

# **Informal videoconference of the members of the GPC**

**4 December 2020 - from 15.00 to 17.00**

## **Main results**

### **1. Welcome and introduction by the Acting Chair**

The Acting Chair of the GPC, Petra Žagar, welcomed the delegates participating at a GPC meeting and recalled that, in accordance with the Council rules, online meetings are informal ones where no formal decisions can be taken.

In her introductory words, she referred to the two main pillars that will drive to a major reform of the ERA for coming years: the Commission communication entitled "A new ERA for Research and Innovation" and the Council conclusions on the New ERA.

These two texts recently adopted, will have a direct impact on the future of the GPC and the matters related to Joint Programming.

The agenda was approved without changes (CM 4963/20).

### **2. Current and future developments within ERA-related groups**

The current Acting co-Chair of the ERAC Steering Board, Fulvio Esposito -who was also former Chair of the GPC-, debriefed on the outcome of the latest meeting of the ERAC Steering Board that took place on 10 November.

He notably reported that the ERAC Steering Board committed to accompany all ERAC groups during the period for the major modernisation of the ERA, and to contribute ensuring a steady and smooth process forward.

He also provided with some personal preliminary views and ideas on the current evolving context towards the new ERA while encouraging the GPC to undertake a thorough reflection on the role of the GPC, in order to deliver a clear signal on how the group foresees its own role, integration and participation in the construction of the new ERA.

A more precise GPC contribution could help clarifying how the group positions itself in the run up to the setting up of the new ERA advisory structure due by 2021.

Among other things, he recalled a former suggestion formulated in ERAC for the GPC to assume functions related to the promotion and monitoring of actions aimed at reducing the R&I divide across the Union.

The GPC Acting Chair concluded that these personal reflections were a highly valuable 'food for thought' in the collective exercise for building a more performant ERA governance model.

### 3. Presentation of priorities by the upcoming EU Presidency

The upcoming Portuguese Presidency, represented by Carla dos Santos, gave an overview of the Presidency priorities, plans and events for the first half of 2021.

A first official presentation was made by the Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education of Portugal, Manuel Heitor, at a videoconference of EU research ministers on 27 November 2020 (WK 13942/2020).

The five overarching priorities can be codified with the following key words: resilience - social - green - digital - global.

The general PT Presidency programme is consistent with the broader 18-month Trio-Presidency programme.

The improvement of researchers' careers, mobility and working conditions will be a top priority subject for the PT Presidency.

The upcoming package of proposals on Partnerships for R&I will be among the most important legislative files to be dealt with under the PT Presidency.

The two regular Council meetings of ministers for research are planned on 26 February and 28 May 2021, and the traditional informal ministerial meeting is scheduled on 2 and 3 February 2021.

### 4. Commission communication on "A new ERA for R&I"

The Commission Director Anna Panagopoulou presented the Commission Communication "[A new ERA for Research and Innovation](#)", issued on 30 September 2020, which elaborates an ambitious and forward-looking vision for a stronger European Research Area for the future capable to address the new challenges for the R&I policy.

The presentation had a particular focus on the following investment targets proposals made by the Commission:

- to maintain the 3% EU GDP R&D investment target and update it to reflect new EU priorities
- to set a new 1.25% EU GDP public effort target to be achieved by Member States by 2030 in an EU coordinated manner, to leverage and incentivise private investments
- to voluntarily commit 5% of national public R&D funding to joint programmes and European partnerships by 2030, to redress the decrease in recent years of the current annual spending on joint programmes and transnational calls.

Furthermore, it was emphasised the importance for the Member States to wisely use the Recovery and Resilience Facility to undertake the necessary R&I structural reforms, mobilise R&I capabilities and foster the cooperation with industry and academia in R&I .

A European Pact for Research and Innovation in 2021 could be established to strengthen the political commitments on the ERA's objectives, as well as to define the areas where Member States will jointly develop priority actions.

In the context of the simplification of the ERA governance, the setting up of an ERA Forum for Transition could support the follow-up of the ERA priorities and the implementation of the Council conclusions on the new ERA, as well as help preparing the common Commission-Member States ERA policy agenda.

GPC delegates notably commented on the following aspects:

- the place of joint programming, missions and partnerships as regards the ERA objectives on prioritizing investments and reforms, as well as the position regarding the existing Joint Programming Initiatives
- future activities of the Policy Support Facility and possible new Mutual Learning Exercises to further improve national coordination of Joint Programming and how to create synergies with national programmes
- concerns about the Horizon Europe draft Work Programmes, as there is no backing seen for the support of JPis via Coordination and Support Actions.

## **5. Strategic Coordinating Process for R&I Partnerships**

The Commission, Andrei Lintu, gave an update on the state of play of the Strategic Coordinating Process for R&I Partnerships. The new generation of European Partnerships is being prepared following an impact-driven and coherent approach to use their full potential in achieving the EU priorities.

The Commission presented the new expert group in support of the strategic coordinating process for partnerships. Its core focus will be the development of the framework for biennial monitoring of EU R&I partnerships. A first report is foreseen by 2021.

He also explained that, after the adoption of the Horizon Europe programme, the Transitional Forum for Partnership will evolve towards a Partnership Knowledge Hub where there will be room for every stakeholder of the partnership landscape.

## **6. Impact of Joint Programming at national level**

The GPC Acting Chair recalled the plenary meeting of 30 September, where a number of delegations expressed interest on having access to the package of raw data used for the survey on Impact of Joint Programming at national level, so that delegations could undertake their own analysis and formulate their own conclusions on a voluntary basis, instead of having a dedicated GPC task force.

These data were circulated to delegations by the GPC Secretariat on 23 October.

On that day, the Acting Chair also informed that ERA-LEARN had accepted to take over the work for finalising the report on Impact of JP at national level to secure the findings for future discussions on Partnerships and on the new ERA.

Therefore, as agreed, this work is to be done by ERA-LEARN with the support by a small advisory group of GPC members, including delegates from the AT delegation and FI delegation together with the GPC Acting Chair.

ERA-LEARN plans to start the work in February 2021.

## **7. GPC Work Programme 2021-2022**

The GPC Rules of Procedure stipulates that "the group shall have a 24 months rolling Work Programme that has to be adopted by the group".

The GPC Mandate stipulates that the "the Work Programme shall be discussed within the ERAC Steering Board and a report of these discussions presented to ERAC before the adoption of the work programmes by the group".

On this basis, the GPC exchanged views on the possible concrete topics that could be part of the GPC Work Programme for 2021, including on those topics that had been provided by a few delegations in written form prior to the meeting.

A document with the GPC draft Work Programme 2021-2022 will be circulated to the GPC delegations with a view to its presentation to the next ERAC Steering Board meeting planned on 5 February 2021, and subsequently approval by the GPC.

The discussion mainly focused on aspects related to the preservation vs. abolition of the group, and notably on whether there will be suitable specific tasks for the GPC within the new ERA priorities. Some delegates supported the continuation of the work under condition that it provides with a real added value for the new ERA structure.

## **8. Any other business**

### *- Position of GPC Acting Chair*

Given the impossibility of having a physical vote for the organisation of elections for the post of GPC Chair due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and taking into account the uncertainties surrounding the continuation of the GPC in its current format due to the upcoming reform of the ERA advisory structure, a significant number of GPC delegates requested that the current Acting GPC Chair, Petra Žagar (SI), continues assuming this role for the time being.

The Acting Chair thanked the GPC delegations for their trust and accepted to continue acting as GPC Chair until there is a more clarity on the ERA advisory structure process as regards the GPC.

### *- Next GPC meeting*

The next meeting of the GPC is tentatively set to take place 23 March 2021.

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