

EUROPEAN UNION  
EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA  
AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

— ERAC —  
Secretariat

Brussels, 26 November 2014  
(OR. en)

ERAC 1216/14

**NOTE**

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From: ERAC Secretariat  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Draft summary conclusions of the 21st meeting of ERAC, held in Venice (IT) on 2-3 October 2014

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Delegations will find attached to this Note the draft summary conclusions of the 21st meeting of ERAC, held in Venice (IT) on 2-3 October 2014<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> All PowerPoint presentations given at the meeting have been sent to delegations by e-mail on 9 October 2014. — Please note PowerPoint presentations given at ERAC meetings will no longer be available on the ERAC website in the future due to administrative changes at the Council Secretariat.

**Chair:** Rudolf Strohmeier

**Vice-Chair:** Krzysztof Gulda

**Secretariat:** General Secretariat of the Council

**Present**<sup>2</sup>: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic (2 October), Denmark, Estonia (2 October), European Commission, Finland (2 October), France, Germany (2 October), Greece, Hungary (2 October), Iceland, Ireland, Israel (3 October), Italy (2 October), Latvia (2 October), Lithuania, Luxembourg (2 October), Malta (2 October), Montenegro, Netherlands (2 October), Norway, Poland, Portugal (2 October), Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom (2 October) (33).

**Absent:** Albania, Bulgaria, Faroe Islands, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Turkey (9).

### **1. Adoption of the provisional agenda**

The provisional agenda was adopted.

### **2. Approval of the draft summary conclusions of the 20th meeting of ERAC, held in Heraklion, Crete, 5-6 June 2014**

The draft summary conclusions were approved.

### **3. Standing information point**

There were no topics under this agenda item.

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<sup>2</sup> The list of delegations present or absent at the meeting is based on the Lists of Participants (one for each meeting day) which were circulated during the meetings for completion by delegates.

## **4. Implementation and monitoring of the innovation union in the context of Europe 2020**

### **4.1 Research & Innovation as sources of renewed growth**

Delegations received an update by the Commission on the Communication "Research and innovation as sources of renewed growth"<sup>3</sup>. This Communication had been the subject of a policy debate at the COMPET Council in September and would also be debated by the ECOFIN Council. It would moreover be the subject of Council conclusions at the December COMPET Council and of support actions by the Commission to improve economic modelling of R&I, including the Policy Support Facility.

The Vice-Chair suggested that the Committee might deliver an opinion following the Council's conclusions which the December COMPET Council is expected to adopt; ERAC could focus its advice on actions taken by MS to implement the Communication, including the potential links with Finance Ministries, and taking into account the Council conclusions.

This suggestion was accepted by delegations, although comments were made on the need to involve / cooperate with the Economic Policy Committee (EPC), given the cross-cutting issues raised in the Communication and the wish that the COMPET Council send a strong signal to the ECOFIN Council on the need for continued R&I investments (the EPC could be invited to the relevant ERAC advisory group if appropriate).

### **4.2 Peer Review of R&I systems and lessons learnt**

#### **Presentation of the peer review of Iceland**

#### **Presentation of the peer review of Spain**

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<sup>3</sup> Doc. 10897/14 of 12 June 2014. See the PPT presentation sent to you on 9 October 2014 for details of the update.

External experts presented the final reports of the ERAC Peer Reviews of the Icelandic and the Spanish Research and Innovation Systems<sup>4</sup>. These had been completed recently and focussed on the R&I policy conclusions and experiences that are transferable to R&I systems in other countries.

Delegations welcomed both peer reviews as being very useful to learn lessons from for the benefit of their own R&I systems.

## **5. Presentation of R&I policy in Italy**

Prof. Maurizio Sobrero (IT) presented the Italian national research and innovation system.<sup>5</sup>

## **6. ERA and Innovation Policy**

### **6.1 ERA Progress Report**

The Commission gave an overview of the main messages of the 2014 ERA Progress Report.<sup>6</sup> and the policy debate at COMP Council. The Commission pointed out that ERAC's role in the monitoring of ERA could be (1) to better mobilise national stakeholders, (2) to ensure policy coordination at the level of the ERA advisory groups, the Research Working Party and the Council, and (3) to look into ways to ameliorate the ERA indicators that are used to monitor progress.

Next steps in this process included the COMPET Council on 5 December, which would be invited to adopt conclusions on the 2014 Report; the 2015 European Semester, in particular the National Reform Programmes which are due in April 2015 and should identify ERA reforms; an ERA conference in March 2015; the planned adoption of the ERA Roadmap by Council in May 2015; and the third ERA Progress Report in September 2016.

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<sup>4</sup> For the Icelandic peer review see also the PPT presentation that was sent to you on 9 October 2014.

<sup>5</sup> See the PPT presentation that was sent to you on 9 October 2014.

<sup>6</sup> This PPT presentation will be sent to you in due time.

The Chair of the Working Group on the European Semester and on ERA Monitoring presented the draft ERAC advice on the 2014 ERA Progress Report with a view to giving an input to the IT Presidency.<sup>7</sup> General recommendations included (1) improving the link between reporting to the European Semester (National Reform Programmes) and the European Monitoring Mechanism (EMM) to increase the overall quality of policy reporting; (2) considering the role of the Research and Innovation Observatory (and the future role of ERA-WATCH; the role of the "dash-board"); (3) improving the link between the EMM on the one hand and the ERA-related groups, stakeholder organisations and specialised Commission services on the other hand; (4) evaluating the questionnaire to increase the level of problem identification (input to ERA Roadmap); (5) considering a greater use of EUROSTAT and/or OECD statistics; (6) considering the "limits to the exercise" : draw lessons on how EMM has improved the methodology.

In general, delegations commented positively on the elements of the draft opinion which were presented. It was decided that delegations could comment in writing until 10 October and then to proceed to adoption of the draft opinion by written procedure at the beginning of November, which was necessary given the tight schedule for input to discussions on the 2014 ERA Progress Report by the Research Working Party, which would start towards the end of October.

The Vice-Chair raised the issue of the level of detail of the comments made on the draft opinion, many of which were thought to be of an excessively technical nature, whereas the Committee's mandate was to give policy advice.

## **6.2 ERA Roadmap**

The rapporteur (UK) for the ERA Roadmap and his staff presented the results of the consultations by ERAC delegations of national stakeholders over the summer.<sup>8</sup> A limited number of key implementation actions were identified for each of the six ERA Priorities which could be expected to make the biggest difference to ERA, notwithstanding the fact that others were also said to be important.

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<sup>7</sup> See the PPT presentation that was sent to you on 9 October 2014.

<sup>8</sup> See the PPT presentation that was sent to you on 9 October 2014.

The key actions were presented by the volunteers, some of whom stated that more input by delegations to their respective key actions was needed to get a reliable picture of what MS thought was important in terms of implementing the ERA Priorities.

The Vice-Chair also mentioned the presentation of the work at the ERA Stakeholder Platform and the willingness of the stakeholders to contribute to the process.

Delegations agreed the key actions to be included in the draft Roadmap. Comments by delegations and Chairs of the other ERA-related groups who had been invited included the need to look at Horizon 2020 in the context of Priority 2 (addressing grand challenges), the need to add the circulation of knowledge between Industry and Science, the need for greater coordination between Priorities 2 and 6 (joint programming and international cooperation), the need to look at international cooperation as an issue cutting across all 5 (initial) Priorities, the necessity of active involvement of the Commission, this being in line with partnership approach agreed in 2012 (action needed at both national and EU level), the need for more progress in Priority 5, the need for greater involvement of stakeholders, the difficulties for smaller MS to implement some of the key actions, and the need to put the import of research policy into perspective, as research was said to be either curiosity- or market-driven rather than policy-driven.

The Chairs of the ERA-related groups confirmed the willingness of the Groups to contribute to the preparations of the ERA Roadmap and informed delegations how they plan to do this in line with the work programmes of their respective groups.

Next steps in the process leading up to the adoption of the Roadmap by Council in May 2015 included (1) the circulation of material to delegations by the rapporteur (for comments by 24 October); (2) the Steering Board meeting on 16 October; (3) the actual drawing up of the draft Roadmap by the rapporteur and the volunteers for each of the ERA Priorities; (4) the Steering Board meeting on 12 November, which would discuss the first draft of the Roadmap; (5) the discussion by the plenary of the draft Roadmap on 3 December; (6) the COMPET Council on 5 December, where Ministers would be informed of the state of affairs of the Roadmap. — The Secretariat was requested to circulate the comments to all ERAC representatives.

The Commission indicated its support to the exercise, including the monitoring aspects. It supported the views that the ERA Roadmap should reflect concrete actions and be translated into effective national strategies.

## **7. Mandate / Rules of Procedure/ Administrative Issues**

### **7.1 Review of ERA-related groups**

The Chair introduced this item by stating that increasing the impact of the ERA advisory groups was crucial. Together with the Vice-Chair the Chair had heard the discussion at the Research Working Party which met on 2 October in Venice. The Chair informed delegations that the RWP (which is in the decision-making line of Council preparatory bodies) was open to change, including changes to the current reporting strands. The Chair had informed the RWP that, in his view, the advisory work lacked sufficient impact; this need to be enhanced in view of the fact that R&I would play an increasingly important role in the future.

The Vice-Chair gave a presentation of the present status and the rationale and the needs for change<sup>9</sup>.

SFIC, GPC and WG KT gave a presentation of their activities<sup>10</sup>.

Opening the debate, DE stated that this was the right time for change for ERAC. If there would be no change, ERAC (and its dedicated configurations) should be dissolved, as it was no option to go on the present basis. ERAC should turn into a genuine high-level (i.e. DG, with no replacements) advisory body that should meet twice a year and give strategic advice to Council and Commission rather than produce opinions of a technical nature which failed to provide policy advice or policy options to decision-makers. ERAC should also become "the one voice for the ERA system". The Committee should be chaired by MS (because it is MS who implement the ERA), although the chair(wo)manship of the Committee — which was said to be crucial — and its Steering Board should be seen in the perspective of close

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<sup>9</sup> See the PPT presentation that was sent to you on 9 October 2014.

<sup>10</sup> See the PPT presentations that were sent to you on 9 October 2014 (for the SFIC presentation).

partnership with the Commission. The Chairs of other ERA advisory groups should be on the Steering Board in order to streamline the different advisory strands. Support to MS Chair should come from the Council Secretariat as well as from MS.

Comments by delegations included the following:

#### *Impact, commitment, and nature of the work done by ERAC*

Greater impact and visibility of ERAC's work were crucial. In general, ERAC proceedings were too procedural, technical and detailed and the Committee did not keep to its remit to give early strategic policy advice as set out in its mandate. In general, MS themselves needed to put more effort into ERAC, as there was said to be a lack of commitment. Changes in the direction of more strategic advice were imperative. ERAC should be a partnership between MS and the Commission, plus stakeholders.

#### *Chairmanship*

The issue of the chairmanship should be seen in the light of the resources needed to run the Committee. MS themselves should provide the necessary resources if they took over the Chair of ERAC. ERAC should be chaired by a representative of the Trio Presidency / of the incoming Presidency so as to improve coordination of its work with Presidency plans. ERAC should continue to be chaired by the Commission.

#### *The ERA advisory groups (including ERAC)*

There was an obvious case for change, as the present advisory structure (set up in 2008) was outdated and not sufficiently adjusted to ERA Priorities and present-day needs. There was said to be an attitude of self-sufficiency among the advisory groups, which should serve current policy needs. Groups and their mandates should be more flexible and adjust to evolving needs. The advisory groups and their mandates should be aligned to the ERA Priorities. The present advisory structure is too complex and opaque, and it should be made understandable to Ministers and stakeholders. The groups have failed to establish adequate interaction and coordination as called for by the Council in its May 2013 conclusions.



### *The level of representation*

Although there was general support for high-level representation, this was also questioned, as there were concerns over the availability of high-ranking officials (DGs) for meetings as well as their knowledge of files.

### *Resources*

Adequate resources were crucial to the functioning of ERAC and the Commission's technical assistance and expertise could not be forgone. GSC, MS and Commission should all provide more resources to ERAC if its impact is to be increased.

### *Reporting strands*

All advisory groups (other than ERAC) should report directly and exclusively to ERAC, as current reporting strands were said to be one of the elements responsible for unclarity and lack of advisory impact on a political level. The self-assessments by SFIC and GPC were questioned; peer review was said to be a more useful instrument. All Groups should report on an equal level and directly to Council as necessary.

### *Steering Board*

There was broad support for having the Chairs of all advisory groups on a Steering Board with a revised mandate.

The IT Presidency stated it was open to receiving ERAC's input on the review of the advisory groups for the December COMPET Council.

The Chair stated that in his opinion ERAC was focused on technicalities rather than on providing strategic policy advice; the ERA advisory groups should reflect the ERA Priorities; the Groups concerned should no longer report directly to Council (this was said to be a contradiction) but exclusively report to ERAC. The ambitions of GPC and SFIC were questioned as there might not be sufficient resources for these ambitions to come to fruition.

The issue of adequate resources was said to be important for deciding on the chairmanship, on which the Chair stated that "as your chair I'm agnostic".

The Chair announced that ERAC would hold an extraordinary meeting on 7 November at DG or State Secretary level to have a debate at political level about the ERA advisory work.

## **7.2 Election of Vice-Chair**

The Chair introduced this Item by stating that under Article 3 (1), first paragraph, of the Rules of Procedure of ERAC the Committee should elect a Vice-Chair from among Member State representatives for a period of two years, which shall be renewable once. The first term of the current Vice-Chair, Mr Krzysztof Gulda, expired in November 2014. In response to the Secretariat's note on the election / re-election of the Vice-Chair of ERAC of 16 July 2014, the DE delegation had informed the Secretariat that in view of the upcoming developments on the ERA advisory structures, it would be premature to decide on any personal changes to the governance of ERAC at this juncture (including the election / re-election of the Vice-Chair). The Secretariat was also informed by the DE delegation that DE was willing to put forward a high-level DE candidate for any new governance structure of the Committee that may be set up. — No other delegations had expressed their interest in putting forward a candidate for the vice-chairmanship.

In the light of this, the Chair declared that the Steering Board, in the given circumstances, had decided to suggest to the Committee to agree to the extension of the current Vice-Chair's term until a new governance structure was in place or until at latest 31 May 2015. This proposal was approved unanimously by the Committee.

The Vice-Chair accepted the Committee's extension of his mandate and announced he would step down at the end of May 2015 if there were no changes to the advisory structure.

## **7.3 Update of the work programme**

The provisional work programme for 2014-2015 was approved unanimously.

## **8. Any other business**

The Chair suggested that delegations might wish to consider the issues on the implementation of Structural Funds.

The Chair also announced that Horizon 2020 was threatened by budget cut from MS which risked leaving the new framework programme with even less funds than FP 7. The Chair called on ERAC delegations to raise this issue at home and to alert Europe's research community with a view to making it clear to political decision-makers that the credibility of Horizon 2020 was at stake.

The Israeli delegation informed the Committee that the ratification of its association agreement for Horizon 2020 was delayed, although this was not related to financial problems.

The next ERAC meeting will be held on 3 December. The Steering Board will draw up the provisional agenda for this meeting on the basis of the Work Programme 2014-2015.

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