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**NOTE**

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From: Presidency  
To: Delegations

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

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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 22 October 2018.

Changes to the previous text (doc. 12585/18) are indicated in **bold underlined** for additions and in ~~striketrough~~ for deletions.

**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”<sup>1</sup> in which the existing ERA Priorities were agreed;
- the Conclusions of the European Council of 2013<sup>2</sup> calling for a **fully functioning** 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”<sup>3</sup> 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”<sup>4</sup> **that formed the basis for a rationalisation of the advisory structure,** in which a first triennial review process of the ERA advisory structure is scheduled for 2018;

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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”<sup>5</sup> 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”<sup>6</sup> 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”<sup>7</sup>, in which the Council expressed the importance of further advancing Open Access and Open Science policies within the Framework Programme and beyond, **underlined the role of the European Open Science Cloud in knowledge dissemination and** 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~~ **making** the European Research Area (ERA)<sup>8</sup> **fully operational** will decisively contribute to increasing the effectiveness, consistency and overall performance of the European research and innovation system, and that ~~achieving a well-~~ **functioning** 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 2000<sup>9</sup> by which ERA was established following the **European Council** of March 2000<sup>10</sup>;

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5 Doc. 14846/15

6 Doc. 15320/17

7 Doc. 9507/18

8 **ERA as defined in Article 179 of the TFEU**

9 OJ C 205, 17.7.2000, p.1.

10 Doc. 100/00

- 1a. RECOGNISES the important strategic role that ERAC plays in advising the Council to ensure that Europe maximizes the economic and social impact of R&I investment at European and national level to increase Europe's global competitiveness, support employment growth, improve the standard of living for citizens and reducing the R&I divide within the European Union;**
2. REITERATES the importance of a close partnership between the Member States and the European Commission in jointly working towards the realisation of **strengthening of** ERA, including linking ERA Priorities and the 9<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme Horizon Europe and **cooperating with** 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 2018<sup>11</sup> on the review, an advisory structure that has been in place in its current form since its last review in 2015;~~

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~~11~~ Doc. 1209/18 and 1209/18 ADD 1

## ERA MILESTONES AND EVIDENCE

3. **HIGHLIGHTS that progress towards an improved ERA has been achieved in all ERA-related groups implementing the ERA Priorities, representing important milestones for the European Research Area;**<sup>12</sup> **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 2018**<sup>13</sup>;
4. HIGHLIGHTS the new approach to European Research & Innovation (R&I) partnership policy ~~induced~~ **informed** 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, **implementation,** and monitoring, **evaluation and phasing out** of EU R&I partnerships; **LOOKS FORWARD to the upcoming Commission's presentation to ERAC in December 2018 of a proposal for the criteria framework for partnerships and for the Strategic Coordinating Process for the entire life-cycle of R&I partnerships;**
5. NOTES the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018 of Joint Programming in ERA with ten Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) ~~currently up and running;~~ **TAKES NOTE of** ~~WELCOMES~~ the recent achievements of the ERAC dedicated configuration the High Level Group on Joint Programming (GPC) in **fostering the development of** long-term strategies for JPIs, establishing a monitoring mechanism for national progress **in this area**; and the setting up of a new framework for evaluating new and existing JPIs; **REITERATES its support for the Joint Programming Process and CALLS ON the Commission to continue to support this process also in the future;**

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<sup>12</sup> **2017 ERAC Annual Report, doc. 1206/18**

<sup>13</sup> **Doc. 1209/18 and 1209/18 ADD 1**

6. WELCOMES the Strategy Report and the ESFRI Roadmap update of 2018<sup>14</sup>, and INVITES ESFRI to prepare the next ESFRI Roadmap update in 2021; equally WELCOMES the second Report on the implementation of the ERIC Regulation<sup>15</sup>, and INVITES the Commission to present the next ERIC implementation Report by 2022<sup>1</sup>; 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 **as well as the need for increased support of transnational access for improving quality and equal access to European Research Infrastructures**, and CALLS upon the Commission and Member States to implement these measures as soon as ~~practicable~~ **possible**; 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; **CALLS ON the Commission to fully implement the VAT exemption (including Representing Entities related issues) and the use of international accounting standards;**

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

15 Doc. 11022/18

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 **for Open Science policy** ~~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 **equal opportunities**, 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, **including the** 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; **in this context, NOTES with interest the messages on promoting a better link between higher education and research in the “Paris Communiqué” of 25 May 2018<sup>16</sup>**;

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**16 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](http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2018_Paris/77/1/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf)**

8. ~~RECOGNISES~~ **TAKES NOTE** of the ~~work progress made~~ **done** by the ERAC Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation ~~with the delivery~~ **regarding the** 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~~ **NOTES** the steps taken towards launching the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), which constitutes a major milestone for increased access to **FAIR**<sup>17</sup> research results and data in ERA, **including the work of the ERAC Standing Working Group on Open Science and Innovation**; ACKNOWLEDGES the need to design a sound governance framework for EOSC **in coordination with Member States** that empowers the scientific communities 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; **RECALLS the need for effective coordination between EOSC and ESFRI**;
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 **in the context of SFIC**, into closer coordination in international cooperation, inter alia through **joint meetings and resulting STI agreements as well as further** 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”<sup>18</sup> as valuable evidence of the state of play of the EU research and innovation **eco**system; RECOGNISES the increase in innovation performance of the EU since 2010 as reported by the “European Innovation Scoreboard 2018”<sup>19</sup>; 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;

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18 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](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/rec-17-015-srip-report2018_mep-web-20180228.pdf)

19 European Commission, European Innovation Scoreboard 2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/facts-figures/scoreboards\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/facts-figures/scoreboards_en)

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; **RECOGNISES the important role these strategic policy debates can play in providing a forum for Member States to better understand how effective the policies and tools we have at our disposal are at national and European level, to implement the ERA priorities and deliver on Europe's wider economic and social objectives; INVITES the Commission to collect further evidence on the design and impact of R&D policies, including by continuing its cooperation with the OECD;** 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;~~

## REVIEW OF THE ERA ADVISORY STRUCTURE

- ~~14~~**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 **through an Action Plan** in 2019, including the revision of their Mandates as appropriate;
- ~~15~~**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;
- ~~16~~**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 **mutual learning exercises, peer reviews, and specific support activities** and of other ERA-related evidence, such as the European Innovation Scoreboard, should be exploited by all parties **as appropriate**; AGREES that **there should be a greater focus on improving** 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 2018<sup>20</sup>;~~

~~1720.~~ 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;

~~1824.~~ 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 **relevant** ERA stakeholder organisations **and involve high quality experts in their work**.
- To foster exchanges between ERA and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) policies, **regular** ~~annual~~ back-to-back meetings **on relevant topics** between ERAC and the Bologna Follow-Up Group and/or Directors General for Higher Education should be established.

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20 — ~~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](http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2018_Paris/77/1/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf)~~

1922. 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~~ assist the other ERA-related groups under its responsibility to have optimal working conditions for their efforts to realise the goals set in the ERA Roadmap.
- **The mandates of all ERA-related groups should give each group a clear mission with concrete and tangible tasks;**
- **In case of emerging topics not covered by existing groups,** ERA-related groups should ~~should~~ **could** continue to set up ad-hoc Working Groups **with clearly defined objectives** 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, **including its Joint Research Centre,** is encouraged to continue to foster cross-fertilisation **with** ~~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

- 20. INVITES the Commission, based on sound evidence, to publish by mid-2020 a new ERA Communication for the period beyond 2020, which should propose revised ERA policy priorities and ERA governance and monitoring mechanisms at national and EU level;**
- 21. INVITES the Presidencies of the Council to consider organising regular ERA ministerial conferences, starting in 2020 in connection with the new ERA Communication;**
- ~~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;~~
- 2224. 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; NOTES the need to explore options to better articulate the "ERA National Action Plans" with the European Semester;**
- 2325. Furthermore, in view of the expiration of the "ERA Roadmap 2015-2020 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.~~

**24. LOOKS FORWARD to the next review process of the ERA advisory structure no later than 2021, taking into account the possible new ERA Communication and the potential outcome of the first ERA ministerial conference.**

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