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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on "The European Research Area: Deepening the ERA providing researchers with attractive and sustainable research careers and working conditions"

Delegations will find in annex the draft Council Conclusions on "The European Research Area: Deepening the ERA providing researchers with attractive and sustainable research careers and working conditions" in view of its examination at the Research Working Party on Monday 15 February 2021.

Draft Council Conclusions on Deepening the European Research Area: Making brain circulation a reality, providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions

FIRST DRAFT

RECALLING

- the Council Resolution of June 2000¹ establishing a European area of research and innovation and including focus on human resources and attractiveness of research professions;
- the Council Resolution of 10 November 2003 on the profession and the career of researchers within the European Research Area (ERA) that called Member States and the Commission to inter alia share and develop evaluation and appraisal systems, improve working conditions for researchers and stimulate intersectoral mobility of researchers and that invited the Commission to report regularly²;
- its conclusions of 18 April 2005 on **reinforcing human resources** in science and technology in the European Research Area³;
- the conclusions of the European Council of 13 and 14 March 2008, which called upon the Member States to **remove barriers** to the free movement of knowledge by creating a 'fifth freedom' based in particular on making the labour market for researchers more open and competitive, providing better career structures, transparency and family friendliness;

¹ OJ C 205, 19.7.2000, p. 1

² OJ C 282, 25.11.2003.

³ 8194/05.

- its conclusions of 30 May 2008 on family-friendly scientific careers: towards an Integrated Model, which recalled the crucial role of research and technological development policy for Europe in the context of the Lisbon Strategy⁴;
- its conclusions 26 September 2008 on “Better careers and more mobility: a European Partnership for researchers”, stressing the need to keeping a balance between the opening-up at the European level and the autonomy of institutions, reinforcing the principles and values of the European Charter for Researchers (2005) and the Code for Recruitment and the need of monitoring the progress at national and EU levels⁵;
- the report of Ministers Biltgen (LU) and Gago (PT) of 18 May 2009 on a European partnership to improve the attractiveness of RTD careers and the conditions for mobility of researchers in Europe⁶ proposing diversified research career paths, dual careers, family conditions and flexicurity and invited for synergies with other Council formations;
- its conclusions of 2 March 2010 on European researchers' mobility and careers⁷ and its conclusions of 1 December 2015 on research integrity⁸ and advancing gender equality;⁹
- The European Parliament Resolution published in April 2010¹⁰ on better career and more mobility, in particular asking for a single European career model, urging for a European Pension Fund and calling on Member States to make the returning to home institutions more attractive for researchers;

⁴ 10212/08.

⁵ 1367/08, 7652/1/08 REV 1.

⁶ 10003/09.

⁷ 6833/10.

⁸ 14853/15.

⁹ 14846/15.

¹⁰ 2010/C 87 E/20)

- the Conclusions of the European Council of February 2011¹¹ that confirmed that Europe needs a unified research area to attract talent and investment and that called for the creation of a genuine single market for knowledge, research and innovation;
- its conclusions of 28 and 29 November 2011 on the modernization of higher education asking for open and transparent recruitment procedures and a European Framework for Research Careers;
- its conclusions of 29 May 2015¹² on the European Research Area Roadmap 2015-2020 highlighting inter alia the role of human capital in the advancement of the ERA and the necessity to strengthen comprehensive human resources strategies and the empowerment of young researchers by providing them with attractive career pathways;
- the European Parliament resolution of 9 September 2015 on women’s careers in science and universities, and glass ceilings encountered¹³;
- its conclusions of 27 May 2016¹⁴ on “the transition towards an Open Science system;
- its conclusions of November 2016¹⁵ on measures to support early-stage researchers and increase the attractiveness of the research careers, which link the careers with the Skills Agenda and called upon the Commission in particular to develop monitoring processes for measuring researchers’ mobility flows within the EU and with third countries;

¹¹ EUCO 2/11

¹² 9351/15.

¹³ Texts adopted, P8_TA (2015)0311

¹⁴ 9526/16.

¹⁵ 15013/16

- the Commission Recommendation (EU) 2018/790 of 25 April 2018 on access to and preservation of scientific information, that in particular call for Member States to set and implement clear policies for adjusting, with regards to scientific information, the recruitment and career evaluation system for researchers, the evaluation system for awarding research grants to researchers, and the evaluation systems for research performing institutions;
- its conclusions of 30 November 2018¹⁶ on the governance of European Research Area, which stressed the importance of the development of the labour market for researchers in Europe, linking Open Science with reward and assessment mechanisms, as well as skills development, schemes for researchers and called for better synergies with the European Higher Education Area;
- the opinion on the future of the ERA adopted by ERAC on 17 December 2019¹⁷ that outlined the main elements for a “New ERA”;
- the Commission communication of 30 September 2020¹⁸ on “A new ERA for research and innovation”;
- its conclusions of 1 December 2020¹⁹ on the New European Research Area which invited the Portuguese Presidency to develop further in cooperation with the Commission the topic of research careers.

¹⁶ 14989/18
¹⁷ ERAC 1201/20
¹⁸ 11400/20 + ADD1
¹⁹ 12349/20

I. Introduction

1. Following up on the ERA policy Agenda and taking into consideration the ERA Roadmap by the Commission, set in the new communication, namely on the priority “deepening the ERA” that strives for better working conditions and employability among other relevant framework conditions;
2. RECOGNISES that researchers are at the heart of R&I systems and that the European Research Area aims at the creation of an internal market for research with free and balanced circulation of researchers, knowledge and technology to assure excellent knowledge production, diffusion and innovation;
3. RECALLS that enhancing the attractiveness of research careers is a vital element of the “New ERA”, by creating attractive, inclusive, supportive and safe working and employment conditions for more sustainable and appealing researchers’ careers and, consequently, attracting and retaining excellent researchers;
4. WELCOMES the Commission proposals in the ERA Communication for a toolbox of support measures to strengthen research careers and other related actions such as those related to open science, inclusiveness and access to excellence (e.g. broaden EURAXESS, facilitate brain circulation);
5. CONSIDERS that research careers go beyond R&I policies, mobilizing other public policies like employment and social security, education and skills, calling for synergies and horizontal coordination; STRESSES the importance of national and regional and sectorial dimensions and preservation of autonomy of the organisations;

6. HIGHLIGHTS that ERA successfully fostered mobility of researchers, removing barriers to circulation through non-binding instruments e.g., the Charter and Code, Human Resources Strategy for Researchers and EURAXESS and funding instruments such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA); however, despite progress, the European dimension of research careers remains to be achieved;
7. STRESSES that cross-border cooperation, openness and sharing and competition as well as creating value from knowledge are underlining principles for the development of sustainable and attractive research careers;

II. Mobility, brain circulation and research and innovation systems

8. RECALLS that mobility of researchers both geographical and intersectoral is a core dimension of the New ERA and that Commission and Member States should strive for brain circulation as a balanced circular movement of researchers, with a better balance between brain drain and brain gain; RECOGNISES that brain circulation is linked to adequate framework conditions, interoperable and attractive research careers and the overall attractiveness of the research system; RECALLS on that regard the Zagreb Call for action on Brain Circulation linking the improvement of attractiveness of researchers' careers to brain circulation and to the need of better performing local research ecosystems;
9. RECOGNISES that impacts of mobility on research careers development is highly relevant in earlier stages of careers, as it is motivated by the search for suitable positions, career progression, better remuneration and employment conditions, as well as by the attractiveness of research systems;
10. EMPHASISES that competition for talent between institutions and systems, is an essential element to improve attractiveness of research systems, highlighting the need to investment in local research system and career development, to eliminate a major driver for the imbalances in flows within the internal market and beyond, creating challenges both in sending and receiving countries;

11. UNDERLINES that balance of the flows and brain circulation goes beyond national remits and requires action at European level through policy measures and instruments; CALLS on Member States to improve the attractiveness of the research and innovation systems with adequate framework conditions, including sufficient R&I investment and implementation of reforms as needed, and notably in the context of their Recovery and Resilience Plans; CALLS on the Commission to develop instruments and measures to attain this aim, such as through the ERA Hubs and ERA4You, Widening Actions and support instruments to design and implement reforms in the national R&I systems, such as the Horizon Policy Support Facility; HIGHLIGHTS the importance of incentive schemes for the promotion of mobility at European level (ERASMUS+, MSCA, ERC), and national schemes; RECALLS, in this context, the study on support measures for researchers to return to their country of origin within and to the Union, foreseen in Horizon Europe that can be a useful tool to demonstrate the need for measures to promote return of researchers and its potential impact in terms of brain gain;

III. Open labour market for researchers

12. NOTES that mobility of researchers in Europe was fostered by the openness of recruitment in order to create an internal market for research, and that achieving a well-functioning labour market for researchers is part of the priorities of ERA; LOOKS FORWARD to the evaluation of the ERA priority 3 – “Labour market for research implementing instruments“ being conducted and providing insights on the level of intervention and future recommendations with more impact at European, national and institutional level;
13. STRESSES the increasing trend towards precariousness of employment in academia and reduction of job security in many countries, as shown by the fact that PhD holders are outnumbering the permanent positions in the academia, while career guidance mechanisms towards other sectors and involvement of non-academic sector in the training and career development systems are often lacking;

14. NOTES the remuneration, including pension and social security issues and the heterogeneous situation in Europe hampering a level playing field as part of broad employment and social policy conditions;
15. NOTES that early-stage career researchers, especially Post-docs are widely under short term temporary contracts with high uncertainty regarding career prospects, which has been aggravated with the COVID-19 pandemic; RECALLS the Bratislava Declaration of Young Researchers asking for sustainable and transparent career trajectories and better employment stability;
16. NOTES that insufficient institutional funding can lead to short-term, project-based contracts that do not give a long term perspective for researchers as funding tends to be short-term and project-based;
17. HIGHLIGHTS the skills mismatch that can be observed in the labour markets as academic doctoral training often mainly focus on training for an academic research career path with pure research skills increasing the difficulty for talents to move to other sectors whose absorption capacity for such profiles is limited; RECOGNISES the need to enlarging the doctoral training programmes beyond the academic training including transversal skills valuable to other sectors, the need to involve other sectors in the training systems for early career researchers from the onset to improve matching, and the need for wider access to training and career development instruments;
18. NOTES the increasing importance of the diverse and essential roles highly skilled research talents play in successful research and innovation systems across the ERA such as data stewards, research (e-)infrastructure operators, research facilitators, knowledge brokers, innovation managers and coordinators, among others;
19. ADDRESSES the recognition of the diversity of the research career in its broadest sense, and the need for training and career development instruments to allow talents to embark on diverse careers;
20. UNDERLINES in these contexts the importance of upskilling and reskilling and digital skills;

IV. Attractive European Framework for research careers

21. NOTES that attractive and flexible framework for research careers is essential for creating conditions to retain talent in Europe and to attract researchers to Europe allowing interoperability and comparability; RECOGNISES the need for harmonising the definition of researchers' careers allowing interoperability and mobility between sectors and countries; RECOGNISES the important technical work being taken by the Commission on the recognition of research as a profession at European level, differentiating the latter from Science and Engineering occupations in the updating of ESCO classification (2021 update of ESCO database) and fine-tuning the EQF8 (professionals in highly skilled jobs); similarly, NOTES the work that will be done on EURES to be updated in 2021, in terms of competences and qualifications; ASKS the Commission to develop a taxonomy of Skills for researchers²⁰ in order to include research skills on the European Job Mobility Portal;
22. RECOGNISES that a unified and specific profession for researchers will facilitate interoperability between careers of different sectors and thus facilitating intersectoral mobility, in full respect of the autonomy of the universities, research organisations and business;
23. NOTES that the revision of the scope addressed by the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Recruitment is in progress in the ERA-related groups and CONSIDERS analysis of further evolution to a single framework with a more holistic approach addressing all challenges beyond values and principles and reducing its bias towards academia; HIGHLIGHTS that the renewed 'Charter & Code' should guide further improvements in the recruitment, selection, rewarding and assessment systems of researchers across Europe, and that these elements should be taken up in the future Pact for R&I;
24. WELCOMES the reform and broadening of EURAXESS network, services and portals towards a talent management platform, with linkages with EURES, and other transnational networks, bridging researchers and institutions and helping absorb talent in countries and regions;

²⁰ 9349/20

25. UNDERLINES that the current reward and assessment systems are largely based on the journal where researchers publish (publication metrics) rather than on what researchers deliver (excellence and impact), and should evolve towards a more qualitative assessment that also incentivizes open collaboration and knowledge and data sharing, and societal engagement; HIGHLIGHTS the need to explore more talent-based quality measurement, going beyond publication metrics and capturing of funding, and taking into account excellence of research, teaching skills, collaboration with industry, among others; NOTES the experiences and reforms underway in Member States and in the research organisations and universities asking for a European approach to the evaluation of researchers' talent; NOTES the Commission's intention to launch in 2021 a wide debate on reforming research assessment, among policy makers (EU, Member States levels), research funders, research performers, scientific publishers and other stakeholders in line with the ERA Communication;
26. CONSIDERS the development of a Model tenure-track system at European level that would benefit early-stage career researchers, increase transparency on contractual arrangements, improve goal oriented training and career development, facilitate diversity of career paths, therefore reduce career precariousness and increase job security;

V. Making research careers with better working conditions and family friendliness

27. RECOGNISES that careers tend not to be linear or developed within a single sector or country and that mobile researchers tend to have composite research careers as a result of different career paths and multiple welfare systems valid only in the country where they were acquired;
28. RECOGNISES that researchers often reach a permanent position at a very late stage and that analysis of existing instruments and tools to tackle this problem should be promoted;

29. ACKNOWLEDGES that social security and pension schemes are national competence and NOTES the progress realized by the pan-European Pension scheme RESAVER and the need for more visibility and diversification of portfolios to facilitate adoption by organisations, including foundations and the business sector and better articulation with national systems; EMPHASISES that analysis of existing instruments and tools and share of best practices should be promoted;
30. UNDERLINES the need to promote a better working-life balance and family friendly environment as part of career prospects including childcare provisions, parental leave and dual-career opportunities;
31. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of promoting equal opportunities and gender balance namely in career accession and progression, reducing precarity as well as the impact of COVID-19;
32. UNDERLINES the need to support career development and counselling services, including advice regarding career choices, recognising that the majority will work outside academia;

VI. Access to excellence and nurturing talent reduction of inequalities

33. HIGHLIGHTS the need to increase the level of public and private investment in R&D throughout Europe and to support lower performing research systems to increase their attractiveness to avoid brain drain and retain talent; STRESSES that meeting the R&D targets set out in the recent ERA Communication, notably in terms of achieving the 3% GDP R&D target, and the proposed widening actions under Horizon Europe, will contribute to this;
34. STRESSES the importance of supporting reforms in the national research systems to ensure the attractiveness of research careers and reduce the gap in the remunerations while improving the rewarding systems. Revamped Commission tools, such as the Technical Support Instrument and the Horizon Policy Support Facility, can help in designing and implementing these needed reforms;
35. CALLS on the Member States to consider for these purposes the inclusion of relevant packages of R&I reforms and investments in their Recovery and Resilience Plans;

VII. Intersectoral, interdisciplinary, virtual and international mobility

36. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of intersectoral mobility on fostering scientific employment, obtaining better knowledge exchange, acquiring a wider set of research- related skills and better matching these to the needs in non- academic sectors;
37. STRESSES that inter-sectoral mobility is significant for early-career researchers to reduce precariousness; HIGHLIGHTS that mobility between sectors can take many shapes (from academia to industry, business, public entities, cultural sectors, as well as to academia) and stresses that the training and career development systems should build mobility opportunities and guidance mechanisms for STEM domains as well as for social sciences and humanities;
38. CONSIDERS that ERA4You scheme proposed in the Commission communication on the future of ERA to foster mobility and access to excellence should primarily target early-stage career researchers providing them with options for employment in non-academic sector; EMPHASISES the need to foster intersectoral mobility and improve links to businesses, offering opportunities at Member State and EU level, such as MSCA fellowships to bridge the non-academic sector with the academic one;
39. NOTES the need to establishing solid partnerships between academia and non-academic sectors for researcher training and career development systems. Underlines the need for a European definition and possible brand of industrial doctorates as a good practice example;
40. CONSIDERS that attraction and retention of talent in Europe needs improved conditions for young researchers, promoting gender equality, fostering meritocracy and adapting systems of remuneration and social security and pensions to non-linear careers;
41. CONSIDERS the merit in using the recently established taxonomy for sustainable financing, to promote innovative, sustainable and regenerative businesses and entrepreneurial activities, stimulating research careers in industry, SMEs and business firms, together with an increasing level and scope of business and private R&D;

VIII. Synergies between European Higher Education Area and European Research Area

42. RECALLS that stronger synergies and interconnections between the ERA, the EHEA and the higher education related elements of the European Education Area (EEA), are to be developed further; CONSIDERS that synergies between the new ERA and the EEA realised through a comprehensive Higher Education Transformation Agenda, developed together with stakeholders and Member States, will enable empowering the European higher education sector in their education, research, innovation and service to society missions; HIGHLIGHTS that namely strengthening research careers should be a major component of this Agenda;
43. To ensure full synergies between ERA and EEA, CALLS on the Commission to support Member States and higher education institutions in creating a policy framework that allows for seamless and ambitious transnational cooperation between higher education institutions in Europe notably in the area of research careers, supporting transformation of institutions and surrounding ecosystems, leveraging excellence and raising the international competitiveness of Europe's higher education sector, thereby increasing attractiveness for talents within and outside Europe;
44. CONSIDERS that the European Universities Initiative promoted as a pilot in ERASMUS+ are another crucial element in terms of synergies; CONSIDERS European University Alliances and their partnerships with local ecosystems as ideal platforms to pilot interoperability of research careers, joint recruitment schemes, training and career development systems, as well as for testing new reward and assessment systems, on alignment of norms and rules and the possibility for joint recruitment;

IX. Monitoring

45. CONSIDERS the development of an observatory for monitoring of research careers trajectories, including doctoral and post-doctoral holders' flows of talent at different dimensions including geographical and sectoral mobility; NOTES that the definition of European research profession is key to develop statistical data on mobility and talent circulation and identification of trends, patterns, skills gaps and labour market dynamics; and INVITES the Commission, through the ERA Forum for Transition, to set a permanent, comprehensive and transparent monitoring system to allow the evaluation of EU actions; in addition, ASKS the Commission to diffuse the results of the study currently underway with the OCDE to develop better data on stocks and remuneration conditions;
46. INVITES the Commission for foresight analysis on researchers 'skills;

X. ERA Priority Actions

47. INVITES the Commission to develop the Observatory on Research Careers as a priority in order to provide sound evidence base for mobility indicators;
48. CALLS on the Commission and Member States to promote measures to reduce precarity in young researchers, to reduce inter-generation inequality and provide the youngsters with sustainable and attractive research careers; and ASKS future presidencies to further develop and explore this outstanding issue;
49. SUGGESTS to Member States and research and technology organisations and business sector to consider coordinated action towards the creation of diversified career paths to reduce skills mismatch and matching expectations of the doctoral trainees;
50. CALLS on Member States to take as a priority the issue of R&I investments and reforms in the above-mentioned areas in their Recovery and Resilience Plan; and INVITES Member States and the Commission to bring this issue further in the context of the future ERA Forum For Transition.