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From: Presidency
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Subject: Draft Council conclusions "From the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020
towards the ninth Framework Programme"
- Presidency text

Delegations will find attached a Presidency text on the draft Council conclusions "From the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020 towards the ninth Framework Programme" with a view to the Research Working Party on 16 October 2017.

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

From the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020 towards the ninth Framework Programme

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING:

- its Conclusions of 29 May 2015 on European Research Area Roadmap 2015-2020¹ in which it invited ERAC, in close cooperation and where relevant with appropriate input from relevant bodies, in particular GPC, and the Strategic configuration of the Programme Committee of Horizon 2020, to assess the coherence of joint initiatives, especially those funded by the European Union, with an emphasis on their European added value;
- its Conclusions of 27 May 2016 on FP7 and the Future Outlook: Research and innovation investments for growth, jobs and solutions to societal challenges² in which the Council, in particular in the context of the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020, invited the Commission to analyse whether, and if so, how to promote a sufficient degree of openness of research and innovation networks funded by the EU, respecting the autonomy of research;
- its Conclusions of 27 June 2016³ on the Special Report No. 4/2016 by the European Court of Auditors in which the Council called on the Commission and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) to report to the Council on actions taken by mid-2017;

¹ 9351/15
² 9527/16
³ 10628/16

- [its Conclusions of 15 November 2017⁴ on Strategic Elements of Cohesion Policy post-2020 in which the Council emphasises the importance of synergies and complementarity between EU funding programmes;]
- the ERAC Opinion⁵ of 7 July 2017 on the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020 and preparations for the next Framework Programme (FP) in which ERAC recognises FPs as generating an outstanding EU added value, notably by teaming up and by driving collaborations of R&I ecosystems through all Europe, but also stresses the need for more active openness and simplification, as well as that FPs should feed to other EU sectoral policies and deliver better and continued dialogue with the European citizens;
- the Commission's communication "Partnering in research and innovation"⁶ of 21 September 2011 taking stock of the state of play of various partnership concepts and a wide range of instruments and identifying steps to further develop the partnering approach also in order to reduce unnecessary multiplication of initiatives and fragmentation of research and innovation, which the Council took note of in its Conclusions of 6 December 2011 on partnerships in research and innovation⁷;
- the European Parliament resolution of 13 June 2017 on the assessment of Horizon 2020 implementation in view of its interim evaluation and the Framework Programme 9 proposal⁸ in which the EP calls for doubling of the FP budget;
- [Tallinn Call for Action 2017 “Seize the opportunity now: research and innovation matter for the future of Europe”⁹ which stresses the importance of ensuring investments in research and innovation, increasing the impact of R&I investments and building trust between research and society, and within the R&I system;]

⁴ [The document number to be added]

⁵ ERAC 1207/17

⁶ 14555/11

⁷ 18349/11

⁸ P8_TA-PROV(2017)0253

⁹ [web link to be added]

1. CONSIDERING that the revised Multi-annual Financial Framework should continue to **stimulate growth and create jobs** through highly effective programmes with high European added value such as Horizon 2020¹⁰.
2. NOTING that even though the gross domestic expenditure on research and innovation (R&I) as a percentage of GDP has grown marginally over recent years, reaching 2.03 % in 2015, the **EU remains at a considerable distance from its target of 3%** per year in the Europe 2020 Strategy for Jobs and Growth¹¹.

Increasing the impact of R&I

3. HIGHLIGHTS that R&I is essential for ensuring long-term economic growth, industrial competitiveness and prosperity and addressing the major challenges, e.g. as defined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as well as the ambitious targets set in the Europe 2020 Strategy and in the Rome Declaration¹².
4. ACKNOWLEDGES that **complying with these ambitious priorities requires well-funded and highly performing national R&I systems**, and therefore, CALLS on the Member States to strive for increasing their investment in R&I to jointly reach the 3% goal and to take further measures to increase the quality and impact of these investments. Taking into account the recommendation of the High Level Group on maximising impact of EU Research and Innovation (hereinafter the High Level Group), EMPHASISES the necessity to prioritise research and innovation across all EU policies and programmes, including the significant increase of investments in the ninth FP.

¹⁰ General Affairs Council, 7 March 2017 (7024/17).

¹¹ EUCO 13/10

¹² Declaration of 25 March 2017 of the leaders of 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission.

5. UNDERLINES that R&I has an important role in carrying common European values¹³, which lay the foundation of cooperation, free movement of people and ideas, and gender equality. Therefore, REITERATES the relevance of the **European Research Area** (ERA) and the need to continue joint efforts to develop it. ACKNOWLEDGES that the FP is the main instrument at EU level to fund trans-national and transdisciplinary R&I cooperation and to support the objectives and implementation of the ERA.
6. STRESSES the importance of assessing the **long-term impact of R&I** in all its dimensions in respect to other policy goals and wider societal issues, as well as broadening the definition of impact to take into account the diversity of contributions of research to knowledge and society. RECALLS in this respect its Conclusions of 27 May 2016.
7. RECOGNISES the shift towards a challenge driven approach in R&I in the EU, yet AGREES that further integration with EU policies and **coherence with other EU funding programmes** is impeded by different non-complementary intervention logics and the complexity of the various funding and other regulations such as state aid rules. ENCOURAGES even greater linking of R&I with other EU, national and regional policies, as well as creating more R&I friendly framework conditions and regulatory environment, taking into account the Innovation Principle.

¹³ as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union.

Key principles in preparing the ninth Framework Programme

EU added value

8. WELCOMES the Commission's Staff Working Documents¹⁴ on the Horizon 2020 (H2020) interim evaluation as well as the report of the High Level Group that provide a good basis for discussions on the next Framework Programme (FP) and HIGHLIGHTS that **R&I cooperation at the EU level has been a very successful example of European cooperation and integration.**¹⁵
9. RECOGNISES that H2020 is a very attractive programme, whose projects are producing high quality scientific and technological outputs and which has a compelling and outstanding **European added value** in terms of producing R&I as a public good with a strong European dimension and in terms of scale, speed and scope. ACKNOWLEDGES that the integration of R&I into a single programme has increased impact, furthermore ACKNOWLEDGES that the three pillar structure of the programme has contributed to increased clarity of the programme, however more linkages between the pillars should be achieved in the next FP.
10. UNDERLINES that **cooperation, excellence, impact and openness** are the founding blocks of the FP; STRESSES that **European added value** must be the major driver for the design and implementation of the next FP. CALLS on the Commission to involve Member States, stakeholders and citizens in the co-design and implementation of the next FP.

¹⁴ 9791/17 +ADD 1-3, 12983/17, 12987/17, 12988/17, 12990/17 and [reference to SWD on EIT to be added]

¹⁵ 6952/17+ ADD 1-2 : "White paper on the future of Europe, Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025".

R&I at the service of society

11. TAKES NOTE of the High Level Group recommendation on **a mission-oriented, impact-focused approach** and CALLS on the Commission together with Member States to explore developing a strategic, interdisciplinary mission-oriented approach for addressing global challenges, while fully taking advantage of digital technologies, and supporting industrial competitiveness which would be implemented by a portfolio of complementary instruments, including partnerships.
12. RECOGNISES the need for a greater outreach to citizens and to better engage the public and policy-makers in the definition of R&I agendas. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of effectively disseminating and exploiting R&I results on project and programme level and ENCOURAGES the Commission and the Member States to jointly develop a common action plan **to enhance communication and interaction with society and stakeholders**, and foster the dissemination and exploitation of results in Europe.
13. RECOGNISES that European competitiveness hinges on the availability of well-educated and skilled people to tackle the challenges of tomorrow, their appropriate and comprehensive training, as well as the effective **circulation of new ideas and knowledge** between research, industry and education. RECOMMENDS establishing stronger links between ERA and European Higher Education Area, e.g. through encouraging research consortia to develop and organise education and training activities.
14. ACKNOWLEDGES that societies are becoming increasingly information driven and **free movement of data and knowledge** can be treated as the fifth freedom of the EU. HIGHLIGHTS that Open Science, e.g. mandating Open Access to publications and data, has a crucial role in boosting impact and transparency of R&I, and bringing science and society closer together.

Rationalisation of the R&I funding landscape

15. [RECOGNIZES that partnerships are an important element of EU R&I policy, but STRESSES that the European R&I landscape has become too complex, also due to increasing number of R&I partnership instruments and initiatives in the FP reflecting an instrument-driven approach. CALLS on the Commission and the Member States to jointly **consider ways to streamline and rationalise the EU R&I funding landscape**, e.g. by merging similar instruments and giving preference to instruments with simpler implementation modalities.
16. CALLS on the Commission and the Member States to jointly **establish a strategic process** for setting up a roadmap covering the whole lifespan of all large-scale long-term partnership initiatives¹⁶, and to designate a body for its implementation. CONSIDERS that such a process should be guided by the **principles** of coherence, transparency, openness, EU-added value, leverage effect, long-term financial commitment, complementarity with national and regional initiatives, and flexibility. The roadmap should set out an exit strategy from EU funding for all partnership initiatives. STRESSES that the strategic roadmap process and its overseeing body must be taken into account in the future development of FP9 and ERA governance and INVITES the Member States to **ensure alignment of relevant national policies and resources** towards agreed priorities of partnerships.
17. In this context, WELCOMES the setting up of the ad hoc ERAC Working Group on R&I partnerships to prepare the strategic process by e.g. defining criteria for selecting the R&I partnerships based on the guiding principles, defining common KPIs and conditions for using different instruments and ASKS ERAC to report back to the Council on a regular basis starting no later than May 2018.]

¹⁶ For example: Joint Programming Initiatives, Initiatives under Articles 185 and 187 of the TFEU, contractual PPPs, ETPs, EIPs, EIT KICs, ERA-nets, EUREKA clusters, European joint programmes and framework partnership agreements.

18. [WELCOMES the response of the Commission and the EIT to the Council Conclusions of 27 June 2016. HIGHLIGHTS the need to **simplify the procedures related** to EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) to be less resource demanding. STRESSES the need for the KICs to ensure openness and inclusiveness and CALLS KICs to develop sound strategies for financial sustainability.]
19. EMPHASISES the importance of supporting the **whole innovation value chain** and TAKES NOTE of the launch of the pilot of European Innovation Council (EIC), which should provide input for designing the possible future EIC. STRESSES that the EIC should be one important element of the EU's measures to support closer-to-market innovations and that it should bring added value and help strengthen the innovation ecosystem, including links between research organisations and innovators, enhance the uptake of R&I results, support breakthrough innovations and the scaling up of innovative companies and contribute to the streamlining of the innovation support landscape.
20. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of **better synergies between the FP and other EU funding instruments**. CONSIDERS therefore that regulations for the FP and the European Structural and Investment Funds, as well as any other relevant EU programmes, must be designed from the very beginning with synergies, coherence, compatibility and complementarity in mind.

Openness and accessibility

21. STRESSES the importance of an even **broader pan-European impact and relevance** by aiming to achieve wider geographic coverage of Europe where appropriate, i.e. in research infrastructures, or in calls for funding related to common societal needs.
22. ACKNOWLEDGES that **Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation** measures and cross-cutting approach to this issue have to continue and should be strengthened. RECOGNISES that the participation gap and the innovation divide must continue to be addressed both at national and EU level.

23. RECOGNISES the importance of strengthening **international cooperation** in the FP and SUPPORTS the Commission in its efforts to encourage the main international partner countries of the EU to implement a stable dedicated instrument (e.g. matching funds) to enable participation in the FPs. INVITES the Commission and Member States together with the countries associated to H2020 to explore synergies between FP and R&I national strategies, operating structures, instruments and networks to support strategic coordination of international cooperation.

Implementation

RECOGNISES that the high oversubscription rate is diminishing the attractiveness of the programme and is a barrier to accessibility. Therefore INVITES the Commission and the Member States jointly to explore ways to **reduce oversubscription and increase accessibility** in preparing the next FP, as well as building on specific measures already in Horizon 2020, e.g. by specifying more clearly the expected impact of projects in calls for proposals, mainstreaming diversity in evaluation panels, and using of two-stage application process while piloting other methods to further modernise the evaluation process, such as blind evaluation.

24. NOTES with concern the shift towards higher Technology Readiness Levels in H2020, and therefore STRESSES the importance of collaborative basic research in tackling societal challenges and developing new technologies. EMPHASISES that the FP has to provide **sufficient funding to frontier research through individual as well as collaborative research**. HIGHLIGHTS that the current balance between collaborative projects and mono-beneficiaries activities should be preserved. UNDERLINES that grants should continue to be the main form of funding in the FP and financial instruments and budgetary guarantees should be used to support in particular the scale up and growth of innovative entities.

25. RECOGNIZES that with Horizon 2020, a good progress has been made towards **simplification and harmonisation** both at programme level and at project level. INVITES the Commission to continue the simplification effort and further enhance the user-friendliness in the design of the next FP and its implementation modalities.
26. UNDERLINES the need to establish a comprehensive **monitoring and evaluation framework** with a set of indicators applying across the programme, to provide a coherent overview of the programme, including more effective and transparent tracking of scientific, economic and societal impact and exploitation of R&I results in the EU during and after the programme. STRESSES that evaluations should fulfil all requirements set in the legal base of the FPs, e.g. the thorough assessment of the extent of use of the additional remuneration to personnel in H2020. CALLS upon the Commission and the Member States to continue efforts to develop a system to measure the impacts of EU R&I programmes at national level in a comparable way, using a common core set of indicators.
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