

## Informal Meeting of Competitiveness Ministers responsible for Research Santander 27-28 July 2023

### Policy debate - Briefing document on Strengthening a common European framework for science, technology and innovation diplomacy.

#### THE VALUE OF EUROPEAN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION DIPLOMACY

The European Union and its Member States are facing unprecedented challenges in a rapidly changing geopolitical, but also scientific-technological, environment. In this context, the importance of science, technology and innovation diplomacy has come to the fore. Many recent Council conclusions related to the Common Foreign and Security Policy make implicit or explicit reference to the role of science, technology and innovation.<sup>1</sup>

The European Research Area (ERA) aims to promote international cooperation, which is facilitated by more connected ecosystems and enhanced communication between policymakers and scientific communities. To this end, very recently the Council has emphasised in the ERA Policy Agenda the importance of inter-sectoral mobility, open science, **international cooperation, and science diplomacy**.

Nowadays, the collaboration on a **global scale in R&I is vital** for the Union to tackle common societal challenges, ensure equal access to the latest knowledge and foster the mobility of talents. However, Europe's role as a global leader depends on maintaining **openness while safeguarding its strategic autonomy**, promoting scientific excellence and translating research outcomes into competitive products, services and policies that benefit its citizens. Nevertheless, collaboration is crucial to accelerate recovery and improve society's well-being, to address global challenges and commonly achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

During the last years, the Council has given its views in several dimensions to frame this cooperation. In 2021, the Council recognised the Commission's Communication on the "Global Approach to Research and Innovation (R&I)"<sup>2</sup> as a useful policy framework to shape the Union's **engagement with international partners in R&I** and the geopolitical dimension of the ERA. The Council Conclusions called on "the Commission and the European External Action Service to develop a European Science Diplomacy Agenda and

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<sup>1</sup> e.g., Council conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy (5263/21), Council conclusions on a globally connected Europe (10629/21), Council's Strategic Compass for Security and Defence (7371/22), Council Conclusions on EU Digital Diplomacy (11406/22),

<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:252:FIN>

to present it to the Council" by 2023. In 2022, the Council Conclusions on "Principles and Values for international cooperation in Research and Innovation"<sup>3</sup> called for a multilateral dialogue on the principles and values of international R&I cooperation with key international partners.

Science diplomacy is a powerful tool to foster international scientific cooperation while advancing the EU and Member States' foreign policy. **The Valletta Declaration** on Strengthening Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation through R&I (2017)<sup>4</sup> is a clear example of how science and diplomacy can enhance each other by strengthening strategic international cooperation. The Declaration allowed the ministers responsible for R&I from the **Union for the Mediterranean** (UfM) to support the creation of **PRIMA**, the Partnership for R&I in the Mediterranean Area. Regional programming initiatives such as PRIMA undoubtedly contribute to the impact in sectorial policy areas and foster cooperation through sharing principles and values.

#### TOWARDS A COMMON APPROACH

In 2017, the same year that PRIMA was launched, the Commission published a report mapping the different national **Science Diplomacy tools**<sup>5</sup> used in a sample of EU Member States and some countries outside the EU. This study concluded that science diplomacy efforts in Europe remained largely **uncoordinated** and stated the need for a strategic vision to underpin the science diplomacy capabilities to better train diplomats, researchers, innovators and other stakeholders of the EU and its Member States. Furthermore, ERAC, through its Strategic Forum for International Cooperation (SFIC), provided additional input in 2020<sup>6</sup>, calling for a more strategic role of EU science diplomacy and proposing a roadmap. Over the past years, the Commission has funded different projects<sup>7</sup> under the Horizon 2020 programme to improve our shared understanding of European science diplomacy and provided significant insights, **training materials**, and position papers, such as the Madrid Declaration on Science Diplomacy<sup>8</sup> (2019). As a substantial outcome, in 2021, the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance<sup>9</sup> was established to foster the theory and practice of science diplomacy in Europe.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/56956/st10125-en22.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Azores-Declaration\_04jun2021-1.pdf (allatlantic2021.eu)

<sup>5</sup> [Tools for an EU science diplomacy](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Input paper by the SFIC Science Diplomacy Task Force](#)

<sup>7</sup> Using Science for/in Diplomacy for Addressing Global Challenges (S4D4C), Inventing a Shared Science Diplomacy for Europe (InsSciDE), and European Leadership in Cultural, Science and Innovation Diplomacy (EL-CSID)

<sup>8</sup> [The Madrid Declaration on Science Diplomacy – EU Science Diplomacy \(s4d4c.eu\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.science-diplomacy.eu/>

In a time of multiple crises, the EU needs to mobilise all available resources and tools to achieve its goals and defend its interests in a coordinated way to enhance the impact of its action globally. With the appropriate **governance structures**, science diplomacy can become a valuable tool to inform European external action and policies with the best available scientific evidence. As a step in this direction, an informal network of science advisors and science diplomacy coordinators in EU ministries of Foreign Affairs was established<sup>10</sup> in 2021 to facilitate this exchange of information and enhance collaboration on science diplomacy initiatives.

As a whole, building a solid base for EU science diplomacy has the potential to provide EU solutions to global challenges while underpinning cooperation at the European and international level.

### Questions for the exchange of views

In light of the above, ministers are invited to give their views on the following questions:

1. Considering the intersectoral approach of European science diplomacy, how can we foster stronger engagement among science policy-makers and diplomats, breaking the silos between these sectors?
2. To tackle common societal challenges and ensure equal access to the latest knowledge, how can the best available science inform and support the Union's foreign affairs vision and policies? Which aspects should be reinforced in R&I policies to strengthen the EU's role as global player in a rules-based multilateral cooperation that enhances collaboration in R&I and other policy areas and fosters EU principles and values?
3. Taking into account the state of science diplomacy within the Union, what steps can be taken to enhance science diplomacy, including institutional capabilities and better train diplomats, researchers, innovators and other stakeholders?

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/role-science-eeas\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/role-science-eeas_en)