

**MULTILATERAL DIALOGUE ON PRINCIPLES AND VALUES
FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN RESEARCH & INNOVATION**

**MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
16 FEBRUARY 2024, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM**

International cooperation in research¹ and innovation (R&I) helps to drive scientific discovery and facilitates finding globally needed solutions to some of the most pressing challenges in order to benefit our societies and economies, for the well-being of our people, the respect of human rights, and delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

International cooperation in R&I should be conducive to a voluntary and mutually agreed exchange of knowledge, technology and personnel. It should be guided by a set of basic principles and fundamental values, in line with relevant international instruments particularly in the fields of human rights and ethics, to enable diverse and equitable cooperation in a trusted, open, accessible, inclusive, participatory, non-discriminatory and safe manner.

Important work on principles and values for international cooperation in R&I is being carried out at institutional, national and international levels, including by the Council of Europe, the G7, G20, the International Science Council, OECD, UNCSTD, UNDP, UNESCO, as well as in other international fora.

Noting the efforts of other parties at national and international levels, the European Union (EU) put forward its view² of what it considers the most essential principles and values for international cooperation in R&I. Advocating strong international R&I cooperation, and recognising that different priorities and different approaches towards principles and values may exist in different parts of the world, in July 2022 the EU initiated a Multilateral Dialogue on principles and values in international cooperation in R&I. It invited the EU Member States, the countries associated with or negotiating association with the EU Framework Programme 'Horizon Europe', the countries with an active Science & Technology Cooperation Agreement with the EU, as well as several international organisations and international and European stakeholder organisations, to join this initiative.

A distinctive feature of this Multilateral Dialogue is that it brings together different partners from all parts of the world as well as an expanding stakeholder community including representatives of industry and civil society to discuss the core principles and values relevant to international R&I cooperation and cooperation policy in one place. It is based on an open and inclusive exchange of views to identify commonalities, discuss differences, compare priorities and practical experiences, to learn from each other's approaches, and to jointly identify good practices. Its objective is to work

¹ in all areas of scientific and academic research and scholarship

² see

- European Commission 'Communication on a Global Approach to Research and Innovation', May 2021
- Council Conclusions on the Global approach to Research & Innovation - Europe's strategy for international cooperation in a changing world, September 2021
- Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe, November 2021
- Marseille Declaration on international cooperation in research and innovation, March 2022
- European Parliament Resolution on the Global approach to research & innovation, April 2022
- Council Conclusions on principles and values for international cooperation in research and innovation, June 2022

towards a common understanding of how these principles and values for international R&I cooperation are elaborated and implemented in practice, with the aim of guiding research performers, research funders and policymakers for future collaborative actions in R&I.

In a first round of meetings in 2022-2024, participants of the Multilateral Dialogue discussed the principles and values of freedom of academic and scientific research; ethics and integrity of scientific conduct; gender equality and inclusiveness; open science; research excellence; the use and application of knowledge (e.g., 'knowledge valorisation'), including industry-academia collaboration; the security of research; solidarity and partnership with low- and middle-income countries, and their application in practice.

Building on the work carried out to date, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in cooperation with the European Commission, hosted an international conference in Brussels on principles and values for international cooperation in R&I, on 16 February 2024. The conference gathered Ministers or their representatives responsible for science, research and innovation of the EU Member States and of international partner countries³, the European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth on behalf of the European Union, as well as representatives of UNESCO, the OECD and the International Science Council.⁴

Against this background, the participants of the Brussels conference:

³ countries associated with or negotiating association with the EU Framework Programme 'Horizon Europe' and countries with an active Science & Technology Cooperation Agreement with the EU

⁴ European stakeholder organisations were invited for online attendance.

- Acknowledged the **importance of R&I** and of **enhancing international R&I cooperation**, for the joint advancement of knowledge in general and for tackling global challenges in particular;
- Recognised the **importance of shared principles and values** as well as of **understanding the diversity of principles and values** for strengthening diverse and equitable international R&I cooperation in a trusted, open, accessible, inclusive, participatory, non-discriminatory, and safe manner;
- Acknowledged at international level that **dialogue on principles and values** in international R&I cooperation **is important and timely** in order **to build trust** among different partners from around the globe and that the Multilateral Dialogue as initiated by the EU has value in this respect and should therefore be continued;
- Acknowledged that discussions on principles and values for R&I are already taking place in **national contexts and other multilateral fora**, and **encouraged further synergies** with the discussions on principles and values taking place within the Multilateral Dialogue;
- **Acknowledged the principles and values** to be covered by such a dialogue, including by drawing on international instruments in the field of human rights and ethics, including freedom of academic and scientific research and the protection of scientists in connection with the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits; research ethics and integrity; research excellence; inclusiveness, accessibility and gender equality; open science; protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights; recognition, consideration, inclusion, and application of local knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge, in consultation with the associated Indigenous community; protection of privacy and personal data; societal and environmental responsibility and response to the needs of society; solidarity and partnership in particular with low- and middle-income countries; risk management and the security of research;
- Expressed their **support for the objectives of the Multilateral Dialogue**, which **is to move jointly towards a trusted**, open, accessible, inclusive, non-discriminatory, and safe **international environment** conducive to researchers from different parts of the world collaborating openly, freely and securely in a global ecosystem of research and innovation, confident that they are doing so **on the basis of shared principles and values** aiming for **common** interest and mutual benefit;
- **Acknowledged at political level the work already undertaken** under the Multilateral Dialogue since its launch in July 2022 and indicated that **other principles and values relevant to international cooperation in research and innovation ought also to be covered** in this context, as identified in future discussions under the Multilateral Dialogue;
- Called for the **sustainability of the Multilateral Dialogue as a global platform for constructive and collaborative engagement in a changing world**, by continuing the open exchange of views, experiences, and best practices, with more in-depth discussions of topics of common interest, among the partners, including the participation of representatives of the research communities, public and the private sector;
- In this context expressed their **readiness to welcome additional countries from different regions of the world to join the Multilateral Dialogue** on principles and values in international R&I cooperation which share and wish to contribute to the objectives of this Dialogue;
- Discussed an **approach for further action** and **encouraged** – through this Declaration – **work on a roadmap** to move towards a common understanding of the principles and values relevant for international R&I cooperation in a respectful and balanced manner, calling for good **coordination and greater synergies** with the work of **other international organisations and fora** working in this area for keeping a global perspective.

ANNEX

The participants of the Ministerial conference recognised the value of the discussions in the thematic expert workshops on the meaning, importance and practical application of each of the principles and values covered so far. They acknowledged the usefulness of the Multilateral Dialogue as a shared process, with all partners involved in the co-design and co-organisation on an equal basis of the Dialogue's thematic workshops.

A description of the Multilateral Dialogue on principles and values in international cooperation in research and innovation and full reports of the workshops held under the Multilateral Dialogue are available online at [Multilateral dialogue on values and principles \(europa.eu\)](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/europe-world/international-cooperation/multilateral-dialogue-values-and-principles_en) (https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/europe-world/international-cooperation/multilateral-dialogue-values-and-principles_en)