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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: *Preparation of the Competitiveness Council on 28 September 2021*
Governance and implementation of the European Research Area
Exchange of views

Delegations will find attached a Presidency note on "Governance and implementation of the European Research Area" with a view to the exchange of views at the Competitiveness Council on 28 September 2021.

Governance and implementation of the European Research Area at national level

1. New European Research Area (ERA)

In December 2020, the Council defined *“the ‘New ERA’ as a researchers-centred, value-based, excellence as well as impact-driven area, in which researchers, knowledge and technology are supported and can circulate freely. This “New ERA” should be based on shared responsibilities, participation of stakeholders and citizens, building on the diversity and strengths of the European R&I ecosystems, being responsive to smart directionality and in which in particular fundamental research is essential for ensuring excellence, attractiveness and the competitive edge of R&I ecosystems.”.*

The political recognition of the role that research and innovation (R&I) have in securing the sustainability and resilience of our societies has seen a significant increase during the COVID-19 pandemic and in delivering the digital and green transitions. The New ERA should employ this renewed political capital and:

- be the political framework for embedding R&I in relevant sectorial policies, both in their design and implementation,
- intensify focus on the delivery of concrete actions and R&I solutions,
- increase political commitments and
- connect existing funding instruments for the pursuit of shared Policy Agenda objectives.

The governance architecture for ERA is being redesigned accordingly to enable:

1. the Council to fulfil its responsibilities for policy design and strategic steering;

2. the European Commission to engage its resources in co-designing necessary ERA initiatives, and supporting and monitoring their implementation;
3. Member States to co-design and implement the ERA initiatives and attune their national actions, investments and reforms in pursuit of shared objectives and
4. stakeholders to be more systematically involved from the start and in the whole policy cycle.

The functionality and effectiveness are priorities and require a focus on building ownership and commitments of involved actors. ERA governance should follow Treaty-defined roles and processes, whereby the **Council** acts as the decision-making, priority-setting and policy-steering body in consideration of the proposals and analysis produced by the **European Commission**. To strengthen the process, these initiatives and reports should be co-designed by **Member States** and the Commission, with a more systematic involvement of the ERA stakeholders, in the framework of the new **ERA Forum**. In addition to facilitating co-design, the ERA Forum should also monitor progress towards the shared objectives. Furthermore, a body whose members are Directors-general (the European Research Area and Innovation Committee – **ERAC**) should fulfil the strategic advisory function to both the Council and the Commission throughout the ERA’s design, implementation and evaluation, while also advising on other pertinent topics.

In order to strengthen the delivery of the ERA objectives on European and national levels, a new **monitoring system** will be established. In particular, it should consist of:

- the **ERA policy online platform**, consisting of information on (1) EU and national/regional-level actions to implement priorities of the 3-year rolling ERA Policy Agenda and (2) investments, reforms and activities on these levels supporting all principles and priority areas of the ERA;

- an **ERA Scoreboard** to track progress on all levels through indicators and qualitative analyses;
- Bilateral and multilateral **policy dialogues between Member States and the European Commission** to support the implementation of the ERA.

2. Implications for national administrations

The EU and Member States share their competencies in research, and the ERA is built on the premise that benefits for the entire European landscape are maximised by more coordinated and joint action.

The implementation of the renewed ERA governance and monitoring on national levels would imply i.a.:

- inter-sectoral coordination and consultation with national stakeholders during the Council's examination of ERA-related initiatives;
- engagement on a voluntary basis in the ERA Forum or its sub-groups for design and implementation of selected ERA actions;
- sharing information on ERA-relevant national policies, roadmaps, programmes, actions, reforms and investments through the ERA policy online platform;
- engagement in policy dialogue with the Commission, based on its review of the plans for and implementation of ERA at national levels.

3. Questions for discussion

1. Will the proposed governance ensure sufficient political ownership and commitments of Member States? How could this be further strengthened, in particular on high political levels? What is the role of Ministerial Conferences and national ERA action plans or roadmaps in this regard?
 2. How and how often do you, or plan to, engage with stakeholder organisations at your national level(s), and how should stakeholders at the EU level be involved more systematically?
 3. How should third countries be involved in the future ERA governance, and should there be a distinction in this respect between countries associated to Horizon Europe and other partner countries?
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