



Council of the European Union
General Secretariat

Brussels, 17 September 2019

WK 10012/2019 INIT

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MEETING DOCUMENT

From:	ERAC Secretariat
To:	ERAC (European Research Area and Innovation Committee)
Subject:	ERAC plenary on 2 October 2019 (Helsinki, FI) - Item 4.1 ("Options for a new paradigm and narrative on the future of the ERA")

In view of item 4.1 of the agenda of the ERAC plenary on 2 October 2019, delegations will find attached the document for discussion "Options for a new paradigm and narrative on the future of the ERA", prepared by the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on the future of the ERA.

ERAC *ad hoc* WG on the future of the ERA

Deliverable 1:

Options for a new paradigm and narrative on the future of the ERA

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This draft deliverable 1 is intended for discussion at the ERAC plenary meeting of 2nd October.

ERAC is asked to provide guidance in particular on the following questions:

- a) **Do you agree with the conclusions and recommendations as the basis for the elaboration of a broadly agreed new ERA narrative?**
- b) **In which way the concept of “lighthouses” should be pursued in the context of implementation of the new ERA priorities?**

1. Background, Conclusions and Recommendations

1.1 Background

1. The European Research Area (ERA) is about to celebrate 20 years of its implementation. It was launched in 2000 based on the idea that Europe needed a Research Area with a European dimension. In 2008, it acquired directionality with the grand challenges approach and the “Ljubljana Process”, for governance along with a revised structure.
2. The European Commission confirmed its engagement in the ERA with its ERA communication in 2012, with an ensuing renewed partnership between Member States, the Commission and research stakeholders adopted in Council Conclusions¹.
3. With the adoption of the ERA Roadmap 2015-2020 and the related national ERA action plans, the national focus and dimension of ERA was strengthened, while the European Commission focused more on a supporting and monitoring role.
4. Over the last two decades, a wide range of ERA related policy reforms and initiatives have been successfully implemented, contributing towards the overarching objective to realise the ERA.
5. The need for a new ERA paradigm is recognised in the European Leader’s agenda 2019-2024 which underlines that *‘we must step up investment in people’s skills and education, do more to foster entrepreneurship and innovation and increase research efforts, in particular by addressing the fragmentation of European research, development and innovation’*.

1.2 Conclusions

1. The policy approach of the ERA Roadmap 2015 – 2020 to focus on national policy reforms and actions strengthened the role of ERA at national level because conditions at EU level were considered to be well in place by the European Commission. So, the ERA Roadmap 2015 included fewer initiatives and action at EU level, including those based on the essential role of the EU framework programmes for research and innovation in delivering a fully-functioning ERA.
2. Progress on ERA implementation has been slowing down in recent years and there are still major disparities between countries and regions, some of which are even diverging rather than converging, as stated in the ERA Progress Report 2018.
3. Despite the multiple achievements of ERA, an effective European dimension is missing in many national, including regional, R&I policies, hindering joint multi-level action, which is an essential element of a fully functioning ERA.
4. This deficiency is leading to an insufficient co-evolution of European, national, including regional, R&I systems, that is building-up an unhealthy level of concentration of R&I excellence pockets across Europe. Moreover, it leads to an unbalanced mobility and knowledge circulation pattern that contradicts ERA policy objectives.
5. From past experience, the following key lessons can be identified:
 - a. Sustained political ownership and continuous commitment at all levels (European, national and regional) are key to achieve the ERA and foster progress towards a fully functioning European area for research and, *mutatis mutandis*, for innovation, that acknowledges the value of diversity among MS/AC and their regions and raises scientific excellence across the whole of Europe;

¹ https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/intm/134168.pdf

- b. A renewed ERA needs to contribute more to a better quality of life for European citizens, driven by a new knowledge-based and innovation-led sustainable growth model, in line with wider economic, societal and environmental policy objectives, namely the transition to a healthy planet;
 - c. There is a need for a better acknowledgement of the shared competence and responsibility of R&I policies and of the multi-level reality in Europe. A renewed ERA needs to ensure relevance, impact and visibility across Europe, and this can possibly be achieved through tangible, larger and more impactful joint actions;
 - d. A renewed ERA should be based on an integrated, coherent approach between education, research and innovation policies and instruments in order to effectively achieve its wider objectives.
 - e. Education plays a key role for the future ERA and, thus, a special emphasis should be placed on a coordinated approach with the higher education sector, in particular the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and ERASMUS+;
 - f. The design and implementation of a renewed ERA must be done in close interaction with all the relevant R&I stakeholders, as well as, whenever possible, the wider society, to provide a greater focus on outcomes and impacts to ensure that ERA delivers benefits for them all;
 - g. Existing barriers at national, including regional, and European level to a fully functioning ERA cannot be overcome by R&I policy alone. They need to be addressed by a broader set of horizontal and sectorial policies in a coherent whole-of-government approach;
 - h. There must be monitoring mechanisms in place from the start to assess progress, gaps, impacts and successes, to enable to steer the ERA and to allow it to adapt to evolving demands and needs.
6. A new ERA paradigm and narrative must build on all its many achievements since 2000, upgrade the future vision underpinning the ERA according to new forms of knowledge production and dissemination, to the changed environmental, economic and societal context and to the need for a knowledge-based and innovation-led sustainable growth model, and provide solutions to the societal challenges and to the identified shortcomings that have so far prevented the achievement of a fully-functioning ERA.

1.3 Recommendations

Building on the lessons learned and conclusions presented above, as well on the changed socio-economic environment and the need to better address future challenges in Europe and globally, the new ERA paradigm² and its underlying narrative should:

1. (OVERALL OBJECTIVE): Exploit the significant contribution that R&I plays in achieving Europe's wider policy goals and make ERA more responsive to society. Promote the adoption of ambitious knowledge policies, targeting researchers, innovators, R&I organisations and citizens, in order to broaden the outreach of ERA related initiatives while also improving communication activities.

² fully respecting subsidiarity and the scope of article 179 TFEU in a way that meets today's needs.

2. (CORE VALUES): strengthen the focus on science, research and knowledge as core values of Europe. Define a set of core principles for ERA and promote them.
3. (SCOPE ON KNOWLEDGE): aim to realise the full potential of knowledge, encompassing knowledge co-creation, dissemination and use/exploitation, as well as their interactions, based on effective open science approaches, turning this dynamic knowledge circle into the new metaphor for the future ERA.
4. (POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY): be supported by a high level, strong and sustained political ownership and continued commitment at the EU and national, including regional, levels.
5. (STRATEGY FIRST): be focussed on strategic policy objectives and a broader/bolder policy vision/scope, while relevant governance aspects should be addressed at a later stage.
6. (INCLUSIVENESS): understand, respect and tap into the diversity of the national, including regional, research and innovation systems, to achieve a more synchronised co-evolution of R&I systems, to strengthen their quality and excellence, to reduce the existing inequalities and fragmentation and to foster connectivity, collaboration and complementarities, thus maximizing the effectiveness of the ERA at all levels.
7. (RECOGNITION): become more broadly recognised in order to allow education, research and innovation to better and more visibly contribute to wider EU policy objectives, including cohesion and societal objectives.
8. (EMPOWERMENT): mobilise and empower all national, including regional, R&I systems and their actors, to create, disseminate and exploit knowledge, fostering transnational and transregional cooperation through networks with adequate critical mass, framed within EU policies and programmes, with the European Commission as a full and engaged partner.
9. (MULTILEVEL OWNERSHIP): trigger knowledge centered policies into a functional multi-level European R&I ecosystem that avoids unnecessary duplication, reduces fragmentation and ensures that policy-makers and stakeholders assume their responsibilities at all relevant levels.
10. (ENABLING): position research and innovation as an important horizontal enabler of solutions for societal needs/challenges and for improving the well-being of European citizens, as well as achieving a knowledge-based sustainable growth for improved European competitiveness on a global scale.
11. (FREE CIRCULATION): continue to improve the circulation of researchers, knowledge and technologies, while addressing the challenge of brain drain and unbalanced circulation patterns, as well as ensuring gender equality and access opportunities for all minority groups.
12. (REGULATORY MEASURES): be open for the potential need for a more complementary and coherent European approach to knowledge policy, namely potential soft law measures or possible legislative action at European level, including assessment and reform of national ERA related policies within the context of the European Semester.

The new ERA paradigm and its underlying narrative should also meet additional requirements stemming from the existing shortcomings and from a changed societal and economic environment in Europe and globally. Notably, the new ERA paradigm should:

13. (DIRECTIONALITY/RR1): underline the importance of ambitious and sustained investments in R&I, possibly applying a 'smart directionality'³ policy approach for knowledge production and

³ The role of policy as setting the direction of change beneficial to society. Mazzucato, M. (2015b). From Market Fixing to Market-Creating: A New Framework for Economic Policy (No. 2015-25). SPRU-Science and Technology Policy Research, University of Sussex.

exploitation, embracing societal goals/challenges and placing a bigger focus on the responsible use of knowledge and research results for societal purposes (policy-led Responsible R&I) in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of national, including regional, R&I systems.

14. (EHEA LINK): adopt more holistic and comprehensive policy approaches encompassing research, innovation and education (including training and skills development), in particular with respect to higher education (EHEA), where the ERASMUS+ program and its European Universities initiative, as well as EIT, could be building blocks.
15. (SUSTAINABILITY): underline that a fully functioning ERA will allow Europe to better address societal goals/challenges, in particular sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), without undermining the relevance of fundamental 'blue sky' research.
16. (EVIDENCE BASED POLICY MAKING): underline that Europe has among the highest quality of life standards in the World, which derives from the shared principle that scientific freedom and the exchange and use of knowledge are key for progress, and call for a new focus on the use of knowledge and scientific evidence in policy making, viewed as a differentiating feature of the European culture of policy making.
17. (SECTORAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION): proactively support other sectoral policies, in order to facilitate their evidence-based development and monitoring, help assessing their expected impact and contribute to their implementation through testing and experimentation.
18. (OVERCOME BARRIERS): promote a dialogue and concerted actions with horizontal policies to overcome existing barriers to a fully-functioning ERA which are beyond the strict remits of R&I policy.
19. (GLOBAL DIMENSION): ensure a greater focus on promoting and enabling collaboration with all relevant third countries to ensure that Europe's researchers and innovators can work together with the best to find solutions to global challenges.

And, finally:

20. (ERA LIGHTHOUSES*) The implementation of a new ERA paradigm could be accelerated by the development of high priority collaborative strategic policy initiatives ("ERA lighthouses") that would be highly visible, motivating and guiding for the general public within the scope of creating a single area of knowledge. These strategic initiatives should be about enhancing Framework Conditions for creating, disseminating or using knowledge in Europe, including launching initiatives of high political relevance in this context. The lighthouses should be developed in a co-design manner and be implemented in a way that allows for larger impacts than earlier ERA-initiatives have achieved.

* Recommendation 20 is not consensual among participants in this Ad-Hoc WG. Guidance from ERAC is sought on this issue.