



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Conclusions on the social dimension of the European Research Area

*3016th COMPETITIVENESS Council meeting
Brussels, 26 May 2010*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

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"RECALLING

Its conclusions of 2 December 2008 on the definition of a "2020 Vision for the European Research Area" which, inter alia, stressed that "the European Research Area (ERA) is firmly rooted in society and responsive to its needs and ambitions in pursuit of sustainable development";¹

Its conclusions of 3 December 2009 on the Guidance on future priorities for European research and research-based innovation in post-2010 Lisbon strategy which, inter alia, recognised 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;²

The Commission communication on Europe 2020 Strategy which highlights the importance of research and innovation, of the improvement of the education systems and life-long learning initiatives (including digital literacy) and proposes to establish as one of the EU flagship initiatives the European Platform against Poverty to ensure social and territorial cohesion such that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society.³

¹ OJ C 25, 31.1.2009, p.1-4.

² Doc. 17189/09.

³ Commission communication of 3 March 2010 entitled "EUROPE 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" (7110/10).

P R E S S

The conclusions of the European Council of 25/26 March 2010 which agreed, as one of the headline targets of the new European strategy for jobs and growth ("Europe 2020"), the promotion of social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty;⁴

The significant potential of the six major axes for the development of ERA (Researchers, Research Infrastructures, Knowledge Sharing, Joint Programming, International Science & Technology Cooperation and Excellent Research Institutions) for attaining beneficial impacts to the social dimension of the ERA.⁵

The specific activities related to the social dimension of ERA which are carried out in the Seventh Framework Programme under the "socio-economic sciences and humanities" priority of the "Cooperation" specific programme and the "Science in society" part of the "Capacities" programme and its coordinating role on issues related to Science in Society both across the Framework Programme and within other relevant EU programmes.⁶

1. ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of the social dimension of the European Research Area given the capacity of research and innovation to provide concrete responses to the demands of society, as also referred to in the San Sebastián/Donostia Declaration of 8 February 2010 by the Spanish Presidency⁷ and in particular that:
 - In supporting excellence in research and underpinning competitiveness and sustainable growth the ERA can also make an important contribution to the social dimension of the EU whilst taking full account of issues of sustainability in all its forms (environmental, social and economic); in return, the full development of the social dimension will help the ERA better achieve its objectives;
 - The social impacts are important results of the ERA and the social dimension should, when appropriate, also be mainstreamed within the development of the ERA, addressing the needs of its citizens and of the society;
 - The elements of the Europe 2020 Strategy already agreed incorporate relevant objectives in this respect and the ERA should, for its part, contribute to related EU policy objectives such as reduction of poverty and social exclusion;
 - Modernising and strengthening the EU employment, education and training policies is also essential for reducing poverty and social exclusion and reinforcing activities concerned in the area of research and innovation.
2. AGREES that the social dimension of the ERA should encompass the following aspects:
 - Analysing and identifying the most effective ways in which scientific research and innovation can contribute to meeting social challenges including through support to policy making;

⁴ Doc. EUCO 7/10.

⁵ Commission Green Paper "European Research Area: New Perspective" of 4 April 2007 (8322/07).

Council Conclusions of 30 May 2008 on The Launch of the "Ljubljana Process" - towards full realisation of ERA (10231/08).

⁶ Council decision of 19 December 2006 on the specific programme: 'Capacities' implementing the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013). OJ L 54, 22.2.2007, p. 101-125.

⁷ Doc. 6760/10.

- Supporting research and debate on the principles of responsible research through partnerships between researchers, policy-makers and society at large;
- Fostering the dissemination and improving the accessibility of scientific and technological knowledge in order to maximise its impact on society as a whole;
- Ensuring that the objectives of the ERA, in strengthening the scientific and technological basis of the EU and promoting competitiveness, contribute to meeting societal objectives;
- Taking full account of the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the EU and abroad, when appropriate, in the development of the ERA policies;
- Taking into account Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTD&I), when appropriate, as a component of the policies of aid and cooperation for development, in line with the principles of policy coherence for development;
- Incorporating the civil society's and citizens' input in the development of the EU RTD&I agendas and in the setting of priorities.

3. INVITES the Commission and the Member States, in the framework of their activities in implementing the European Research Area as appropriate, to:

- continue reflecting which specific objectives and the corresponding indicators will allow the assessment of progress towards achieving the social dimension of the ERA, both at EU and Member State level;
- consider ways and means to increase the visibility of actions addressing aspects of the social dimension of ERA, with the aim to inspire and promote similar activities in the EU and in other parts of the world;
- consider the societal impact of selected Joint Programming initiatives;
- promote the civil society's and citizen's input for the development of responsible strategic research agendas to broaden the scientific interest in relevant social problems, including through the promotion and consolidation of social platforms;
- identify and exchange best practices in promoting the social dimension in the context of the research and innovation policies and programmes, including evaluation of social impact and relevance of research;
- stimulate interdisciplinary research in humanities, social and natural sciences and engineering to create new added value;
- continue to help develop knowledge and its application in developing countries, through the potential offered by cooperative and joint research with those countries on issues of mutual concern, as well as through the exchange of technology and knowledge with those regions;
- in the context of the aid and cooperation programmes, consider ways and means for mobilising resources in case of emergency, such as, mobility programmes to temporarily host researchers affected by disasters in the world;
- consider holding EU Presidency conferences addressing aspects of the social dimension of ERA.

4. INVITES the Commission to take into account the social dimension (including actions put forward above) in its regular reporting on the development of the ERA, as well as to present any further initiatives that could help to fully develop the social dimension of the ERA."