

ERAC 1202/20

NOTE

From: ERAC Secretariat
To: ERAC delegations

Subject: Summary conclusions of the 44th ERAC plenary meeting on 17 December 2019 in Brussels

Delegations will find annexed to this Note the summary conclusions of the 44th ERAC plenary meeting on 17 December 2019 in Brussels, as adopted by written procedure on 5 March 2020.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

44th ERAC plenary meeting, 17 December 2019

Co-Chairs: Jean-Eric Paquet / Christian Naczinsky

Secretariat: General Secretariat of the Council

Present: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Ukraine (33)

Absent: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Turkey (11)

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes as set out in document [CM 4970/1/19 REV 1](#).

The ERAC co-Chairs welcomed new participants to the ERAC meeting from Germany, Ukraine and the Chair of the SFIC, as well as the new ERAC member from the Commission Anna Panagopoulou, who takes over from Kurt Vandenberghe.

2. Summary conclusions of the 43rd meeting of ERAC on 2 October 2019

The summary conclusions of the 43rd meeting of ERAC held in Helsinki on 2 October 2019, were approved by written procedure on 22 November 2019 as set out in document ERAC [1215/19](#).

3. Information from the co-Chairs and Presidency

The MS co-Chair debriefed on the **outcome of the latest ERAC Steering Board** that took place on 12 November 2019 which, among other points, included the following subjects:

– *Helpdesk for the implementation of the ERAC Action Plan 2019-2021*

The Action Plan Helpdesk will strive for simplifying procedures with a view to making the monitoring exercise for the implementation of the ERAC Action Plan less cumbersome.

The former MS co-Chair David Wilson will join the Helpdesk team to reinforce it. He will act in his personal capacity as independent consultant, commissioned by the MS co-Chair.

– *ERA-related groups*

- The ERAC Steering Board recommended that the GPC task force on inclusiveness and openness/transparency of networks should finalise its report as soon as possible.
- With a view to enhancing the visibility of outputs of ERA-related groups the ERAC Secretariat will request a light restructuring of the ERAC webpage on the Council's website. It will also be possible to publish the final public documents of ERA-related groups in the [ERA Portal of Austria](#). Furthermore, the ERA-related groups will align the approach to use Twitter, which will only be used on a personal basis.

– *Monitoring the ERA*

The ERAC Steering Board decided that the ERA groups will continue their own monitoring and that a consolidated report will be prepared by the December 2020 ERAC plenary. Ms Cecilia Cabello expressed her readiness to function again as rapporteur for this task.

– *Updated ERAC Work Programme 2019-2020*

The ERAC Steering Board finalised the updated ERAC Work Programme 2019-2020, which was subsequently adopted through an ERAC written procedure on 5 December 2019 ([1216/1/19 REV 1](#)).

The **Finnish Presidency** (Erja Heikkinen) made a presentation on the progress of the Presidency priorities (WK 14387/2019). In particular, the Finnish Presidency referred to the Joint Conference of ERAC and EU Directors-General for Higher Education that took place in Helsinki on 1 October 2019 and the pressing need to increase cooperation between the R&I and education sectors.

The COM co-Chair agreed on the paramount importance to develop synergies between both sectors, and recalled that the portfolio of the new Commissioner Gabriel contains both Education and R&I responsibilities. Moreover, and following calls by Universities associations and the Member States, the Commission has proposed concrete synergies in the Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ programmes.

The MS co-Chair recalled that the latest ERAC Steering Board meeting decided that the topic on synergies between ERA and EHEA will be discussed at the next ERAC plenary of 30-31 March 2020.

It was also outlined the useful outcome¹ of the Conference on "R&I Excellence through gender equality - New pathways and challenges", held in Helsinki on 23-24 October 2019.

The incoming **Croatian Presidency** (Ivana Pavlaković) gave an overview of the Presidency priorities for the first half of 2020, which include "Brain circulation" and "Future Jobs" (WK 14386/2019).

4. ERA and Innovation Policy

4.1 Ad-hoc Working Group on the future of the ERA: draft ERAC Opinion

Following a debate, ERAC adopted by unanimity an ERAC Opinion on the future of the ERA. The ERAC Opinion will feed into preparations of an upcoming Commission communication on the future of the ERA, expected by mid-2020.

The draft ERAC Opinion was presented by the Chair of the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group (WG) on the future of the ERA, Eduardo Maldonado (PT).

¹ <https://www.lyyti.fi/p/NEUPATHWAYS/en/outcomes>.

The draft ERAC Opinion had been finalised and approved by the ERAC Ad-hoc WG on 3 December 2019, following the conclusion of its work in accordance with its mandate (WK 1206/2019).

The draft ERAC Opinion is made up of a Final Report, a Deliverable 1 on Options for a new paradigm on the future of the ERA, and a Deliverable 2 on Future ERA Objectives and Priorities. It also included a new motto for the ERA which, after modification at the ERAC plenary, will read: "*Mobilising knowledge for a better and more sustainable future*".

The Ad-hoc WG on the future of the ERA was established on 26 April 2019 to advise ERAC on:

- options for a new narrative/paradigm on the future of the ERA, taking into account both the experiences of 20 years of ERA policies and emerging needs for policy reforms; and
- possible future ERA priorities and other relevant trends, inter alia of Horizon Europe, which may feed into a new ERA policy framework post-2020.

Following a lively debate, the draft ERAC Opinion was adopted by all delegations with a few modifications aimed at better reflecting:

- the implementation of future ERA priorities in the global context;
- the recommendation on the scope on knowledge to be based on effective open science and open innovation approaches, and
- the inclusion of the local dimension in a fully-functioning ERA.

The Commission (Anna Panagopoulou, Director 'Common Implementation Centre' and Acting Director 'R&I Outreach' at DG R&I) expressed satisfaction with the ERAC Opinion and indicated that the Commission intends to deliver a communication on the ERA by mid-2020. Through outreach events in the Member States and Associated States the Commission will engage with stakeholders, in the spirit of co-creation. The Commission also welcomed the new level of ambitions, the inclusion of novelty concepts such as inclusiveness and the contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whilst warning that this will require greater pooling and alignment of resources and investments.

The Commission (Magda De Carli, Head of Unit 'ERA & country intelligence' at DG R&I) also informed about the launch and next steps of the "ERA Tour de Capitales" exercise to collect input from stakeholders and the civil society across Europe on how they see the new ERA, as a key mean to ensure full commitment and engagement by all players. The events normally would consists of three sessions with different orientations: political, technical, and one for the wider outreach. Commission is fully engaged to high-level participation to those events as a true wide R&I and public engagement is what we aim for in the future ERA. Those countries wishing to host the event are invited to express an interest to unit 'ERA & country intelligence' at DG R&I.

4.2 Strategic debate

– *R&I Investments for sustainability and competitiveness*

ERAC exchanged views on 'R&I Investments for sustainability and competitiveness' (WK 14389/2019). The debate built on the outcome of the discussions held at the ERAC workshop of 16 December 2019 on the same subject.

The Commission (Román Arjona, Head of Unit 'R&I Strategy and Foresight' at DG R&I) made a presentation with a focus on ways to increase the directionality of national public R&I investments in support of the SDGs, and around the main elements within the national systems with the greatest potential to support the sustainability transitions, together with the necessary R&I reforms that should accompany those investments.

During the debate, the Commission referred to the joint Commission/EIB report of December 2018 on ['Innovation investment in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe: Building future prosperity and setting the ground for sustainable upward convergence'](#).

The policy conclusions of the ERAC workshop on 'R&I Investments for sustainability and competitiveness' were presented by the rapporteur, Cecilia Cabello (ES), along eight lines:

1. New policy cycles open opportunities to re-align/re-direct national R&I strategies with SDGs in support of the sustainability transitions.
2. A “whole of government” approach is required to maximise directionality across all policies (systemic approach of R&I policy).
3. There is a need to use the right policy mix, including different types of both financial and non-financial support (i.e. tax incentives, competitive funding, institutional funding).
4. To achieve directionality we need a combination of regulations, investments (Horizon Europe-Missions) and reforms (smart specializations strategies, ERA, European Semester).
5. Leveraging private sector investment is critical: for example, public funding should be used smartly to leverage business investment; increase SMEs engagement.
6. Fostering learning and policy experimentation to close knowledge gaps is critical.
7. New indicators and monitoring are needed to enrich the intelligence and evidence on the role of R&I as driver of the transitions and to address trade-offs.
8. Higher education institutions and citizens can be better mobilised to engage in addressing the sustainability challenges.

Anna Panagopoulou and Román Arjona reacted to these conclusions and highlighted the opportunity to hold a Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility activity with Member States on the “whole of government” approach and how countries are embedding sustainability in national R&I strategies. Participation of countries in PSF reviews or specific support was encouraged, following the recent example of Denmark’s review. They underlined how the new Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy (replacing the Annual Growth Survey) is becoming an instrument that integrates the UN SDGs to simulate policy reforms. Ms Panagopoulou stressed the relevance of the forthcoming European R&I Data Hub, as a tool to share interoperable regional, national and European R&I data to improve the transparency, coordination and benchmarking of policies and results. Mr Arjona pointed to the value of the Commission’s work on EU R&I Investment Agendas that aim at providing more targeted impact of public interventions and increase the pipeline of innovative solutions in Europe by mobilising new combinations of grants, loans and even equity. These can inspire national R&I investment agendas. Finally, Mr Arjona highlighted the creation of a new Expert Group (“ESIR”) chaired by Sandrine Dixson-Declève, who had a keynote at the ERAC Workshop, that will advise the Commission on how to make its R&I agenda more transformative.

– **Brain circulation**

The incoming Croatian Presidency (Marko Košiček) provided a summary of the outcome of the discussions held at ERAC workshop of 16 December on "Brain circulation - how to address negative influences and how to maximize the benefits" (WK 14394/2019).

The workshop focused on the following key areas that could greatly contribute to enable a balanced and fair brain circulation at EU level and, consequently, improve the implementation of the ERA:

- a) Collaborative networks
- b) Inclusiveness and participation
- c) Prosperity of researchers
- d) Complementarity and responsibility at national levels.

Brain circulation will be one of the key priorities in the field of R&I under the Croatian Presidency and the main item at the informal meeting of Ministers responsible for research that will take place in Zagreb on 3-4 February 2020. The outcome of the workshop will feed into preparations for this meeting.

5. Standing Information Point

The COM co-Chair recalled a note on the involvement of the Commission in the ERA-related Groups, circulated to the ERAC Delegates in advance of the meeting. He confirmed the Commission commitment to continue a pro-active collaboration in the future with all the ERA-related groups and to provide input to their work, while taking into account the evolving context.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Multiannual Financial Framework

The COM co-Chair gave an oral update on the state-of-play of the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework Following the European Council meeting of 12-13 December 2019.

Among other aspects, he referred to the confirmation by the European Council of the crucial role that R&I will play in the implementation of the new European Green Deal, as well as to the important investments in R&I that the Green Deal might require in this regard across several EU policies.

6.2 45th ERAC meeting (30-31 March 2020, Opatija, Croatia)

The ERAC Steering Board will draw up the provisional annotated agenda of the next ERAC meeting to be held in Opatija, Croatia, on 30-31 March 2020, on the basis of the Work Programme 2019-2020.