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NOTE

From:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
To:	Council
No. prev. doc.:	8409/15 RECH 102 COMPET 173 MI 277 TELECOM 100
Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on the European Research Area Roadmap 2015-2020 - <i>Adoption</i>

1. The February 2014 Council Conclusions on the progress report from the Commission on European Research Area (ERA) 2013¹ called for the “Member States in close cooperation with the Commission, considering the ERAC Opinion and working through ERAC to develop by mid-2015 an ERA Roadmap at European level which should serve the purpose of facilitating and reinforcing the efforts undertaken by the Member States”.

¹ Doc. 6945/14.

2. As a response to this request, the ERA Roadmap was developed in consultation with the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC), the ERA-related groups and most of the organisations which make up the ERA Stakeholder Platform. The ERAC Opinion was adopted by ERAC at its meeting of 16-17 April in Riga². The ERA Roadmap is a living document whose purpose is to identify a limited number of key implementation priorities which are likely to have the biggest impact on Europe's science, research and innovation systems.
3. On the basis of the ERA Roadmap, the Presidency proposed draft Council conclusions which have been discussed in the Research Working Party's meetings in March and April 2015 and a broad consensus on the text has been reached.
4. The Permanent Representatives Committee confirmed the broad consensus reached at its meeting of 13 May 2015. The UK entered a general scrutiny reservation on the final text, following the recent national elections.
5. Therefore, the Council ("Competitiveness") is called upon to adopt the conclusions at its meeting of 28-29 May 2015.

² Doc. 1208/15.

Draft Council conclusions on the European Research Area Roadmap 2015-2020

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

- The Conclusions of the European Council of 24-25 October 2013³ which note the need to accelerate structural reforms of national systems and to strengthen progress monitoring based on robust data provided by Member States in view of obtaining a full European Research Area by the end of 2014;
- Its Conclusions of 21 February 2014 on the progress report from the Commission on European Research Area (ERA) 2013⁴ which note the progress in delivering the ERA and call for the development of an ERA roadmap by mid-2015;
- Its Conclusions of 5 December 2014 on the European Research Area Progress Report 2014⁵ acknowledging that a good progress in delivering the ERA has been made, encouraging further efforts of the Commission, Member States and research stakeholders to make the ERA fully operational, and reaffirming its support to develop by mid-2015 an ERA roadmap at the European level,

³ Doc. EUCO 169/13.

⁴ Doc. 6945/14.

⁵ Doc. 16599/14.

1. UNDERLINES that the ERA is one of the cornerstones of the Innovation Union flagship initiative and is a crucial component of the Europe 2020 Strategy focusing on maximising the potential of Europe's research systems, fostering innovation, strengthening the scientific and technological bases of the Member States as well as their competitiveness and capacity to address grand societal challenges, and therefore REAFFIRMS its commitment to make the ERA fully operational.
- 2 REAFFIRMS the priorities for the ERA as identified in the 2012 Communication on a reinforced European Research Area Partnership and confirmed by the Council conclusions⁶, including the international dimension of the ERA, and RECOGNISES the start of a new phase in further developing the ERA. Building on the experience of the existing ERA partnership, the Member States, the Commission and the stakeholder organisations should now ensure a fully operational ERA through coordinated efforts at the national and the EU level while reviewing regularly and, when necessary, updating the ERA priorities.
3. ENDORSES the ERA Roadmap 2015-2020 adopted by the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC)⁷. In this context, ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of the work undertaken by the Member States and ERAC, in close cooperation with the Commission, and in consultation with the other ERA-related Groups and the ERA Stakeholder Platform.
4. AGREES with the approach taken by ERAC that the purpose of the ERA Roadmap is to identify a limited number of top action priorities to implement the ERA priorities which will have the biggest impact on Europe's research and innovation, whilst fully recognising that national research and innovation systems across Europe have different characteristics and specificities, and that it is up to the Member States to decide upon the most suited approaches for their systems.

⁶ Doc. 17649/12.

⁷ Doc. 1208/15.

5. UNDERLINES the importance of the implementation of the ERA Roadmap at the national and the EU level and INVITES the Member States and the Commission to implement the ERA Roadmap through appropriate actions in their action plans or strategies. CALLS for effective use of the Policy Support Facility in this endeavour.
6. INVITES ERAC to propose by the end of 2015 a set of core indicators and, where appropriate, qualitative methods allowing to monitor the implementation of the ERA Roadmap. STRESSES that the monitoring of the ERA Roadmap should be put in the context of the monitoring of the ERA progress and CALLS ON the Commission to consider possible integration of the monitoring of the ERA Roadmap into the ERA Progress Report 2016 and the following ERA Progress Report exercises, in close cooperation with the Member States, while avoiding creation of unnecessary administrative burden.
7. NOTES the need to place the ERA Roadmap in a broader strategic context of Europe's growth agenda, including the Digital Single Market (DSM) strategy and the Innovation Union. RECOGNISES that significant efforts have been undertaken by the Member States to address the ERA priorities in the context of the European Semester. The relevant ERA actions and measures, where appropriate, should be embedded in the National Reform Programmes. CALLS on the Member States and the Commission for better coherence and complementarity between all the ERA actions, including those fostering quality and excellence of the European research and innovation as well as actions promoting innovation and growth, while taking into account the need to close the research and innovation divide across the Member States and regions.

8. INVITES ERAC, in close cooperation and where relevant with appropriate input from relevant bodies, in particular GPC, and the Strategic configuration of the Programme Committee of Horizon 2020, to assess the coherence of joint initiatives⁸, especially those funded by the European Union, with an emphasis on their European added value, feasibility, critical mass, complementarity and impact. In this context, EMPHASISES that the advice of ERAC and other ERA-related groups on the identification and design of strategic priorities should be taken into consideration for the implementation of Horizon 2020 and advice resulting from the assessment of the Seventh Framework Programme should be also taken into account.

WITH REGARD TO THE ERA ROADMAP PRIORITIES

9. CALLS on the Member States and the Commission to start the implementation of the top action priorities identified in the ERA Roadmap:
- strengthening the evaluation of research and innovation policies and seeking complementarities between, and rationalisation of, instruments at EU and national levels;
 - improving alignment within and across the Joint Programming Process and the resulting initiatives (e.g. Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs)) and speeding up their implementation;
 - making optimal use of public investments in Research Infrastructures (RIs) by setting national priorities compatible with the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) priorities and criteria taking full account of long term sustainability;

⁸ For example, Joint Programming Initiatives, Initiatives under Articles 185 and 187 of the TFEU, contractual PPPs, ETPs, EIPs, EIT KICs, ERA-nets, EUREKA clusters, European joint programmes and framework partnership agreements.

- using open, transparent and merit based recruitment practices with regard to research positions;
- translating national equality legislation into effective action to address gender imbalances in research institutions and decision making bodies and integrating the gender dimension better into R&D policies, programmes and projects;
- fully implementing knowledge transfer policies at national level in order to maximise the dissemination, uptake and exploitation of scientific results. Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) and Research Funding Organisations (RFOs) should make knowledge transfer second nature by integrating it in their everyday work;
- promoting Open access to scientific publications;
- developing and implementing appropriate joint strategic approaches and actions for international Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) cooperation on the basis of Member States' national priorities,

through appropriate actions in their action plans or strategies by mid-2016.

POINTS FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE CONSIDERATION

10. HIGHLIGHTS the following:

- the need to maximise the quality, effectiveness and impact of national expenditure on Research and Innovation;
- the need to further strengthen the Joint Programming Process (JPP). Within this context EMPHASISES that the transnational cooperation requires revitalisation and therefore INVITES the Member States and the Commission to better use the coordination instruments and develop better synergies with funding programmes at EU, national and regional levels. CALLS on the Member States to better align the implementation rules and procedures within and across the JPP and its initiatives in order to stimulate the cooperation and to avoid unnecessary administrative burden;
- the need to step up the efforts in the area of the Research Infrastructures, including the e-infrastructures, and UNDERLINES that the use of the European Structural and Investment Funds for these purposes should be encouraged, where appropriate;
- the role of the human capital in the advancement of the ERA and the necessity to strengthen comprehensive human resources strategies including mobility of researchers, also from outside the EU as well as from and to the private sector, and the empowerment of young researchers by providing them with attractive career pathways;
- the new digital opportunities and challenges for research, in particular, the substantial increase of research data, and CALLS ON the Member States and the Commission for coordinated actions addressing the digital dimension of the ERA;

- the need to strengthen the EU as the global player while building on the existing successful bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Therefore INVITES the Member States to consider the multiannual roadmaps for international cooperation between international partner countries and regions and the EU, while taking into account possible synergies and added value of coordination and cooperation between Member States as well as choosing the optimal level of bilateral, multilateral and European cooperation with international partner countries and regions.
11. UNDERLINES that the ERA Roadmap 2015-2020 should mirror the possible evolution of the priority areas and actions and therefore INVITES ERAC in cooperation with the other ERA-related Groups to review it as part of the ERA progress reporting cycle. In this context, STRESSES the importance of effective and efficient ERA governance and advisory structure in order to improve the coordination and monitoring of the ERA.
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