COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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From :	General Secretariat of the Council
To :	Delegations
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Subject :	Guidance on future priorities for European research and research-based innovation in post-2010 Lisbon strategy - Council conclusions

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on the Guidance on future priorities for European research and research-based innovation in post-2010 Lisbon strategy, as adopted by the Competitiveness Council at its meeting on 3 December 2009.

ANNEX

Council conclusions on Guidance on future priorities
for European research and research-based innovation in post-2010 Lisbon strategy

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

– its conclusions of 30 May 2008 on the launch of the "Ljubljana Process - Towards full realisation of ERA"[1] ;

– its conclusions of 2 December 2008 on the definition of a 2020 vision for the European Research Area[2] which is part of the first phase of the Ljubljana Process and serves as the basis for the development of the future ERA governance;

– its conclusions of 1 and 2 December 2008 concerning joint programming of research in Europe in response to major societal challenges;[3]

– its conclusions of 2 December 2008 concerning a European partnership for international scientific and technological cooperation;[4]

– the conclusions of the European Council of 11 and 12 December 2008[5], which called for the launching of a European plan for innovation, combined with the development of the ERA and with reflection on the future of the Lisbon Strategy beyond 2010;

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1 10231/08.
2 Official Journal C 25, 31.1.2009, pp. 1-4.
3 Official Journal C 24, 30.1.2009, pp. 3-5.
4 Official Journal C 18, 24.1.2009, pp. 11-13.
5 17271/1/08.

– its conclusions of 29 May 2009 on the Evaluation and Impact Assessment of European Research Framework Programmes (FPs);[6]

– its conclusions of 29 May 2009 on the first steps towards realisation of the ERA Vision 2020[7] which called upon the Member States and the Commission to further engage in ensuring enhanced complementarity and synergies between Community policies and instruments;

– Council conclusions of 3 December 2009 on the future of ICT research, innovation and infrastructures;[8]

– Council conclusions of 4 December 2009: Towards a competitive, innovative and eco-efficient Europe ─ a contribution by the Competitiveness Council to the post 2010 Lisbon agenda; [9]

– Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 26 November 2009, on developing the role of education in a fully-functioning knowledge triangle.[10]

1. ACKNOWLEDGES that research policies, programmes and activities at European level encompasses those at Union and inter-governmental levels as well as those at national/regional level which contribute to the overall development of ERA, and that third countries are also involved, when appropriate and subject to specific arrangements, in the development of ERA, while acknowledging the current status of cooperation with countries associated to the Framework Programme.

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6 10610/09.
7 10615/09.
8 17190/09.
9 17179/09.
10 14344/09.

2. RECOGNISES that Europe, in order to respond adequately to grand challenges contributing to growth and sustainable development - be they social, economic or environmental - or to increasing global industrial competition, must continue increasing support for research and research-based innovation at both European and national level. A limited set of ambitious quantitative and qualitative targets, together with the corresponding indicators, should be considered in the context of the post-2010 EU strategy for competitiveness and growth and the implementation of ERA, reflecting the reaffirmed commitment to transforming the EU into a leading knowledge-based society.

3. EMPHASISES that, in the context of the implementation of the ERA 2020 Vision and improved governance of the ERA as outlined in Council Resolution of 3 December 2009[11], an approach cutting across policy areas is needed to identify and address the grand challenges of our time, which call for action at European level taking the wider international context into account. To address these challenges, it is essential to mobilise industry and knowledge-building institutions of different scales, as well as civil society at large, through both top-down and bottom-up approaches. Thus, it is of utmost importance to take into account the following key considerations when developing future priorities for research and research-based innovation at the European level:

a) Activities should be identified which are required in respect of:

– basic research, taking into account notably the experience of frontier research funded by the European Research Council as well as that of the Future and Emerging Technologies scheme in FP7, contributing to endowing Europe with the required knowledge and expertise to explore new research potential and to help respond to unforeseen challenges,

[11] 17159/09.

– the further consolidation and development of collaborative tools enhancing research relevant for industry, in particular SMEs, building also upon experience from European Technology Platforms, Public-Private Partnerships, Joint Technology Initiatives, "Article 169 Initiatives"[12] and other relevant mechanisms such as EUREKA,
– measures focusing on developing a leading role for Europe in the development and implementation of key enabling technologies,
– supply and demand side measures to support both business development and public policy goals,
– better and easier access to finance, for instance making use of the instruments of the EIB and encouraging venture capital,
– the development of a European strategy for cross-border cooperation between knowledge-building institutions, to promote world class research and innovation environments involving academia, research organisations and industry,
– world class research infrastructures, including e-infrastructures to facilitate the further growth of knowledge, technology and e-science as well as regional partner facilities; Members States should identify common priorities and how to take more effective decisions to implement the ESFRI roadmap,
– human resources, including researcher mobility and career development,
– international and world-wide science and technology cooperation.

b) The "knowledge triangle" concept should be implemented, developing the synergies between education[13], research and innovation activities[14] at all levels and in all relevant activities, inter alia by enhancement of partnerships between universities and business stakeholders, including knowledge-building institutions and collaborative tools for industrial research; In this respect, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) are likely to provide a very valuable contribution towards this goal.

[12] Research and development Programmes undertaken by several Member States (presently Article 185 of the Treaty).
[13] In the context of the creation of a European Higher Education Area.
[14] In the context of the European Plan for Innovation.

c) It should be recognised that in many cases responsibility for policy in these areas may lie at national/regional level and that approaches identified should be flexible enough to be adapted to the different national circumstances.

4. INVITES, therefore, Member States and the Commission, with the advice of CREST, to initiate during 2010:

a) an open and transparent process to identify the priorities for the future European research and research-based innovation activities following appropriate consultation with stakeholders across the policy areas and responding to issues set out in paragraph 3;

b) a review, and as a complement to and taking into account the FP7 interim evaluation, ERA-related instruments (including those on innovation) [15] with a view to presenting a basis for considering best ways to improve and simplify the "ERA-landscape";

and at the same time explore and take into account:

c) forward-looking activities ("foresight") to support the identification of grand challenges and the corresponding priorities for research and innovation;

d) synergies between the Framework Programme, Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) and Education Programmes (including Lifelong Learning) as well as the Cohesion Programmes and Joint Programming activities (including the pilot Joint programming initiative on combating neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's). Experience from specific areas such as the European Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET Plan)[16] and agricultural research coordination[17] should also be drawn on;

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[15] "ERA Toolbox".

[16] Council conclusions of 28 February 2008 (6326/1/08).

[17] Noting the progress made within the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) with a view to strengthening the coordination research activities in this field in accordance with its mandate (17489/09).

e) means to further mobilise research and innovation capacity across Europe within the Research, Innovation and Cohesion policies;

f) the results of the FP7 mid-term evaluation.

5. WELCOMES the Commission communication of 2 September 2009 entitled "Reviewing Community innovation policy in a changing world"[18] and

INVITES the Commission to draw up its forthcoming initiatives as a follow-up to the European Council of December 2008 regarding the launching of a European Plan for Innovation:

- identifying how innovation can contribute to addressing the grand challenges;
- seeking further incentives for the more rapid emergence of innovation-friendly markets, notably through public-private partnerships and a stronger demand- and user-drive for research and research-based innovation including public procurement, lead markets and innovation in services, noting the major role that the public sector can play in this context;
- ensuring synergies with other EU and European initiatives in the fields of research, innovation, education and industry, and
- encouraging business, academia, research organisations and public authorities at appropriate levels to help implement projects across the research and innovation cycle.

6. WELCOMES the Commission communication of 30 September 2009 entitled "Preparing for our future: Developing a common strategy for key enabling technologies in the EU"[19] and INVITES the Commission to come forward with further relevant initiatives and WELCOMES the Commission's intention to draw up a new Action Plan on Nanotechnologies for 2010-2015.[20]

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[18] 12905/09.
[19] 13000/09.
[20] 15363/09.

TAKES NOTE of the Commission communication of 7 October 2009 entitled "Investing in the development of low carbon technologies (SET Plan)"[21] and ENCOURAGES the Commission and the Member States to examine ways and means to accelerate the implementation of the SET Plan including as regards improved synergies with FP7.

7. TAKES NOTE of the progress achieved in the first two years as outlined in the seventh Framework Programme (FP7) progress report[22] and LOOKS FORWARD to the results of the interim evaluation of the FP7.

8. TAKES NOTE of the Review of the European Research Council's Structures and Mechanisms of July 2009 as well as the responses by the ERC Scientific Council and the Commission[23]. The Council will discuss them in depth, in order to deliver its political opinion in early 2010 on the review's recommendations and their follow-up.

9. ACKNOWLEDGING the progress already made in administrative simplification, UNDERLINES the need to make further progress on simplification and more efficient management in order for the EU Framework Programmes to fully contribute to the implementation of a post-2010 EU strategy, WELCOMES the Commission's intention to present a Communication in the spring of 2010 on simplification, which should contribute to translating the political commitment into new simplified rules taking into account the specificities of the research sector, and AGREES that:

   – a review is needed of the EU financing framework with a view to achieving a risk-tolerant and trust-based approach for the management of research funding supporting the EU's policy objectives; such an endeavour would also require support from the European Parliament and the Member States;

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21 14230/09.
22 9374/09.
23 Commission communication "The European Research Council - Meeting the challenge of world class excellence", 15052/09.

– the Framework Programmes' rules for participation should be reviewed with a view to ensuring the necessary coherence;
– the recommendations put forward in the Review of the ERC's Structures and Mechanisms should be followed up taking into account the response from the Commission;

10. INVITES the Commission, together with Member States where relevant, to:

– pursue vigorously further reduction of the administrative burden, continuing to implement the recommendations of the Evaluation of the Sixth Framework Programme, keeping the Council informed of measures taken on a regular basis;

– present a cost-benefit analysis of its current approach to financial controls taking into account the administrative burden involved for both the beneficiaries and the EU;

– further improve the functioning of the new instruments and initiatives of FP7 (such as ERC, Joint Technology Initiatives and the Risk Sharing Finance Facility) as well as the Executive Agencies involved, based on the results of the review on their progress;

- further improve the approaches to independent ex-post evaluation of Framework Programmes;[24]

– draw up its proposals for the revision of the Financial Regulation taking into account the specificities of the research sector.

[24] Council conclusions of 30 May 2008 on Special Report No 09/2007 by the European Court of Auditors concerning "Evaluating the EU Research and Technological Development (RTD) Framework Programmes - could the Commission's approach be improved? (9096/08).

11. INVITES, finally, the Commission to consider, in particular, the following further aspects with a view to implementing FP7 to its full potential, improving its impact as well as shaping the ERA:

- strengthening industry-academia (including public research organisations) interactions**,** improving the participation of SMEs and reinforcing actions on knowledge transfer to improve the dissemination and exploitation of research results;
- improving the response to grand challenges by e.g. implementing cross-cutting actions such as cross-thematic calls, and continuing the use of European Technology Platforms, complemented by Societal Platforms to develop research agendas in relevant areas, as well as through activities on Future and Emerging Technologies;
- developing further links to and synergies with other EU policy areas and initiatives such as the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP), Cohesion policies, Education programmes, the European Economic Recovery Plan and the European Agricultural Research Agenda;
- making further progress in simplification and efficient management.