

EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA
AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

– ERAC –
Secretariat

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ERAC 1213/16

NOTE

From: ERAC Secretariat
To: ERAC delegations
Subject: Summary conclusions of the 31st ERAC plenary meeting.

Delegations will find attached the summary conclusions of the 31st ERAC plenary meeting, as adopted by written procedure.

Summary conclusions

31st ERAC plenary meeting, 15-16 September 2016 in Bratislava (SK)

Co-Chairs: Robert-Jan Smits and Marina Villegas

Secretariat: General Secretariat of the Council

Present¹: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland (only on 15/09), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom (35)

Absent: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Ukraine (6)

The Commission (COM) co-Chair started the meeting by indicating that the Member State (MS) co-Chair, David Wilson, was unable to attend the meeting but that Marina Villegas (ES), the more senior MS representative in the ERAC Steering Board, had kindly offered to act as the MS co-Chair this time.

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda

The agenda was adopted with two additional AOBs: 1) one requested by the Commission on the Resaver scheme and 2) one requested by the AT delegation on the Commission decision of 14 September 2016 to allocate more budget for H2020.

The co-Chairs welcomed the new ERAC delegates.

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.

2. The draft summary conclusions of the 30th meeting of ERAC, held in Brussels on 22 April

The MS co-Chair informed delegations that the draft summary conclusions of the 30th meeting of ERAC had been approved by written procedure.

3. Information from the co-Chairs and Presidency

The COM co-Chair informed ERAC about Tunisia being the most recent country associated to H2020.

The COM co-Chair reported back on the latest ERAC Steering Board meeting organised on 28 June 2016 and informed delegations that the Chair of the newly established ERAC Standing Working Group on Open Science and Innovation (SWG OSI) had attended the meeting for the first time.

Representatives of the SK Presidency gave a presentation of R&I policy in Slovakia, including actions for widening the participation in Horizon 2020, measures to support young researchers, and the implementation of key changes in the business sector to boost economic growth at national and European level.

Following this, the incoming MT Presidency gave a brief presentation on "Streamlining the R&I Monitoring and Reporting Landscape" which will be one of its Presidency priorities. MT had deemed opportune to discuss this topic in ERAC, as the Council Conclusions of December 2015 on the ERA Advisory Structure included a specific reference to streamlining the R&I monitoring and reporting landscape and since ERAC is uniquely positioned to discuss and advise on this topic in view of its overarching role in the ERA monitoring and implementation. MT proposed that ERAC prepare an opinion to pave the way towards a set of Council Conclusions that MT wishes to have adopted at the planned 30 May 2017 Council (Competitiveness) meeting. MT had done a stock-taking exercise of existing reports and requests for information received from various sources and prepared a discussion paper which had been circulated prior to the plenary. Several delegations expressed their support to MT, indicating that while the number of reports requested from the Member States and Associated

Countries had reduced, it was important to continue the work on not only the number but also the quality, the frequency and the coherence of the reports requested. Clarity about the benefits of reporting, open access and open data and transparency were mentioned as important elements when defining rules and principles for future reporting, and digital means to collect data only once and a single findable, accessible and retrievable database were also mentioned as possible ways to reduce the reporting burden for delegations. It was agreed that a rapporteur should be chosen among potential volunteers after the meeting and that this rapporteur should first organise a workshop, as this had been found to be an effective way to launch the drafting of the ERAC Opinion on the idea of a EIC. The ERAC Opinion should preferably be approved at the December ERAC plenary. Following the presentation by MT, the Commission (Ana Correia) presented its initial views on how the exercise of streamlining the R&I monitoring and reporting landscape shall proceed. While pointing out that different reports serve different purposes and that streamlining therefore cannot be a "one size fits all" approach, and while considering that monitoring and reporting on R&I have a clear added value if properly used and that some progress has already been made to reduce the reporting burden imposed on Member States, Ms Correia agreed that there is indeed scope for further streamlining of the monitoring and reporting landscape which should however be driven by clear guiding principles so as not to lose value or purpose of the current reports. The Commission thus would stand ready to support the MT Presidency and ERAC in the exercise.

4. ERA and Innovation Policy

4.1 Exchange of views on the European Innovation Council (EIC)

ERAC took note of the outcome and follow-up of the discussion at the informal Competitiveness Council under the SK Presidency (19 July). ERAC had provided advice to Ministers on the EIC and the measures to develop it in the form of an ERAC Opinion on the idea of a EIC. Katrine Nissen (DK), the rapporteur for the ERAC Opinion, first gave a debrief on the process leading to the Opinion and recalled the most important recommendations made by ERAC in it. The COM co-Chair thanked the rapporteur for her excellent work under a tight deadline and indicated that Commissioner Moedas had been content to read the practical and operational recommendations given by ERAC in the report. He also said that the ERAC

Opinion and the results of the public consultation were very much in line. The Commission now aims to transform the recommendations into concrete action points and to integrate operational suggestions in the H2020 Work Programme 2018-2020, ERAC will be kept informed of the process.

4.2 ERA Roadmap and Joint Programme Initiatives

ERAC considered the best ways to give response to the invitation in the May 2015 Council Conclusions on the ERA Roadmap 2015-2020 (*"INVITES ERAC, in close cooperation and where relevant with appropriate input from relevant bodies, in particular GPC, and the Strategic configuration of the Programme Committee of Horizon 2020, to assess the coherence of joint initiatives^[1], especially those funded by the European Union, with an emphasis on their European added value, feasibility, critical mass, complementarity and impact"*), following the reiterated invitation in the Council Conclusions of May 2016 on FP7 and the Future outlook. To prepare the discussions, Leonidas Antoniou, Chair of GPC, had been invited to make a presentation on the evaluation of Joint Programming and the Commission made a presentation on the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020.

4.2.a The High Level Group for Joint Programming (GPC) will report on the evaluation of the Joint Programme Initiatives

Leonidas Antoniou, GPC Chair, made a presentation on the evaluation of Joint Programming which was based on two main issues: the results of the Hernani report on the evaluation of Joint Programming to address grand societal challenges and the short and long term recommendations in the report, and the GPC's reaction to the report. Under the latter issue, Mr Antoniou mentioned the recently established GPC Working Group on the Long term planning for Joint Programming and the on-going MLE on "Alignment and Interoperability of Research Programmes" using the 'Policy Support Facility' (PSF) under H2020. Delegations welcomed the new GPC Working Group, indicated that JPIs have become strategic hubs in their field of expertise, considered it good to ask the JPIs to define long term strategies and spoke in favour of a more dynamic set of objectives in the long term strategy for JPIs.

[1] *For example, Joint Programming Initiatives, Initiatives under Articles 185 and 187 of the TFEU, contractual PPPs, ETPs, EIPs, EIT KICs, ERA-nets, EUREKA clusters, European joint programmes and framework partnership agreements.*

One delegation mentioned that there exist also other possibilities like the ERA-NET for networking and other joint activities. Some delegations considered that ERAC should work together with the GPC to analyse the complete panorama of joint programming. The COM co-Chair suggested that ERAC could pronounce itself on the results of the JPIs' work and considered that the JPIs should be able to show what they have achieved.

4.2.b Evaluation of other joint initiatives (in the context of the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020)

The Commission (Wolfgang Burtscher) made a presentation on the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020. The COM co-Chair pointed out that the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020 and the preparations of the next Framework Programme (FP) are closely linked and asked delegations to reflect how ERAC could/should be involved in the preparations for the next FP and at which stage. Delegations who took the floor considered it clear that ERAC should be involved and give strategic advice as is ERAC's role. The ERAC Steering Board (SB) should set the level of the plenaries so that ERAC is able to have the necessary strategic discussions. Some delegations were however wondering whether the input should be given by ERAC or rather by the RPG. The SFIC Chair indicated in this context that SFIC is preparing an opinion as an input to the work of the High Level Group. The COM co-Chair considered that the approach needs to be coherent and that it should be for ERAC to give input, possibly by coordinating with other groups.

The COM co-Chair considered that ERAC should indeed react at a strategic level and suggested that ERAC have an in-depth discussion at its March 2017 plenary on the draft report by the High Level Group on the H2020 Interim Evaluation, leading possibly to an ERAC opinion which could be adopted at its September 2017 plenary and serve as an input by ERAC to the preparations of the next FP. To prepare these discussions, the COM co-Chair proposed that at its next meeting on 18/10, the ERAC SB would prepare a detailed roadmap for ERAC involvement in the preparations of the next FP, including the H2020 Interim Evaluation.

4.3 Update on national ERA action plans and strategies

ERAC took note of the outcome and follow-up of the Ministerial Lunch on ERA as well as the results of the ERA workshop organised on 15 September 2016 back-to-back with the ERAC plenary meeting. The main outcome of the workshop was that for the two processes involved, the national ones and the European one, the aim of the monitoring and evaluation should not be streamlining but mutual learning. The diversity of the national research programmes is important but it is also necessary to look how to find coherence.

The analysis presented by the Commission at the workshop was seen as a first stage which delegations wanted to be followed by a second one with a more qualitative focus on how the countries have interpreted the ERA priorities. Such second stage could be done either bilaterally or in mutual learning events like the workshop in Bratislava.

4.4 Discussion on the 2016 European Semester

The Commission (Rossella Cravetto) presented ERAC the outcome of the 2016 European Semester and mentioned in particular the 13 Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) addressing R&I. She also mentioned the workshops which took place in some Member States with national authorities and stakeholders and the Semester missions starting in autumn 2016. Furthermore, she reminded delegations of the possibility to use the services offered by the Policy Support Facility (PSF) and reminded them of the 3rd Call of Expressions of interest for the services of the PSF (see also item 5 of the plenary agenda). At the end of her presentation, she posed delegations two questions as the basis for the discussion: 1) Do the 2016 R&I Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) reflect the real challenges faced by the national R&I systems? Are there any important challenges which are not sufficiently addressed in the CSRs?; and 2) How to ensure the implementation of the R&I CSRs? What are the main types of hurdles faced for implementing R&I reforms? How can the Commission help the Member States to implement the CSRs?

The ES delegation took the floor, indicating that the country-specific recommendations do not always reflect the national priorities and therefore asking for a more fruitful dialogue with national policymakers to understand the national bottlenecks. It also pointed out that the macroeconomic recommendations were sometimes in conflict with the R&I recommendations and thus pleaded for a more integrated approach.

The COM-co-Chair thanked the ES delegation for its pertinent comments and asked other delegations to send their comments to the two questions in writing after the meeting.

4.5 European Open Science Cloud

The Commission (Jean-Claude Burgelman) presented the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC). He explained that the cloud will federate existing and emerging horizontal and thematic data infrastructures, effectively bridging today's fragmentation and ad-hoc solutions. It will provide 1.7m EU researchers an environment with free, open services for data storage, management, analysis and re-use across disciplines and add value and leverage current and past infrastructure investment. Governance is a key issue: a roadmap has to be developed for governance and financing and thus create a global level playing field for research data sharing.

Several delegations raised the question of financing and governance of the EOSC and underlined the need to take national initiatives into account in the planning of the EOSC. Mr Burgelman assured that a maximum of experts would be involved and said that at this stage the Member States should mobilise their national funders, universities, research centres and ministries. As for financing, he indicated that the Cloud as such would basically be software and not that expensive, but that for the governance and data management the Member States could for example reflect on dedicating a certain percentage of their national research budgets to open data, including the EOSC.

The COM co-Chair indicated that a workshop dedicated to EOSC would be organised soon to discuss the culture of data, data stewardship and data management plans, standards to make data interoperable, certified data repositories and the necessary hardware.

5. Standing information point

Information was provided in writing to delegations prior to the meeting on the 3rd expression of interest for the H2020 PSF services to be launched. The outcome of the expression of interest will serve to plan the activities of the PSF throughout 2017.

6. ERA Governance

6.1 The ERAC Annual Report 2015

The MS co-Chair indicated that the ERAC Annual Report 2015 had been adopted by written procedure on 8 September 2016.

6.2 The ERAC revised Rules of Procedure

The MS co-Chair indicated that the revised ERAC Rules of Procedure had been adopted by written procedure on 20 June 2016.

6.3 Discussion on the Commission's inventory of ERA-related groups

ERAC was first given a presentation by Eeva Kaunismaa (FI), the rapporteur for the ERAC Opinion on the streamlining of the expert groups set up by the Commission. The draft Opinion was circulated to ERAC prior to the plenary. Ms Kaunismaa briefly went through the results of the survey which had been open for seven weeks during July and August.

14 delegations had provided input. On this basis, she had compiled a draft opinion on the significance of each group from the Member States/Associated Countries perspective and on the opportunities to develop the system. The draft contained four recommendations to the Commission.

Ms Kaunismaa pointed out that it was clear that the final decisions about the future of the advisory structure would be for the Commission to take as the groups have been set up by the Commission; however the Commission had at the previous ERAC plenary asked ERAC to be clear and direct in putting forward delegations' views as an input to its thinking.

The Commission assured delegations that there is permanent screening of the expert groups already set up but considered that it would go too far if the Commission was requested to consult the Member States/Associated Countries before setting up new expert groups, taken the Commission's right and need to get independent expert advice for evidence-based policy making. The Commission emphasised that the mandatory Transparency Register is an excellent tool to screen where there are risks of overlaps between groups. The Commission agreed however that information about the groups and the results of their work could be better channelled to ERAC through ERA-related groups and that the coordination within the Commission DGs but also at national level was important when setting up new expert groups. Several delegations supported the draft opinion, including all recommendations, and underlined the importance of internal coordination within the Commission when setting up expert groups. Delegations also considered that groups dealing with complementary issues should better coordinate their work and that better use could be made of existing ERA-related groups which could channel the output of the expert groups to ERAC. One delegation suggested to distinguish the recommendations between groups in which all participants are Member States/Associated Countries representatives and those in which the participants do their work as independent experts.

Delegations were given time to send in written comments until 30 September after which the rapporteur will prepare a revised draft of the text.

6.4 Updates from the ERAC Working Groups

6.4.a Ad-hoc Working Group on Measuring the Impact of EU Framework Programmes for R&I at National Level

The Chair of the Ad-hoc Working Group, Mr Tiago Santos Pereira, gave a brief update on the group's activities so far. The group was established to develop a harmonised impact evaluation template based on (i) a core set of evaluation questions, (ii) common evaluation methodologies, (iii) common indicators and (iv) available common datasets and available EU and national databases to assess the socio-economic impacts of EU Framework Programmes at national level. It had its first meeting on 12 April and should finalise its work in December 2016.

6.4.b Standing Working Group on Open Science and Innovation

The Chair of the new ERAC Standing Working Group on Open Science and Innovation

(SWG OSI), Ms Clara Eugenia García, gave a brief update on the first activities of the group. The group's overall objective is to advise, in the context of open science and open innovation, on the development and implementation of policies and initiatives to enhance access to scientific information, and the circulation and use of knowledge for research and innovation for the benefit of scientists, research institutions, education, businesses, citizens and society at large. During the summer, members of the group had been asked to provide feedback to the Chair and Vice-Chair on 3 main priorities on open science, 3 main priorities on open innovation and 3 main priorities on cross cutting issues. Ms García explained that the replies by delegations clearly showed that the SWG has a very broad scope and that it would therefore not be evident to establish a work programme for the group. The group had identified five thematic priority areas which were coherent with the structure of the Amsterdam Call for Action and the Commission's Open Science Policy Platform experts' groups. The discussions on the work programme would continue at the second meeting of the group, to be held on 6 October 2016.

6.5 Updates from the ERA-related groups

The representatives of the ERA-related groups gave a brief update on the recent activities of their respective groups:

- ESFRI was represented by the new Chair, Mr Giorgio Rossi. Mr Rossi told ERAC that the ESFRI Roadmap 2018 was about to be approved and the process launched in October. ESFRI coaches and monitors all Roadmap projects. Furthermore, ESFRI does landscape analyses of all European research infrastructure projects and thereby prepares a general overview and survey of the whole Research Infrastructure system in Europe.

- SGHRM was represented by Ms Cecilia Cabello Valdés. Ms Cabello Valdés presented the two recently established SGHRM working groups on Rewards and Skills. Both groups aim to promote and encourage implementation of best practices of open science issues with Rewards concentrating on scientific career assessment issues and Skills in open science education and training.
- the Helsinki Group (HG) was represented by the co-Chair, Ms Marcela Linkova. Ms Linkova told delegations that recently, the HG had been focusing among others on the implementation of the December 2015 Council Conclusions on gender equality, on She Figures 2015, the European statistics and indicators on gender equality in R&I prepared by the Commission, and on the EIGE online tool being prepared by the European Institute for Gender Equality together with the Commission which will be launched on 20 October. Furthermore, the HG provided input to the ERAC Opinion on the idea of a EIC.
- SFIC was represented by the Chair, Mr Dan Andrée. Mr Andrée informed ERAC that recently SFIC has given input and comments to the Commission for the Commission staff working document on international cooperation. SFIC is following-up on the process, based on the Commission's implementation of the PSF. Furthermore, SFIC has created a new working group on a SFIC Toolbox the idea of which is to develop a practical overview for the Member States, Associated Countries and the Commission in their implementation of international STI agreements and STI cooperation activities at bilateral and multilateral level.
- the GPC Chair, Mr Leonidas Antoniou, gave his update already during his presentation earlier at the meeting.

The COM co-Chair thanked all representatives of the ERA-related groups. He especially thanked Mr Dan Andrée who will step down as the SFIC Chair in October.

7. Any other business

32nd ERAC meeting (2 December, Brussels)

The COM co-Chair indicated that the ERAC Steering Board would draw up the provisional annotated agenda of the next meeting on the basis of the Work Programme 2016.

Resaver

The Commission gave an update on the Resaver scheme.

More budget for H2020

The COM co-Chair informed delegations that on 14 September 2016, the Commission had decided to grant 400 M€ more budget for H2020, money which now had to be allocated. The COM co-Chair promised to keep ERAC informed.