

ERAC 1210/14

NOTE

From:	ERAC Secretariat
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Draft summary conclusions of the 20th meeting of ERAC held in Heraklion (EL) on 5-6 June 2014

Delegations will find attached to this Note the draft summary conclusions of the 20th meeting of ERAC, held in Heraklion (EL) on 5-6 June 2014¹.

Tasks to be undertaken and potential tasks have been *put in italic type and underlined*.

¹ Please refer to the ERAC website for all PowerPoint presentations given at the meeting and for all Commission and ERAC Secretariat documents relating to the various agenda items and circulated to the Committee ahead of the meeting (follow this link: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/policies/era/erac/erac-plenary-meetings/20th-erac-meeting-5-6-june-2014>).

Chair: Rudolf Strohmeier

Vice-Chair: Krzysztof Gulda

Secretariat: General Secretariat of the Council

Present: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria (6 June only), Croatia (6 June only), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Commission, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland (6 June only), Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom (33).

Absent: Albania, Finland, Faroe Islands, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Israel, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Romania, Serbia (9).

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda

The Committee adopted the provisional agenda. The Chair welcomed the new Icelandic and Moldovan delegates.

2. Approval of the draft summary conclusions of the 19th meeting of ERAC, held in Brussels (BE) on 27 March 2014

The Committee approved the draft summary conclusions of the 19th meeting of ERAC.

3. Standing information point

Delegations were provided with a paper on the state of play of the Public Procurement of Innovation project (PPI). Mr Mart Laatsit (EE), who leads the Task Force set up for this project, explained the ongoing work and announced a questionnaire would shortly be sent to delegations. In reply to a question by AT, Mr Laatsit informed the Committee the questionnaire would be sent to *all* ERAC delegations rather than just to members of the Task Force. *All delegations in whose country PPI is an issue would be expected to complete the questionnaire and return it in time.*

A further question was raised by SE on the Commission report on PPI. The Commission replied that DG ENTR was working on a Guidance document on public procurement which would be available shortly.

4. ERA and Innovation policy

4.1 ERA Roadmap

Mr David Wilson (UK, Steering Board (SB)) presented revised documents on the contents, the responsibilities and the timeline for the ERA Roadmap².

The October plenary meeting will have a closer look at the structure, the contents and the key actions included in the Roadmap.

Delegations generally strongly agreed with Mr Wilson's approach, praising its pragmatism and realism. Comments focussed on the following elements:

1. The Roadmap should try and look at ERA from a customer perspective; "selling the benefits of ERA" was said to be the right line of approach.
2. How should an "optimally functioning ERA" ("Taking the ERA Roadmap forward", p. 1) be defined? There ought to be a common understanding of this.
3. Does the Roadmap take into account the different stages at which MS find themselves in bringing about ERA? National diversity should not be lost sight of.
4. ERA and the Innovation Union should be combined by explicitly taking on board innovation in the Roadmap.
5. National stakeholders should preferably be involved before ERAC's October plenary meeting: Could the Commission organise a meeting with European stakeholders in September? (broad support).
6. The upcoming review of the EU 2020 Strategy should be taken into account in the Roadmap (broad support).
7. The Roadmap should no longer speak 5 + 1 ERA Priorities but of 6 ERA Priorities, being those defined in 2012 plus international cooperation (which was said to be horizontal / cut across the other Priorities). However, no new priorities should be added (broad support, although no concluding outcome).
8. The Roadmap should make it very clear that *MS* need to implement the Priorities. ERA is primarily a national responsibility. The key actions listed in the document should therefore not stop MS from considering additional actions to implement the Priorities. In general there was thought to be room for adding a limited number of key actions to the Priorities.
9. The timeline was thought to be ambitious but realistic (broad support).

The Commission replied that stakeholders were consulted at regular intervals. As the second ERA Progress Report will be published in September, it would difficult to organise a stakeholder conference in the same month. However, two European stakeholder platform meetings are planned towards the end of this year.

² See ERAC website under Documents (see Footnote No 1).

The Chair summed up the comments by delegations, agreeing to most of them (i.e. perhaps some additional key actions to focus on, although their number should remain limited, ERA is primarily a national responsibility (this should be clearly reflected in the Roadmap), linking ERA with Innovation Union, turn 5+ 1 into 6 Priorities, customer perspective). The Vice-Chair also pointed out that the Groups may not be able to give input in time, given their own meeting schedule and their own priorities. On the other hand, a pro-active attitude on their part to contribute to the Roadmap could be expected. ERAC is under some pressure to produce the Roadmap in time. Input has to go via national channels and Groups need to coordinate at that level, as already agreed at the previous ERAC meeting on 27 March. Mr David Wilson agreed with the Chair and Vice-Chair's summary and undertook to produce new Roadmap documents on the contents, the responsibilities and the timeline for the special SB meeting on 10 July.

The Commission clarified that any input has to go to the Steering Board (David Wilson) via ERAC Secretariat rather than to the Commission. It also pointed out that key actions should reflect action on three levels: MS, EU and stakeholders.

4.2 ERA Progress Report

The Commission presented the preparatory work for the second ERA progress report, which is due in September³. From then on, progress reports will only be published biennially.

200 Research-Funding Organisations had responded to the Commission's call for figures (a doubling of last year's figure) and 1265 Research-Performing Organisations had replied.

Only a very limited number of delegations commented, focussing on the risk of having a biased picture in the facts and figures part of the report due to over-representation of certain MS with a large input and asking the Commission to involve national ministries at an early stage to get the right Organisations and the right data for the progress reports. Clarification was sought (1) on whether the report will compare the implementation between MS and rank or cluster MS' progress, (2) if there would be an ERAC opinion and Presidency conclusions, and (3) whether the **European Council** will discuss the completion of ERA.

The Commission confirmed that the aim was to compare policy and implementation and to group / cluster institutions behaving in similar way for each Priority.

³ See the PPT (see Footnote No 1).

5. Presentation of research and innovation policy in Greece

Constantinos Stephanidis of the University of Crete and the Foundation of Research and Technology Hellas (FORTH HELLAS) gave a presentation on the national research system and the national research priorities, including the Greek research infrastructures⁴.

Vasilios Gongolidis of the General Secretariat for Research and Technology gave a presentation on the designing of the smart specialization strategy of Greece in relation to regional development⁵.

6. Implementation and monitoring of the Innovation Union in the context of Europe 2020

6.1 European Semester

The Commission presented this year's Country-Specific Recommendations in the field of research and innovation (R&I).⁶

The Chair observed that this year's European Semester had a much stronger ERA content than before.

AT thought MS who had had a CSR on R&I might sit together to exchange best practises, in particular concerning the efficiency of their national research systems. FR, which had had a CSR on innovation, said it was interested to learn from other MS in this respect; it was also interested in a European benchmark. *It was observed that ERAC's Steering Board might organise the mutual learning / exchange of practises with good results.*

The Commission replied it would be prepared to assist technically in the exchange of best practises (the Commission has accumulated experiences from Peer Review exercises and mutual learning seminars which could be used, and it also broadly introduced the concept of the new Policy Support Facility).

AT asked if ERAC's guidance as set out in its recent opinion on Member States' structuring of Research and Innovation content in preparing their 2015 National Reform Programmes⁷ would be used. AT was also interested in working with other MS on better reporting methods (future policy learning activities, ad-hoc workshops, etc.) but only few other MS appeared to share this interest.

⁴ See the PPT (see Footnote No 1).

⁵ See the PPT (see Footnote No 1).

⁶ See the PPT (see Footnote No 1).

⁷ Doc. 1209/14 of 2 June 2014.

6.2 Mutual Learning Seminar: follow-up

Mme Nathalie Gimonet, representing the Chair of the Working Group on the European Semester and on ERA Monitoring, presented the outcome of the first seminar on efficiency and effectiveness of national research and innovation systems that had been organised by the Working Group on 5 May 2014⁸.

Only a limited number of delegations took part in the discussions.

Given the importance and the recurring nature of the Working Group's activities, AT and UK thought *all MS and Associated Countries* should join the Working Group, which ought to be set up as a permanent body representing all delegations. As the Working Group's focus is on the first ERA Priority (for which there is no ERA advisory body), its work is likely to contribute to shaping the ERA Roadmap. Clustering was also said to be a useful idea for exchanging information and best practises, although this should not result in ranking MS as far as the efficiency and effectiveness of their national R&I systems were concerned, nor to generalisations in which there was no room for national characteristics. This was endorsed by several MS.

Mme Nathalie Gimonet undertook to confer with the WG Chair and the Commission on the drafting a practical checklist and then contact the ERAC Secretariat about this.

The Chair concluded that a short and practical checklist that could be useful for ERAC delegates to pass on to their national authorities, that clustering was supported by the Committee although this should not lead to ranking or benchmarking but should only be used for the purpose of comparison and mutual learning. On the possibility of giving a permanent status to the Working Group and having all delegations join: this would have to be discussed with the WG Chair and the issue would return to the agenda at the October meeting.

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See the PPT (see Footnote No 1).

6.3 Presentation and discussion on the mid-term review of Europe 2020

The Commission gave a presentation of its Communication "Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth"⁹, which was the first step in the run-up to the review of the Europe 2020 Strategy scheduled for the first half of 2015¹⁰.

AT asked the Commission if the Review would lead to new targets compared to original targets from 2010, if there will be new or adjusted flagship initiatives, and how the upcoming Council Presidencies plan to deal with the review at the COMPET Council. FR, supported by SE, asked about the role of the Innovation Indicator in the review (would there be more emphasis on output than on input?) and how ERAC will be involved in the process (ES asked if there will there be an ERAC opinion).

Responding to the latter comment, the Vice-Chair pointed out that new ERAC opinions could only be considered *if delegates volunteered as rapporteur, for which he would be happy to receive nominations*.

The Chair concluded by inviting delegates to come forward as rapporteur and also to contribute to the public consultation on the review.

7. Any other business

7.1 Update on work with ERA-related groups

The Vice-Chair updated the Committee on work with ERA-related groups. There had been no follow-up to the meeting with Chairs or representatives of the ERA-related groups in February of this year, as SB had concentrated on the Roadmap (for which a special SB meeting will be called on 10 July). *The Vice-Chair suggested inviting the ERA Group Chairs to the next ERAC meeting in Venice on 2-3 October.*

The Chair concluded that inviting the ERA Group Chairs to the next ERAC meeting had received a favourable reception from the Committee.

⁹ Doc. 6713/14 of 7 March 2014.

¹⁰ See PPT (see Footnote No 1).

7.2 Information by the incoming Italian Presidency on its research and innovation priorities

The IT representative presented the research and innovation priorities of the incoming Presidency¹¹.

The Chair asked the IT representative to send the dates of the various events, conferences etc. that were mentioned in her presentation to the ERAC Secretariat, which could then circulate these to delegations.

7.3 Next ERAC meeting (2-3 October, Venice)

The Chair informed the Committee that the Steering Board will draw up the annotated provisional agenda of the next meeting on the basis of the Work Programme 2014-2015.

¹¹ See PPT (see Footnote No 1).