Council of the European Union
General Secretariat

WORKING PAPER

This is a paper intended for a specific community of recipients. Handling and further distribution are under the sole responsibility of community members.

WORKING DOCUMENT

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	ERAC SWG on HR & Mobility (Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility)
Subject:	ERAC SWG HRM Opinion on the Horizon Europe programme

Dear ERAC SWG HRM delegates,

Please find attached the ERAC SWG HRM Opinion on the Horizon Europe programme, as approved by written procedure.

Best regards,

ERAC SWG HRM Secretariat

The Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee

Opinion on the Horizon Europe programme

The **Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility** (SWG HRM) of European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) supports the implementation of the European Research Area (ERA) in the areas related to researchers' careers and mobility at EU and national level as well as to the attractiveness of Europe to researchers in general. In addition the SWG HRM is closely linked to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) with respect to the implementation of the Open labour market for researchers (ERA priority 3) and shared policies between ERA and EHEA are defined and encouraged[1].

The SWG HRM generally welcomes the European Commission's specific program proposal adopted for Horizon Europe[2] with special regard to measures concerning scientific excellence, researchers' mobility and favourable conditions for researchers. Nevertheless, based on our competences, we would like to comment the topics listed below:

Main points of concern:

i) Mobility of researchers

With focus on:

- human resources as the key elements both to ERA and EHEA should have favourable framework conditions and continued support from Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe
- the continuation of the schemes to support widening countries and/or moderate innovators through means to foster brain circulation across ERA by encouraging mobility of researchers, cf. Zagreb Call for Action on Brain Circulation 2020.
- the importance of facilitating the EURAXESS network's services towards researchers locating in Europe and to enhance the collaboration with EURAXESS worldwide in third countries
- the necessity to define specific goals concerning intersectoral mobility of researchers, to review funding mechanisms and assessment procedures to ensure better opportunities for cooperation between universities and industry, skills development and cross-sector mobility
- the reinforcement of the Horizon 2020 objectives on the monitoring regarding gender to enhance recruitment and mobility of researchers towards the ERA, cf. Helsinki Call for Action 2019.

ii) Promotion of international cooperation

- with focus on including a more spelled out ambition for increased international cooperation in the Horizon Europe program for human resources and mobility

---

[1] See: **WK 10870/2019 INIT** – ERAC SWG HRM on the links between ERA and EHEA, Oct. 2019

[2] See Proposal for a DECISION OF THE COUNCIL on establishing the specific programme implementing Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation

iii) Improvement of Open Science-related skills

With focus on:

- researchers' need for new skills to open-up, engage and communicate well
- the need to access adequate and flexible tools and training to learn new relevant skills including ethics and research integrity
- the need to access adequate and flexible tools and training to learn new relevant skills including science communication, ethics and research integrity
- the training on Open Science to be preferably part of researchers' professional development and the recognition of these skills
- The development of Open Science related skills for R1 and R2 researchers, either within or separate from the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions

iv) Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter & Code) and the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)

With focus on:

- the insufficient adoption of the principles of Charter & Code and how to deal with that by continuing the obligations set in H2020 within Horizon Europe without making the HRS4R procedure mandatory.
- looking at possible ways to incentivise and reinforce the adoption of the Charter & Code in a positive manner, through for instance funding mechanisms rather than additional evaluation criteria on top of the thorough monitoring mechanisms that are already in place.

Recommendations of the SWG HRM on Horizon Europe

The following is a more detailed explanation of the main points above:

1. Researchers' Mobility

The SWG HRM welcomes the continuation of the successful programmes of Horizon 2020's pillar, especially the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) under the "Excellent Science" pillar of Horizon Europe. Based on the promising results of the widening fellowship pilot that successfully merges the two principles: scientific excellence and sharing excellence, the group encourages the continuation of the scheme. As the widening fellowship scheme is a measure it should be financed from the widening budget. Although the MSCA individual fellowship programme and the widening fellowship scheme are different brands, the same rights, training possibilities and services should still be ensured to both groups.

The working group acknowledges the risk of brain drain, which is a general problem all over Europe. It should be overcome under the premises of respecting MSCA mobility rules. In certain cases – like the reintegration of researchers in Europe after a longer stay in a third country, or for Beneficiaries of Global Fellowships – the introduction of a return grant scheme within Europe would be interesting to investigate the relevance of attracting talents back to Europe, in particular for widening countries. Such a scheme would motivate excellent researchers to return to Europe or to a specific region in Europe characterised by moderate or modest performance in research and innovation. Nevertheless,

as stated in the Horizon Europe program proposal, such a scheme should only be introduced if its necessity and added value is justified by a study. If the study proved to be supportive, first a pilot scheme could be launched to test the new scheme.

The ERA Steering Group for Human Resources & Mobility (SGHRM)[3] 2016 report on Welcoming Researchers[4] provides several recommendations emphasising the role of Euraxess and recommending to upscale programs developing mobility, for instance MSCA and Erasmus+. We believe the Euraxess Network, that comprises more than 500 European Service Centres, plays a crucial role in supporting mobility by welcoming and integrating researchers and their families, and should thus continue to facilitate for researchers to locate in Europe. For the future, it should also be considered to improve coordination with Euraxess Worldwide in Third Countries and extend it to provide support on all forms of mobility. Euraxess may play a crucial role in collecting good practice and understand mobility trends.

Acknowledging that human resources are the key elements both to ERA and EHEA, the SWG HRM advocate for a common agenda with three main goals, supported by the Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, that would advance favourable framework conditions; i) Supporting highly competent and socially responsible students, researchers, academics and higher education and research institutes' (HE&RI) professionals in Europe throughout their working life, ii) Achieving effective mobility of students, researchers, academics, and HE&RI professionals within, to and from Europe, iii) Creating more common human resources standards for HE&RI in Europe, and striving for a common European identity for students, researchers, academics, and HE&RI professionals.

Intersectoral mobility

Intersectoral mobility of researchers will supply society's need for increased research competence and innovative solutions, through a flow of people and ideas. Intersectoral mobility also provides quality in higher education. In particular the support for intersectoral mobility and entrepreneurship skills at career stage R1 or R2[5] would enhance researchers' employability further in their career, strengthen the scientific knowledge in firms and increase the innovation potential across all sectors. The European Innovation Council would therefore benefit from integrating the established policies on Human Resources and Mobility. It is recognized that EURAXESS centres in several countries are more and more involved with career counselling for researchers, including for aspects related to intersectoral mobility.

According to the SGHRM 2016 report on Intersectoral Mobility[6] of Researchers, the top barriers for intersectoral mobility are cultural differences and the reciprocal lack of recognition of competencies, funding and support opportunities for the development of competences and skills, and arenas for cooperation between sectors. In the time frame of Horizon Europe, the European Commission should define specific goals concerning intersectoral mobility of researchers, review funding mechanisms and assessment procedures to ensure better opportunities for cooperation between research institutions and industry (i.e. within firms and as well as mutual knowledge between them), skills

---

[3] SGHRM was European Commission group, predecessor to the SWG HRM European Council

[4] See Euraxess policy library: ERA SGHRM 2016 report on Welcoming Researchers 2016

[5] See European Framework for Research Careers (2011) which describes four broad profiles on the researchers' career development:
R1: First Stage Researcher. R2: Recognized Researcher. R3: Established Researcher; R4: Leading Researcher

[6] See Euraxess Policy Library: ERA-SGHRM working group on the intersectoral mobility of researchers, their conditions and their competences 2016

development and mobility across all sectors and look into possible ways to enhance inter-sectoral experience before the PhD education begins.

Gender balance to enhance mobility

In order to advance the three objectives of gender balance (1) in research teams, (2) in decision-making positions and (3) the gender dimension in the research and innovation content, SWG HRM encourages the Commission to step up and reinforce these three objectives of H2020 in Horizon Europe including the monitoring on gender issues. Analysing the data, act on them and raise awareness about the differences and obstacles encountered, would contribute to counteract the implicit gender bias that challenges the meritocratic principle and plays a role in impeding women's careers. This will move the ERA towards being an attractive place for talents independently of gender and background, and contribute to the desired impact of our investments in R&D. The Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation (SWG GRI) has contributed to efforts along these lines[7].

2. Promotion of international cooperation

Research activities are in essence international. Stimulating and facilitating participation of third countries and allowing associated countries to fully participate in Horizon Europe will guarantee its attractiveness for talented researchers and innovators and ensure the desired impact. As international joint action is fundamental for effective tackling of global societal challenges, increased international cooperation should be included in the Horizon Europe programme and could be spelled out more clearly in the strategic planning especially in relation to human resources and mobility.

3. Improvement of Open Science-related skills

The SWG HRM acknowledges and supports open science and the fostering of the necessary related skills. Open science issues including research data management and science communication are intrinsically linked to career development, skills development and researcher's mobility. Open Science demands a great shift in career policy as it will have major implications not only for the individual researchers, but on different levels under the Horizon Europe time frame. The transition to open science depends on the support and alignment from the researchers as well as institutions. Their support depends largely on peers' ability to offer a fair and comprehensive evaluation of their skills, competences and achievements as well as the institutional support in favour of the transition to open science. The Open Science Career Assessment Matrix (OSCAM)[8] that recognises Open Science and the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) provides a comprehensive basis for the work on rewards and recognition for researchers practicing Open Science. Euraxess should also work on open science skills in order to support their development.

---

[7] See reports related to these issues of the SWG GRI such as: *Position paper on the future gender equality priority in the European Research Area 2020-2030* (ST 1204 2020 INIT) and Policy brief "*Mobilising to eradicate gender-based violence and sexual harassment: A new impetus for gender equality in the European Research Area*" (ST 1206 2020 INIT) and also ST 1205 2020 REV 1.

[8] The ERA SGHRM Working Group on Rewards under Open Science 2017 report on rewards and recognition for researchers practicing Open Science

Reinforced engagement with citizens and society is equally important for quality, relevance and societal impact. To meet new demands in research and society and manage the transformation of our economy and society, researchers need new skills to open up, engage and communicate in a responsible way. Ethics and research integrity are crucial for research quality. Reinforced engagement with accessible tools and training support should be flexible and tailored to individual needs skills. The ERA SGHRM 2017 report[9] on the skills and the competencies researchers need to practice Open Science gives an excellent basis for addressing this need. SWG HRM suggests that the acquisition and practice of Open Science related skills, including open access publishing, data management and open data, enabling professional research conduct and citizen science becomes a part of researchers' professional training and development. As a concrete action, Open Science skills for R1 and R2 researchers could be developed, either within or separate from the Marie Skłodowska Curie Action.

4. Charter & Code for Researchers and the HRS4R

The European Commission should, through Horizon Europe, continue to stress the importance of, and consider how to increase, the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter & Code)[10], the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)[11] and the Open, Transparent and Merit based recruitment (OTM-R)[12] principles, the Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training[13] and the EURAXESS network[14].

All these initiatives move ERA in the right direction and might also be seen as important widening tools. Indeed, the adoption of the Charter & Code and OTM-R principles is still insufficient in many member states and improvements needs to be done in terms of respect of the principles and values.

The SWG HRM has embraced the promotion of the Charter & Code within Horizon 2020 (cf. article 32 of Model Grant Agreement on grant contracts), asking institutions to do their best efforts to comply with the Charter & Code principles as well as to promote a wider diffusion on the national level. As SWG HRM acknowledges the benefits of the Charter & Code and how it is actually stimulating better human resources in research policies in Europe, the group recommends continuity in Horizon Europe regarding the obligations of grantees with the Charter & Code.

However, we believe it is not opportune to make the Charter & Code mandatory for receiving grants in Horizon Europe due to the uneven uptake of it across Europe and to the barrier it might represent for new players. The European Commission could look at possible ways to incentivise and encourage the adoption of the Charter & Code in a positive manner that might recognize the achievements of adopting institutions and of Member states that aligned their legislations to Charter & Code. An adequate monitoring system to assess progress in implementing the Charter & Code would help assessing whether member states and associated countries are providing favourable conditions for researchers in compliance with the Charter & Code and whether concrete efforts are made to spread

---

[9] The The ERA SGHRM Working Group on Education and Skills under Open Science 2017 report

[10] See https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter/european-charter

[11] See https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r

[12] See ERA SGHRM Working Group report on OTM-R

[13] See Report on Principals for Doctoral Training

[14] See https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/

the adoption of the Charter & Code. There is also a need to analyse the reasons behind the slow adoption of the HRS4R strategy and favour an efficient and smooth procedure for its, if necessary gradual implementation. Horizon Europe, inter alia through the fourth part of *Widening participation and strengthening the ERA,* could support networking initiatives and specific actions to promote – as a policy initiative – the Charter & Code as well as studies, debates, actions to monitor its adoption and increase the slenderness and simplicity of the process.

The SWG HRM is ready to continue playing an active role in the further integration of human resource management issues in the future science, technology and innovation landscape of the European Research Area. In line with its mandate, the group is committed to give policy advise during the creation, implementation and monitoring of Europe-wide programmes and initiatives like the Horizon Europe programme.