



Competitiveness Council (Research and space) **Brussels, 29 November 2024**

Research (Friday 29 November – Morning session)

Chair: Balázs Hankó, Hungarian Minister for Culture and Innovation (Minister of State Máté Lóga, will replace Minister Hankó until arrival of Minister Márton Nagy, around 10:00)

European Commission representative: Iliana Ivanova, Commissioner for innovation, research, culture, education and youth

Start time: 09:30

Press conference: +/- 14:20 (Justus Lipsius press room).

The Council meeting will resume at 09:30 on Friday. The entire morning session will be public, except the presentation of the priorities of the Polish presidency, which comes under AOB.

Research ministers are expected to approve three sets of Council conclusions: the first on strengthening the competitiveness of the EU, reinforcing the European Research Area and overcoming its fragmentation; the second on a potential research and innovation (R&I) initiative on advancing sustainable natural resource management, food systems security and the deployment of the bioeconomy, harnessing the potential of Central and Eastern Europe; and finally on the Commission's communication on advanced materials.

Ministers will then hold a policy debate on 'the contribution of research and innovation to the competitiveness of the European Union: follow-up to the recommendations of the report on the Future of European Competitiveness. The last items on the agenda will be two items under AOB, the first one on reinforcing the independence of the European Research Council (ERC), and the second one on the programme of the incoming Polish presidency in the field of research. During lunch, ministers will discuss the topic of sustainable European research infrastructures.

The research part of the Council will conclude with a press conference held by Balázs Hankó, Hungarian Minister for Culture and Innovation, and Iliana Ivanova, Commissioner for innovation, research, culture, education and youth.

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

Space (Friday 29 November – Afternoon session)

Chair: Richárd Szabados, Minister of State for SME Development and Technology, Ministry for National Economy

European Commission representative: Margrethe Vestager, Executive Vice-President for 'Europe fit for the digital age'.

Start time: 14:30

Press conference: The space part of the agenda will be covered during the press conference after the research part, at 14:20.

The ministers for space will meet in the afternoon, starting at 14:30. The meeting will be public, except the policy debate on the future of the Union space policy and the AOB item on the Polish presidency priorities in the field of space.

The meeting will begin with the approval of two sets of Council conclusions: the first on reinforcing European competencies in the space sector; and the second on the interim evaluation of the EU Space Programme.

There will then be an exchange of views on the future of the Union space policy. Space ministers will end their formal session with an AOB item on the work programme of the incoming Polish presidency in the field of space.

[Competitiveness Council \(Internal market and industry\), 28 November 2024 - meeting page](#)

[Competitiveness Council \(Space, research and innovation\), 29 November 2024 - meeting page](#)

[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery, Thursday, 28 November 2024](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery, Friday, 29 November 2024](#)

Research

Strengthening the competitiveness of the EU and overcoming the fragmentation of the European Research Area – Council conclusions

Ministers responsible for research are expected to approve Council conclusions on 'strengthening the competitiveness of the EU, reinforcing the European Research Area (ERA) and overcoming its fragmentation'. This session will be public.

The ERA was launched in 2000 with the goal of creating a unified market for R&I across Europe. It aims to foster the free movement of researchers, scientific knowledge and innovation, while enhancing the competitiveness of European industries. Since its creation, the ERA has evolved to also address the fragmentation of the EU's R&I system. To achieve its objectives, the ERA has emphasised cross-border cooperation, continent-wide competition, coordination and the improvement of national research policies and systems.

In 2021, the European Council and the Commission initiated a process to renew the framework and governance of the ERA to revitalise it and give it more prominence. This led to the adoption of the 'pact for R&I in Europe', which serves as the foundation for the 'new ERA', as well as a new governance structure. The Council also approved the ERA policy agenda for 2022-2024, which outlines 20 specific actions aimed at operationalising the pact. These actions are set to be implemented at European and national levels. A second ERA policy agenda for 2025-2027 is expected to be adopted in 2025, coinciding with the new European Commission. The 'Letta report'

on the future of the single market provides strong political support for advancing the ERA and its policy agendas.

Despite these efforts, a geographical divide in R&I persists across Europe, with northern and western European countries leading in innovation, while southern and eastern European countries lag behind. This divide is evident in both the inputs (such as investment) and outputs (such as patents) of R&I activities. The effectiveness of previous R&I framework programmes in reducing these disparities has been limited. In the informal research council on 16 September 2024, the Hungarian presidency held a political debate to discuss how to strengthen European competitiveness through R&I and reduce fragmentation within the ERA. The outcomes of this discussion fed into the draft Council conclusions.

[Enrico Letta report 'Much more than a market'](#)

[ERA policy agenda 2022-2024](#)

A potential research and innovation initiative on the deployment of the bioeconomy, harnessing the untapped potential in Central and Eastern Europe – Council conclusions

Ministers are invited to approve Council conclusions on a potential Europe-wide R&I initiative on advancing sustainable natural resource management, food systems security and the deployment of the bioeconomy, harnessing the potential of Central and Eastern Europe. This session will be public.

The bioeconomy encompasses all sectors that rely on biological resources, such as animals, plants, microorganisms and biomass, including organic waste. It includes primary production sectors like agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, as well as industries that use biological resources to produce food, bio-based products, energy and services. The bioeconomy already plays a vital role in the EU economy, contributing 4.7% to GDP and employing 8.9% of the workforce. Advancing with the bioeconomy will enhance the Union's competitiveness, while contributing to climate targets.

The EU first developed its bioeconomy strategy in 2012, updating it in 2018 to emphasise sustainability and circularity. A new Commission communication aims to review the EU bioeconomy strategy by the end of 2025. BIOEAST (the Central-Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry in the Bioeconomy) was created in 2015 to establish a strategic R&I framework to work towards a sustainable bioeconomy in Central and Eastern European countries.

The Hungarian presidency proposed the drafting of Council conclusions on assessing the need for and feasibility and impact of a potential new R&I initiative in the field of the bioeconomy, while harnessing the untapped potential of Central and Eastern European Member States, the Western Balkans and candidate countries.

[BIOEAST website](#)

Advanced materials – Council conclusions

Ministers are expected to approve Council conclusions on the Commission's communication on advanced materials. This session will be public.

On 27 February 2024, the Commission adopted a communication on advanced materials for industrial leadership. Advanced materials are engineered materials with enhanced properties, crucial for innovation and essential across various sectors. They are central to the EU's economic security, competitiveness and the green and digital transitions, as highlighted in the EU strategic

agenda 2024-2029. These materials are key to creating new products and technologies and have become a priority area for the Union, which aims to strengthen its position in this field.

In its communication, the Commission has proposed a series of actions to boost R&I in advanced materials, focusing on five main pillars: strengthening the European research ecosystem; fast-tracking innovative materials to market; increasing investment and financing; fostering production and use (among other things, through the creation of an advanced materials academy); and creating a technology council to oversee these efforts. On 5 July 2024, the Commission established the Technology Council for Advanced Materials, which held its first meeting on 15 November 2024.

The Hungarian presidency initiated Council conclusions on this communication with the objective to underscore the Council's strategic vision on the matter.

[Communication on advanced materials for industrial leadership](#)

The contribution of R&I to the competitiveness of the EU – policy debate

Ministers will hold a political discussion on the contribution of innovation to the competitiveness of the EU. This session will be public.

The main priority of the Hungarian presidency of the Council is to increase the competitiveness of the EU. The debate on R&D and competitiveness will be the contribution of research ministers to the discussions on the future of EU competitiveness, in particular following the publication of the report 'The future of European competitiveness' by former Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi. The Draghi report underlines the importance of R&I (in particular on digital disruptive technologies like AI) in reducing the European productivity gap with competing economies like the US and China. The report identifies several weaknesses in the research area (i.e. insufficient funding, inefficient public investment, fragmented regulatory fragmentation, limited academic excellence and innovation clusters, and underdeveloped capital markets). It proposes some concrete measures for the EU's forthcoming 10th research and innovation framework programme to make it more effective, focusing resources on projects that can enhance global competitiveness, and doubling the current budget to €200 billion.

The presidency has prepared a note to frame the debate around three subjects: points of the Draghi report that ministers agree (or disagree) with and how to implement them better; the innovation divide and how to strike a balance between excellence and the benefits of R&I; and effective ways to leverage private R&I capital to meet the goals of the Draghi report.

[Mario Draghi's report 'EU competitiveness: looking ahead'](#)

Any other business

a) Reinforcing the independence of the European Research Council (ERC)

Information point from Denmark, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

b) Incoming presidency programme

The Polish delegation will inform the Council about its presidency work programme in the field of research and innovation.

Sustainable European research infrastructures – lunch debate

During lunch, ministers will hold a political discussion on sustainable European research infrastructures.

The importance of Research Infrastructures (RIs) and Technological Infrastructures (TIs) in the European Union has grown significantly in recent years. The 2021 Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe highlighted RIs and TIs as essential areas for collaborative efforts. This was reinforced by the 2022 Council conclusions emphasizing the need for sustainable long-term RIs and a stronger European ecosystem.

In 2023, the Tenerife Declaration established key guidelines for enhancing the sustainability of RIs, including funding models, societal alignment, and integration with the industrial sector. Reports from bodies like the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) further outlined strategies for strengthening European RIs and TIs, stressing the importance of collaboration, innovation, and funding sources, including private investments.

The Heitor report (recommendations of 15 leading experts chaired by Manuel Heitor, former secretary of state for science, technology and higher education of Portugal) and the Draghi report on the future of EU competitiveness stress the importance of pooling resources and expanding industrial access to overcome barriers, particularly the "middle-technology trap."

The debate will be framed by a background note prepared by the Hungarian presidency that invited ministers to give their views on three issues: the role of Commission and member states in supporting and funding top research infrastructures; best approach to attract industry to use and make investments in research infrastructures; operational implementation of the Tenerife declaration to develop the research infrastructure ecosystem in Europe.

[Mario Draghi's report 'EU competitiveness: looking ahead'](#)

[Manuel Heitor report 'Align, act, accelerate'](#)

[Tenerife Declaration on "Global Dimension and Sustainability of Research Infrastructures"](#)

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Space

European competencies in the space sector – Council conclusions

Ministers are expected to adopt Council conclusions on 'reinforcing European competencies in the space sector'. This session will be public.

The space sector plays a crucial role in supporting the EU's economic, social, environmental, technological and security goals. However, there is a pressing need to strengthen Europe's capabilities in this field to maintain its competitiveness, leadership and independence. The conclusions highlight the importance of a comprehensive approach that includes developing skills, regulatory frameworks, and international collaboration to ensure that Europe remains at the forefront of space technology. The conclusions also emphasise the need for proactive steps, such as investing in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education, and creating synergies between businesses, universities and public institutions. These actions are expected to foster innovation, sustainability and resilience within Europe's space sector. By reducing reliance on non-European technologies, the EU can protect its interests, strengthen its ability to act independently on the global stage and foster a culture of continuous improvement and excellence in the space sector to support innovation and competitiveness in the EU.

Interim evaluation of the space programme – Council conclusions

Ministers are expected to adopt Council conclusions on 'The interim evaluation of the European Union's space programme'. This session will be public.

The Council conclusions 'The interim evaluation of the European Union's space programme' analyses the findings of a report on implementation of the EU Space Programme and on the performance of the EU Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA), that the Commission published in July 2024. The Space Programme was established for the period 2021-2027 to implement space activities in the fields of earth observation, satellite navigation, Space Situational Awareness (SSA), Governmental Satellites Communications (GOVSATCOM), and to support an autonomous, secure and cost-efficient capability to access space, taking into account the essential security interests of the Union; as well as to foster the development of a strong Union space economy, including by supporting the space ecosystem and by reinforcing competitiveness, innovation, entrepreneurship, skills and capacity building in all Member States and Union regions.

It encourages and supports innovation and competitiveness through investments in critical infrastructures and disruptive technologies. The regulation that created the EU Space Programme also set up the EU agency for the space programme (EUSPA) as the continuation of the European global navigation satellite systems agency (GSA), with an extended mandate on all components of the programme. The main components of the EU Space Programme are the European earth observation system Copernicus, the global satellite navigation and positioning system Galileo, the geostationary navigation overlay service EGNOS, Space Situational Awareness (SSA) and Governmental Satellites Communications (GOVSATCOM)

The Council conclusions take stock of the progress made in implementing the EU Space Programme, analyse the work of the EUSPA and identify priorities for the work ahead. The conclusions urge for action against the growing threats to the safety and resilience of the programme and call for reduced dependency and strengthened autonomy.

[Report on the implementation of the EU space programme and on the performance of the EU agency for the space programme](#)

[EUSPA website](#)

[EU space programme](#) (background information)

The future of the EU's space policy – policy debate

Ministers will hold an exchange of views on 'The future of the EU's space policy – Defence synergies with a civilian Space Programme'.

The policy debate will focus on the strategic and security aspects of space policy, following the adoption of the EU space strategy for security and defence (EUSSSD) in March 2023. The EEAS Special Envoy for Space, Ms. Marjolijn Van Deelen, will participate in the exchange of views.

The discussion will be guided by a document prepared by the presidency which highlights space as a strategic and contested domain. It outlines key priorities for integrating defence into space initiatives, including technological sovereignty, strategic autonomy, defence synergies with the EU space programme and the resilience and security of space infrastructure. The document also stresses the importance of sustainability in space operations.

The presidency's note calls for a more coordinated approach to defence and civilian space policies. It proposes concrete actions, such as expanding public-private partnerships, encouraging collaboration between civilian and defence sectors, and building the necessary capacities and skills for a future that uses space for both civilian and defence purposes.

Ministers will be invited to give their opinions on three topics: evolution of the space programme to address the growing security challenges in Europe; strengthening of the EU space infrastructures' resilience and security in the context of current civilian oversight frameworks; priorities in dual-use technologies and steps to ensure alignment with sustainability goals.

[EEAS website on the EU's space strategy for security and defence](#)

Any other business

a) Incoming presidency programme

The Polish delegation will inform the Council of the work programme of the incoming presidency in the field of space.

[EU space policy \(background information\)](#)

[EU achievements in space \(infographic\)](#)