

Note on the role of the European Commission in the ERA-related Groups

The European Research Area (ERA) was initially launched by the publication of the Commission Communication ‘Towards a European Research Area in 2000’. More recently, the Lisbon Treaty mentions explicitly its achievement as an objective in the research chapter¹. It follows that the ERA is a key priority for the Commission.

Accordingly, the Commission has been and currently is actively involved in the achievement of the ERA. The Commission is a member of all the ERA-related Groups since their set-up, providing regularly, in different roles (see attached table), input on the content of the discussions.

There are seven ERA-related Groups, currently:

- the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) and its two dedicated configurations: the High-Level Group on Joint Programming (GPC), and the Strategic Forum for International Science and Technology Co-operation (SFIC);
- the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure (ESFRI);
- three Standing Working Groups respectively on: Gender in Research and Innovation (SWG GRI), on Human Resources and Mobility (SWG HRM), and on Open Science and Innovation (SWG OSI).

The Commission is committed to continuing to pursue pro-active collaboration in the future with all the ERA-related groups and to provide input to their work. However, it should be noted that with the next review in 2021, the ERA Advisory structure may evolve.

It should be noted that the achievement of the ERA is mentioned prominently in the mission letter of Commissioner-designate Gabriel, which guarantees that it will remain high on the policy agenda of the next Commission². Education, research and innovation will be key to our competitiveness and our ability to lead in the transition to a climate-neutral economy and new digital age. Our world-leading science, research and innovation capacity can help us find European solutions to the most pressing global issues.

The Commission will work with Member States to build a true European Research Area in which we pull together all national and European efforts, and ensure that research, policy and economic priorities go hand in hand.

¹ “The Union shall have the objective of strengthening its scientific and technological bases by achieving a European research area in which researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely, and encouraging it to become more competitive, including in its industry, while promoting all the research activities deemed necessary by virtue of other Chapters of the Treaties.”

² “I want you to work with Member States to build a true European Research Area in which we pull together all national and European efforts.”

Extent of the cross-fertilisation between expert advisory groups of the Commission and the ERA-related Groups

ERAC

In its policy making the Commission draws on the advice of different groups and stakeholders.

ESFRI

The cross-fertilisation between expert advisory groups of the Commission and ESFRI is significant and adequate. This is particularly relevant for two topics: the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) and the effective implementation of European Research Infrastructures. As regards the EOSC, ESFRI Chair is member of the EOSC Executive Board and ESFRI has established a dedicated, internal task force on the EOSC to foster collaboration with EOSC bodies, as stipulated by Council conclusions of 29/05/2018 and 30/11/2018. As regards the implementation of European Research Infrastructures, the Commission set up a High-Level Expert Group to assess the effectiveness of Framework Programme support to European Research Infrastructures, their current state of implementation and challenges for achieving long-term sustainability. The Group is chaired by the former ESFRI Chair Giorgio Rossi (IT) and includes one current ESFRI Delegate. Interim findings of the Group were presented during the ESFRI workshop with stakeholders on 6-8 November. Final results will also be discussed with ESFRI and the Research Infrastructures community in the first half of 2020.

GPC

Partnerships are now dealt with in the context of strategic planning and the strategic coordination process.

SFIC

SFIC has a limited interaction with the Commission's advisory or expert groups, and more linkages and synergies are needed with EEAS and JRC.

SWG GRI

SWG GRI has a limited interaction with the Commission's advisory or expert groups. However, DG Research & Innovation does keep the SWG GRI posted on the activities of gender-related groups e.g. the Expert Group to update and expand Gendered Innovations/Innovations through Gender.

SWG HRM

SWG HRM have had a large participation and representation in the Working Groups on Skills and Rewards under the Open Science Policy Platform.

SWG OSI

At any meeting of the SWG OSI, the Commission is updating on the latest development in the OSPP, the National Points of Reference for Open Access, the EOSC and other initiatives involving experts and national stakeholders. This way the Group is always up to date on all Commission's initiatives in the area of Open Science and there will be less overlap. The Group might decide to prepare its own opinion on various issues but this is then done on an informed background. There are a number of members in the SWG OSI who are also part of other groups related to Open Science.

Extent of the evaluation to use JRC services more effectively for ERA activities in the ERA-related Groups

ERAC

DG Research & Innovation draws on the RIO-PSF platform provided by the JRC mainly to use country analyses and results from the Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility (e.g. Mutual Learning Exercise on R&D tax incentives, Mutual Learning Exercise on Performance-Based Funding, Specific Support to Slovenia). DG Research & Innovation also uses JRC's in-house studies and analyses (e.g., JRC Science for Policy Report on 'Research Performance Based Funding Systems; a Comparative Assessment', JRC Technical Report 'Analysis of national public research funding').

ESFRI

Neither the Commission nor ESFRI have so far analysed in detail the potential to use JRC services in support of ESFRI work. This is due to the ongoing work on the future of Research Infrastructures in Europe and the role of ESFRI, which may have a significant impact on the scope of ESFRI and its activities. Once these are defined, it will become pertinent to look into the different ways of implementing these activities, including the support of JRC. This could potentially include gathering and analysing data linked to monitoring of Research Infrastructure performance and, perhaps, also impact. It is also worth noting that JRC includes a number of Research Infrastructures that have recently been opened up to external users from the ERA.

GPC

Not applicable.

SFIC

SFIC is asking for a stronger involvement of the Joint Research Centre and the creation of an International site at the RIO page of the Policy Support Facility. A pilot platform reflecting International Cooperation between Member States and International Partners is already underway and other initiatives, e.g. repository of documents might be interesting and useful for its activities.

SWG GRI

SWG GRI has suggested a stronger involvement of JRC services in the undertaking of specific supporting studies relating to ERA activities, e.g. further exploring the apparent correlation observed between the EIGE gender equality index of countries and their innovation scoreboards. On the side of DG Research & Innovation, we have recently contacted JRC colleagues in charge of inter-service collaboration on gender equality asking for a state-of-play on JRC research relating to gender equality and should receive feedback shortly. More synergies could indeed be found with JRC in terms of specific studies supporting ERA activities, e.g. on gender and diversity/intersectionality in R&I across the ERA.

SWG HRM

JRC services could be more explored and envisaged in the future for activities that the SWG HRM will develop for: Horizon Europe Work Programme on Human Capital, and the interdisciplinary and intersectoral career of researchers at all career stages (including potential revision of Charter and Code, revamped human resources strategy for researchers, Euraxess

and Resaver pension fund). JRC colleagues have been actively involved as members of the working group on Skills.

SWG OSI

From the Commission's side we are currently assessing the possible overlaps and synergies with JRC in the area of Open Science and should be able to report back to ERAC in the first quarter of 2020.

Synoptical table of the ERA-related Groups:

ERA Group	Firstly established by	Notes	Secretariat	Commission Role	DG RTD Unit in charge
ERAC	Concil conclusions 28 May 2010		Council	co-Chair Member plus	Coordination and Interinstitutional Relations
ESFRI	Concil conclusions 26 June 2001		Commission	Member	Research & Industrial Infrastructures
GPC	Concil conclusions 3 December 2008	ERAC configuration	Council	Member	Missions & Partnerships
SFIC	Concil conclusions 3 December 2008	ERAC configuration	Council	Member	International Cooperation
SWG GRI	Concil conclusions November 1999	Formerly EC Expert Groups, now under the remit of the Council as from July 2017	Council	Member	Democracy & European Values
SWG HRM	Concil conclusions 10 December 2001		Council	Member	Academic R&I and Research Organisations
SWG OSI	Concil conclusions 30 May 2008		Council	Member	Open Science