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	- Council conclusions (adopted on 26/11/2021)

Delegations will find in annex the Council conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area (ERA), adopted by the Council at its 3830th meeting held on 26 November 2021.

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COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

ON THE FUTURE GOVERNANCE OF THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA (ERA)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

–   its conclusions of December 2015 on the 'Review of the European Research Area advisory structure'[1] which reiterated the importance of a well-functioning advisory structure to ensure the coherent and effective implementation of the ERA;

–   the ERAC report of December 2020 on 'The 2019 Action Plan for the Advisory Structure of the European Research Area'[2] and its lessons learned and the ERAC opinion of December 2019 on the future of the ERA[3];

–   its conclusions of December 2020 on the 'New European Research Area'[4] which is defined 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 and calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop in 2021 an ERA Policy Agenda and a multi-level governance model to deliver on the 'New ERA', taking into consideration the governance-related elements in the Commission communication of September 2020 on 'A new ERA for research and innovation'[5];

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[1]   14875/15.
[2]   ERAC 1212/20.
[3]   ERAC 1201/20.
[4]   13567/20.
[5]   11400/20 + ADD1.

NEW ERA GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

1. RECOGNISES the need to revise and reform the governance framework for the ERA, in order to reflect the changed policy environment affecting research and innovation (R&I), to foster the investments and reforms needed to secure our scientific leadership and the need to leverage more effectively the potential of R&I for society and the economy;

2. ACKNOWLEDGES the wider societal recognition and increased expectation of the role of R&I and its exploitation in addressing present and future societal, environmental and economic challenges induced, *inter alia*, by COVID-19 and climate change, which also entails a need for a renewed, stronger and more coherent European R&I policy; REITERATES the continued importance of basic, curiosity-driven science and INVITES the Member States and the Commission to strike a balance between 'mission-oriented' and 'curiosity-driven' public R&I investments as a prerequisite to achieving the new ERA;

3. ACKNOWLEDGES that the attainment of the objectives and targets defined within the ERA requires foresight analysis and prioritisation of R&I policy initiatives, increased political ownership and a more effective translation into action through coordination at Union, national and regional level;

4. CONSIDERS the special partnership between the Union and associated countries, as well as cooperation with stakeholders in the implementation of the ERA to be important; AGREES with a case by case approach for the involvement of associated countries and stakeholders in the governance bodies taking into account their respective roles in the implementation of the ERA, as well as that of relevant third countries; and REITERATES that cooperation with third countries should be based on shared fundamental values and principles, including a balanced reciprocity and respect for academic freedom;

5. UNDERSCORES the cross-sectoral dimensions of the ERA policy as essential characteristics for its governance, requiring shared ownership and directionality of policy actions; EMPHASISES that R&I is at the core of the green transition, digital transformation and other cross-sectoral policy goals, and should contribute to the design and implementation of relevant policies, for which improved coordination interfaces and knowledge exchanges at the EU and national levels with such sectoral policies are required;

6. STRESSES the role that the Recovery and Resilience Plans, the Union R&I Framework Programme and Cohesion policy instruments can have in supporting the new ERA;

7. RECALLS the importance of mainstreaming gender equality in the design, implementation and monitoring of R&I policies and TAKES NOTE of the contribution of the Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in R&I to the ERA Action in this area;

RENEWED ERA GOVERNANCE AND POLICY SETTING

8. HIGHLIGHTS that the new ERA and its priorities require a comprehensive redesign of the current ERA governance, with a view to rationalising resources and strengthening its capacity for effective implementation while respecting the inter-institutional balance, the principle of subsidiarity and the respective competences in the field of R&I; ACKNOWLEDGES that the new ERA governance should be shaped *inter alia* by:

    a. the Pact for Research & Innovation in Europe (Pact for R&I) setting out the fundamental R&I values and principles for the new ERA, the priority areas for ERA actions and the policy coordination mechanisms;

    b. the ERA Policy Agenda, designed to contribute to the priority areas from the Pact for R&I, setting out the voluntary ERA actions which are defined and coordinated at Union level in order to attain agreed outcomes;

ERA Policy Agenda and ERA actions

9.	UNDERLINES that achieving the new ERA requires an ERA Policy Agenda that ensures the commitment of all relevant actors, embraces the diversity of national and regional policy environments and employs a tailor-made and voluntary approach. It is to be approved by the Council, every three years, while acknowledging the longer-term nature of some actions;

10.	The ERA actions are identified in the ERA policy agenda with a view to ensuring impact, credibility and effectiveness of the new ERA, and their actual implementation should aim at fulfilling the following criteria:

- Relevance: address at least one of the priority areas identified in the Council recommendation on a Pact for R&I and ensure clear added value of joint action;

- Viability: clearly set out their objective, timing, milestones, actors, and funding as well as anticipated contribution to realisation of ERA;

- Commitment: secure the commitment of at least half of Union Member States representing a critical mass in order to ensure a broad political support and to provide opportunities beyond the participating States to benefit all Member States;

11.	AGREES on the common ERA Policy Agenda for 2022-2024 as presented in the Annex, CONSIDERS it a dynamic document that may be subject to adjustments by the Council throughout its duration, and CALLS FOR its implementation by the Commission and the Member States, in cooperation with associated countries, stakeholders and relevant third countries where applicable;

12. INVITES the Commission to provide explanatory documents for each ERA action set out in the Annex and, on this basis, INVITES ERAC to provide its views on the ERA Policy Agenda by April 2022, in order to facilitate Member States and where applicable associated countries to identify within the first semester 2022 the ERA actions in which they wish to participate; CALLS ON Member States and INVITES associated countries to provide information on their take-up at national level; STRESSES that it is up to each Member State and associated country to define how the ERA Actions in which they choose to participate should be addressed at national level; INVITES Member States and associated countries to determine the optimal national process for providing information in the ERA policy online platform on the measures, including potential reforms or investments, relevant for the chosen ERA Actions and for the ERA priorities, including those reflected in the chosen national policy vehicles such as strategies, National Action Plans or Roadmaps where available;

Governance architecture of ERA

13. AGREES that the Council's decision-making and policy-guiding role within the ERA governance includes notably the approval of long-term guidance in the form of the Council Recommendation on a Pact for R&I in Europe, of mid-term priorities in the form of the ERA Policy Agenda, both based in principle upon initiatives of the Commission, and of their revision in response to the mid-term assessment of the ERA Policy Agenda and to the assessment of the Pact for R&I in Europe respectively; CALLS UPON the Commission to update the Council regularly, including through its preparatory bodies, on the work carried out by the ERA Forum; RECALLS the Council's role in providing additional political guidance at any time with initiatives such as Council Conclusions and Council Resolutions on any ERA and R&I related issues;

14. INVITES the Presidencies of the Council to consider organising ERA ministerial conferences to inform the evolution of the ERA, building on the work of relevant ERA governance bodies where appropriate[6];

15. REAFFIRMS the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) as the high-level strategic policy joint advisory committee, providing early advice to the Council, the Commission and the Member States on strategic R&I policy issues; RECOGNISES the need to assign to ERAC a mandate which will enable it to advise on the strategic direction of European and national R&I policy; RECOMMENDS that the revised mandate should include *inter alia* elements to:

- advise on strategic policy orientations and future trends that require the refinement of Union and national, including regional, R&I policies, including on the current and the next Union R&I Framework Programme and other relevant R&I-driven Union initiatives;

- initiate updates of the ERA Policy Agenda, by providing early strategic advice informed also by consideration of the progress made in the ongoing ERA Actions;

- reflect and provide advice on new policy demands, which fulfil the ERA Policy Agenda criteria, throughout the implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda;

- interact with governance and coordination structures at similar level in other relevant policy areas, such as higher education and industry;

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[6]   14989/18 and 13567/20.

16. RECOGNISES the role of the ERA Forum, including its possible sub-groups, as the body, established by the Commission, responsible for enhancing coordination towards the effective implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda, supporting the Commission and the Member States in the delivery of the ERA Actions; CONSIDERS that the ERA Forum should:

- co-design and coordinate among the Commission and the Member States on the preparation of Commission's initiatives with regard to future updates of the ERA Policy Agenda and discuss alignment with other policies;

- co-design and coordinate the implementation of the ERA actions among the Commission, Member States and, on a case by case basis, associated countries, stakeholders, as well as relevant third countries;

- analyse the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda through the ERA Scoreboard and the information provided through the ERA policy platform, and contribute to the Commission's work in preparing a report to the Council;

- act as a facilitator for the preparation of additional candidate ERA Actions in variable geometry, with support from the Union where appropriate, as well as for the exchange of best practices on national ERA policies and measures;

WAY FORWARD

17. INVITES the Commission to establish, by the end of 2021, the ERA Forum; CONSIDERS that the co-chairing of the ERA Forum by the Commission and a Member State representative will result in enhanced ownership and more efficient implementation of the renewed ERA; similarly, its sub-groups may be chaired or co-chaired by the Commission and/or a Member State, or, subject to agreement in the ERA Forum, co-chaired by an associated country or stakeholders representative;

18. INVITES the Commission to present to the Council by mid-2022 a monitoring and evaluation framework for the implementation of the ERA co-designed with the ERA Forum and to provide it with information on the progress of the implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda at mid-term, on the basis of discussions carried out by the ERA Forum; RECALLS that ERAC may be called upon to provide advice on these initiatives at any time;

19. RECOMMENDS that participation at selected meetings of the ERA Forum or their specific agenda items when preparing the Commission's initiative on the ERA Policy Agenda should be limited to representatives of the Commission and the Member States, while consulting with the stakeholders and associated countries as well as relevant third countries;

20. PROPOSES that a Steering Committee is set up within the ERA Forum, consisting of the Commission, the incumbent and subsequent Council Trio Presidency, for preparing its meetings; RECOMMENDS that, on the basis of a proposal from the Steering Committee, the ERA Forum applies a consistent approach as far as possible to the involvement of associated countries, relevant third countries and stakeholders in its work;

21. CONSIDERS that stakeholders should be more systematically involved in the delivery of the ERA at Union and national levels; UNDERLINES that national stakeholder participation should be ensured at national level; with regard to the work of the ERA Forum and its possible sub-groups INVITES the Commission to foresee that the ERA Forum will:

- ensure representative involvement at its relevant meetings of EU-level umbrella organisations or other appropriate representative organisations relevant at EU level of the following seven types of stakeholders: universities and other higher education institutions, research and technology performing organisations, R&I-intensive businesses, including SMEs, individual researchers and innovators, including at early- and middle stages of their carriers, research infrastructures, R&I-funding organisations and academies of sciences;

- set up an open, online, voluntary stakeholder register to increase transparency in the identification of the ERA stakeholders involved in the work of the ERA Forum and its possible sub-groups, taking into account respective thematic issues;

- take into consideration the institutional autonomy of public and private research organisations and higher education institutions when discussing the potential reforms of R&I policies at all relevant levels;

22. AGREES to review the ERAC mandate in order to reflect the new ERA governance, including limiting membership to Member States representatives with high executive level of responsibility for R&I policies; ACKNOWLEDGES the added value of the co-chairing of ERAC by the representatives of Member States and the Commission and SUGGESTS inviting associated countries as well as relevant third countries, external experts and stakeholders to relevant ERAC meetings for specific agenda topics; SUGGESTS representation of the incumbent and subsequent Council Trio Presidencies on the ERAC Steering Board, which selects and prepares topics for strategic discussions of ERAC, supported as necessary by ERAC ad-hoc task forces, and being informed by the work of the ERA Forum as appropriate;

23. CONSIDERS that the creation of time-limited, outcomes-focused and objectives-bound sub-groups of the ERA Forum, when duly justified, should be the default approach for implementing ERA Actions;

24. SUGGESTS that for the coordination and implementation of R&I policy in the area of research infrastructures and R&I partnerships, permanent governance structures, the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), the Partnership Knowledge Hub and the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) Steering Board continue their work as independent Commission Expert Groups and closely coordinate with and regularly inform the ERA Forum; STRESSES that these structures should take into account the renewed approach to ERA governance including the possibility of being chaired or co-chaired by representatives of the Commission and/or Member States;

25. UNDERLINES the integrating and structuring role of research infrastructures at all levels, including e-infrastructures, in the European knowledge and innovation ecosystem, ENDORSES the ESFRI Roadmap adopted in 2021, WELCOMES the ongoing assessment of the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) legal framework and REITERATES its invitation to the Commission to submit the next ERIC implementation report by 2022;

26. AGREES that the existing ERA-related groups: the ERAC dedicated configurations GPC (High Level Group on Joint Programming), SFIC (the Strategic Forum for International Scientific and Technological Cooperation) and the Standing Working Groups on Human Resources and Mobility, on Gender in Research and Innovation and on Open Science and Innovation are discontinued as groups under the remit of the Council; RECOMMENDS that their work is taken into account and, if so decided within the ERA Forum, continued within the ERA Forum, to the extent where it contributes to the implementation of the new ERA Policy Agenda;

27. ACKNOWLEDGING the new global approach to R&I as set out in the Council conclusions on 'the Global approach to Research and Innovation – Europe's strategy for international cooperation in a changing world', RECOMMENDS setting up a standing sub-group of the ERA Forum, co-chaired by Member States and the Commission, to take into account and continue the work done by SFIC;

28. INVITES Member States, associated and other relevant third countries to ensure appropriate resources for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of ERA actions and priorities at national and/or regional level; URGES the Commission to endeavour to reduce bureaucracy and the administrative burden when implementing the online policy platform and conducting bilateral dialogues between the Member States and the Commission.

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ERA POLICY AGENDA 2022-2024

This ERA Policy Agenda sets out a catalogue of voluntary ERA actions for the period 2022-2024 to contribute to the priority areas defined in the Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe. It is a first step to addressing comprehensively the priority areas set out in the Pact. Member States and associated countries are invited to identify in which actions they wish to participate and to determine how these actions should be addressed at national level. Subsequent editions of the ERA Policy Agenda will further complement these actions in the long term.

It draws mainly on the Commission's Communication 'A new ERA for Research and Innovation' and on the Council conclusions of December 2020 on the 'New European Research Area', of May 2021 on 'Deepening the ERA: Providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions and making brain circulation a reality' and of September 2021 on the 'Global approach to Research and Innovation'.

The following ERA actions are ordered according to the priority areas in the Pact for Research and Innovation:

Priority Area: Deepening a truly functioning internal market for knowledge	
ERA Actions	**Outcomes**
1. Enable the open sharing of knowledge and the re-use of research outputs, including through the development of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)	• Deploy Open Science principles and identify Open Science best practices • Deploy the core components and services of EOSC and federate existing data infrastructures in Europe, working towards the interoperability of research data • Establish a monitoring mechanism to collect data and benchmark investments, policies, digital research outputs, open science skills and infrastructure capacities related to EOSC
2. Propose a EU copyright and data legislative and regulatory framework fit for research	• Identify barriers and challenges to access and reuse of publicly funded R&I results and of publications and data for scientific purposes, and identify potential impacts on research, through an analysis of relevant provisions under EU copyright and data legislation and related regulatory frameworks, and of relevant institutional and national initiatives • Propose legislative and non-legislative measures to improve the current EU copyright and data legislative and regulatory frameworks
3. Advance towards the reform of the Assessment System for research, researchers and institutions to improve their quality, performance and impact	• Analysis of legal and administrative barriers at national and trans-national level for a modern research assessment system • Create a coalition of European research funders and research performers who agree on a new approach for research assessment, following wide and inclusive consultations at European and international level • Implementation plan of the coalition to roll-out the new approach, including pilots in different domains

4. Promote attractive and sustainable research careers, balanced talent circulation and international, transdisciplinary and inter-sectoral mobility across the ERA	• Development of a European Framework for research careers and toolbox of support measures to improve attractiveness of research careers in academia and beyond • Launch an observatory on research careers • Revise the Charter and Code for researchers • Set up the ERA Talent Platform as the one-stop-shop online gateway to EURAXESS services, network and portals including HRS4R, and RESAVER • Launch the ERA4You initiative to promote talent circulation between sectors and across the EU • Exchange of good practices with regard to R&I systems to support balanced brain circulation • Pilot with European Universities alliances the European Framework for Research Careers

5. Promote gender equality and foster inclusiveness, taking note of the Ljubljana declaration	• Develop a policy coordination mechanism to support all aspects of gender equality through inclusive Gender Equality Plans and policies, and a dedicated EU network on their implementation • Strategy to counteract gender-based violence including sexual harassment in the European R&I system and to assure gender equality in working environments through institutional change in any research funding or performing organisation • A policy approach to strengthen gender equality, that addresses gender mainstreaming to advance the new ERA • Develop principles for the integration and evaluation of the gender perspective in research and innovation content in cooperation with national Research Funding Organisations
6. Deepening the ERA through protecting academic freedom in Europe	• Facilitate the development of a policy approach to safeguard the freedom of scientific research in Europe, based on the Bonn declaration on freedom of scientific research • Support interested organisations in implementing the recommendations of the guidelines on foreign interference • Publication of a first European monitoring report on the freedom of scientific research
7. Upgrade EU guidance for a better knowledge valorisation	• Develop and endorse Guiding Principles for knowledge valorisation • Development of a Code of Practice for smart use of IP together with stakeholders • Development of a Code of Practice for researchers on standardisation

8. Strengthen sustainability, accessibility and resilience of research infrastructures in the ERA	• Strategic analysis of the European Research Infrastructure landscape • Broader and more sustainable access for all countries to European research infrastructures and their services and revision of the European Charter of Access to Research Infrastructures • Update of the ESFRI Roadmap and implementation of the RI performance monitoring framework • Report on the ERIC Framework • Increased cooperation between research infrastructures, e-infrastructures and stakeholders, including through EOSC
9. Promote a positive environment and level playing field for international cooperation based on reciprocity	• Further develop values and principles for international cooperation in research and innovation as set out in the Council Conclusions on the Global approach to Research and Innovation - Europe's strategy for international cooperation in a changing world to be promoted in multilateral dialogues with partner countries and international fora • Launch one pilot initiative on the Team Europe approach for a specific world region and/or topic • Develop a European Science Diplomacy Agenda • Promote a coordinated joint approach for engagement in multilateral initiatives

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Priority Area: Taking up together the challenges posed by the twin green and digital transition, and increasing society's participation in the ERA</th></tr>
<tr><th>ERA Actions</th><th>Outcomes</th></tr>
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<td>10. Make EU R&I missions and partnerships key contributors to the ERA</td>
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Share information, create awareness and build ownership of EU R&I missions at national level, regional and community level in order to promote citizen engagement
Monitor the performance of partnerships and how they contribute to the new ERA and its set of values and principles (on the basis of the work of the Partnership Knowledge Hub)

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<td>11. An ERA for green transformation</td>
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Policy approach for a cooperation framework on R&I driven safe and sustainable low-carbon energy technologies
Development of a green hydrogen R&I ERA pilot action, while ensuring consistency with other related initiatives and without prejudice to the relevance of a broader hydrogen R&I policy approach
ERA4FutureWork: a policy approach (at national, regional, local and EU levels) to address R&D funding for the Future of Work

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12. Accelerate the green/digital transition of Europe's key industrial ecosystems	• Consultation process on R&I-related needs of industries, including skilling/upskilling needs, digitalisation, R&I driven standardisation, common technology roadmaps, and research and technology infrastructures • Develop a robust policy framework to better support fundamental research at national and European levels to generate breakthrough knowledge and innovation • Development of a policy approach to link industrial and R&I policies, notably on how to accelerate the industrial take-up of R&I results, and launch pilots in transport and energy industrial ecosystems • Development of industrial technology roadmaps on low carbon technologies for energy-intensive industries and on circular industrial technologies • Development of a coordination mechanism to provide industry with the technology infrastructures needed to test, validate and upscale innovations • Address the social adaptation of the green (and digital) transitions
13. Empower Higher Education Institutions to develop in line with the ERA, and in synergy with the European Education Area	• Support universities in their digital transition, including through initiatives such as Connected Universities; • Develop and adopt a policy approach to equip researchers with the skills needed for an interoperable career in academia and beyond • Policy approach on future EU level support for the further development of HE institutions, including through a European Excellence Initiative and the consolidation of the European Universities Initiative
14. Bring Science closer to Citizens	• Scale-up of the Plastic Pirates – Go Europe! initiative • Launch the European City for Science, during the European Year for the Youth, and networking different European cities. • Feasibility analysis for a federated "EU Science Media Network" to ensure more factual journalistic reporting on science • Propose a policy coordination mechanism on public engagement practices, including citizen involvement in scientific processes

Priority Area: Amplifying access to research and innovation excellence across the Union

ERA Actions	Outcomes
15. Build-up regional and national R&I ecosystems to improve regional/national excellence and competitiveness	- Define and pilot ERA Hubs to enable the emergence of competitive R&I ecosystems across the EU, to fill territorial gaps and to ensure easier flow of talents and investments - Consultation process on future bilateral R&I cooperation activities to strengthen and connect R&I excellence in the ERA
16. Improve EU-wide access to excellence	- Establish a dedicated work stream in the ERA Forum to improve access to excellence - Design and implementation of tailor-made support to individual Member States - Policy approach on the potential of COST to improve access to excellence across the EU
17. Enhance the strategic capacity of Europe's public research performing organisations	Implementation of a Science management Initiative, with at least 100 participating institutions across Europe

Priority Area: Advancing concerted research and innovation investments and reforms	
ERA Actions	**Outcomes**
18. Facilitate a national process or ERA policy vehicle preparation for identification of running or planned measures contributing to the implementation of ERA	• Provide coordination between EU and MS on the definition and implementation of a national policy approaches supporting ERA
19. Establish an efficient and effective ERA monitoring mechanism	• Develop the online ERA policy platform with the aim to have a consistent, robust and quality tested national reporting system to feed the online policy platform, taking into account current instruments • Develop the ERA scoreboard with the aim to monitor the progress towards ERA priorities at EU level and the progress of individual ERA actions at MS level, taking into account current instruments
20. Support to the prioritisation, coordination and direction of R&I investments and reforms	• Develop and promote the adoption of a policy and investment approach, through bilateral and multilateral policy dialogues in order to support interested Member States in prioritising R&I investment, including synergies between EU and national programmes and apply structural reforms