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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on strengthening the role and impact of research and innovation in the policy-making process in the Union - Presidency text

Delegations will find attached a revised Presidency text on the *Draft Council conclusions on strengthening the role and impact of research and innovation in the policymaking process in the Union* with a view to the meeting of the Research Working Party on 9 November 2023.

Changes in comparison to doc. 13705/23 are marked in **bold underline** for additions and in ~~strikethrough~~ for deletions.

ANNEX

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON STRENGTHENING THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS IN THE UNION

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

– its conclusions of December 2020[1] on the new European Research Area (ERA), which refer to the need to exploit more effectively the potential of research and innovation (R&I) for ~~the~~ society and the economy **and reaffirmed the target of investing 3% of Union GDP in research and development. In order to prioritise investments and reforms, Member States could update their national targets to reflect new Union priorities and national circumstances;**

– its conclusions on Data Technologies to Improve 'Better Regulation' of May 2021[2], which highlight the fact that a robust, evidence-based decision-making process is a key requirement for anticipating the potential and risks of emerging challenges and the need for a common effort to enhance Europe's resilience, and to deliver better policies and a more future-proof, innovation-friendly, predictable, consistent and efficient regulatory framework;

– its conclusions of September 2021[3] on the Global ~~A~~**a**pproach to Research and Innovation – Europe's strategy for international cooperation in a changing world, which underline that the Union's global approach to R&I should be built on the principles of openness, rules-based multilateralism, shared values and priorities, facilitation of knowledge circulation and **the** exchange of ideas, and highlight the importance of integrating the Global Approach to R&I in the Union's external action;

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1 13567/20.
2 9215/21, pp. 9 and 17.
3 12073/21

– its conclusions of November 2021[4] on the future governance of the European Research Area, which acknowledge the wider societal recognition and increased expectation of the role of R&I and its exploitation in addressing present and future social, environmental and economic challenges;

– its Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe of November 2021[5], which sets out the priority areas for joint action and a common set of values and principles for R&I in the Union, including the principle of value creation and the societal and economic impact of R&I, along with enhanced policy coordination and monitoring mechanisms in the ERA;

– its conclusions of October 2022[6] on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 15/2022 "Measures to widen participation in Horizon 2020 were well designed but sustainable change will mostly depend on national authorities", which **inter alia** take notes of the Court's recommendation to aim for a more geographically balanced participation of widening countries in widening measures, and also call on the Commission if continuous significant imbalances emerge, to assess the need for more tailor-made actions and targeted networking activities, while ensuring **that** the allocation of funding continues to be based on the principle of excellence;

– its Recommendation on the guiding principles for knowledge valorisation of December 2022[7], referring to the need to strengthen structures, processes and practices in the use of research results and scientific knowledge for designing and implementing public policies and developing and revising standards;

4 14308/21.
5 OJ L 431, 2.12.2021, p. 1–9.
6 13426/22.
7 OJ L 317, 9.12.2022, p. 141–148.

– its conclusions of December 2022[8] on the New European Innovation Agenda (NEIA), which highlight the need to improve and consolidate ~~the~~ innovation ecosystems as Europe continues to struggle with significant regional and national disparities and a persistent innovation divide, and which also underline that innovation ecosystems have a strong regional and national dimension that should be fully taken into consideration when developing the innovation policy;

– its conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 23/2022 entitled 'Synergies between Horizon 2020 and European Structural and Investment Funds - Not yet used to full potential' of **March** ~~February~~ 2023, which encourage the inclusion of synergies in strategic planning, programming and implementation, where relevant, for instance in smart specialisation strategies **(S3)**, in order to capitalise on the full potential of investments in Europe's R&I sector;

– its conclusions of June 2022[9] on Research assessment and implementation of Open Science, which suggest that the evolution of the research assessment systems in Europe should be guided, inter alia, by guiding principles taking into consideration the "diverse career paths and all research and innovation activities, including (…) support for evidence-informed policymaking";

– Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) whereby the scope of the application of the Facility refers to policy areas of European relevance structured in six pillars, which are the green transition; the digital transformation; smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, including economic cohesion, jobs, productivity, competitiveness, research, development and innovation, and a well-functioning internal market with strong SMEs; social and territorial cohesion; health, and economic, social and institutional resilience, with the aim of, inter alia, increasing crisis preparedness and crisis response capacity; and policies for the next generation, children and the youth, such as education and skills~~.~~**;**

8 15602/22.
9 10126/22.

– **the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, and the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025"[10], which includes inter alia policy objectives related to closing gender gaps in the labour market, achieving equal participation across different sectors and achieving gender balance in decision-making and in politics.**

UNDERLINING THAT

– ~~that~~ the ERA's ambition to create a single, borderless area for research, innovation and technology ~~across the EU~~ **should underpin European R&I policy and programme design and implementation.** ~~has been present to some extent in the policy mix delivered by the EU.~~

– ~~that the mutually complementary dimensions covered in the present Conclusions reveal that~~ R&I policy measures, through an appropriate design of their actions, facilitate a positive impact on society**,** ~~and~~ the economy **and the environment**, and contribute to strengthening democracy and increasing the resilience of the Union.

– ~~that~~ science-informed policymaking processes can enhance the quality and reinforce the coherence of policy initiatives in different sectors and administrations.

– ~~that in current times~~ **currently**, policy initiatives across sectors project the constant need for innovation to promote economic ~~and social~~ development, **environmental protection and social progress**, which requires strong R&I ecosystems. ~~The role of ecosystems is of utmost importance for~~ **These ecosystems and their actors can contribute to** ~~avoiding inequalities between territories, and~~ **reducing** the current innovation divide at national, regional and local levels ~~requires~~ **through continuous national efforts and** a common ~~strategic~~ orientation from the Member States.

10 **6678/20.**

– ~~that~~ the RRF **was designed to** ~~is~~ temporarily help~~ing~~ Member States to make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions. By strengthening the response to cyclical or circumstantial events - mitigating the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic - consistent with the relevant country-specific recommendations identified in the European Semester Recommendations, the RRF has allowed several Member States to develop new evidence-informed policy-driven investments and reforms complementary to other national and other EU funds and instruments.

I. Science in the public policy process to improve the lives of citizens and strengthen democracy

1. RECALLS that the Union has a long-standing tradition of relying on science and the best available evidence-based knowledge in all disciplines to support and improve decision-making, as well as the quality, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of public policies (the 'Science for Policy' concept). The design, monitoring and evaluation of evidence-informed policies have relied, among other types of knowledge, on processes of direct involvement of the scientific communities and/or mechanisms of scientific advice for political authorities to support them in the exercise of their responsibilities.

The contribution of science to improve public policymaking

2. UNDERLINES that, to strengthen the Union's competitiveness and the implementation of Union policies to face up to global challenges, the ERA requires:

    a. a strong R&I ecosystem in all Member States, grounded in excellence, that will further facilitate the generation of high-quality scientific knowledge, the implementation of open-science policies as well as the development of technologies and innovation, including social innovation, with a high social, economic and environmental impact;

    b. thriving scientific and innovation communities encouraging talents, both capable of and committed to contributing to the progress of our democratic societies by advancing top-down and bottom-up scientific and technological objectives, delivering tangible results and communicating them to policymakers and the general public;

c. increased, coordinated**,** ~~and~~ targeted **and synergised** funding at both Union and national levels in order to better respond to the Union's and the Member States' priorities and challenges**;** ~~, such as building capacity throughout the Union and reducing R&I fragmentation and disparities between and within Member States,~~

c bis. building capacities that can contribute to improving excellence and competitiveness at national level and reducing R&I fragmentation and disparities between and within Member States;

d. improved capacity to engage in R&I cooperation with international partners and between countries and global regions while pursuing the Strategic Autonomy of the Union to defend the Union's interests globally while preserving an open economy.

3. CONSIDERS that all fields of science, including social sciences and humanities, by producing evidence-based knowledge, should play a more significant role in the policymaking process for the identification of political challenges, the analysis of the state of the art, the framing of the solutions**. These elements could be** ~~being~~ part of the findings included in foresight activities and impact assessments. RECALLS that this should be achieved in line with the Better Regulation principles recognising scientific evidence as a cornerstone. Science should also be a key part of the process of preparing for political decisions, as well as for implementing, evaluating and communicating them. STRESSES the importance of including the best available scientific evidence in impact assessments to support the political decision-making process to increase the credibility of **and citizens' trust in** public action**,** ~~and~~ **as well as** the added value of the legislation.

4. STRESSES that scientific knowledge and scientific advice should be reliable, verifiable, robust, pertinent and transparent, fully respecting scientific freedom, integrity and ethical principles, with a view to supporting evidence-informed policymaking. RECALLS that science and evidence-based knowledge are built on a rigorous methodological framework, even though there are methodological limits and they are subject to uncertainties. **ENCOURAGES transparent and responsible communication about scientific processes and the dissemination of scientific evidence used to inform policymakers, as well as societal engagement and citizens participatory processes in R&I, in line with democratic values**. RECOGNISES the need to build and expand capacities for scientific policy advice in order to facilitate **the activities within knowledge** valorisation ~~of knowledge~~ for policymaking. ~~ENCOURAGES transparent and responsible communication about scientific processes and the dissemination of scientific evidence used to inform policymakers, as well as societal engagement and citizens participatory processes in R&I, in line with democratic values. HIGHLIGHTS that open science is also key for policymakers and other groups in society for accessing and using free scientific knowledge of highest quality, which enhances resilience to disinformation and to knowledge resistance and promotes public trust in science and evidence-informed policy making.~~

4bis. HIGHLIGHTS that open science is also key for policymakers and society at large for accessing and using free scientific knowledge of the highest quality. This enhances resilience to disinformation, prevents knowledge resistance and promotes public trust in science and evidence-informed policy making.

Governance in decision-making

5. RECALLS that the formulation of public policies aims at supporting citizens' well-being and involves political, financial, economic, **environmental** and social elements, for which scientific knowledge and advice should serve as input to policymakers.

6. HIGHLIGHTS that inter-disciplinary, evidence-based knowledge, innovative processes and scientific advice may contribute to sectoral policies' objectives in various policy dimensions. HIGHLIGHTS the fact that the mobilisation of R&I communities in the promotion of cross-cutting and government-wide understanding of scientific knowledge can serve to break down the traditional silos of sectoral policies, promote cross-sectori~~a~~l learning within the EU and peer-learning among Member States, and improve the coherence, relevance and expected impact of public policies.

7. RECOGNISES that the use of evidence-based knowledge and scientific advice, and the means of incorporating them into public policies, vary across Member States **depending on** ~~according to~~ the level of governance, sectoral policy advisory ecosystems and regulated administrative processes. TAKES NOTE that intermediaries, such as **some** scientific counselling structures or mechanisms, **including the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors of the European Commission and the European Science Advisors Forum,** may play a role **in** ~~for~~ bringing together researchers and policymakers, and may present evidence-informed policy options to support policy development.

Future actions

8. ENCOURAGES the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States:

   a. to further develop the concept of 'Science for Policy' and to promote the role of scientific and evidence-based knowledge and its cross-cutting integration in public policies, by:

      i. continuing to raise societies' awareness of the added value of incorporating scientific knowledge into the design, development and deployment of public policies, and, by extension, raising the trust **of society in science and research as well as trust** in researchers among policymakers;

      ii. continuing the actions on mapping the existing practices of knowledge valorisation in policymaking and the national institutional scientific advisory systems and mechanisms;

iii. analysing the policymaking authorities' needs for scientific and evidence-based knowledge as well as the researchers' and innovators' needs for understanding the policymaking process. These needs can be met by respective training actions covering the use of scientific and academic expertise **in order** to evaluate public policies, **in response to** ~~following~~ demands for scientific advisory processes, mechanisms and instruments at European, national, regional and local levels. These actions should aim at fostering the uptake of scientific advice in decision-making processes ~~by promoting the science and policymaking literacy.~~**;**

iv. developing relevant tools that allow continuous peer-learning, encouraging exchange of best practices in ~~'S~~**s**cience for ~~P~~**p**olicy~~'~~ at both national and Union level, and promoting intersectoral mobility and capacity**-**building measures, with particular emphasis on their tangible benefits for society;

v. recognising science for policy activities as one of the elements for assessing the scientific **capacity** ~~excellence~~ of research institutions and the researchers' career progress, and supporting ~~and incentivising~~ the participation of early-stage career researchers in these activities;

v bis. providing adequate incentives for researchers to engage in science for policy activities with significant impact;

vi. acknowledging ~~women~~ **gender mainstreaming** in science for policy**, including through the promotion of women's careers in science to contribute to closing labour gaps; as well as in research content to avoid gender biases in the scientific evidence base.** ~~policy and promote research, careers, and expertise of women in science policy.~~

b. to foster the establishment of a ~~'S~~**s**cience for ~~P~~**p**olicy~~'~~ ecosystem to support and connect the scientific and policymaking communities in the Union on the basis of the principles and values of the Pact for R&I in Europe.

c. to promote the collaboration of networks of relevant actors within the Union, the exchange of best practices and mutual learning exercises, and the establishment of two-way communication channels to enrich the dialogue between the scientific communities and public policymakers in various policy domains, including R&I; and, by extension, promoting societal engagement without prejudice to existing policy dialogues.

9. INVITES the Commission to promote instruments and activities that value the 'Science for Policy' concept, including its knowledge valorisation dimension, ~~and~~ **as well as** to **further** develop tools and programmes for the intersectoral dialogues, training and mobility of staff between scientific institutions and public administrations**, and to foster the use of existing ones**. The important role of this staff as facilitators and "bridges" between different structures should be recognised and supported.

9 bis. CALLS ON the Commission to foster the use of the Technical Support Instrument, ~~which can build up the capacities of the scientific communities,~~ and the Policy Support Facility to support public policymakers and strengthen public structures for scientific advice.

II. A stronger role for ~~regions and cities~~ **local and regional innovation** ***to strengthen competitive R&I ecosystems***

9 bis bis (former 13)

RECALLS that regional development is primarily the responsibility of national and regional governments, which can use Union cohesion policy funds and the S3 to increase the interaction and cooperation among the different innovation ecosystems' stakeholders and reduce disparities. UNDERLINES that the Union also plays an important role in promoting inter-regional cooperation and the exchange of best practices beyond national borders.

14. STRESSES that, besides other funding programmes, the R&I framework programme should ~~contribute to fostering~~ **continue to drive** research excellence in all Member States. CONSIDERS that, without prejudice to the negotiations of future EU **R&I** programmes, ~~a~~ greater coordination across innovation ecosystems and a more efficient use of all capabilities and resources at European, national and regional levels would improve competitiveness and innovation performance of the Union.

9 ter. RECALLS that there is a strong role for ~~communities, cities and~~ region**al**~~s~~ **and local actors** to build globally competitive R&I ecosystems and growth strategies. Local capacity building and seed investing lay the foundations for a successful European innovation ecosystem that delivers European competitiveness.

10. RECALLS that the new ERA should be based on trust and shared responsibilities, **with** the participation of stakeholders and citizens, building on the societal engagement, diversity and strengths of the European R&I ecosystems. ACKNOWLEDGES the Commission's efforts to measure the performance of national and regional R&I systems in the Union by means of the annual European Innovation Scoreboard and the biennial Regional Innovation Scoreboard, which show that**,** despite ~~the persistent innovation divide~~ **the fact that most EU Member States have increased their performance, a significant innovation gap remains between them**. **REITERATES** that there is a lot of potential across Europe **to** ~~in~~ strengthen~~ing~~ the performance of ~~the~~ **its** ~~ERA~~ R&I ecosystem**s**. ~~UNDERLINES~~ **TAKES NOTE of** the potential of closer R&I cooperation and coordination in the ERA between the European, national and regional levels in order to reduce the R&I divide across the Union.

10bis. RECALLS that the NEIA underlines the challenge of enhancing the interconnection between European innovation ecosystems. HIGHLIGHTS the fact that the regional dimension ~~simultaneously~~ hosts rural and urban areas requiring greater flexibility and ~~specificity~~ **inclusivity** in support instruments, as well as advances in multi-level policy coordination between EU, national, regional and local authorities.

11. ~~SUPPORTS~~ **TAKES NOTE of** the NEIA's objective of consolidating and connecting the multiple and geographically dispersed innovation ecosystems in Europe, and TAKES NOTE of the Regional Innovation Valleys and the **pilot project of the** Partnerships for Regional Innovation **-** initiatives aiming to facilitate cross-border collaboration between less and more innovative regions with complementary ~~Smart Specialisation Strategies (~~S3~~)~~.

11bis RECOGNISES that innovation spans a variety of sectors and encompasses technological as well as social innovation. CONSIDERS that the NEIA's focus on deep-tech innovation, talents and entrepreneurship is appropriate for consolidating and developing the Union's technological leadership, competitiveness and strategic autonomy while preserving an open economy. HIGHLIGHTS ~~that it is essential to ensure that~~ **the need to support participation from** emerging and moderate innovative Member States and regions ~~participate~~ in deep-tech projects, **fostering the cooperation** ~~cooperating~~ with leading and strong innovative Member States and regions, **as well as to** connect~~ing~~ businesses with cutting-edge science, ~~and~~ to facilitat**e**~~eing~~ access to funding and **to attract and retain** talents.

The need to improve the governance of national and regional cooperation and the alignment of the policy portfolio

13. RECALLS the role of Union cohesion policy and the S3 to foster innovation and competitiveness in all EU Members States and regions. ~~UNDERLINES that the Union also plays an important role in promoting R&I inter-regional and cross-border cooperation and the exchange of best practices beyond national borders.~~ HIGHLIGHTS the fact that the initiatives supporting European R&I ecosystems and the new initiatives launched to deploy the NEIA should be designed to create synergies with cohesion policy funds and R&I funds, while taking into account the national and regional responsibilities and different legislative frameworks.

~~14. STRESSES that, besides other funding programmes, the R&I framework programme should contribute to fostering **continue to drive** research excellence in all Member States. CONSIDERS that, without prejudice to the negotiations of future EU **R&I** programmes, a greater coordination across innovation ecosystems and a more efficient use of all capabilities and resources at European, national and regional levels would improve competitiveness and innovation performance of the Union.~~

15. HIGHLIGHTS that close exchange and cooperation between less and highly innovative EU Member States and regions may contribute efficiently to further develop**ing** R&I capacities and **to** reduce**ing** disparities between them. RECALLS that the Commission has stimulated regional innovation ecosystems through the smart specialisation framework and RECOMMENDS that the Commission evaluate~~s~~ the impact of recent initiatives such as the European Institute of Innovation and Technology's Regional Innovation Scheme and establish~~es~~ connections between the various NEIA Flagship Initiatives.

15bis SUPPORTS the EU Global Approach to Research and Innovation to ~~design~~ **promote cooperation for aligning international** R&I policies ~~aligned~~ with the Sustainable Development Goals, in order to enhance the international cooperation of European innovation ecosystems, on the basis of the principles and values of the Pact for R&I in Europe.

15ter. STRESSES that research infrastructures constitute a fundamental pillar of excellent R&I ecosystems, attracting users from a variety of scientific fields and facilitating collaboration, and have become multidisciplinary hubs at national, regional and local levels, enabling cross-fertilisation across disciplines as reflected in the Tenerife Declaration on "Global Dimension and Sustainability of Research Infrastructures".

Future actions

16. URGES the Commission:

a. to harness the competitiveness of European regional innovation ecosystems, to promote their impact in interregional smart specialisations and exploit complementarities in R&I capabilities, paying attention to the need to make progress in closing the innovation gap in Europe by strengthening the science base and innovation ecosystems **across all** ~~in lower-performing R&I~~ **EU** countries and regions.

b. in cooperation with Member States, where appropriate, to introduce measures to coordinate Union, national and regional initiatives to attract or retain talent and improve their R&I capacities.

c. in cooperation with Member States, to increase coordination between R&I and other relevant policies, notably the digital and industrial policies, in order to target excellence and impact, and to support transformative innovation, innovative industrial value chains and to mobilise innovation hubs.

d. in cooperation with Member States, to identify and promote ~~tailor-made~~ evidence-informed R&I policies, with a view to targeting specific national, regional and local challenges and needs, ~~while reducing inequalities and~~ contributing to Union and national strategic priorities.

e. in cooperation with Member States, to strengthen co**operation** ~~llaboration~~ between the Union and third countries in a Team Europe approach, through specific actions supporting international R&I ecosystems within the framework of the Commission's EU Global Gateway and the Global Approach to R&I. In particular, to strengthen co**operation** ~~llaboration~~ with Latin American and Caribbean States, in the context of the EU-CELAC Summit of Heads of State.

III. ~~A qualitative leap in European R&I policies to improve competitiveness and welfare:~~ Policy impact of the Recovery and Resilience Facility on the Union's key objectives **of R&I policy and the ERA**

17. STRESSES that reforms and investments under the Facility should ~~promote the Union's economic, social and territorial cohesion policy areas~~notably ~~by~~ improv**e**~~ing~~ the resilience, crisis preparedness, adjustment capacity and growth potential of the Member States, ~~and~~ thereby contributing ~~notably~~ to the strategic autonomy of the Union alongside an open economy and generat~~ing~~**e** European added value **as well as promote economic, social, and territorial cohesion**. R**&I** ~~esearch and Innovation~~ measures funded by the RRF have the capacity to contribute to transforming the European R&I ecosystem through:

a. sustainable reforms and related public investments at national level, with many Member States devoting a substantial proportion of their RRF investments and reforms to R&I, aiming to achieve systemic social impact and changes as a driver of a knowledge-based economy.

b. building a diverse, excellent~~t~~**ce-driven** and well-functioning ERA, aimed at finding solutions ~~in~~ **to achieve** the Union's and national priorities such as the green and digital transitions, **and to** ~~as well as~~ address~~ing~~ other significant societal challenges.

18. STRESSES that, in several instances, Member States have included at the design stage of their RRF actions, where possible, some investments to complement, strengthen and establish synergies, including the additionality of the Facility with other Union funds and with the traditional R&I instruments and actions found in ~~the~~ R&I national and European funds.

19. HIGHLIGHTS ~~the fact~~ that the RRF is characterised by a time**-**limited design, **funding** and implementation period as well as ~~clear~~ rules of additionality and complementarity of funds that have ~~allowed~~ **enabled** Member States to act on national and European priorities. UNDERLINES ~~the fact~~ that the RRF **Regulation** ~~approach~~ ~~facilitates~~ **allows for** synergies with other Union programmes and instruments. RECALLS that synergies between Union, national and, where available, regional funding R&I programmes still constitute both a major challenge and **an** opportunity for accomplishing the objective of strengthening European scientific and technological bases. WELCOMES the efforts made by the Commission and the Member States to address the persistent challenges and INVITES them to continue this work.

20. RECALLS the role that the Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs), the Union R&I Framework Programme and Cohesion policy instruments can have in supporting the new ERA. RECOGNISES that in several instances Member States have allocated RRF funding to actions in R&I policies that can support some of the priorities of the new ERA, such as:

a. the promotion of gender equality in R&I. STRESSES that some Member States have **included** ~~implemented~~ **gender mainstreaming measures - such as** further programmes to support ~~female~~ **women** entrepreneurs and their professional development **and** to attract female talent to careers in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics **-** as well as actions that address the gender gap in R&I.

b. the promotion of territorial cohesion through R&I. STRESSES that some Member States have included measures to strengthen national and regional R&I ecosystems and territorial cohesion, and to facilitate coordination and better governance systems among national and regional bodies.

~~21. ACKNOWLEDGES that the RRF Regulation was established to provide effective and significant financial support to step up the implementation of sustainable reforms and related public investments in the Member States and the specific objective of the Facility shall be to provide Member States with financial support with a view to achieving the milestones and targets of reforms and investments as set out in their recovery and resilience plans.~~

Future actions

2**1**~~2~~. RECALLS that the Commission is conducting a mid-term evaluation of the RRF, which will be delivered by February 2024. INVITES the Commission to carry out a separate study that complements this evaluation, **while avoiding any duplication,** ~~and~~ focuses on the R&I actions included in the RRF to support policy learning, and **also** takes into consideration the design differences between the RRF and other Union funds **with regard** to ~~promote~~:

a. the contribution to fostering the green and digital transition, **and, where appropriate**, ~~strengthening territorial cohesion within R&I,~~ ~~and~~ reducing R&I disparities at regional and national level and promoting gender equality.

b. the contribution to strengthening national R&I systems.

c. the contribution of the R&I measures of the national RRPs to advancing the ERA Policy Agenda and the New European Innovation Agenda.

d. the extent to which Member States have exploited synergies between the RRF and other Union funds in R&I and sectoral policy actions where science and technology play a significant role, identifying the instruments and mechanisms implemented and the obstacles that have hindered the combination of different sources, as well as documenting best practices to facilitate mutual learning.

2**2**~~3~~. INVITES the Commission to inform Member States about the findings of this study for future R&I policy developments at European and national levels **and about the findings of the mid-term evaluation of the RRF**. RECALLS that existing Commission tools, such as the Technical Support Instrument and the Horizon Policy Support Facility, can help in designing and implementing reforms.