

EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA
AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

– ERAC –
Secretariat

Brussels, 21 June 2016
(OR. en)

ERAC 1208/16

NOTE

From: ERAC Secretariat
To: Delegations
Subject: Summary conclusions of the 30th meeting of ERAC, held in Brussels on 22 April 2016.

Delegations will find attached the summary conclusions of the 30th meeting of ERAC, held in Brussels on 22 April 2016.

Co-Chairs: Robert-Jan Smits and David Wilson

Secretariat: General Secretariat of the Council

Present¹: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom (35)

Absent: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Faroe Islands, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Israel, Ukraine (7)

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda

The agenda was adopted with two additional AOBs: 1) requested by EL on planning of meetings and 2) requested by DE on the European Science Cloud initiative.

The co-Chairs welcomed the new delegates from BE and FI.

2. Draft summary conclusions of the 29th meeting of ERAC, held in Amsterdam on 14-15 January 2016

The Member State (MS) co-Chair informed delegations that the draft summary conclusions of the 29th meeting of ERAC had been approved by written procedure.

3. Information from the co-Chairs and Presidency

The MS co-Chair indicated that information related to ERA-related governance issues would be given under item 8.

¹ The list of delegations present or absent at the meeting is based on the List of Participants that was circulated during the meeting for completion by delegates.

The NL Presidency gave an update on the three sets of Council conclusions being prepared, one on FP7 and future outlook, one on Framework conditions for Research and Innovation and one on the Transition towards an Open Science system. The NL Presidency also indicated that following the adoption of the Digital Single Market technologies package by the Commission on 19 April, Council conclusions were being prepared on this issue.

The incoming SK Presidency gave an update on the activities involving young researchers. Several delegations underlined the importance of listening to the researchers themselves and of involving all Member States in these activities. The COST ministerial conference in September was mentioned as a good opportunity to coordinate with various stakeholders.

IT gave a debrief on the RPG meeting held in Rome on 14-15 April 2016. 22 countries and the Commission had been present. 4 sessions were organised, each discussing a single theme: 1) Open science and open innovation, 2) The contribution of research to the “Migrants, migrations and integration(s)” grand challenge, 3) Defining and measuring 'European added value' and 4) Attracting, training and retaining the best talents for research in the whole of Europe.

The Czech Republic and Austria expressed their interest in hosting the next 2 RPG meetings.

4. ERA and Innovation Policy

4.1 Exploratory exchange of views on the European Innovation Council (EIC)

The Commission (Peter Dröll) gave a presentation on the EIC. He stressed that the EIC was not a single supplementary instrument to support EU innovation but an ecosystem of different measures. The guiding principles for a possible EIC were EU added value, top quality and high visibility and simplicity. A public Call for Ideas had been launched on 16 February, closing on 29 April. On 27 May at the COMPET Council, Commissioner Moedas would present the results of the Call for Ideas to Ministers.

The Commission (COM) co-Chair thanked Mr Dröll for the presentation and suggested that ERAC should prepare some thoughts on EIC. Katrine Niessen (DK) volunteered to be the rapporteur to coordinate the input from the ERAC delegations. According to the COM co-Chair, there would be a discussion on the concept of EIC and the measures needed to establish it at the Informal COMPET Council on 18 July, so it would be helpful if ERAC could provide input ahead of that. He noted that the ERAC Steering Board was meeting on 28 June and that it would make sense for the SB to review the draft input at that stage before circulating to the whole of ERAC for approval by written procedure.

Several delegations stressed the importance of ERAC discussing the matter in more depth at a later stage, and being consulted on the input to the Informal Council ahead of submission. Some delegations indicated that they did not have any coordinated national position yet and that it was therefore difficult for them to contribute to the discussion at this stage. It was however generally agreed that ERAC should give advice to the Council at a relatively early stage of the discussions on the EIC, otherwise it would be reacting to something that had already been decided.

The SFIC Chair informed delegations that SFIC had drafted key messages on the EIC which it could provide as its input to the ERAC advice. He mentioned that for SFIC it was very important that the EIC tackled the issues that EU innovation presently experienced in international markets.

The GPC Vice-Chair told delegations that GPC expected the EIC to launch initiatives to tackle societal challenges. He also underlined that there should be coherence between all the initiatives dealing with innovation.

The ESFRI representative indicated that ESFRI was ready to contribute on issues relating to technology infrastructure.

Ms Niessen (the rapporteur) indicated that she still needed to reflect on the proposed timetable. The COM co-Chair concluded that ERAC would be informed shortly about the definitive timetable.

4.2 Update on the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) financing for RDI-related projects and expectations

The Commission (Steve Rogers) gave a presentation on EFSI financing for RDI-related projects. He explained that EFSI had had an encouraging start and that it could be said already at this stage that EFSI was good for RDI. The SME window was already very successful and the Infrastructure and Innovation window was also delivering, even though project promoters still needed to be encouraged.

4.3 Update on national ERA action plans and strategies

The MS co-Chair mentioned the message sent by the ERAC Secretariat to delegations on 14 April reminding delegations of the 1 May deadline for the submission of their ERA national action plans and strategies, in preparation for a discussion on ERA during the Ministerial lunch meeting which would be organised by the Commission on 27 May after the Competitiveness Council. He indicated that the item was on the plenary agenda in order to give delegations the possibility to raise any final issues and underlined the importance of finding solutions that worked for delegations.

Several delegations took the floor to explain the state of play of the preparation of their ERA national action plans. Most delegations explained that they would be ready shortly after the 1 May deadline, or at least ready to submit a draft or a summary. Some delegations had started to draft the action plan in their national language and indicated that only that linguistic version would be ready in time. The MS co-Chair concluded that most delegations would be able to submit at least a draft action plan or a summary of it shortly after the deadline. He reminded delegations that it would be important to indicate the status of the version (draft, summary etc.) when submitting it.

In order to prepare Ministers, some delegations asked the Commission to indicate what its expectations for the lunch debate were. The COM co-Chair replied that Commissioner Moedas would introduce the item and that Ministers would then be asked about the state of play of their respective ERA action plans. The expected outcome would be to clarify whether further work was necessary at national, ERAC or Commission level.

5. Standing information point

A report of the EMM Workshop organised on 1 March and an update on the RESAVER scheme had been circulated to delegations prior to the meeting.

The COM co-Chair informed delegations that the finalisation of the "8 x 3" EMM indicators was progressing well and reminded them of the interviews to be conducted by Science-Metrix to gather data and more qualitative information for the 2016 ERA Progress Report. As far as the RESAVER scheme was concerned, the COM co-Chair informed delegations of the mapping exercise that was on-going in order to find out which research organisations would be ready to join the scheme.

6. Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility: Peer-Review of the Moldovan R&I system and lesson learnt

Prior to the meeting, a note with a summary of the MD exercise conducted through the Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility had been circulated to delegations.

Ms Aurelia Hanganu from Moldova gave an overview of the Moldovan RDI system. She explained that the MD exercise had been conducted during a period of political, social and economic turbulence in Moldova. Constant reduction in R&D spending during last two decennia had led to a serious brain-drain, causing the number of scientists to diminish considerably. Most public R&D funding (ca. 80%) was allocated as a block institutional funding and most R&D was performed in the governmental sector, with the Academy of Science (ASM) in a very strong position to the detriment of universities and research

organisations. She underlined that there was strong commitment by the Moldovan authorities to support the exercise and to follow-up with concrete reforms, some of which had already been launched.

The Chair of the Review Panel, Krzysztof Gulda, gave a presentation on the MD exercise and the lessons learnt. He underlined that despite the difficult situation in Moldova at the time of the exercise, the cooperation and commitment of the Moldovan authorities had been remarkable. The exercise had shown that the Moldovan R&I system was still in a difficult situation (low funding, ageing of R&D personnel, etc.) and that there was therefore a need for a prudent increase in and efficient use of resources and for clear and simple structures of governance for the Moldovan R&I system. The unique role of the ASM was the key in preserving research capacity and consolidating infrastructure. He confirmed that on the basis of the preliminary results of the exercise, some reforms had already been launched in Moldova and that there was strong will and commitment to continue on this path.

Several delegations thanked the Chair of the Review Panel, the Moldovan authorities and the Commission for the interesting and useful exercise. They underlined the importance of follow-up support to the MD exercises and of keeping ERAC informed and involved in them.

The Commission (Roman Arjona-Gracia) informed delegations that the final exercise report would be distributed to ERAC. He also gave information on the on-going and planned Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility (PSF) activities and related country-specific events; an information note would be sent to delegations after the plenary. Furthermore, he reminded delegations that the pipeline of PSF activities was currently being consolidated for 2017 and that, in line with the approach agreed with ERAC, an Expression of Interest would be launched to ERAC by summer 2016 to collect requests for 2017 support from interested countries. In this context he recalled that the PSF dealt with all issues on the ERA agenda.

7. Report on Science, Research and Innovation Performance of the EU - A contribution to the Open Innovation, Open Science, Open to the World agenda

Prior to the meeting a summary note on the Report on the Science, Research and Innovation Performance of the EU had been circulated to delegations.

The report had been published on 10 March 2016. The Commission (Roman Arjona-Gracia) gave a presentation on the report. He explained that there was a clear link between R&I and growth and jobs and that research and innovation were therefore key to building a prosperous future for the EU. The report presented an in-depth indicator-based analysis of the EU's science, research and innovation performance and provided insight into the underpinning factors and drivers. It provided extensive evidence of the EU's performance in relation to the challenges the EU faced in getting research results to market, in increasing its capacity to produce the very best science and in fully exploiting its weight in international science cooperation and science diplomacy, thus underpinning the Commission's "3O's" strategy (Open Innovation, Open Science, Open to the World). The key finding of the report was that a continuing productivity challenge was hindering the EU from re-taking the path towards sustainable economic growth and the creation of high quality jobs. The EU therefore needed to have better incentives and conditions for businesses to innovate, to continue improving the quality of its science base and the intensity of knowledge circulation and to capitalise on its strengths in an increasingly global context.

One delegation indicated that it was facing difficulties due to lack of empirical evidence on the impact of R&I on the creation of growth and jobs and that there was thus a need for quantitative analysis of the impact of investment in research and innovation. Adapting economic models to reflect the analysis of impact could be one way to solve such problems. The Commission (Roman Arjona-Gracia) replied by saying that the Commission was indeed putting forward a policy package to ensure common approaches among different economic models.

The COM co-Chair concluded with thanks for the presentation and for the report, which he considered very useful in giving policy-makers necessary input on how and when research and innovation had an impact on growth and jobs.

8. ERA Governance

8.1 Election of Steering Board member

Katrine Niessen (DK) was elected unanimously as a new Member State representative on the Steering Board under Article 4 (2,3) of the Rules of Procedure.

8.2 Implementation of actions relating to the ERA advisory structure

ERAC considered the actions needed to progress the ERA-related governance issues.

The MS co-Chair first gave an update on the meeting of the Steering Board on 3 March and expressed his opinion that at the meeting, lively and constructive discussion had taken place. He indicated that in the spirit of transparency, he would from now on send a brief note to ERAC following each SB meeting to inform delegations of the discussions and decisions. Moreover, positive results of the cooperation among the ERA-related groups were beginning to be seen. He also suggested that ERAC delegates might wish to participate in SB meetings as observers, and that a note would be circulated on this point.

One delegation was of the opinion that as the Steering Board was now stronger and more competent, a balance should be found between the Steering Board and ERAC. The SFIC Chair added that the main tasks of the Steering Board were to prepare ERAC plenaries, to coordinate between groups and to report back to ERAC. The MS co-Chair agreed. He also emphasised that any ERAC member was welcome to suggest items for the Steering Board agenda, and encouraged delegations to do so.

On the setting up of the **ERAC Working Group on ERA Priority 5**, the MS co-Chair informed delegations that the draft mandate had been circulated the day before the plenary, on 21 April, and that any last comments had to be sent by Friday 29 April, in

the absence of which the mandate would be considered adopted by ERAC by written procedure. He also informed ERAC that the name "Open Science and Innovation" had been chosen by a clear majority of votes from delegations. As regards the substance, he explained that the aim had been to keep the draft mandate as much as possible in line with the standard clauses adopted by ERAC in October 2015 and the new ERAC mandate.

As regards the **follow-up on the streamlining of the ERA-related groups and other expert groups**, the MS co-Chair reminded delegations of the discussions which had taken place at the plenary meeting in Amsterdam on 14-15 January during the break-out sessions. He explained that the Steering Board had taken note of the input from the rapporteurs of those sessions and had also looked at information provided by the Commission on the details to be found on its website regarding its expert groups. A note from the Commission had also been circulated to ERAC prior to the plenary meeting. The MS co-Chair indicated that the Steering Board had concluded that at this stage ERAC should capitalise on its work to date by preparing a structured set of comments to the Commission. A rapporteur would be needed to coordinate the input from ERAC. The COM co-Chair suggested that the new FI representative, Ms Eeva Kaunismaa, be appointed rapporteur. Ms Kaunismaa indicated that she had to reflect on the suggestion and would send her answer shortly.

Some delegations asked why ERAC should make recommendations to the Commission when their groups were a matter for them. The MS co-Chair explained that, whilst decisions were indeed a matter for the Commission, it had signalled that it wanted honest feedback about the value of the groups at national level. SE indicated that it had gone through all the expert groups with the help of the information on the Commission website and identified all participants coming from Sweden. It was of the opinion that ERAC could indeed give advice to Commission on the groups.

The MS co-Chair informed delegations about the state of play of the **draft revised Rules of Procedure (RoP) for ERAC**. He said that a new draft from the co-Chairs would be circulated shortly and explained that some comments received from delegations had been considered too detailed for RoP but that they would still be acted upon. In general he indicated that the aim of the co-Chairs had been to keep the draft revised RoP as much as possible in line with the standard clauses adopted by ERAC in October 2015 and the new ERAC mandate. He also indicated that the comments showed that delegations felt a need to have more information on the discussions at the Steering Board. In this respect he referred to the note which he intended to send to ERAC following each SB meeting to inform delegations of the discussions and decisions.

The MS co-Chair also informed delegations about the content and structure of the first **ERAC Annual Report** and the process for its adoption. He explained that the Steering Board had at its latest meeting taken note of the contributions submitted by the other ERA-related groups and had decided to respect the format and length of the contributions and simply add an executive summary by the co-Chairs. He indicated that the Steering Board had discussed the need to give the other ERA-related groups more guidance during the next exercise and possibly to provide a template for the contributions. ERAC would be consulted on the draft Annual Report by written procedure prior to the following plenary meeting in Bratislava.

One delegation was worried about the timing for the adoption of the Annual report, explaining that it would be very late to adopt it at the end of 2016 as it was a report covering 2015. Another delegation considered that this being the first time that ERAC was adopting an Annual report, it was understandable that it had to develop the process. The MS co-Chair assured delegations that the Annual report would be adopted as soon as possible but not before consulting ERAC.

The MS co-Chair informed delegations that the first meeting of the **ERAC ad-hoc Working Group on Measuring the Impact of EU Framework Programmes for R&I at National Level** had taken place on 12 April in Brussels. 18 countries had

participated, with Mr Tiago Santos Pereira (PT) as the Chair. The main task of the Group was to develop a harmonised impact evaluation template, to be used by interested Member States and Associated Countries when measuring the socio-economic impacts of EU Framework Programmes at national level. The next meeting would take place in The Hague on 6 June.

9. Any other business

Planning of meetings

EL pleaded for good planning of meetings, no last-minute cancellations and if possible identifying opportunities to hold them back-to-back with other meetings (eg. GPC and SFIC) in order to save on travel expenses.

European Science Cloud

The COM co-Chair indicated that the European Science Cloud could be discussed as one of the items in the plenary on Bratislava on 15-16 September. He informed delegations that a press release and some background information could be distributed to delegations with the summary conclusions.

ERAC meeting (15-16 September, Bratislava)

The next ERAC meeting will be on 15-16 September 2016 in Bratislava. The Steering Board will draw up the provisional annotated agenda for this meeting based on the Work Programme 2016.