of the Horizon Policy Support Facility mutual learning exercises, peer reviews, and specific support activities; policy monitoring, R&I related reports and other high-quality ERA-related studies; and WELCOMES the efforts made by ERAC in 2018 to review and adapt the ERA advisory structure as outlined in the ERAC Opinion of 18 September 2018¹⁰ on the review, an advisory structure that has been in place in its current form since its last review in 2015;

ERA MILESTONES AND EVIDENCE

4. HIGHLIGHTS the new approach to European Research & Innovation (R&I) partnership policy induced by the ERAC ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships and, as a result of the work of ERAC, the introduction in the Horizon Europe proposal of a new mechanism for the selection and monitoring of EU R&I partnerships;
5. NOTES the 10th anniversary in 2018 of Joint Programming in ERA with ten Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) currently up and running; WELCOMES the recent achievements of the ERAC dedicated configuration the High Level Group on Joint Programming (GPC) in developing long-term strategies for JPIs, establishing a monitoring mechanism for national progress; and the setting up of a new framework for evaluating new and existing JPIs;

6. WELCOMES the Strategy Report and the ESFRI Roadmap update of 2018¹¹, and INVITES ESFRI to prepare the next ESFRI Roadmap update in 2021; equally WELCOMES the second Report on the implementation of the ERIC Regulation¹², and INVITES the Commission to present the next ERIC implementation Report by 2021; NOTES the urgent need for appropriate measures to facilitate the use of the ERIC instrument and to stimulate investments in ERICs and other ESFRI Roadmap Infrastructures, and CALLS upon the Commission and Member States to implement these measures as soon as practicable; and CALLS upon the pan-European Research Infrastructures to promote their services at international level and to reach out, where appropriate, to new international members;
7. STRESSES the importance of concerted actions and good coordination between ERA and the Framework Programme, including the future Horizon Europe, for the development of a labour market for researchers in Europe, and of the work performed by the Open Science Policy Platform groups on improving recognition and reward mechanisms as well as skills development schemes for researchers in this context; CALLS on all involved parties to acknowledge the cross-cutting nature of gender and open science for the ERA Priority on human resources, in particular as regards early stage researchers and doctoral candidates; CALLS on the ERAC Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility to strive for better synergies between ERA and the European Higher Education Area on issues related to higher education, training, research careers and the knowledge triangle;

11 <http://roadmap2018.esfri.eu/>

12 Doc. 11022/18

8. RECOGNISES the progress made by the ERAC Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation with the delivery of joint guidelines on integrating the gender perspective in international cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), together with the ERAC dedicated configuration Strategic Forum for International Cooperation in STI (SFIC), including the recommendations for implementing quotas at national level with a view to increasing the share of women in leadership positions in academia, and on how to address gender equality in Horizon Europe; NOTES with concern that this ERA Priority 4 on gender is unequally implemented across Member States, which threatens European research and innovation excellence and jeopardises the implementation of comparably fair and gender-balanced working conditions in research in Europe; WELCOMES the joint efforts made by SFIC and the ERAC Standing Working Group on Gender in R&I as an example of good practice for the collaboration across different ERA Priorities;
9. WELCOMES the steps taken towards launching the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) which constitutes a major milestone for increased access to research results and data in ERA; ACKNOWLEDGES the need to design a sound governance framework for EOSC that empowers the scientific community and can evolve over time; CALLS upon all involved parties to implement EOSC fully in due time, and NOTES the important role of research infrastructures in this context;
10. In the light of new developments in the field of knowledge transfer, e.g. Open Innovation, INVITES the Commission to consider revisiting its 2008 Recommendation on the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities, and the Code of practice for universities and other public research organisations to further boost the impact of R&I through knowledge transfer;

11. INVITES Member States, the European Commission, and, where appropriate, private actors as well as NGOs and citizens, to put more effort into closer coordination in international cooperation, inter alia through multilateral activities, including for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, whereby synergies and added-value will be created at national and European level; in this context, activities under Horizon Europe should also be taken into account;
12. WELCOMES the 2018 Report of the European Commission on “Science, Research and Innovation Performance of the EU”¹³ as valuable evidence of the state of play of the EU research and innovation system; RECOGNISES the increase in innovation performance of the EU since 2010 as reported by the “European Innovation Scoreboard 2018”¹⁴; however, NOTES the unequal development across the European Research Area, with 18 EU countries increasing, yet 10 EU countries decreasing their innovation performance, and in this context UNDERLINES the need for making ERA better equipped to address the above challenges;
13. WELCOMES the new approach of ERAC to hold strategic policy debates on a regular basis to further develop the policy-mix for research and innovation for ERA; ENCOURAGES national policy makers in Member States to carefully design, implement and assess performance-based research funding and to ensure consistency with the wider set of performance incentives for public research organisations; INVITES the Commission to collect further evidence and deepen its assessment of the impact of such policies;
14. AGREES that in relation to R&D tax incentives, care must be taken to maintain a balanced policy mix for R&D, and INVITES Member States to reinforce monitoring and evaluation of these schemes which are increasingly used; INVITES the Commission to collect further evidence on the design and impact of R&D tax incentives, including by continuing its cooperation with the OECD;

13 European Commission, Science, Research and Innovation Performance of the EU 2018, Strengthening the foundations for Europe’s future, 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/rec-17-015-srip-report2018_mep-web-20180228.pdf

14 European Commission, European Innovation Scoreboard 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/facts-figures/scoreboards_en

REVIEW OF THE ERA ADVISORY STRUCTURE

15. WELCOMES the ERAC Opinion on the Review of the ERA Advisory Structure, and CALLS on ERAC and the other ERA-related groups to implement swiftly its recommendations in 2019, including the revision of their Mandates as appropriate;
16. ACKNOWLEDGES that the current ERA Priorities should continue to be the basis for collaboration between Member States, Associated Countries, the European Commission and stakeholder organisations within a strengthened ERA partnership; NOTES that the ERA Roadmap 2015-2020 will continue to apply, fully respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality while at the same time drawing on the diversity and strengths of the national research and innovation systems; INVITES the Commission to publish by mid-2020 a new ERA Communication for the period beyond 2020, which should revise the Priorities and their actions included in the 2012 ERA Communication;
17. REAFFIRMS that the Framework Programme shall be carried out to pursue the objectives of achieving a European Research Area, while respecting that the Framework Programme also pursues other objectives beyond and apart from ERA; therefore, ENCOURAGES the European Commission, Member States and Associated Countries to look at ERA and Horizon Europe from a systemic point of view;
18. EMPHASISES the relevance of the Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility (PSF) as a Framework Programme instrument to strengthen ERA policies; in this context, UNDERLINES that the results of PSF activities and of other ERA-related evidence, such as the European Innovation Scoreboard, should be exploited by all parties; AGREES that the relevance and impact of ERA should be increased by improving the dissemination and valorisation of output of the ERA-related groups;

19. RECOGNISES the importance of synergies between the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area; in this context, NOTES with interest the “Paris Communiqué” of 25 May 2018¹⁵;
20. CONSIDERS that emerging needs for new ERA activities can be embedded into existing ERA Priorities, notably in the area of partnership initiatives; RECOGNISES the horizontal nature of some ERA activities, such as international cooperation or gender, which calls for further collaboration across ERA Priorities;
21. CALLS for adapting the ERA Advisory Structure as follows:
 - ERAC shall explore options to relaunch the existing GPC to prepare Member States’ and Associated Countries’ participation in the strategic coordinating process for partnerships, once its design and the design of missions is decided in the appropriate forum.
 - ERA-related groups shall organise back-to-back or joint meetings where many synergies with regard to content and target groups exist. In the medium term, examine options to reduce the number of groups while ensuring adequate coverage of all aspects of ERA Priorities.
 - All ERA-related groups should explore ways to increase direct exchanges with ERA stakeholder organisations.
 - To foster exchanges between ERA and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) policies, annual back-to-back meetings between ERAC and the Bologna Follow-Up Group and/or Directors General for Higher Education should be established.

15 Paris Communiqué, Conférence ministérielle européenne pour l’enseignement supérieur, 25 May 2018.
http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2018_Paris/77/1/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf

22. UNDERLINES that the efficiency and effectiveness of the ERA Advisory Structure should be optimised:

- ERAC’s guiding role in the ERA Advisory Structure should be maintained and strengthened. In doing so, ERAC should help the other ERA-related groups under its responsibility to have optimal conditions for their efforts to realise the goals set in the ERA Roadmap.
- ERA-related groups should continue to set up ad-hoc Working Groups for a limited period of time in order to address emerging topics. Member States, Associated Countries and the European Commission should ensure that the participants in all types of groups have the appropriate profile at the right level.
- Coordination between the Council Presidency priorities and the agendas of the ERA-related groups shall be increased, in particular by involvement of future Council Presidencies in the ERAC Steering Board starting 18 months prior to their term.
- The European Commission is encouraged to continue to foster cross-fertilisation between the Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) or expert advisory groups of the Commission and the ERA-related groups, in order to avoid duplication of efforts, and to optimise the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall R&I advisory system, e.g. for the European RTD Evaluation Network, or in the area of open science and innovation.

FUTURE OF ERA

23. CALLS ON the European Commission to review and improve the ERA Monitoring Mechanism in close cooperation with ERAC, possibly based on a new ERA Communication by the Commission;
24. CONSIDERS the “ERA National Action Plans” of Member States and Associated Countries to be important instruments to implement ERA, and ENCOURAGES them to turn their “ERA National Action Plans” into effective and efficient instruments. These plans shall ensure the uptake of ERA Priorities in line with the organisational and procedural structures of the different national research and innovation systems and require a coherent and lean monitoring tool to be used across all ERA Priorities and Groups that would accommodate the different national roadmaps and should be used on a voluntary basis;
25. Furthermore, in view of the expiration of the “ERA National Action Plans” in 2020, SUGGESTS that the Commission, in close collaboration with Member States, undertakes a careful evaluation of this kind of ERA policy-making tool, also in the context of other existing policy instruments of the European Semester;
26. CALLS ON the Presidencies of the Council to consider organising regular ERA ministerial conferences every two years, starting in 2020.