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**NOTE**

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From:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
To:	Council
No. prev. doc.:	8562/15 RECH 104 COMPET 180
Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on the review of the European Research Area advisory structure - Adoption

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1. Since the review of the mandate of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) in 2010 the Council has on several occasions called for a more effective advisory structure of the ERA. In its Conclusions on the ERA progress report 2014 in December 2014, the Council reaffirmed that a fully functioning ERA needs a well-structured and effective governance with a more enhanced role of Member States and therefore invited ERAC to discuss and propose a reform of the ERA-related governance by 2015.
2. Following two extraordinary meetings of ERAC in November 2014 and January 2015, the Presidency proposed draft Council conclusions, which have been discussed by the Research Working Party at its meetings on 16 March, 14 and 27 April and 4 May 2015.

3. The Permanent Representatives Committee, at its meeting on 20 May 2015, examined these draft conclusions, resolved the remaining open issues and agreed to forward the draft conclusions to the Council (Competitiveness) of 28-29 May 2015 for their adoption. The UK has a general scrutiny reservation on the text, following the recent national elections.
  4. The Council (Competitiveness), at its session of 28-29 May 2015, is therefore called upon to adopt the conclusions as set out in the attached text.
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**Draft Council conclusions on the review of the European Research Area advisory structure<sup>1</sup>**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

- its conclusions on the development of the European Research Area (ERA) through ERA-related groups of 1 June 2011<sup>2</sup>, which reconfirmed the need for strengthened coordination between the ERAC and the ERA-related groups, and stressed the need to pursue all relevant improvements in this cooperation in line with the outcome of the ERAC's advice<sup>3</sup> on the review of ERA-related groups;
- the Commission's Communication on a reinforced ERA partnership for excellence and growth of 17 July 2012<sup>4</sup>, and the Council's response to this in its conclusions of 11 December 2012<sup>5</sup>;
- its Resolution on the advisory work for the ERA of 30 May 2013<sup>6</sup>, in which the Council agreed to review the statuses, the mandates and the reporting lines of those ERA-related groups that have been established by the Council by the end of 2014 and invited the Commission and the ERAC to consider whether such a review is required in relation to the groups they have established;
- its Conclusions on the ERA progress report 2014<sup>7</sup> of 5 December 2014, in which the Council invited ERAC to discuss and propose a reform of the ERA-related governance by 2015;

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<sup>1</sup> UK: general scrutiny reservation

<sup>2</sup> 11032/11

<sup>3</sup> ERAC 1206/11

<sup>4</sup> 12848/12

<sup>5</sup> 17649/12

<sup>6</sup> 10331/13

<sup>7</sup> 16599/14

1. RECALLS that the advisory work for the development and implementation of the ERA is currently undertaken by the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) and a number of different ERA-related groups<sup>8</sup>; ACKNOWLEDGES that there is a need for a more efficient and effective advisory structure for the implementation of the ERA with a strong and strategic role of the Member States in close partnership with the Commission and the relevant stakeholders;
2. In this respect TAKES NOTE of the Summary conclusions of the two extraordinary meetings of ERAC<sup>9</sup>, as well as the contributions from GPC<sup>10</sup> and SFIC<sup>11</sup>; RECOGNISES that further work on an improved advisory structure is still needed;
3. AGREES that, in order to reflect the importance of the policy and implementation advice in the framework of the ERA governance, in particular with a view to the coherent implementation of the ERA Roadmap, ERAC, in cooperation and with the support of the other ERA-related groups should cover all the ERA priorities, which currently are:
  - Priority 1: More effective national research systems
  - Priority 2: Optimal transnational cooperation and competition
  - Priority 3: Open labour market for researchers
  - Priority 4: Gender equality and mainstreaming in research
  - Priority 5: Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge
  - Priority 6: International cooperation;

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<sup>8</sup> The ERA-related groups currently include the European Research Area and Innovation Committee, the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), the Strategic Forum for International Science and Technology Cooperation (SFIC), the High Level Group on Joint Programming (GPC), the Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation (HG), the ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility (SGHRM) and the ERAC Working Group on Knowledge Transfer (KT). The Digital ERA Forum (DERAF) and the group of national points of reference on Open Access (NRP on OA) are also contributing to the implementation of the ERA. ESFRI has an additional strategic role beyond that relating to the ERA and the ERA roadmap, which is not subject of these conclusions.

<sup>9</sup> ERAC 1214/3/14 REV 3, ERAC 1202/1/15 REV 1

<sup>10</sup> ERAC-GPC 1302/1/15 REV 1

<sup>11</sup> ERAC-SFIC 1355/15

4. NOTES that the objectives and the current mandates of ERAC and the other ERA-related groups must be reviewed and AGREES that in the future mandates should be assessed when necessary, but at least every three years, and, where necessary, revised or repealed in order to reflect the progress in the implementation or updates of ERA priorities;
5. RECALLS that the EU research and innovation policy landscape includes a number of advisory structures providing inputs and expertise and URGES the Commission to carry out an inventory to identify these structures and highlight any possible overlaps with ERAC and the other ERA-related Groups and to submit its assessment to ERAC by 30 June 2015; ENCOURAGES ERAC, with the support of the Commission, to strive for close interaction with any relevant groups regarding the ERA-related aspects of their work programmes;
6. UNDERLINES that the commitment by Member States in partnership with the Commission is a key driver for an enhanced efficiency and visibility of ERAC in fulfilling its mission to deliver early-stage strategic advice to the Council, the Commission and Member States; ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of the representation of Member States and the Commission in ERAC at an appropriate level in order to ensure the Committee's effectiveness and impact; AGREES that ERAC should be co-chaired by the Commission and an elected representative from the Member States;
7. ENCOURAGES ERAC to be proactive towards anticipation of policy topics that could efficiently contribute to the preparation of policy debates in the Council (Competitiveness) and to the research and innovation policy preparation by the Commission; CALLS on the Commission to fully engage with ERAC when preparing new strategic initiatives in the field of research and innovation;

8. NOTES that, in order to ensure European added value and an effective implementation of the ERA, there is a need for coordinated work programmes for ERAC and the other ERA-related Groups;
9. RECOGNISES the role that ERAC should play to ensure coordination between itself and the other ERA-related Groups, coherence of their work programmes and priority setting in order to achieve real synergies, complementarities and impact; ENCOURAGES the ERA-related Groups to provide timely strategic inputs to ERAC on research and innovation issues that are relevant to the development of their respective specific ERA priorities; furthermore INVITES Member States to ensure appropriate coordination between national representatives in the different ERA-related Groups and to continue coordinating the implementation of the ERA at the national level using the results and outputs from the different ERA-related groups;
10. In this context NOTES that ERAC and the other ERA-related Groups should develop their own work programmes, agendas, activities and deliverables according to their mandates. The relevant aspects of the draft work programmes should be discussed within the ERAC Steering Board and comments by the ERAC Steering Board should be taken into account. Before the adoption of the work programmes by each group, the work programmes are presented to ERAC to ensure overall coherence among the ERA-related Groups;
11. AGREES that the ERAC Steering Board should be responsible for preparing the meetings of ERAC. It should consist of the ERAC Co-Chairs, the Chairs of the other ERA-related Groups, two members elected from among the representatives of Member States of ERAC by a majority of its component members for a period of two years as well as representatives of the incumbent and of the incoming EU Presidency;

12. ASKS ERAC to consider the following outstanding issues:

- streamlining the advisory structure including the number of ERA-related groups, their mandates and reporting lines;
- developing standard clauses which should be present in the mandates of all ERA-related groups;
- a mechanism for definition of new ERA-related groups and conditions for revising the status of the existing ones;
- a definition of the role and functions of the Co-Chairs based on a partnership of equals;
- a draft mandate for ERAC;
- draft rules of procedure for the ERAC Steering Board;
- the proposals by SFIC and GPC for their new mandates in the light of the standard clauses;

with a view to preparing a proposal on the ERA advisory structure by 15 October 2015 for the Council (Competitiveness) in December 2015.

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