EUROPEAN UNION

**EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA
AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE**
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– ERAC –
Secretariat

Brussels, 25 January 2018
(OR. en)

ERAC 1201/18

NOTE

From:	ERAC Secretariat
To:	ERAC delegations
Subject:	Draft summary conclusions of the 36th ERAC plenary meeting on 5 December 2017 in Brussels

Delegations will find annexed to this Note the summary conclusions of the 36th ERAC plenary

meeting on 5 December 2017 in Brussels, as adopted by written procedure.

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Summary conclusions

36th ERAC plenary meeting, 5 December 2017 in Brussels

Co-Chairs: Robert-Jan Smits/Wolfgang Burtscher and Christian Naczinsky

Secretariat: General Secretariat of the Council

Present [1]: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom (36)

Absent: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Serbia, Ukraine (8)

1. **Adoption of the provisional agenda**

The agenda was adopted with two AOB items requested by the Commission relating to the long-term sustainability of Research Infrastructures and to the Horizon 2020 Dashboard, and one AOB item requested by the SE Delegation relating to the planning of the consultation in view of the proposal for the ninth Framework Programme (FP9).

The co-Chairs welcomed the new ERAC Delegates.

2. **Summary conclusions of the 35th meeting of ERAC**

The Commission (COM) co-Chair indicated that the summary conclusions of the 35th meeting of ERAC, held in Tartu, Estonia, on 21-22 September 2017, had been approved by written procedure on 1 December 2017.

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[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.

3. Information from the co-Chairs and Presidency

The Member State (MS) co-Chair referred to the last ERAC Steering Board (SB) meeting on 7 November 2017, and the summary sent to ERAC following the SB meeting. He informed Delegations that this meeting had been the first for Mr Fulvio Esposito (IT), who had replaced Katrine Niessen (DK) as a MS representative at the SB. Following a proposal by Mr Esposito, the SB had decided to increase the impact of the work of the ERA-related groups by sending a compilation of written input by all the groups to ERAC prior to the Plenary meeting.

The representative of the Estonian Presidency, Taivo Raud, made an update on the progress of the Estonian Presidency (the presentation has been issued as document WK 14448/17). The main output of the Estonian Presidency, the Council conclusions "From the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020 towards the 9th Framework Programme" had been adopted by the Council (Competiveness) on 1 December. Mr Raud also referred to the Conference "European Research Excellence – Impact and Value for Society", following which Estonia's Prime minister Jüri Ratas handed over the Tallinn Call for Action with the aim to ensure broad public trust towards research, as well as political commitment for increasing research and innovation funding.

The representative of the incoming Bulgarian Presidency, Karina Angelieva, made a short presentation on its Presidency priorities. She explained that the incoming Bulgarian Presidency would aim to steer the debate towards FP9 and pave way to the Austrian Presidency. The priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency in the field of R&I would be "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". For the latter topic, the Bulgarian Presidency was planning to prepare a Call for Action. As the main output of its incoming Presidency, Bulgaria foresees Council conclusions on knowledge transfer, ITER and the European Open Science Cloud. There would be two Council (Competitiveness) meetings on research, on 13 March and on 29 May 2018. The missions-based approach in FP9 would be further discussed at the March meeting. A conference on Research and Innovation for Food and Nutrition Security and Quality Empowerment would also be organised by the Bulgarian Presidency.

4.   ERA Governance (Part 1)

4.1   Review of the ERA governance foreseen in 2018

According to the mechanism for the review of the ERA governance, the procedure starts a year before the triennial review with a discussion in ERAC at Director-General level on the strategic landscape for research and innovation in Europe to identify the key strategic priorities that will require attention by the research and innovation community. The Directors-General had been invited to the ERAC plenary on 5 December to have this discussion.

The MS co-Chair introduced the item and explained the background. The ERAC Steering Board had prepared the discussion of the Directors-General based on the exchanges of views at the ERAC plenaries in March, June and September 2017. Furthermore, as a preliminary step, the participants in the informal meeting of the Research Policy Group (RPG) on 26-27 October 2017 in Oslo had had an exchange of views on the broader strategic landscape for research and innovation in Europe. The conclusion from the discussions at ERAC and at the RPG was that the ERA review in 2018 should seek a light, evolutionary approach and that a complete overhaul of the ERA Priorities should be avoided. The ERAC Steering Board had prepared a set of guiding questions to steer the debate of the Directors-General and had proposed that the focus of the debate should be on two aspects: (a) short-term consolidation of the ERA process, and (b) mid-term review of key strategic priorities of ERA and their implementation by the ERA Groups. Furthermore, there was the fundamental issue of an eventual need to revise the mandates of ERAC and the other ERA-related groups. The Directors-General were expected to give guidance to ERAC for shaping the scope of the review.

The outcome of the discussions can be summarised as follows:

– the 2018 review should be a light and evolutionary rather than revolutionary: the mandate of ERAC does not need substantial revision, but adjustments are necessary for some of the ERA-related groups to work more efficiently and to deliver better results with impact (in this respect, many Delegations asked for the widening of GPC mandate to include all partnerships, also so that GPC could possibly continue the work of the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships) the work of the groups should also be scrutinised better;

– some Delegations were open to discuss streamlining of the groups or the creation of a new group on Open Innovation by splitting the current SWG Open Science and Innovation (as some delegations considered that the field of Open Innovation had not received enough focus so far);

– the work of ESFRI was mentioned by several Delegations as an example of strong impact among the ERA-related groups;

– coordination and cooperation between ERAC and the ERA-related groups should be better, overlaps should be avoided;

– ERAC should be more strategic and have discussions on strategic, cross-cutting, new emerging topics (like the missions-based approach in FP9, European Innovation Council);

– linkages between ERAC and the ERA-related groups, between ERAC and the Council work/Presidency should be strengthened; there were several calls for ERAC work to be better reflected at Council level and for Council conclusions to be better followed up by ERAC; there were also calls for ERAC to better follow Presidency priorities;

– Member States and Associated Countries should try to reflect ERAC work better at national level;

–   the ERA priorities are still relevant and thus do not need major overhaul; they should however be adjusted to also include linkages between the ERA & the European High Education Area and the innovation divide; it was generally considered that these areas are already covered by the work of the ERA-related groups but that it should be reinforced;

–   there were some calls for the proposal on FP9 to have an annex about the importance of ERA and the links between FP9 and ERA;

–   implementation of the ERA Priorities and of the National Action Plans and the monitoring of this is very important (including the issue of indicators);

–   some Delegations considered that a ministerial conference on ERA every 2 years would be a good idea; some also proposed that within a couple of years, the Commission could come up with a new Communication on ERA to replace the 2012 one and thus to launch a new round of discussions on the ERA priorities.

The GPC Chair pointed out that the current GPC mandate already covers all public-public partnerships, so the only question is whether it should also cover the public-private ones. He also pointed out that GPC had already had a workshop in which the relationship between partnerships and missions had been discussed. The Vice-Chair of ESFRI explained that ESFRI has an easier task than some of the ERA-related groups in that its work was scientific and easily understood. The SFIC Chair mentioned the cooperation with the Standing Working Group on Gender in R&I (SWG GRI) on the follow-up of the Council conclusions on gender equality in ERA and indicated that SFIC intended to start working on innovation-related issues. The Chair of the SWG GRI underlined that it had already cooperated with Presidencies and the other ERA-related groups and also referred to the recent cooperation with SFIC. The Chair of the Standing Working Group on Human resources and Mobility (SWG HRM) was of the opinion that there was not enough awareness of the work done by the ERA-related groups, also

because the visibility of the groups in ERAC plenary was not optimal. The <u>Vice-Chair of the Standing Working Group on Open Science and Innovation</u> (SWG OSI) pointed out that it had so far had to dedicate all its efforts into the analysis of the implementation of the Amsterdam Call for Action (something that the Council asked it to do in the 2016 Council conclusions on Open science) and the collaboration with the Commission on the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC). The next meeting in February 2018 would however be dedicated to issues relating to open innovation.

The <u>Commission (Fabienne Gautier)</u> indicated that strong focus had been on the implementation of the ERA Priorities and their monitoring. <u>The representative of the Estonian Presidency, Dr Indrek Reimand,</u> pointed out that it would be difficult for the Presidencies to lean on the ERA-related groups for help as the role of ERAC is long-term, whereas the Presidency has another timeframe. Delegations admitted this but considered that a solution should be found to inform ERAC earlier of the Presidency priorities.

The <u>MS co-Chair</u> concluded by reminding delegates of the next steps:

- Delegations could send additional input in writing to the ERAC Secretariat by 20 December 2017 at the latest;

- On the basis of the discussion and the written input, the ERAC Steering Board would identify the scope of the review and define the terms of reference at its next meeting on 17 and 18 January 2018;

- The results of the Steering Board discussions would be presented to ERAC at the March 2018 plenary. A rapporteur for the exercise would also be elected at the March plenary;

- A draft report of the review would be submitted to ERAC at the June 2018 plenary;

- The final report would be adopted by ERAC at the September 2018 plenary at DG level.

- On the basis of the final report, the upcoming Austrian Presidency would prepare Council conclusions that would be adopted by the Council (Competitiveness) on 30 November 2018.

5. ERA and Innovation Policy

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

The <u>COM co-Chair</u> introduced the item. Following ERAC's decision at the September plenary to establish an ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group (WG) on Partnerships, the draft mandate for the Ad-hoc WG had been circulated to delegations prior to the meeting.

<u>Maria Reinfeldt (EE)</u> made a short presentation to give the background and to introduce the draft mandate. In October, the members of the Ad-hoc WG had been asked to provide input on the tasks and focus of the Ad-hoc WG. At its meeting on 7 November, the ERAC Steering Board had asked Ms Reinfeldt and Joerg Niehoff (Commission) to consolidate these inputs. Furthermore, the Council conclusions of 1 December had provided guidance for rationalising the partnership landscape and defined the scope and the tasks of the Ad-hoc WG. The draft mandate included four priority blocks for the Ad-hoc WG's work, with specific timelines for the discussion of draft deliverables at ERAC. The final report of the Ad-hoc WG would be expected at the December 2018 ERAC plenary. She also pointed out that there was a minor clerical error in the text of the draft mandate and explained how it should be corrected.

Delegations made the following comments:

– <u>BE</u>: the timeframe is problematic, the work of the Ad-hoc WG takes too long considering the timetable for the FP9 proposal.

– <u>CH</u>: supports the draft mandate, it is ambitious; if it is not possible for the Ad-hoc WG to deliver on all objectives, it could concentrate on blocks A and D; GPC could perhaps take over the work of the Ad-hoc WG long-term; the draft should mentioned that also Associated Countries can take part in the Ad-hoc WG.

– <u>DE</u>: coherence should be the starting point of the mandate; it would be important to distinguish the public-public partnerships and the public-private ones in the mandate, as they are different; the relationship between the Commission and the Member States in the strategic coordinating process (priority block C) is crucial.

– <u>DK</u>: supports the draft mandate; it should be added in the draft that the Ad-hoc WG will coordinate with GPC and build on the experience from and the work already done by GPC.

– <u>EL</u>: supports the draft mandate; the context has to be the Council conclusions of 1 December; flexibility is very important.

– <u>ES</u>: like PT somewhat disappointed with the draft; priority blocks A and C are very similar and overlapping; it is very important to have one clear and unique set of rules concerning the partnerships.

– <u>FR</u>: has no objections to the draft; considers that indeed the public-public partnerships and the public-private ones are different and that they should be handled differently; the Ad-hoc WG should build on the existing work by GPC and ESFRI; there shouldn't be any capping of partnership instruments in the FP9 budget.

– <u>IT</u>: overall supports the draft mandate; the text should separate between partnership instruments and initiatives, in footnote 2 they are mixed together; the ESFRI roadmap approach should be considered; supports the DK proposal concerning the work done by GPC.

– <u>NL</u>: the usefulness and impact of the partnerships is crucial; there shouldn't be any capping of partnership instruments in the FP9 budget; the Ad-hoc WG should look to the future but not pre-empt the discussions on the FP9.

–   PT: supports the text but is somewhat disappointed as it does not refer to the simplification of the partnership funding landscape and the target to eliminate some initiatives (in accordance to the Council conclusions that talk about a "possible capping"); the mandate has to cover all partnerships, not only the public-to-public ones.

–   SE: the Ad-hoc WG should first discuss the criteria when to use partnership instruments and only afterwards the details about the various instruments; public-public partnerships and the public-private ones are indeed different, but it should be possible to streamline both types.

–   SI: supports PT; the targets of the work are the most important, but the group has to work efficiently and fast.

Following the exchange of views, the Commission (Joerg Niehoff) explained that the mandate had enough flexibility to adapt to changing needs during the work of the Ad-hoc WG. The draft included four priority blocks for the Ad-hoc WG's work and in all four early feedback to ERAC was foreseen, as it was clear that the group had to deliver fast. It should however be kept in mind that rationalisation of the partnership landscape was a long-term project.

The COM co-Chair considered that the issues raised by Delegations were already included in the draft mandate. He also considered that there was broad agreement on the main orientations for the Ad-hoc WG, which follow the guidance given by the Council conclusions. As it was crucial for the Ad-hoc WG to be able to start its work as soon as possible, he proposed to leave the draft mandate as it was and to make sure that the remarks of the Delegations would be properly reflected in the summary proceedings of the meeting. Furthermore, he indicated that the co-Chairs would closely follow the work of the Ad-hoc WG to ensure that the different aspects mentioned during the discussion would be addressed. There was no objection to this proposal and CH, ES, IT and PT explicitly supported it. RO indicated that it supported IT, ES and PT. The draft mandate was therefore declared approved.

5.2 Update on ERA National Action Plans and strategies

The <u>Commission (Anette Bjornsson)</u> indicated that at the ERA workshop organised in September back-to-back with the ERAC plenary in Tartu, delegates had found that the sub-group approach worked well and therefore it had been decided to continue this way. As for the topics for the next workshop, to be organised back-to-back with the ERAC plenary in Plovdiv (BG) in March 2018, <u>Ms Bjornsson</u> explained that a large number had been proposed by ERAC members. In line with the priorities of the incoming Bulgarian Presidency, human resources had been chosen as the main theme. At the next workshop to be organized back-to-back with the ERAC plenary in Plovdiv (BG), the three subgroups would thus cover the following topics: relationship between ERA Priorities 1 and 3; short-term and permanent contracts of researchers and the impact on career development: and ERA and higher education.

<u>Ms Bjornsson</u> explained that the Chair of the SWG HRM would be very much involved. The <u>SWG GRI Chair</u> supported the sub-topic on contracts and offered to help as well. <u>Ms Bjornsson</u> added that a call for volunteers to chair the three sub-groups would be launched in good time before the workshop, and a guiding note would be prepared and circulated.

The <u>MS co-Chair</u> concluded by reminding that the impact of the workshops for the ERAC plenary had to be kept in mind. It was agreed that each subgroup would also discuss how to best report back from the workshop to the ERAC plenary.

6. Standing Information Point

Documents concerning the update on the upcoming edition of the Report "Science, research and innovation performance of the EU 2018" (WK 13624/17) and the outcome of the Expression of Interest for PSF activities (WK 13627/17) had been circulated to delegations prior to the meeting.

7. ERA Governance (Part 2)

7.1 Updates from the ERAC Standing Working Groups and from the ERA-related groups

A written compilation of the updates from the ERAC Standing Working Groups and from the ERA-related groups (WK 13563/17) had been circulated to delegations prior to the meeting. On this basis, and in the absence of remarks or questions by delegates, the MS co-Chair asked the groups for some clarifications and details.

The ESFRI Vice-Chair explained that the importance of e-components in Research Infrastructures is growing, which is also reflected in new proposals submitted for the ESFRI Roadmap 2018. Due to this, ESFRI has recently set up a new Strategy Working Group on Data, Computing and Digital Research Infrastructures. The ESFRI's work in this area complements the work done by SWG OSI, especially in the context of the EOSC.

The GPC Chair indicated that its report on Measuring the Progress and Implementation of Priority 2a of the ERA Roadmap had been adopted at its plenary on 4 December. As a follow-up, it had created forms for each GPC member to monitor the national measures for Priority 2a. He also explained that at the 3rd workshop on the Future of Joint Programming, the issue of "Partnerships on Mission Oriented Programmes" had been discussed in the presence of 135 participants. The idea had been to bring together representatives from all initiatives tackling similar challenges and the Commission to discuss how to strengthen the delivery of partnerships on tackling specific societal challenges and related missions.

The SFIC Chair referred to the cooperation with SWG GRI on the follow-up of the 2015 Council conclusions on gender equality in ERA and explained that at this stage, the two groups had decided to adopt a report instead of guidelines due to the difficulties encountered during the preparations of the paper (e.g. including the gender aspect in science diplomacy could be difficult). SFIC was also discussing the future of its working groups, with a thematic approach and a geographical approach being the two options.

The SWG GRI Chair made a short presentation focussing on the implementation of the Council conclusions on gender equality in ERA. She mentioned that the Council conclusions had contained two direct invitations to the Helsinki Group (the predecessor of the SWG GRI): the development of joint guidelines on a gender perspective for international cooperation in STI (together with SFIC) and the provision of guidance for Member States on gender balance in decision-making. The Helsinki Group had started the work on both tasks, and the SWG GRI was finalising the joint guidelines together with SFIC. As for the latter task, the SWG GRI had adopted its report at its first meeting on 18 October 2017 and had submitted it to the Commission.

The SWG HRM Chair explained that the group had had its first meeting on 10 October and was discussing which areas in its mandate it should first focus on.

The SWG OSI Vice-Chair referred to the group's work on the governance of the EOSC and indicated that its report would be adopted soon. He also explained that the group had decided not to work on skills and rewards at first stage, as the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility (predecessor of the SWG HRM) had been working on reports on both topics. Now that the reports were ready, the SWG OSI would integrate the results into its work. It will also collaborate intensively with the Mutual Learning Exercise on Open science.

7.2 ERAC Work Programme 2018-2019

The COM co-Chair introduced the item. The draft ERAC Work Programme had been circulated to delegates prior to the meeting.

The RO delegation asked for its Presidency priority relating to the R&I cooperation in the Black Sea area to be replaced with one concerning FP9 related subjects. The COM co-Chair reminded delegations that the ERAC Work Programme should not include topics that are to be negotiated within the Council but topics that are specifically related to ERAC's work. Some delegations proposed to add topics to the list of proposed strategic topics, like high education or missions. Certain delegations felt that not all topics on the draft list were particularly strategic, some warned against duplicating discussions at the Council and others considered that some topics could also be relevant for other ERA related groups.

The <u>COM co-Chair</u> reminded delegations that according to the ERAC Rules of Procedure, the Work Programme has to be updated every 6 months. He also mentioned that the proposed strategic topics are not principles but topics for discussion. The <u>MS co-Chair</u> considered that work coming up from other ERA-related groups could be a strategic topic for ERAC.

Following the exchange of views, ERAC agreed to adopt the draft Work Programme 2018-2019 with one modification concerning notably the removal of the reference to the RO priority on "*Strengthening R&I cooperation in the Black Sea area (to be confirmed)*" on page 5 of document WK 13460/17.

8.   Any other business

8.1   37th ERAC meeting (15-16 March 2018, Plovdiv)

The <u>MS co-Chair</u> indicated that at its next meeting, the SB would draw up the provisional annotated agenda of the next ERAC plenary meeting on 15-16 March 2018 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, on the basis of the updated ERAC Work Programme 2018-2019.

8.2   *Long-term sustainability of research infrastructures*

The <u>Commission (Ales Fiala)</u> made a presentation on the long-term sustainability of Research Infrastructures. The Commission published a Staff Working Document (SWD) on this topic in September, with a view to set a basis for discussions with Member States and stakeholders on the measures to be taken to address Research Infrastructure (RI) sustainability in the medium and long term. The SWD proposed key elements for an action plan that should result in a sound basis to work for a sustainable European RI ecosystem. This proposed action plan includes, among others, issues like exploiting better the data generated by RIs, exploiting the potential of RIs as innovation hubs, assessing the economic and wider societal value of RI and establishing adequate framework conditions for effective governance and sustainable long-term funding of RI.

8.3 *Horizon 2020 Dashboard*

The Commission (Gabor Mihaly Nagy) presented the Horizon 2020 Dashboard which contains data on Horizon 2020 implementation (proposals, projects and participation). The purpose is to inform the public on the impact of Horizon 2020, give applicants a tool to follow-up and analyse the state of play of the calls and to support evidence-based policy making. By the first quarter of 2018, a specific and more complete version of the Dashboard should be available for Member State representatives and authorized eCORDA users. eCORDA data would then be synchronised with the Dashboard.

8.4 *Commission planning for consultations in view of the ninth Framework Programme*

The SE delegation asked the Commission to inform delegations about the planning of the consultation in view of the proposal for FP9. The COM co-Chair indicated that the Commission Communication on the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020 was expected in January 2018. A public consultation on the next Multiannual Financial Framework was expected to be launched shortly and would also cover FP9, COSME and the Single Market instrument. The Commission was currently looking at modalities for the consultation of stakeholders. It was still unclear how long the public consultation would be open.