

EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA
AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE
— ERAC —
Secretariat

Brussels, 8 May 2018
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ERAC 1203/18

NOTE

From: ERAC Secretariat
To: ERAC delegations

Subject: Summary conclusions of the 37th ERAC plenary meeting on 15-16 March 2018 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Delegations will find annexed to this Note the summary conclusions of the 37th ERAC plenary meeting on 15-16 March 2018 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, as adopted by written procedure.

Summary conclusions

37th ERAC plenary meeting, 15-16 March 2018 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Co-Chair: Christian Naczinsky

Secretariat: General Secretariat of the Council

Present¹: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom (34)

Absent: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Faroe Islands, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Iceland, Serbia, Ukraine (10)

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda

The agenda was adopted without AOB items.

The Member State (MS) co-Chair apologised on behalf of the Commission co-Chair, who was not able to participate due to other commitments. The MS co-Chair informed ERAC that, as foreseen by the ERAC Rules of Procedure, he would exceptionally chair the meeting alone. The MS co-Chair thanked the previous RTD Director-General Robert-Jan Smits for his long-time dedication to ERAC and for the work on the ERA in general.

The MS co-Chair 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. Summary conclusions of the 36th meeting of ERAC

The MS co-Chair indicated that the summary conclusions of the 36th meeting of ERAC, held in Brussels on 5 December 2017, had been approved by written procedure on 25 January 2018.

3. Information from the co-Chairs and Presidency

The MS co-Chair referred to the last ERAC Steering Board (SB) meeting on 17-18 January 2018, and to the summary sent to ERAC following the ERAC SB meeting.

The representative of the Bulgarian Presidency, Milena Damyanova, made a presentation on R&I policy in Bulgaria (the presentation has been issued as document WK 3393/18). The priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency in the field of R&I are "Accelerating the transfer of knowledge, data and research results in support of a new generation of innovators and researchers" and "Maximizing long-term sustainability of Research Infrastructures and opening up to the industry and the society". The Bulgarian Presidency is also preparing Council conclusions on ITER and on the European Open Science Cloud. Two major conferences will be organised in Bulgaria during the Presidency: Research infrastructures on 22-23 March and Food 2030 Sustainable food systems and food security on 14-15 June 2018.

The representative of the incoming Austrian Presidency, Ms Julia Prikoszovits, made a short presentation on its Presidency priorities (the presentation has been issued as document WK 3394/18). The proposals for the new Multiannual Financial Framework, the next Framework Programme (FP) for R&I, the budget restraints (including the issue of Brexit) and the approaching EU elections are setting a very challenging context for the incoming Austrian Presidency. Austria will start the negotiations of the next FP proposal. It will also aim to adopt a set of Council conclusions on ERA, building on the review of the ERA advisory structure and other relevant ERA developments. Furthermore, it will support sectoral policies (defence research, HPC, EOSC, international STI-Fora etc.) as appropriate. There will be two Council (Competitiveness) meetings with a research part on 28 September and 30 November,

with the Austrian Presidency aiming to adopt a partial general approach on the FP9 Regulation, progress reports on the other proposals in the FP9 "package" and the Council conclusions on ERA in the latter. An informal meeting of the Ministers responsible for research will take place in Vienna on 16-17 July. ERAC plenary at Directors-General level will take place on 17-18 September in Salzburg. Moreover, numerous RDI Presidency events will take place during the 6 months of its chair, including events relating to the ERA priorities.

4. ERA Governance

4.1 Review of the ERA advisory structure foreseen in 2018

The MS co-Chair resumed the work done so far in the framework of the review of the ERA advisory structure foreseen in 2018. Based on the discussions at ERAC plenaries organised in 2017 and the discussion at Directors-General level at the ERAC Plenary meeting on 5 December 2017, the ERAC SB had identified the scope of the review and defined its terms of reference. The results of the discussion at the ERAC SB meeting had been provided in writing to Delegations prior to the plenary. The MS co-Chair underlined that the timetable for the review was very tight: a progress report should be submitted to ERAC at the May 2018 Plenary, and the final report should be adopted by ERAC at the September 2018 Plenary at DG level. Timely adoption of the report is important in view of the adoption of Council conclusions on the review of the ERA advisory structure during the Austrian Presidency at the Competitiveness Council meeting of 30 November 2018.

The next step was the appointment of a Rapporteur to draft a report by ERAC on the review. For this purpose, a call for expressions of interest for a Rapporteur had been launched by the ERAC Secretariat on 30 January 2018. Two expressions of interest had been received by the deadline of 16 February, one from Philipp Langer/Switzerland and another (for a supporting role) from Kari-Balke Øiseth/Norway. In the absence of objections from ERAC delegations, the MS co-Chair confirmed the appointment of Mr Langer as the Rapporteur, with Ms Øiseth and the Swiss ERAC delegation collaborating in the task, and congratulated them.

Mr Langer thanked ERAC for the confidence and indicated that it was his priority to have a transparent and inclusive procedure. The basic parameters for the review were the Terms of Reference (ToR) defined by the ERAC SB. The preliminary planning for the review was the following:

- Together with his collaborators (CH, NO), the Rapporteur would immediately start the documentary analysis and the communication with the Chairs of the ERA-related groups; first results of this analysis and the interviews would be submitted to ERAC at the May plenary;
- An online survey of ERAC delegations, ERA-related groups and external stakeholders would be launched by the rapporteur early June with deadline mid-August²;
- A draft final report would be circulated to ERAC during August for feedback;
- The final report would be adopted by ERAC at the September plenary at Director-General level.

The MS co-Chair indicated that it was essential to circulate the draft report to ERAC early enough so that it can be adopted at the Salzburg plenary in September. ERAC Delegations stressed the linkages of the review with ERA and the European Higher Education Area (as mentioned in the guiding principles of the Terms of Reference) and with the upcoming proposal on FP9, as well as complementarity with the informal Research Policy Group. In relation to the scope of the review, they also referred to the on-going work of the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships. The Chair of the ERAC Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility (SWG HRM) referred to the composition of the group that had recently changed due to the change of status of the group (from the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility to the

² N.B. The rapporteur later confirmed that at the May plenary he would report on the state of play of the review and inform ERAC about the next steps, including the preparation of the survey. As for the latter, the rapporteur will anticipate the deadline to end June instead of mid-August.

SWG HRM) and asked if previous members of the group should also be involved in the review. The MS co-Chair urged the groups to be pragmatic and to take on board everybody who has a long-term view of the work of the groups.

Mr Langer underlined that contacts with the groups would be done through the Chairs and that it was thus their responsibility to take care that the procedure was as inclusive as possible. As to the involvement of stakeholders at national level, it was up to ERAC members to take care of this. Moreover, as he had already indicated, the basic parameters for the review were the ToR, but this did not prevent ERAC from looking at supplementary issues during the review as well. The survey would be the possibility for ERAC delegations to bring in new ideas.

The Commission/Mr Jean-David Malo considered that the ToR was precise enough but at the same time open so that new ideas could be brought in. He mentioned the need to strengthen the linkages between ERAC and the European Semester. Furthermore, he invited ERAC not to use the review for other purposes, like a discussion on the FP9 proposal.

4.2 Updates from the ERAC Standing Working Groups and from the ERA-related Groups

The MS co-Chair reported on the feedback from Delegations after the latest ERAC Plenary meeting and the discussion at the ERAC SB on how to further strengthen the effectiveness of interaction between ERAC and the other ERA-related groups.

Following comments on the place of the item on the updates from the ERA-related groups on the ERAC agenda, the ERAC SB had agreed to move the item forward, starting from the plenary in Plovdiv. Other comments from Delegations had included the following:

- the ERA-related groups should be encouraged to contribute more to ERAC work and to challenge ERAC;
- ERAC should turn the contributions by the ERA-related groups into the "big picture";
- the ERA-related groups should report primarily on how they are advancing their respective ERA priority; and
- the ERAC Secretariat should encourage ERAC Delegates to consult national members of the ERA-related groups.

Relating to the last comment, the MS co-Chair considered that this was not a task for the ERAC Secretariat but for ERAC Delegates themselves.

Following the practice that had been initiated at the ERAC Plenary meeting in December, updates by the ERAC Standing Working Groups and the ERA-related groups had been provided in writing to Delegations prior to the meeting. Some Delegations (BE, EL, FR, IT, ME, SE) asked clarifying questions and made comments in relation to the information provided. Furthermore, the MS co-Chair invited the representatives of the groups to briefly give supplementary information on the following:

- advisory work done by ESFRI and the Standing Working Group on Open Science and Innovation (SWG OSI) on the preparations of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC):
 - Mr Jan Hrusak, the ESFRI Vice-Chair, informed ERAC that ESFRI had adopted a position paper on EOSC in which it among others calls for the establishment of a close and effective interaction between the Governance Board of EOSC and the ESFRI Forum.

- Mr Marc Vanholsbeek, the SWG OSI Vice-Chair, indicated that the group had cooperated closely with the Commission on the development of EOSC and had adopted an Opinion on the EOSC governance models and Strategic Implementation Plan. There had not been consensus among all delegations as regards the model to follow for the governance structure, but the respective strengths and weaknesses of the different options were explicitly stated in the Opinion.
- role of the GPC in the work of the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships:
- Mr Emmanuel Pasco-Viel, the GPC Vice-Chair, informed ERAC that GPC had had a discussion on this issue at its latest plenary beginning of March and had for example touched upon the role of public-public and public-private partnerships and the life-cycle approach to partnerships, including phasing out.
- the technical tool for making international research and innovation cooperation results more visible and publicly available, the development of which the Toolbox Working Group of SFIC had recommended:
- Ms Martina Hartl, the SFIC representative, explained that there had not been much progress in the development of such a tool by the Commission and that this was regrettable as the data that SFIC had collected could not be widely used. The Commission/Mr Jean-David Malo indicated that it would coordinate internally and with the Joint Research Center in order to find a solution to the problem.
- the follow-up to and the dissemination of the joint report by the Standing Working Group on Gender in R&I (SWG GRI) and SFIC on gender aspects in international cooperation:

- Ms Martina Hartl, the SFIC representative, proposed that the Commission could integrate certain issues from the report into work that it is doing on bilateral international cooperation with third countries.
- Ms Marcela Linkova, the SWG GRI Chair, referred to the work being done within the H2020 project GENDERACTION and indicated that the recommendations in the report will be taken up in this context.

Following a question by the BE delegation, the MS co-Chair also asked the representatives of the groups to indicate to which extent they had analysed the parts concerning their respective priorities in the National ERA Action Plans. Based on the replies, he urged ESFRI and SWG OSI to dedicate more time on this task.

The Chair of SWG GRI and the Vice-Chair of SWG OSI briefly presented the draft Work Programmes of the groups that had been circulated to ERAC prior to the meeting. ERAC took note of the documents but did not have any comments. ERAC also took note that the SWG HRM was in the process of preparing its draft Work Programme and would submit it to the ERAC SB for its next meeting in April for comments and subsequently present it to ERAC at the May plenary.

5. ERA and Innovation Policy

5.1 Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020 and preparations for the next Framework programme for Research and Innovation - Partnerships

The draft reports by the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group (WG) on "Criteria for selecting, implementing, monitoring and phasing out EU R&I partnership initiatives" and on "Strategic coordinating process for EU R&I partnerships" had been circulated to Delegations prior to the meeting. The Chair of the Ad-hoc WG, Maria Reinfeldt, briefly presented the main findings and recommendations in the draft reports.

There was wide agreement among ERAC Delegations that the Ad-hoc WG had so far done very good work, and Delegates who took the floor thanked the Chair and the members of the Ad-hoc WG warmly for their efforts. The debate that followed can be summarised as follows:

- there is wide consensus on the Ad-hoc WG's proposal for the criteria framework;
- relating to the strategic coordinating process, there is a need to ensure an effective transition period until the process is up and running, with the Member States and Associated Countries fully involved during this period and applying the criteria and principles developed by the Ad-hoc WG;
- there are clear linkages between the discussion on partnerships and the review of the ERA advisory structure;
- there is a need for good cooperation between the Commission and the Member States/Associated Countries, while respecting their distinctive roles;
- the life-cycle approach for partnerships is appreciated by many Delegations; there were questions whether the phasing out part also includes the possibility of the renewal of a partnership initiative;
- the criteria should only be mandatory for partnerships funded by the FP for R&I and not all partnership initiatives;
- transparency and openness are essential in the process, as is also the commitment by the Member States and the Associated Countries; and
- we must not lose sight of the topline principle of simplification of the partnership landscape.

Some delegations stressed the difference between the public-public partnerships and the public-private partnerships. Other delegations considered that GPC, with an enlarged mandate, would be the appropriate body to do the follow-up to the work of the Ad-hoc WG.

The first recommendation in both draft reports calls on the Commission to develop proposals for the criteria framework and the strategic coordinating process. ERAC considered that there was a need to clarify the formulation of these recommendations and to make it clear that this is a necessary next step to make the proposals of the Ad-hoc WG fully operational.

The Commission/Mr Jean-David Malo underlined the importance of the work of the Ad-hoc WG in the preparations of the proposal on FP9. He stressed that the on-going discussions should not block the current preparations for new partnership instruments. At the next ERAC plenary in May, the Commission will present a proposal for making operational the next steps for the criteria framework and the strategic coordinating process, based on the requirements developed in both draft reports. In the meantime, the Commission will informally update and consult with the Member States and the Associated Countries via the Ad-hoc WG.

Regarding the scope of the criteria, Ms Reinfeldt referred to the Council Conclusions of December 2017. She invited ERAC delegations to send their written comments on the draft reports by 26 March to the ERAC Secretariat. At the ERAC plenary in May, the Ad-hoc WG would submit the final reports on "Criteria" and "Process" and the draft reports on its two other deliverables, "Rationalising the partnership landscape" and "Increasing the efficiency of implementation of partnerships".

5.2 Update on ERA National Action Plans and strategies

The Commission (Anette Bjornsson) updated ERAC on the outcome of the workshop on National ERA Action Plans held on 14 March in Sofia (the presentation has been issued as document WK 3400/18).

There were three sub-groups at the workshop. The conclusions per sub-group can be summarized as follows:

- relationship between ERA Priorities 1 and 3 (chaired by Cecilia Cabello Valdes): There is a strong relationship between HR policies and measures that improve open labour market and effective and efficient R&I systems; there is therefore a need to measure and monitor the impacts of HR policies on the R&I systems as a whole and to improve the inter-exchange of researchers between academia and industry. Furthermore, there has to be a better understanding of the whole “ecosystem” of R&I, as the open labour market for researchers is a global issue.
- short-term and permanent contracts of researchers and the impact on career development (chaired by Marcela Linkova): short-term contracts are a symptom of other structural issues (including funding), we should therefore move away from technical solutions to a debate about what kind of policy we want for Europe. Mutual learning would be useful for countries to learn from each other.
- ERA and higher education (chaired by Elissaveta Gourova): To build the future labour force, there is a need for new approaches in teaching. Moreover, the fields of education and research have common challenges for the development of a new generation of researchers with a comprehensive approach starting from early age. The focus should be on stronger collaboration with various stakeholders to ensure the knowledge triangle works, to raise research impact and to ensure greater synergy between ERA and EHEA.

Ms Bjornsson also referred to the proposal on how to best follow up on the results of the workshops, that had been circulated to Delegates prior to the meeting. Due to the shortness of time at the plenary, a debate on the proposal was not possible. ERAC Delegations were therefore invited to send their comments relating to this proposal, as well as the results of the workshop, to the ERAC Secretariat by 28 March.

5.3 Science, Research and Innovation Performance of the EU-2018 Report

The Commission/Mr Beñat Bilbao-Osorio made a presentation on the Science, Research and Innovation Performance of the EU-2018 Report (SRIP) (the presentation has been issued as document WK 3398/18)

Mr Bilbao-Osorio mentioned that there were 10 novelty features in the 2018 SRIP report. He also presented the top 10 key facts and figures and listed the policy implications of the findings in the report. The next steps are the dissemination of the report and the integration of the policy implications in the national research agendas.

Mr Bilbao-Osorio invited the Member States to flag their interest in organising a dissemination event of the report findings in their country.

Due to the shortness of time at the plenary this time, ERAC agreed that a strategic discussion on how to make the best use of the SRIP report and other important and strategic reports would be held at plenary level at a later stage. The ERAC SB would at its following meeting discuss the issue.

6. Standing Information Point

Document concerning the outcome of the PSF Mutual Learning Exercise on Open Science (Altmetrics and Rewards) (WK 2453/18) had been circulated to delegations prior to the meeting.

7. Any other business

7.1 38th ERAC meeting (17 May 2018, Brussels)

The MS co-Chair indicated that at its next meeting, the ERAC SB would draw up the provisional annotated agenda of the next ERAC plenary meeting on 17 May 2018 in Brussels on the basis of the updated ERAC Work Programme 2018-2019.
