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WORKING DOCUMENT

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: ERAC (European Research Area and Innovation Committee)

Subject: ERAC's role in the renewed ERA Governance

Delegations will find attached document on the above mentioned subject with the view to the meeting of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) on 12-13 April 2022.

ERAC's role in the renewed ERA Governance

During the ERAC meeting of 13 December 2021, a strategic debate took place regarding the Implementation of the 1st ERA Policy Agenda and the future role and work of ERAC.

At its first meeting under the new mandate, it is therefore important to reflect upon the unique role of ERAC. This short note provides elements for reflection on two points: ERAC's new task, and the working methods in order for the Committee to fully carry out its mandate.

1. ERAC's tasks

According to the ERAC mandate, the committee is entrusted with four basic tasks, which will rely on the active involvement of ERAC members:

- a) *to advise on strategic policy orientation and future trends that require the refinement of Union and national, including regional, R&I policies, including on the current and the next Union R&I Framework Programme and other relevant R&I-driven Union initiatives;*

At the outset, it will be important to define the **work programme for ERAC** in which the areas that require strategic direction should be identified for the first 18 months. The work programme should be based on input from all ERAC delegates, in particular the Presidency Trios. The outcome should be a prioritised list of policy areas that ERAC intends to tackle in the first 18 months. Following a discussion in the ERAC Plenary meeting, the work programme would be drawn up by the ERAC secretariat and adopted by written procedure.

- b) *to initiate updates of the ERA policy agenda, by providing early strategic advice informed, among other things, by consideration of the progress made in ongoing ERA actions;*

ERAC initiates updates of the ERA Policy Agenda by providing early strategic advice, informed also by consideration of the progress made in the ongoing ERA Actions. The first 18-month **report on the implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda** will be provided in mid-2023, following which the subsequent ERAC meeting should focus on the preparation of the early strategic advice on the future Policy Agenda.

- c) *to reflect and provide advice on new policy demands which fulfil the ERA policy agenda criteria, throughout the implementation of the ERA policy agenda;*

ERAC is also to reflect and provide advice on **new policy demands**, which fulfil the ERA Policy Agenda criteria, throughout its implementation. This means assessing whether possible candidate actions should be added to the ongoing Policy Agenda.

When ERAC identifies new policy demands, this should be followed by discussions in the ERA Forum, in order to discuss further such initiatives, which can subsequently be transmitted by the Commission to the Council.

d) *to interact with governance and coordination structures at a similar level in other relevant policy areas, such as higher education and industry.*

This is an important aspect of ensuring **synergies with other policies** and their implementation. From a practical point of view, a first step could be to provide a limited overview of policy areas that are considered a priority for R&I. Individual ERAC members who express an interest in doing so, could be entrusted to interact with these policy areas on behalf of ERAC, for example by following policy processes, reporting relevant developments and initiatives to the committee, or even organising joint meetings.

2. Working methods

The following suggestions aim to achieve streamlined working methods that allow ERAC to carry out its strategic and guiding role for the research and innovation policy in Europe.

- *Agendas*

The agendas of meetings should reflect the topical concerns of national DGs and contain a limited number of topics, allowing for an in-depth discussion on the basis of a policy brief prepared by the ERAC Steering Board.

- *The organisation of the committee meetings*

In principle, ERAC should only hold strategic discussions on the basis of a short policy brief, prepared by the Steering Board, setting the scene and suggesting questions for discussion. It can also be envisaged to organise discussions in breakout sessions, depending on the topics. Conclusions and follow-up will be determined by the ERAC co-chairs according to the guidance provided by the discussion.

A discussion point in the ERAC meeting could typically be organised like this:

- Introduction by a keynote speaker – preferably from a member state, Commission, stakeholder or expert.
- Discussion in plenary or breakout groups
- Conclusions drawn by the co-chairs, followed by a written feedback prepared by the secretariat
- Follow-up, which could consist in drafting an ERAC opinion, or another course of action

- *The role of the ERAC Steering Board*

As the ERAC plenary will meet only twice a year, the ERAC steering board will play a more important role as a preparatory body.

The steering board will meet at least once between ERAC plenary meetings to prepare them and address any pending issues. The meeting should be chaired by the two co-chairs at DG level.

The ERAC steering board is now restricted to the two Presidency trios, and will select and prepare topics for the agendas for the ERA plenary (choice of strategic issues to be discussed) and also ensure a consistent follow-up to the guidance provided (at nationally and European level), supported, as necessary, but ad hoc task forces.

- Do members agree with the proposed approach to the working methods for ERAC under its new mandate?
- How can discussions be organised in order to ensure that ERAC holds relevant discussions and delivers strategic advice?