

Informal videoconference of the members of the GPC

23 March 2021

Main results

1. Welcome and introduction by the Acting Chair

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

The agenda was approved without changes (CM 1948/21).

2. Presentation of priorities by the EU Presidency

The Portuguese Presidency, represented by Carla dos Santos, reported on the progress made of the Presidency priorities in R&I, including the following issues:

- The Council adoption of its first reading position on Horizon Europe on 16 March.
- The outcome of the "Launch of Horizon Europe Event" and the informal meeting of research ministers broadcast from Lisbon on 2 and 3 February that will feed notably into ongoing discussions on draft Council conclusions aimed at improving researchers' careers.
- The outcome of the meeting of research ministers on 26 February, where it was discussed the Recovery Plans in the context of the European Research Area.
- The provisional Council-Parliament political agreement on the two EIT files on 28 January.
- The ongoing technical examination on the Partnerships package following the Commission presentation of the package on 21 February.

The next Slovene Presidency, represented by Peter Volasko, presented the broad priorities, plans and events in R&I during the second half of 2021 (doc. WK 4114/2021). The design of the governance for the new ERA will be a top priority, which will directly affect the future of the GPC in its current format. In line with the current Trio-Presidency programme, other priorities will include: gender equality, green hydrogen, researcher's careers, cancer research, citizens engagement in science and international cooperation in R&I. The informal meeting of research ministers is scheduled on 19 July and the two formal Competitiveness Council meetings on research on 28 September and 26 November.

The upcoming French Presidency, represented by Anne-Sophie Gallou, anticipated some of the main priorities and key themes to be considered in the first half of 2022, such as: synergies between the European Research and Education Areas; synergies between different funding

instruments for R&I activities and projects; synergies with European Universities Alliances; breakthrough innovation; researchers mobility and diplomas and international cooperation in R&I (with possible organisation of a flagship conference in Marseille on this subject).

3. Impact of Joint Programming at national level

The GPC heard a presentation by ERA-LEARN (Effie Amanatidou) on the impact of JPP and JPIs at national level (doc. WK 4115/2021). At the GPC plenary meeting of 30 September 2020, the group was informed that ERA-LEARN had accepted to take over the work for finalising the report on Impact of Joint Programming at national level in order to secure the findings of the previous work.

The report, which will be an ERA-LEARN/GPC joint publication, is currently under preparation by ERA-LEARN with the support of a small advisory group from GPC members made up of representatives from the AT and FI delegations together with the GPC Acting Chair.

Some delegations requested the integration of relevant work carried out by the GPC in the past related to the JPIs.

The report is expected to be highly valuable in the context of the future Partnerships as it will show the challenges that the Member States/Associated Countries are facing in implementation of the JPIs at national/regional level and the benefits of joining such initiatives. New partnerships will certainly face similar challenges that have already been addressed within the JPIs and the report could be very useful for steering their future.

Delegates heard about initial expectations and motivation of countries to participate to the JPP and JPIs, fulfilment of their expectations, barriers to participation and about positive and negative impacts on national level. Among the positive impacts, cooperation with other countries outside Europe was a strong one, as was creating new contacts and interaction with European countries and more trans-national cooperation among funding agencies and ministries. In some cases even high structural was reported.

A snapshot of the situation was also displayed regarding the national coordination systems for JPP, monitoring and evaluation systems and the influence of the JPIs SRIA's on national priorities or strategies.

4. Debrief on recent activities of ERAC and of the "ERA Forum for Transition" and on the status of the GPC

The Acting Chair debriefed the GPC on the latest ERAC plenary that took place on 16 March and highlighted the following aspects:

- ERAC held a strategic debate on Synergies between Horizon Europe, Cohesion Policy and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). Horizon Europe sets out the regulatory framework for synergies to work in practice, however this is a necessary but not sufficient condition to maximise the synergies potential across funding schemes. The Commission asked for feedback on the difficulties that Member States are incurring in view of the preparation of the operational programmes. Most Member States commented on the need to have practical guidelines for implementation, including regarding the possibilities to use funds from the RRF for partnerships.

- The Commission gave a presentation on new toolbox for the Policy Support Facility for the period 2021-2027 under Horizon Europe. The Commission invited Member States interested in the Policy Support Facility to organise bilateral meetings.
- ERAC took note of the state of play on the "Study to evaluate the ERA policy framework/ERA monitoring mechanism". This study, which will notably provide recommendations on indicators with a view to developing the future ERA Scoreboard, is expected to be concluded in July.
- The Commission provided information on the R&I consultation on the future of universities, as well as on new initiatives in the field of Higher Education. Both will feed into the process of the Higher Education Transformation Agenda.
- The Rapporteur of the ERAC workshop on "Gender Equality in the ERA" that took place on 15 March, Peter Volasko (SI), provided feedback on the outcome of the workshop. This will be a top priority topic under the next Slovene Presidency.

Furthermore, the Acting Chair also informed on the ongoing work within the Expert Group on the 'ERA Forum for Transition' that was set up in the beginning of the year. The new Expert Group will notably provide advice on proposals for a future ERA governance framework. In this respect, the Acting Chair anticipated that the place of the activities currently assigned to the GPC will have to evolve and will be rearranged within the future ERA framework.

Finally, the GPC took note of information by the Council Secretariat on the practical implications for the GPC stemming from the decision taken by Coreper on 3 February 2021 to remove GPC and SFIC from the list of Council preparatory bodies. This decision, which will be applicable as from 1 July 2021, entails that the GPC working conditions will be in line to those currently in force for the three existing ERAC Standing Working Groups.

5. GPC Work Programme 2021-2022

Following the exchange views at the GPC plenary on 4 December 2020 on possible concrete topics that could be part of the GPC Work Programme for 2021-2022 as well as the written consultations within the GPC in the second half of January 2021, and taking into account the absence of comments on the draft GPC Work Programme by the ERAC Steering Board before the deadline of 12 March, the GPC agreed on the final text of the GPC Work Programme 2021-2022.

The new GPC Work Programme will be circulated to the GPC delegations¹ and will be forwarded to ERAC for information.

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", and the GPC Mandate stipulates that "the Work Programme shall be discussed within the ERAC Steering Board".

¹ The GPC Work Programme was published on 24 March:
<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-1301-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

6. Any other business

- Partnerships

At the request of delegations, the Commission explained that, after the adoption of the Horizon Europe programme, the Transitional Forum for Partnerships will evolve towards a Partnership Knowledge Hub where discussions about strategic issues related to Partnerships will take place with all relevant stakeholders of the partnership landscape, including the Commission itself, the Member States, designated third countries in the process of association to the Horizon Europe programme and Partnership representatives. After the adoption of the Horizon Europe Regulation, the nomination process for delegates to participate in the Partnership Knowledge Hub – where strategic coordinating process for partnerships will be done – will take place via Permanent Representation offices.

- GPC contribution to the ERAC Annual Report 2020

The Acting Chair announced that the traditional draft GPC contribution to the ERAC Annual Report 2020 will be circulated to the members of the group without delay with a view to collecting their comments, with a deadline for comments on April 6.

- Next GPC meeting

The next meeting of the GPC is scheduled on Tuesday 25 May 2021.
