

Priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU:

Overall vision of the Presidency

The Bulgarian Presidency vision for the EU in 2018 is one of a pragmatic and efficient European Union providing more **prosperity and security** to its citizens; a more **innovative, competitive and energy-independent** Union, setting standards of growth and employment policies fit for a more digital world; and last, but not least, a Union that continues to be a force for inspiration on the global scene and in its neighbourhood, including the countries in the **Western Balkans**.

The Presidency will strive in a positive and constructive way to deliver **forward-looking results**, based on the principles of **transparency, accountability and openness to the citizens**. The slogan of the Bulgarian Presidency "**United We Stand Strong**" is a reflection of our country's history and of the idea for united and solidary Europe.

Priorities in Research and Innovation

I. Overarching priority:

Setting the orientations for the approach towards the next Framework Programme for research and innovation of the EU for the period 2021-2028. The Presidency will aim towards boosting the potential of the 3 O's concept which should genuinely refresh and reframe the strategic orientations of the EU in the field of R&I and programme support beyond 2020.

The primary work of the Bulgarian Presidency in this area will be dedicated to ensure sustainable political commitment for the discussions on the next Framework programme (FP9). Based on the interim evaluation of the Horizon 2020 programme, the focus on the future discussions will be on results and impact of research and innovation on industry and society across the EU, including optimizing the transfer of knowledge, uptake of research results and open access as key factors for increasing the EU's competitiveness and growth.

The Presidency will strive to reach a broader support for the next generations of EU researchers with a focus on new skills, related to working in open science environments, including interdisciplinary methods, entrepreneurship and application of Big Data. In particular, a debate on a European Skills Agenda for young researchers will bring a new focus on the specific measures for supporting their career development. Alongside fostering new, highly skilled generations of researchers and innovators across the EU, the Bulgarian

Presidency will aim to pursue a fruitful discussion on and resolution of the brain-drain phenomenon, in particular in lagging EU Member States and regions, which young, highly educated people tend to leave so far.

II. Main Presidency topics in Research and Innovation

1. Accelerating the transfer of knowledge, data and research results in support of a new generation of innovators and researchers

The Presidency plans Council Conclusions on the pertinent need to **accelerate knowledge transfer, including access to research results on the part of industries and societies across the EU**. The Conclusions are to provide recommendations on reinforcing the EU research and innovation achievements and translating results from the Framework programme to other sectoral policies. The Presidency aims to ensure stronger economic and societal impact of the results on all EU regions through enhanced synergies with the European structural and investment funds (ESIF).

2. Maximizing long-term sustainability of Research Infrastructures and opening up to the industries and the societies

Long-term sustainability of research infrastructures across the EU will be an element of the Council conclusions, as they are one of the primary sources for generating knowledge and know-how, which unfortunately is still limited in terms of utilization on behalf of Europe's industries and societies. During the Presidency, Bulgaria will host the **European Strategic Forum for Research Infrastructures**, which is set to adopt its next Roadmap. Raising awareness on the principle of inclusiveness is a crucial element in going beyond the "widening" principle. In this context it will be important to discuss and possibly conclude on how to better couple capacity building with excellence criteria, and on how to effectively exploit achieved/generated results on and across regional, national and EU level.

3. Research and Innovation for Food and Nutrition Security and Quality Empowerment.

In the prospect of the discussions of the future missions in the 9th Framework Program for Research and Innovation, coupled with exploring the opportunities for promoting public-private partnership for involving actors from different sectors and leveraging private investments, the Flagship conference on **Food 2030** during the Bulgarian EU Presidency will focus on increasing the impact of R&I for the whole food chain, in response to societal needs and expectations, climate change and globalization.

4. Supporting the work of the Council to mandate the European Commission for the approval on behalf of Euratom the new baseline *International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER)*

The Presidency will work towards addressing the challenges of the ITER project and to put it back on track in terms of programming. Work in the Council will focus on the mandate of the European Commission for the approval on behalf of Euratom of the new baseline for ITER.

5. Ensuring the implementation of the Euratom Programme for research and training during 2018-2020

The Council under the Bulgarian Presidency will deliberate on achieving an agreement to adopt the Euratom Programme (the research framework programme for nuclear research) for 2018-2020.

6. Progressing the preparation of a roadmap outlining the governance and funding of the *European Open Science Cloud* initiative.

Calendar of Presidency events

Flagship events during the Bulgarian Presidency aim to further explore opportunities for promoting public-private partnerships to increase inclusive participation, by providing the necessary platform for discussions on increasing the impact of R&I, in response to economic and societal needs and expectations, as well as globalization.

To do this, Bulgaria will address, invite and involve a wide diversity of actors to build a shared and inclusive vision, with an aim to boost future investments in R&I in Europe and leveraging private investments and increasing synergies with public funding.

Key Presidency events:

1. University-Business Forum, Sofia, **22-23 February 2018**
2. Conference "*Financial Instruments. Access to Risk Finance under Horizon 2020*" – dates to be confirmed for **March 2018**
3. ESFRI Steering Board meeting - **21 March 2018**
3. Conference "*Research Infrastructures*" - **22-23 March, Sofia**
4. Conference "*Food 2030*" - second half of **14-15 June 2018, Plovdiv**

Key dates for work in Council:

1. Informal Meeting of Research Ministers, **1-2 February, Sofia**
2. COMPET Council (Research), **13 March, Brussels** (*poss.*)
3. COMPET Council (Research), **29 May, Brussels**
4. RWP/ERAC Meeting, **14-16 March, Plovdiv**
5. ERAC plenary, **17 May, Brussels**
6. ERAC - GPC, **8 March & 5 June, Brussels**
7. ERAC - SFIC, **7 March & 6 June, Brussels**

Key dates for work in RWP:

January - **15, 22, 29**
February - **19, 26**
March - **5, 26**
April - **16, 23**
May - **7, 14**
June - **4, 11**