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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	ERAC Summary Conclusions of the Policy Debate 'Towards a European Science for Policy ecosystem'

Delegations will find in annex the ERAC Summary Conclusions of the Policy Debate 'Towards a European Science for Policy ecosystem', held at the plenary meeting in Lund on 22 June 2023.

ERAC Summary Conclusions of the Policy Debate 'Towards a European Science for Policy ecosystem'

On 22 June 2023, the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) held the Policy Debate "**Towards a European Science for Policy ecosystem**" at the plenary meeting in Lund, hosted by the Swedish Presidency. The discussion took place in two breakout rooms moderated by the ERAC delegates from Belgium and Czechia. The first group focused on the further development of science for policy across Europe, discussing measures for creating an inclusive and sustainable European S4P ecosystem. The second group focussed on how to better connect Member States' science for policy ecosystems, facilitating mutual learning and the exchange of good practices. Both groups held rich debates, underlining the importance and timeliness of the topic and **the need for structured scientific support to policymaking**, both at EU and at national levels. The ERAC members broadly supported the development of a European S4P ecosystem and recognised the need to setup a network of S4P coordinators to facilitate this process by promoting a regular S4P Policy Dialogue at European level.

ERAC underlined that a robust and well-functioning European S4P ecosystem should introduce a clear governance structure, common standards and clear division of roles and responsibilities not only for the different actors involved (Commission, Member States, Institutions etc), but also for the different S4P communities (scientists, scientific advisors, knowledge brokers, policymakers, politicians, etc). This is considered an essential precondition ensuring that policymakers have access to excellent research in a usable and accessible format and actionable policy recommendations, while the final decision-making responsibilities remain in the hands of the politicians.

The ERAC delegates stressed that the European S4P ecosystem should be established respecting the diversity of the individual S4P ecosystems of the Member States, making it inclusive and flexible, and aiming to reduce the potential administrative burden for national administrations. Further building on existing networks and initiatives, the European S4P ecosystem should facilitate communication, networking of current and new networks and coordination between the S4P communities at all levels and be a forum for the exchange of best practices and knowledge, incorporating diverse expertise and accurately capturing the complexity and multidimensional nature of societal challenges.

The ecosystem should clearly state the long-term perspective and deliverables. The actions should be based on a good understanding of the gaps and barriers in the systems and on a clear intervention logic. Particular attention should be paid to strategic foresight and the possible technological tools, including Artificial Intelligence, that could be used to assist policymakers. Such an S4P ecosystem would help the EU and the Member States to not only mobilise science in response to a crisis and urgent societal challenges, but also to create a habit of trusted and transparent collaboration on longer term policy objectives, such as the digital and green transitions. A strong focus on knowledge exchange is highlighted as equally important.

The ecosystem will also play a pivotal role in strengthening public trust in science and governance. Promoting open access to scientific data, publications and research findings, will foster transparency, reproducibility, trust, and good collaborations within the Science for Policy ecosystem.

Research excellence, high-quality, accurate and reliable data, and basic research funding are preconditions for the development of such an ecosystem and, thus, diversity of different types of actions covering various policy domains is considered as a key factor. ERAC remarked that it is necessary to train professionals at the S4P interface, such as science advisors and knowledge brokers, capable of bridging the gap between excellent, open and transparent science and policymakers and politicians. Similarly, policymakers should be trained on scientific methods and uncertainties, on how to frame policy questions and improve the way politicians use science in their decision-making process. To this end, inter-sectorial mobility schemes involving all communities, such as exchange programmes and fellowships, should be promoted. As part of the training and acquisition of S4P skills, including communication activities, it was proposed to develop a S4P toolbox which would include good practices, codes of conduct and guidelines for all categories of S4P actors at all levels on governance, including regional levels, which would reinforce the transparency and independency of science advice.

Therefore, the ERAC members called upon the European Commission to play a key role in coordinating policy actions and, in fact, in developing the concept of the European S4P ecosystem in close cooperation with the Member States, avoiding duplication of efforts. For this reason, the establishment of the European S4P ecosystem should be considered as an Action of the next ERA Policy Agenda.

The ERAC members emphasised the need to increase funding for S4P activities, highlighting the need to adopt shared activities such as collaborative HE funded calls and policy actions that build on existing structures and initiatives in European, national and regional level (including the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) of the European Commission) and improve collaboration of the communities, to support the exchange of knowledge and extend the debate to all competent institutions, to explore opportunities for capacity building, for example under the Policy Support Facility (PSF) and the Technical Support Instrument (TSI), to raise awareness within states and network in multiple levels.

Existing knowledge and good practices should be shared and exploited, for example through mutual learning exercises (MLEs) to better understand and disseminate existing models of S4P across the EU, mapping exercises at EU level, awareness raising initiatives, structured plans for reforms both medium- and long- term, development of a S4P toolbox to ensure an effective role for science in the decision-making process, promotion of good practices, development of codes of practice/conduct, and suitable instruments for each category of stakeholders at all levels of governance. Learning from experiences beyond the EU and Europe is also strongly recommended.

In this context, ERAC further acknowledged that the researchers should be encouraged to participate in S4P activities and be part of the policymaking process. Thus, building on existing initiatives, it is recommended to identify the gaps and barriers that hinder the participation of academics in S4P and promote initiatives to recognise and reward researchers for providing scientific advice to policymakers. This could be achieved by:

−   promoting the proper involvement of researchers and science advisors in the policymaking processes and take the necessary measures to ensure that their involvement in S4P activities will be rewarded (ERA Action 3)

–	establishing exchange mechanisms to promote intersectional mobility between research and policymaking (ERA Action 4).

ERAC welcomes the Commission's initiative to organise on 10-11 October 2023 the Science for Policy in Europe – Building better Science for policy ecosystems Conference that will bring together policymakers, science advisors, researchers, ethics experts, and other professionals in science-for-policy ecosystems.

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