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**NOTE**

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| From: | General Secretariat of the Council |
| To: | Delegations |
| No. prev. doc.: | 12007/25; 12005/25 |
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| Subject: | Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, for the period 2028-2034 laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/695<br>Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION on establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the period 2028-2034, laying down the rules for participation and dissemination under that Programme, and repealing Decision (EU) 2021/764<br>- Second Presidency compromise text on the Excellent Science Pillar |

Delegations will find attached a second Presidency compromise text on Block II (Excellent Science): Framework Programme (Art. 12-14) and Specific Programme (Art. 6-10) . Changes in comparison to document 12007/25 and 12005/25 are marked in ~~strikethrough~~ for deletions and in **bold underline** for additions. Text in ***bold italics*** corresponds to topics which require further discussion.

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**ANNEX**

**PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHING HORIZON EUROPE, THE FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION, FOR THE PERIOD 2028-2034 LAYING DOWN ITS RULES FOR PARTICIPATION AND DISSEMINATION, AND REPEALING REGULATION (EU) 2021/695**

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# Chapter II
# Excellent Science

*Article 12*

***European Research Council***

1. The European Research Council shall provide attractive and flexible funding to enable talented and creative individual researchers, ~~with an emphasis on~~ **including** early-~~stage~~**career** researchers, and their teams to pursue the most promising avenues at the frontier of science, regardless of their nationality and country of origin and on the basis of competition based solely on the criterion of excellence.

2. The ERC shall attract the most talented researchers from all over the world **and thus contribute** to establish the Union as a world-leading centre for research and innovation.

**Recital**

(13) The European Research Council (ERC) should provide attractive and flexible funding, thereby enabling talented and creative individual researchers—~~with a deliberate emphasis on~~ **including** nurturing early-~~stage~~**career** researchers—to pursue the most promising avenues at the frontier of science **across all fields**. This commitment to **bottom-up,** investigator-driven research, selected through Union-wide competition based solely on the criterion of excellence and open to talent regardless of nationality or origin, is fundamental to ~~attracting the world's brightest minds and further establishing~~ **strengthening** Europe as a world-leading centre for research and innovation **and further attracting the world's brightest minds**.

*Article 13*

***Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions***

1. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions shall support the **research** career at all stages, **with particular emphasis on early-career researchers,** skills development, and mobility of researchers from all over the world**, also offering exchange possibilities to research staff** ~~subject to security considerations~~. MSCA shall foster **bottom-up** research excellence, attract and retain excellent research talents, and support sustainable **and attractive** research careers in the Union with the aim to increase the Union's **scientific excellence, thus contributing to** competitiveness in research and innovation.

2. The MSCA shall fund excellent doctoral networks, post-doctoral fellowships, R&I staff exchanges, as well as support mechanisms to foster sustainable careers in view of attracting and retaining the most promising talents. A strong focus shall be put on international, inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary cooperation as well as science outreach. The funding shall support cutting edge research and focus on developing research talent, with targeted support for early ~~-~~career researchers. It shall ~~support~~ **contribute** to establish the Union as a leading destination for **European and foreign** researchers.

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**Recital**

(14) In a knowledge-based global economy, the Union's long-term competitiveness, **scientific and** technological leadership and capacity to address global challenges should depend notably on its ability to develop, attract and retain a highly skilled and**, subject to security considerations,** internationally connected research workforce **throughout the Union**. Strategic investment in excellent researchers, in their training, mobility and career prospects, within and outside academia, is essential to ~~sustain~~ **foster scientific breakthroughs, which lead to** innovation, economic **and environmental** resilience**,** and societal well-being. In line with the principles of the European Charter for researchers, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) are instrumental in advancing this objective. The Programme should reinforce links between **research performing organisations,** ~~and~~ universities**,** and innovation ecosystems, including the private sector. It should **contribute to** enable the completion of the European Research Area, ~~including~~ **and** ~~via~~ **the development of synergies with the European Education Area, in its higher education dimension, including through the European Universities Alliances and Erasmus+. This should support the** development of European higher education sector capacity to compete with global counterparts through collaboration, nurturing and attracting talent and leveraging more private investments~~,~~ ~~including through higher education initiatives like European Universities Alliances, in synergy with Erasmus+,~~ ~~and in line with the objectives and activities of this Regulation~~.

*Article 14*

***Joint Research Centre***

1. The Joint Research Centre shall provide independent, evidence-based knowledge and science, supporting EU policies **and, where relevant, Member States** to positively impact society. This shall be undertaken through JRC direct actions and through participation of the JRC in indirect actions. Chapter II of Title II shall not apply to direct actions. **[**By way of derogation from Article 21(3) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, the revenues or amounts resulting from the JRC's research activities (e.g. patents, licenses etc) shall be reusable by the JRC.**]**

**Recital**

(17) The Joint Research Centre ('JRC') should continue to provide independent scientific evidence and technical support for Union policies throughout the whole policy cycle. The direct actions of the JRC should be implemented in a flexible, efficient, and transparent manner, taking into account the needs of Union policies and the relevant needs of the **Member States and other** users of the JRC and ensuring the protection of the Union's financial interests **and strategic autonomy**. **[**The JRC should continue to generate additional resources, which it may use to support its scientific and technical activities.**]**

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# Chapter II

# Excellent Science

*Article 6*

***European Research Council***

1. The Commission shall establish a European Research Council (the 'ERC') to implement the actions under Part I 'Excellent Science' of Regulation XXX [*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation*] which relate to the ERC. The ERC shall succeed the European Research Council set up by Council Decision (EU) 2021/764.

2. The ERC shall be composed of the independent ERC Scientific Council provided for in Article 7 and the ERC dedicated implementation structure provided for in Article 8.

3. The ERC Scientific Council shall have a President ('ERC President') who shall be chosen from among senior and internationally respected scientists.

4. The ERC President shall be appointed by the Commission following a transparent recruitment process involving an independent dedicated search committee. The recruitment process and the candidate selected shall have the approval of the ERC Scientific Council. The term of office of the ERC President shall be limited to ~~two~~ **four** years, ~~extendable~~ **renewable** once ~~for up to two years.~~

5. The ERC President shall chair the ERC Scientific Council and ensure the leadership of the ERC Scientific Council and its liaison with the ERC dedicated implementation structure and shall represent the ERC Scientific Council in the world of science.

**5a.** **The ERC President shall devote in principle at least 80% of their working time to ERC business. The ERC President shall be provided by the ERC dedicated implementation structure with the necessary support to carry out their functions.**

~~6. The President shall be assisted by three Vice-Presidents chosen by the Scientific Council from among its members.~~

7. The ERC shall operate according to its core principles which are scientific excellence, open science, autonomy, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability and research integrity~~, while respecting the corporate policies of the European Commission~~. It shall ensure continuity with ERC actions conducted under Council Decision (EU) 2021/764.

8. Through its activities, the ERC shall support, in a bottom-up manner, frontier research carried out across all fields by principal investigators and their teams in competition at European level, including early-~~stage~~ career researchers.

9. The Commission shall act as the guarantor of the autonomy and integrity of the ERC and shall ensure the proper execution of the tasks entrusted to it.

10. The Commission shall ensure that the implementation of ERC actions is in accordance with the principles set out in paragraph 7 of this Article as well as with the overall strategy for the ERC, referred to in Article 7(4)(a), established by the ERC Scientific Council.

*Article 7*

***ERC Scientific Council***

1. The ERC Scientific Council shall be composed of ***up to*** 22 independent scientists, engineers and scholars of the highest repute and with the appropriate expertise, including both women and men in different age groups, and ensuring a diversity of research areas and a variety of geographical origins. They shall act in their personal capacity, independent of extraneous interests. The members of the ERC Scientific Council shall be appointed by the Commission, following an independent and transparent procedure for their identification agreed with the ERC Scientific Council, including an open consultation of the scientific community and a report to the European Parliament and the Council.

2. The term of office for members of the ERC Scientific Council shall be ~~up~~ **limited** to four years, ~~extendable~~ **renewable** once ~~by up to two years~~, based on a rotating system which shall ensure the continuity of the work of the ERC Scientific Council.

3. The ERC Scientific Council shall elect from amongst its members three Vice-Presidents who shall assist the ERC President in its representation and the organisation of its work. **Support shall be provided to the three Vice-Presidents to ensure adequate local administrative assistance at their home institutions** ~~They shall hold the title of ERC Vice-President. The members of the ERC Scientific Council shall be compensated for the tasks they perform by means of an honorarium and, where appropriate, reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses~~.

**3a**. **The members of the ERC Scientific Council shall be compensated for the tasks they perform by means of an honorarium and, where appropriate, reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses.**

4. The ERC Scientific Council shall exercise its tasks solely and exclusively within the scope and for the purposes of the Specific Programme. In that context, it shall establish:

   (a) the overall strategy for the ERC;

   (b) the ~~draft~~ work programme for the implementation of the ERC activities;

   (c) the methods and procedures for peer review and proposal evaluation on the basis of which the proposals to be funded are determined;

   (d) its position on any matter which from a scientific perspective may enhance the achievements and impact of the ERC and the quality of the research carried out;

   (e) a code of conduct covering, among other matters, the avoidance of conflicts of interest;

   (f) the procedure for the election of the ERC Vice-Presidents.

The Commission shall depart from the positions established by the ERC Scientific Council in accordance with the first subparagraph only if it considers that this Decision has not been respected. In that case, the Commission shall adopt measures to maintain continuity in the implementation of the Specific Programme and the achievements of its objectives, setting out and duly motivating the points of departure from the ERC Scientific Council positions.

5. The ERC Scientific Council shall inform the Commission on research trends, data and any matter relevant for policy making and may perform analysis in this respect**, which the Commission shall convey to the Member States**.

6. The ERC Scientific Council and the Commission shall meet at least twice a year to have a broad and timely exchange of views in the context of the development **and implementation** of the ERC's strategy and the Commission's policy making.

7. The ERC Scientific Council is the guarantor of the quality of the activity from the scientific perspective and has full authority over decisions on the type of research to be funded.

8. The ERC Scientific Council shall act exclusively in the interest of the ERC, according to the principles set out in Article 6(7). It shall act with integrity and probity and carry out its work efficiently and with the greatest possible transparency.

9. In the context of the implementation of the Specific Programme, and in order to carry out these tasks, the ERC Scientific Council shall do the following:

   (a) as regards scientific strategy:

      i. establish the overall scientific strategy for the ERC, in the light of scientific opportunities and European scientific needs;

      ii. establish the work programme and develop the ERC's mix of support measures in accordance with its scientific strategy;

      iii. establish the necessary **European and** international **outreach and** cooperation initiatives ~~including outreach activities~~, to increase the visibility of the ERC for the best researchers **within the Union and** from the rest of the world, in accordance with its scientific strategy;

(b) as regards scientific management, monitoring and quality control:

i. ensure a world-class peer review system based on scientific excellence and on fully transparent, fair and impartial treatment of proposals by establishing positions on the implementation and management of calls for proposals, evaluation criteria, peer review processes including the selection of experts, the methods for peer review and proposal evaluation and the necessary implementing rules and guidelines, on the basis of which the proposals to be funded will be determined under the supervision of the ERC Scientific Council;

ii. make a proposal based on which experts shall be appointed in the case of ERC frontier research actions;

iii. ensure that ERC grants are implemented according to simple and transparent procedures that maintain the focus on excellence, encourage initiative and combine flexibility with accountability by continuously monitoring the quality of the operations and implementation;

iv. review and assess the ERC's achievements and the quality and impact of the research funded by the ERC and make recommendations and guidelines for corrective or future actions accordingly;

v. establish positions on any other matter affecting the achievements and impact of the ERC's activities and the quality of the research carried out under this part of Horizon Europe.

(c) as regards communication and dissemination:

i. raise the global profile and visibility of the ERC by conducting communication and outreach activities, including scientific conferences, to promote the ERC's activities and achievements and the results of the projects funded by the ERC with the scientific community, key stakeholders and the general public;

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ii. where appropriate, consult with the scientific, engineering and academic community, regional and national research funding agencies and other stakeholders;

iii. regularly report to the Commission on its own activities.

*Article 8*

***ERC dedicated implementation structure***

1. The ERC dedicated implementation structure shall be responsible for the administrative implementation and execution of this component of the Specific Programme. It shall, in particular, implement the evaluation procedures, peer review and selection process in accordance with the strategy established by the ERC Scientific Council and shall ensure the financial and scientific management of the grants.

The ERC dedicated implementation structure shall support the ERC Scientific Council in the conduct of all of its tasks as set out in Article 7 including the development of its scientific strategy, its monitoring of the operations and its review and assessment of the ERC's achievements as well as its outreach and communications activities. The ERC dedicated implementation structure shall also provide access to the necessary documents and data in its possession and keep the ERC Scientific Council informed of its activities.

To ensure an effective liaison with the ERC dedicated implementation structure on strategy and operational matters, the leadership of the ERC Scientific Council and the Director of the ERC dedicated implementation structure shall hold regular coordination meetings.

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2. The Commission shall ensure that the ERC dedicated implementation structure follows strictly, efficiently and with the necessary flexibility the objectives and requirements of the ERC alone. To fulfil its responsibilities as set out in Articles 6 and 7 and in this Article, in the context of its own responsibilities for budget execution, the Commission shall:

(a) ensure the continuity and renewal of the ERC Scientific Council and provide support for a standing Identification Committee for the identification of future ERC Scientific Council members;

(b) ensure the continuity of the ERC dedicated implementation structure and the delegation of tasks and responsibilities to it, taking ~~into~~ **due** account **of** the views of the ERC Scientific Council;

(c) ensure that the ERC dedicated implementation structure carries out the full range of its tasks and responsibilities;

(d) appoint the Director and the members of the management of the ERC dedicated implementation structure, taking into account the views of the ERC Scientific Council;

(e) ensure the timely adoption of the ERC work programme, the positions regarding implementing methodology and the necessary implementing rules including the ERC rules of submission and the ERC model grant agreement, taking into account the views of the ERC Scientific Council ~~and the Commission's corporate policies implemented through the Specific Programme~~;

**(ea) regularly and in a timely manner inform and consult the ERC Programme Committee configuration on the implementation of the ERC activities;**

(f) monitor, as responsible for the overall implementation of the Programme, the ERC dedicated implementation structure and evaluate its performance.

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*Article 9*

***Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions***

1. The Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) shall focus on **bottom-up,** investigator-driven research founded exclusively on scientific excellence to support researchers' career, skills development, and mobility**, with particular emphasis on early career researchers, while remaining open to** ~~at~~ all career stages.

2. The MSCA shall be open to any scientific domain under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community. If specific needs arise **and additional funding becomes available**, the MSCA may target certain activities in specific thematic priorities, types of research and innovation institutions, or geographical locations to respond to the evolving requirements and needs of the Union regarding skills, research training, career development and knowledge sharing, in pursuit of the Union strategic autonomy.

3. The implementation of the MSCA shall:

   (a) offer attractive conditions and opportunities for career progression, helping to address systemic issues of career instability and precarity in the research sector. The MSCA shall actively support the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers promoting fair recruitment, transparent procedures, and merit-based advancement[1];

   ***(b) ensure strategic synergies with the European Research Council (ERC) but also with Union instruments that foster innovation, such as the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the activities to foster the integration of the knowledge triangle – higher education, research and innovation, and business – across the Union as well as other Union programmes such as Erasmus+;***

   (c) promote work-life balance, diversity, and inclusion, setting high standards for working conditions across the European Research Area.

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[1] COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe (C/2023/1640). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj/eng

*Article 10*

***Joint Research Centre***

1. The activities of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) shall be complementary to indirect actions supporting longer-term policy objectives. To achieve this, the JRC works with international, national, regional, and local stakeholders, including through scientific collaboration agreements.

   The JRC activities shall:

   – be flexible and responsive to ~~evolving~~ policy needs.

   – ~~ensure~~ **promote** synerg~~y~~**ies** with other EU investments.

   – focus on the following areas:

      i. scientific and technical support to Union policy priorities, in particular (but not limited to) those defined within the framework of the European Competitiveness Fund and those defined for parts I, II, III and IV of the Horizon Europe Programme;

      ii. knowledge integration and policy impact;

      iii. territorial development and Member State support;

      iv. scientific excellence and international collaboration;

      v. open science, knowledge sharing and capacity building.

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**Recital**

(3) The Board of Governors of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) set up by Commission Decision 96/282/Euratom[2] has been consulted on the scientific and technological content of the Specific Programme on the non-nuclear direct actions of the JRC.

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[2] Commission Decision 96/282/Euratom of 10 April 1996 on the reorganization of the Joint Research Centre (OJ L 107, 30.4.1996, p. 12, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/1996/282/oj).