



Council of the  
European Union

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**NOTE**

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From: Presidency  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Draft Council Conclusions on the Research Infrastructures  
- Presidency text

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Delegations will find attached a Presidency text on the *draft Council conclusions on the Research Infrastructures* with a view to the Research Working Party meeting on 6 September 2022.

**Draft COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS on Research Infrastructures**

The Council of the European Union,

**RECALLING:**

- its *Conclusions of 1 December 2020 on the New European Research Area (ERA)*<sup>1</sup>, underlining the research infrastructure (RI) domain as a priority to develop the ERA Policy Agenda and implement the ERA Actions, and outlining the need for long-term sustainable investments in the European RI ecosystem to contribute to excellent results in fundamental and applied sciences, and deliver the comprehensive knowledge needed to address present and future challenges;
- its *Conclusions of 28 May 2021 on Deepening the European Research Area: Providing Researchers with Attractive and Sustainable Careers and Working Conditions and Making Brain Circulation a Reality*<sup>2</sup>, noting the essential role that highly skilled talents play in the operation of (e-)RIs;
- its *Conclusions of 28 September 2021 on Global Approach to Research and Innovation – Europe’s Strategy for International Cooperation in a Changing World*<sup>3</sup>, stressing the importance of openness and international cooperation in RIs for the advancement of science, science diplomacy, tackling global challenges and increasing access to excellence, and encouraging the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) and the Commission to support activities of RIs aiming at further development and implementation of the global RI network;

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<sup>1</sup> 13567/20.

<sup>2</sup> 9138/21.

<sup>3</sup> 12301/21.

- its *Recommendation of 26 November 2021 on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe*<sup>4</sup> that encompasses RIs as a priority area for joint action in the European Union (EU) to further deepen a functioning internal market for knowledge and calls for enhancing integration of the European RI ecosystem to maximise the benefits and impacts of investments in RIs, and provide knowledge-based solutions to global societal and economic needs;
- its *Conclusions of 26 November 2021 on the Future Governance of the European Research Area*<sup>5</sup>, setting out the ERA Policy Agenda for the period 2022–2024, including the ERA Action 1 on the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), the ERA Action 8 on RIs and the ERA Action 12 partially on technology infrastructures, and suggesting that ESFRI continues with its work as an independent Commission Expert Group, and closely coordinates with and regularly informs the ERA Forum;
- its *Conclusions of 10 June 2022 on European Missions*<sup>6</sup>, emphasising the critical importance of RIs in achieving the objectives of European Missions and of ESFRI in guiding the strategic development of the European RI landscape and fostering RIs’ contribution to the implementation of European Missions.

## **GENERAL POLICY PERSPECTIVES**

1. ACKNOWLEDGES that a fully functional and operational European RI ecosystem, which efficiently integrates European, national, as well as regional RIs of various sizes, is a vital cornerstone in the development of renewed ERA, plays a central role in Europe’s ability to provide with science-based solutions to social, health, environmental and economic challenges, and contributes to sustainable growth and well-being in Europe.

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<sup>4</sup> OJ L 431, 2.12.2021, p. 1-9.

<sup>5</sup> 14308/2021.

<sup>6</sup> 10124/22.

2. AGREES that RIs constitute a fundamental pillar of research and innovation (R&I) ecosystems in Member States and the EU as a whole, providing scientists and innovators with unique knowledge and expertise, experimental devices and technical resources, and extensive collections of data sets and related ICT and computing services, which are necessary to perform cutting-edge fundamental and applied research, extending frontiers of the human knowledge beyond yet known horizons, and to develop state-of-the-art technologies, feeding into breakthrough, disruptive and deep-tech innovations.
3. UNDERLINES benefits and impacts of public investments in RIs on industries, through the activities such as proprietary access to RIs, contractual research, joint R&I, training, and industrial provision of top-class products and services to RIs.
4. ACKNOWLEDGES that, beyond their fundamental missions in the areas of R&I, regionally anchored RIs act as an amplifier for regional development, when offering highly qualified jobs, including the managerial, scientific, technical, administrative and other positions, and boosting growth of their sites and neighbouring regions by stimulating the development of supply chains, civil infrastructure and related services, thereby shaping regional economic strategies.
5. RECOGNISES that a more balanced distribution of RIs across Europe and construction of regionally anchored RIs embedded in the Smart Specialisation Strategies of their host countries and regions hold a great potential to accelerate closing of the R&I divide, harvest the full potential of the R&I excellence and increase the cohesion in Europe.
6. INVITES ESFRI to examine the methodologies to assess societal and economic benefits and impacts of investments in RIs utilised by Member States, the Commission, international organisations and RIs, identify good practices, develop a monitoring framework, pilot it and elaborate guidelines by the end of 2023 for uptake by the national and regional RI stakeholders.

7. RECOGNISES the open access policies of RIs as a major contribution to stimulating knowledge and brain circulation, strengthening inter-sectorial and international mobility, and attracting talented students, early career researchers, leading scientists, highly skilled innovators and entrepreneurs from all over the world to Europe, thereby enhancing Europe's international collaboration in R&I and reinforcing the competitiveness of the European R&I ecosystem globally.

## **CONVERGING THE RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE AND OTHER SECTORIAL POLICIES**

8. UNDERLINES the potential of RIs, integrating a large variety of stakeholders, including outside R&I, and providing multidisciplinary problem-solving and solution-oriented services, in contributing to convergence of R&I policies with other sectorial policies; ENCOURAGES Member States and the Commission through ESFRI to identify how RIs can optimally contribute to the implementation of European Partnerships and Missions, and policies such as industrial technology roadmaps.
9. ENCOURAGES the RI operators to elaborate on services based on different missions of RIs, and put the European and global wider policy objectives, such as the twin digital and green transitions of the economy, or the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, at the forefront in RI strategy R&I agendas in order to exploit the full potential of the European RI ecosystem.

## **INTEGRATING RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES IN THE EU's RESPONSE TO CRISES**

10. APPRECIATES the immediate call for action by ESFRI, and early reaction and essential contribution by European, national and regional RIs to fight the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak and Covid-19 pandemic; WELCOMES the attitude of RIs to adapt to unprecedented conditions of operations, to continue to serve users despite containment measures, to implement innovative modes of operation, enabling fast track, remote and virtual access, to re-baseline user programmes in line with pressing societal needs and to prioritise user experiments of critical relevance.

11. ACKNOWLEDGES that the European RI ecosystem, as a part of the EU's overall response to crises, proved its readiness to accommodate to sudden crisis scenarios; CONSIDERS the European RI ecosystem a key component for the post-pandemic recovery with a great potential to strengthen resilience and preparedness of the European society in order to cope with any present and future crisis requiring knowledge-based solutions.

## **ENSURING THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF EUROPEAN RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES**

12. ACKNOWLEDGES that the RI funding requires strategic investments through the entire RI life-cycle, including the phases of concept development, design, preparation, implementation, construction, operation, major upgrades, reorientation, decommissioning and termination, which spreads over decades; CALLS on Member States and the Commission to form a long-term political commitment on funding of RIs, thereby enabling a stable, reliable and predictable financial planning of RIs and their sustainable development.
13. INVITES Member States and the Commission through ESFRI to perform an analysis of the types of financial support to the European RIs throughout their life-cycle phases, identify good practices in synergies of various RI funding resources and, on this basis, propose appropriate RI funding models and corresponding RI funding initiatives.
14. CALLS on Member States and the Commission for joint coordinated actions in the spirit of their co-design, co-creation and co-implementation to advance synergies in the RI funding at the regional, national, macro-regional and European levels to increase the efficiency of investments in RIs.
15. EMPHASISES the vital role of highly skilled personnel in constructing and operating RIs, and serving users and meeting their needs; REITERATES the Council invitation to the Commission to present initiative for a European framework on research careers.

## ADVANCING THE RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY-MAKING IN EUROPE

16. RECOGNISES the ERA Policy Agenda for the period 2022–2024 and particularly the ERA Action 8 as a suitable vehicle to advance the RI policy-making; INVITES the involved actors to proceed swiftly to the implementation of its ambitious plan; REITERATES that ESFRI should closely coordinate with and regularly inform the ERA Forum about its activities; CONSIDERS the involvement of ESFRI as an observer in the ERA Forum as a precondition for an effective exchange and contribution of RIs to the implementation of ERA.
17. UNDERLINES the role of ESFRI in triggering and structuring coordinated policy approaches at both European and national levels to the RI policy-making, resulting in, among others, roadmapping and landscaping processes, leading to a more coherent RI policy-making in Europe; INVITES Member States to reinforce their efforts directed at the RI roadmapping and landscaping, while taking up guidelines, recommendations and good practices developed through ESFRI, and while respecting the national diversity.
18. INVITES Member States to carry out regular peer review-based RI monitoring exercises in line with ESFRI's good practices and based on a set of criteria, including context, narratives and managerial, scientific, technical, financial and other indicators, by which the progress and performance of RIs throughout all their life-cycle phases may be monitored appropriately.
19. ENCOURAGES Member States and the Commission to provide incentives, including financial ones, to RI operators to continue networking, clustering, associating, integrating and even merging their facilities, and RI capacities and capabilities across scientific disciplines and research domains at the regional, national and European levels to promote consolidation of the European RI ecosystem.

## **DEVELOPING THE EUROPEAN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SCIENTIFIC DATA AND DIGITAL TRANSITION**

20. ACKNOWLEDGES the critical role of RIs in producing, collecting, processing, storing and providing quality certified scientific data in accordance with the FAIR (*Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable*) principles, thus facilitating the use of scientific data across a broad range of disciplinary domains and internationally, and fundamentally contributing to the implementation of EOSC and open science policy.
21. ENCOURAGES Member States and the Commission to incentivise the development of national data infrastructures by mobilising regional, national and EU funding, introducing the data management plans as essential components of institutional policy-making of research enabling and performing organisations, and investing in education and training of scientific data curators; CALLS on Member States to federate their regional and national data infrastructures as nodes within a European data infrastructure.
22. ACKNOWLEDGES the fact that EOSC is being developed in a complex environment with European, national and regional constituents that involves generic and thematic components with different levels of maturity and priorities; RECOGNISES a key role of ESFRI and thematic RIs working together with EOSC core developers and operators to speed up the implementation of open science policy and the FAIR data management, and to promote interdisciplinary R&I in Europe.
23. RECOGNISES the digital transition as a major opportunity for RIs' development, their accessibility, interoperability and integration in the European digital R&I ecosystem; INVITES Member States and the Commission to incentivise digitalisation of RIs throughout their entire RI life-cycle.

## **REINFORCING THE EUROPEAN STRATEGY FORUM ON RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES**

24. ACKNOWLEDGES the essential position of ESFRI as a strategy forum to conduct a regular, open and structured dialogue with European RI and R&I stakeholders through the ESFRI Stakeholder Forum in order to analyse their needs and bottlenecks and to provide Member States and the Commission with evidence-based and timely advice, and strategic vision for an effective long-term sustainable development of the RI ecosystem in Europe.
25. APPRECIATES that ESFRI operates on the basis of consensus, integrating views of all its members, respecting geographical, economic, societal and cultural diversity in Europe, allowing for reaching solutions based on the principle of variable geometry while meeting common macro-regional and European needs, respecting scientific excellence, and promoting cohesion and inclusiveness.
26. INVITES Member States and the Commission through ESFRI to perform a comprehensive analysis of the European RI landscape with the aim to identify existing synergies and complementarities, expose persistent deficiencies, shortcomings and gaps, and propose improvements on networking, clustering, associating and even merging of European, national and regional RIs, and their deeper integration in a fully functional and interoperable European RI ecosystem; INVITES Member States and the Commission through ESFRI to publish the outcomes of the European RI landscape analysis, including a monitoring mechanism that could be taken up by Member States on a voluntary basis, by the end of 2023.
27. INVITES Member States and the Commission through ESFRI to develop the next edition of the *ESFRI Roadmap*, including a strategy report on the European RI ecosystem, strategic orientations for the future European RI agenda development, and an overview of the ESFRI Projects and Landmarks, and publish the *ESFRI Roadmap* before the end of 2025.

28. INVITES the ESFRI stakeholders to explore, analyse and consider viable options for a reinforced and long-term sustainable support structure of ESFRI in order to provide with more effective strategic advice in all areas of its mandate, thereby strengthening the operational capacity of ESFRI to meet increasing tasks related to delivering comprehensive strategic advice in the context of expanding and maturing European RI landscape, including EOSC and e-RIs, and the growing complexity of the European RI ecosystem.

## **EVOLVING THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR ACCESS TO RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES**

29. INVITES the Commission to present initiative, following the consultation within ESFRI, on a revised *European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures* by the end of 2023 in view of the evolving European RI ecosystem and landscape of RI facilities, which accommodate their user strategies and open access policies for operations under both free-of-charge and proprietary access business models, serve users in the physical, remote and virtual access modes, and enable mission-oriented and fast-track access to perform experiments and conduct studies of urgent societal and economic relevance.

## **ENHANCING THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK**

30. REAFFIRMS the relevance of the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) Framework to allow for the setting up of RI operating entities; ACKNOWLEDGES the progress made with [25] ERIC established since its entry into force; WELCOMES the assessment of the ERIC Framework by the Commission Expert Group, contribution by ESFRI and the [Commission Communication on the ERIC Framework]; INVITES the Commission to present initiative by the end of 2023 on the future of the ERIC Framework, taking into account these conclusions and in close cooperation with ESFRI, the ERIC Committee and the ERIC Forum.

## DEVELOPING THE GLOBAL RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE ECOSYSTEM

31. TAKES NOTE of the outcomes of the *International Conference on Research Infrastructures* (ICRI), held in Brno under the auspices of the Presidency of the Czech Republic of the Council of the EU from 19 to 21 October 2022; WELCOMES the [*Brno Declaration on Fostering a Global Ecosystem of Research Infrastructures*].
32. CALLS on Member States and the Commission through ESFRI to elaborate the concept of the global RI ecosystem, integrating the European, national and regional RIs in a multi-disciplinary and cross-sectorial way at the macro-regional and global levels, taking into account the political priorities of the EU's external relations and based on the EU's values and principles for the international R&I cooperation, including the principle of the balanced reciprocal openness, promoting a level playing field and underpinned by common framework conditions.
33. INVITES Member States and the Commission to intensify sharing of experiences and exchanging good practices internationally in the areas of RI policy-making, funding, roadmapping, landscape analysis, user strategies, access policies, governance, management, monitoring and assessment, thereby feeding in high-level strategy debates to be held in relevant international fora, particularly at the biennial International Conference on Research Infrastructures (ICRI).

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