

EUROPEAN UNION  
EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA  
AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

— ERAC —  
Secretariat

Brussels, 7 August 2020  
(OR. en)

ERAC 1207/20

**NOTE**

---

From: ERAC Secretariat  
To: ERAC (European Research Area and Innovation Committee) delegations  
Subject: ERAC Work Programme 2019-2020

---

Delegations will find annexed to this Note the ERAC Work Programme 2019-2020 (second update), as approved by ERAC by written procedure on 24 July 2020.

---

ERAC WORK PROGRAMME 2019-2020

INTRODUCTION

The ERAC Work Programme 2019-2020 was adopted at the ERAC plenary of 6 June 2019 (ST 1209/19) and updated by written procedure on 5 December 2019 (ST 1216/1/19).

This second update takes into account the disruptions provoked by the outburst of the COVID-19 in the sequence of the formal ERAC plenaries and the effects on its working methods. The COVID-19 health crisis has notably led to:

- the cancellation of the 45th meeting of ERAC originally planned in Opatija, Croatia, on 30 and 31 March 2020, and
- the replacement of the 46th ERAC meeting on 4 June 2020 under Croatian presidency, and of the 47th ERAC meeting on 10 September 2020 under German presidency, by informal videoconferences of the members of the ERAC on the same days.

The cancellation of physical meetings due to COVID-19 has also affected the normal functioning and working methods of the Committee as well as its work programme, which has been considerably altered and constrained to be adapted to a new contingency situation.

The second update of the Work Programme covers the next period of policy development in the areas of research and innovation and closely related policies.

In 2018, the European Research Area advisory structure underwent a review of its structures and processes. ERAC has since then moved into a new phase of activity, focussing on more strategic issues, with timely, open debates that are better aligned to the incoming Presidency's priorities, and with clear deliverables that can add value to the challenges facing EU and national research and innovation systems. The updated ERAC Work programme 2019-2020 has been prepared with this background in mind.

## **WORKING METHODS FOR ERAC**

Article 2 of ERAC's mandate states that: "The Committee's principal mission is to provide timely strategic input to the Council, the Commission and Member States on the ongoing implementation of the ERA in Member States and Associated Countries and on other strategic research and innovation policy issues. The Committee shall do this on its own initiative or at the request of the Council or the Commission".

ERAC's work programme will continue to take a flexible, proactive approach to ensure ERAC can contribute in a speedy and timely manner, as appropriate, to emerging and evolving issues. ERAC will consider several strategic issues each year. Such topics will give ERAC an opportunity, for example:

- to give strategic advice at an early stage in developing R&I policy;
- to consider the impact of other policies on the R&I agenda, the impact of R&I policy on other policies, and advise on the appropriate actions; and
- to advise on the implementation of R&I policies and propose specific actions to support these policies.

It is important that ERAC considers carefully what outcomes and impacts it aims to achieve. ERAC is reminded that it does not have to reach consensus on topics, and that outside speakers may be invited to stimulate discussions. Directors-General are strongly encouraged to attend the strategic discussions.

ERAC is continuously improving the dialogue and coordination with incoming EU Presidencies and undertaking the necessary preparatory work to contribute policy options for debates in the Council. Presidencies will be invited to present their indicative priorities and planning to ERAC well in advance of their term. ERAC will also liaise with the current/outgoing Presidency to provide advice regarding the follow-up and implementation of Council conclusions.

ERAC will continue to work on its 'regular' strands, in particular the follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the ERA National Action Plans, to achieve the objective of implementation by 2020, as set out in the ERA Roadmap and the National Action Plans. In addition, ERAC will work on ensuring the momentum is maintained on the initiatives to deliver tangible results.

Prioritisation and active participation in the process from the Commission, the Member States and Associated Countries, will be key factors in meeting the demands during this period.

The quality in preparations for each strategic debate is decisive. ERAC and its Steering Board make use of the input from the other ERA-related groups, workshops, seminars, *ad hoc* working groups and rapporteurs so that the issues at stake can reach the Plenary sufficiently mature for debate and/or adoption, including in the form of written opinions. For that purpose, it is important to further strengthen the exchanges and collaboration between ERAC and the ERA-related Groups and among the ERA-related Groups.

To have adequate time for strategic debate in ERAC Plenary, summary information will continue to be given to members of ERAC in writing in advance of the meetings, with new important developments being taken up orally by the co-Chairs and/or the Presidency. Furthermore, input from the ERA-related groups on their recent activities will continue to be given to ERAC members in writing prior to the meetings.

## **ERAC STRATEGIC TOPICS FOR 2019-20**

The proposed strategic topics for consideration by ERAC in 2019-20 are:

- The Innovation/Research divides (both within the EU and with the rest of the world)
- Review of the ERA Advisory Structure 2021
- National structural reforms (linked to EU Semester and the contribution that PSF can make)
- Partnerships
- Improvement of National Research and Innovation systems of Member States and Associated Countries
- Synergies between the European Research and Education Areas, in particular ERA and the Higher Education Area
- Commission communication on the future of R&I and the ERA

## **INTERACTION WITH PRESIDENCIES AND THEIR PRIORITIES**

This particular part of the work programme will develop in line with the priorities for the Presidencies as they become more mature.

- Ministerial Conference on the European Research Area and Council conclusions on the ERA (DE)
- Strengthening the synergies between Higher Education and Research (DE)

## **REGULAR STRANDS**

These strands include:

- ERA - implementation and monitoring the ERA Roadmap, including Member States' ERA National Action Plans and strategies; interim review of the implementation of the ERA National Action Plans which will also feed into the ERA Progress Report 2020; discussion on the future orientation and development of ERA in line with the Council conclusions of May 2015 that states that the ERA Roadmap and thereby the National Action Plans are seen as living documents, implementation of the Council conclusions of December 2015 on advancing gender equality in the ERA;
- Follow-up on the Review of the ERA Advisory Structure 2018, including the implementation and final report of the ERAC Action Plan 2019-2021;
- ERA governance - implementation of Council conclusions, including the coordination of ERAC and the ERA-related groups through the ERAC Steering Board with the objective of knowledge sharing and greater alignment of activities; preparing the annual report to the Council on the progress and impact against the ERA Roadmap to ensure that the Council is regularly and comprehensively sighted on progress;
- Follow-up on Partnerships in the context to preparations for the Horizon Europe Framework Programme;
- Responsible group for overseeing Priority 1 “Effective national research systems”, through workshops, ad hoc working groups as well as debate with invited speakers;
- European Semester – Annual Growth survey priorities for the Semester; dialogue on the R&I elements of the country reports and follow-up on R&I country-specific recommendations;
- Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility - demand-driven, Horizon 2020 instrument that responds to requests made by Member States and Associated Countries for its three main services: Peer Reviews of national R&I systems; specific support to the design, implementation and evaluation of policy reforms; and mutual learning exercises.

**UPDATED WORK PROGRAMME 2019-2020**

<b><u>Regular strands</u></b>	<b>1-2 October 2019</b> 43 <sup>rd</sup> meeting Helsinki	<b>17 December 2019</b> 44 <sup>th</sup> meeting Brussels	<b>30-31 March 2020</b> 45 <sup>th</sup> meeting Opatija	<b>4 June 2020</b> Informal videoconference	<b>10 September 2020</b> Informal videoconference	<b>16 December 2020</b> 46 <sup>th</sup> meeting Brussels
<b>ERA - implementation and monitoring the ERA Roadmap, National Action Plans and strategies, Future of the ERA</b>	Presentation of R&I policy in Finland Ad-hoc WG on the future of the ERA: interim report	Ad-hoc WG on the future of the ERA: final report	CANCELLED	ERA National Action Plans and Roadmap as a policy tool	Presentation of R&I policy in Germany Final report on Monitoring National Action Plans	
<b>(Strategic) debate</b>		R&I investments for sustainability		Synergies between ERA and EHEA		Commission communication on the future of R&I and the ERA
<b>European Semester</b>	Outcome of the 2019 European Semester cycle			Update on the 2020 European Semester cycle		Launch of the 2021 European Semester cycle
<b>Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility</b>					(poss.) Update on the H2020 Policy Support Facility and outcome of the call for Expression of Interest	
<b>ERA governance</b>	Highlights from the ERA-related Groups	Highlights from the ERA-related Groups Update of ERAC Work Programme 2019-2020		Highlights from the ERA-related Groups ERAvsCorona Action Plan and actions undertaken by ERA-related groups on COVID-19	Highlights from the ERA-related Groups Update of ERAC Work Programme 2019-2020	Highlights from the ERA-related Groups ERAC Work Programme 2020-2021 Final report on the implementation of the ERAC Action Plan

### Major events and milestones

July 2019	August 2019	September 2019	October 2019	November 2019	December 2019
Informal meeting of Ministers for Competitiveness (Research) (4 July, Helsinki)		Competitiveness Council (26-27 September, Brussels)	Joint Conference of ERAC and EU Directors-General for Higher Education (1 October, Helsinki) ERAC Plenary (2 October, Helsinki)	Competitiveness Council (28-29 November, Brussels)	ERAC Plenary (17 December, Brussels)
<b>January 2020</b>	<b>February 2020</b>	<b>March 2020</b>	<b>April 2020</b>	<b>May 2020</b>	<b>June 2020</b>
	Informal meeting of Ministers for Competitiveness (Research) 4 February, Croatia Competitiveness Council (27-28 February, Brussels)	<del>ERAC Plenary (30-31 March, Opatija)</del> CANCELLED		Informal videoconference of Research Ministers (29 May)	Informal ERAC videoconference (4 June)
<b>July 2020</b>	<b>August 2020</b>	<b>September 2020</b>	<b>October 2020</b>	<b>November 2020</b>	<b>December 2020</b>
Informal videoconference of Ministers for Research (21 July)		Informal ERAC videoconference (10 September) Competitiveness Council (25 September, Brussels)	ERA Ministerial Conference (20 October, Bonn)	Competitiveness Council (Research part) (27 November, Brussels)	ERAC Plenary (16 December, Brussels)