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WORKING DOCUMENT

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

Subject: Post Meeting Flash

**EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA AND
INNOVATION COMMITTEE
(ERAC)**

ERAC co-Chairs

ERAC meeting of 12 and 13 April 2022 (agenda CM 2270/1/21)

Post-meeting flash

The meeting of ERAC on 12 and 13 April 2022 took place in Strasbourg, France, and the agenda included a strategic debate on the “ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024”.

The audio-visual presentations showed at the meeting can be found in documents WK 5889/2022 and WK 5891/2022.

The outcome of the meeting and the next steps can be summarised as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda

The ERAC co-Chairs opened the session and welcomed the ERAC members and the representatives of the Associated Countries that attended the meeting. On behalf of the Committee, the ERAC co-Chairs thanked the French Presidency for hosting the meeting.

2. Updates from the co-Chairs and the current and upcoming Presidencies

- The COM co-Chair, Jean-Eric Paquet, provided an update on the **follow-up measures in R&I in the context of the invasion of Ukraine** after the informal ERAC extraordinary meetings of 4 and 17 March 2022.

As regards solidarity with Ukrainian researchers, the Commission is applying a flexible approach to ongoing projects of the Horizon Europe Programme involving Ukrainian participants.

- The ERA4Ukraine portal, integrated in the Euraxess network, was launched on 22 March as a one-stop-shop for information in support of Ukrainian researchers.
- On 30 March, a message was sent to all ongoing Horizon Europe beneficiaries encouraging them to give special consideration to researchers from Ukraine when they apply for projects’ vacancies.
- The European Research Council launched an initiative to publicise job opportunities linked to its ongoing grants with 501 vacancies already in offer.
- Researchers affiliated to Ukrainian entities are eligible to receive funding under the COST Programme. Researchers can apply for short-term research stays, virtual networking tools and join action working groups.
- The Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022 will include:
 - A provision encouraging participants to offer opportunities to researchers and innovators previously active in Ukraine or unable to return to Ukraine due to Russia’s invasion.

- a dedicated fellowship call to displaced Ukrainian researchers under the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) through a grant to the ongoing InspirEurope project, coordinated by the Scholars at Risk Europe consortium. The call will be open to universities, research centres and enterprises from all over Europe.
 - Around 900 Ukrainian researchers will be able to benefit from an expanded budget for the ‘scientists help scientists’ initiative within the ‘Health’ cluster.
- A number of additional support measures will be also considered under the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024.

As regards the package of sanctions against Russia, no new contracts will be concluded with Russian organisations under EU R&I programmes and grants under preparation were suspended. The measures are however not targeted towards natural persons from Russia or Belarus (e.g. individual fellowships or the involvement in R&I projects of researchers from those countries).

The fifth package of economic and individual sanctions against Russia adopted by the Council on 8 April provided the basis to proceed with the termination of the participation of all Russian public bodies and related entities in ongoing projects of Horizon 2020, Euratom and the Research Fund for Coal and Steel.

The Commission offered guidance to the Member States on the application of the sanctions, and encouraged them to continue contributing with further ideas on how best provide assistance to Ukrainian researchers and students. Finally, some Associated Countries requested a closer cooperation with Member States with a view to reinforcing the impact of the measures taken in the context of the Russian invasion.

- The **French Presidency** presented the achievements and the progress made at the mid-term of its Presidency mandate, which include the preparation of three sets of Council conclusions on:
 - *Research assessment and implementation of open science policies*, which take into account the ‘Paris call on research assessment’ published on the occasion of the Open Science European Conference in February 2022¹;
 - *Principles and values for international cooperation in research and innovation*, which take into account the common principles and values to be promoted as a follow up to the Marseille Ministerial Conference of 8 March 2022 on a Global Approach to Research, Innovation and Higher Education², and
 - *European Missions*, which take into account the outcome of the Conference on Civic Engagement in EU Missions, held on 21 March 2022³.

¹ [Paris Call – OSEC 2022](#)

² [Ministerial Conference on a Comprehensive Approach to Research, Innovation and Higher Education](#)

³ [Les cinq Missions de l’UE | Horizon-europe.gouv.fr](#)

- **The incoming Czech Presidency** updated on the main priorities and events planned for the second half of 2022. They will include Research Infrastructures (with the presentation for adoption of Council conclusions at the December Competitiveness Council) and synergies between the European Structural Funds on the one hand, and the EU Framework Programmes for R&I on the other hand, and the European- and national-based R&D funding to maximize the cooperation in R&I (conference on 7-8 July 2022 in Prague).

An ERAC meeting is scheduled on 13 and 14 September 2022 in Prague (an informal dinner is planned on 12 September).

- During the first semester of 2023, the **future Swedish Presidency** will focus, among other issues and pending finalisation of the planning process, on how to bolster synergies and maximize the use of Research Infrastructures, including collaboration at international level and with industry, as well as on the implementation of open science policies.

An ERAC meeting is tentatively foreseen between 20 and 22 June 2023 in Lund.

3. Strategic debate: “ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024”

ERAC held a strategic debate on the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 with a view to delivering an ERAC Opinion on the subject⁴, as requested by the Council in its conclusions on the Future governance of the ERA of 26 November 2021.

The debate took place based on a discussion document with questions prepared by the ERAC Steering Board (doc. WK 4234/2022) and a presentation by the ERA Forum co-Chairs on the outcome of the first round of discussions about the ERA actions carried out within the ERA Forum.

ERAC delegations supported a proposal aimed at the co-creation by the Commission and the ERA Forum of templates to facilitate Member States’ expression of their commitment to specific ERA actions.

The Commission will share these templates with ERAC members, representatives of associated countries and the stakeholders’ representatives in the ERA Forum, who are to express their voluntary commitment to specific ERA actions before July 2022.

The ERA Forum should take stock of the expression of commitment to ERA actions in July 2022, ascertaining in particular which actions secured the commitment of at least half of the Member States, in accordance with the Council conclusions on the future governance of the ERA.

ERAC will provide guidance regarding the ERA actions to be implemented at its meeting in September 2022 and the ERA Forum co-Chairs will be invited to report to ERAC.

The template for Member States, and where applicable associated countries and stakeholders, to express their commitment to the actions in the ERA Policy Agenda, should be flexible enough to be adapted to the specific characteristics of each action.

⁴ A first *Draft ERAC Opinion on the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024*, was forwarded to ERAC delegations, on behalf of the ERAC Steering Board, following the discussion held at the ERAC meeting on 12 April with a view to collecting feedback from delegations by the end of April 2022.

The majority of delegations also requested the possibility for Member States to revise their commitments to ERA actions in the course of designing and implementing the respective national measures in order to be able to adapt to the eventual evolution of national strategies in R&I. In this regard, delegations supported the idea of “hopping on”, that is, to join ongoing ERA actions at a later stage.

Finally, many delegations drew attention to the need of avoiding excessive administrative burden.

4. Debate on the reform of the research assessment systems

ERAC held a debate aimed at making progress towards the reform of the assessment system for research, researchers and institutions to improve their quality, performance and impact (Action 3 of the ERA Policy Agenda).

This debate, which was a follow-up to a previous debate on this subject held by ERAC at its meeting on 30 September 2021, was structured by means of a discussion document with questions (doc. WK 4231/2022).

It was preceded by a presentation from the Commission on the progress made so far and the planned next steps, with a focus on the establishment and development of a “stakeholder-owned coalition” (alliance of funders, research performing organisations, including universities, and their associations, national/regional assessment authorities and agencies, as well as learned societies, willing to speed up the reform of the current research assessment system).

Many delegations that took the floor explained the measures taken at national level to improve their domestic systems for evaluation of researchers and the barriers that they are facing towards the transition of their national systems.

ERAC delegates supported the approach and the process undertaken by the Commission, which includes a fundamental change of culture as compared with the existing evaluation systems.

Some delegations requested to put particular emphasis in aspects related to: the interdisciplinary dimension, open science, new metrics and indicators,

A number of delegations requested more time mainly to be able to finalise consultations with national stakeholders.

In addition, ERAC delegates elaborated on the related Draft Agreement on “Reforming Research Assessment” (doc. WK 4231/2022 ADD1), which was drawn up by the Commission building mainly on the [Scoping Report](#) on the reform of the research assessment system that was published on 29 November 2021. Up to date almost 300 organisations have expressed interest to be part of this process. ERAC delegates provided suggestions to improve the content of future versions of the text and encouraged the Commission to take the process forward.

5. Debate on “Foreign interference”

The Commission recalled the [Staff Working Document on tackling R&I foreign interference](#) that was published on 18 January 2022 and aims to support R&I institutions to protect their fundamental values by safeguarding academic freedom, integrity and institutional autonomy, and their key research findings and intellectual assets.

The document, which is intended as a toolkit of measures to help develop a comprehensive strategy, covers four key areas (values, security, partnerships and governance) and is structured in line with the phases of the crisis management cycle: 1) addressing awareness/preparedness, 2) prevention, 3) response, and 4) recovery.

The Commission presentation focused on the following possible future actions for improving access to information and facilitating identification and assessment of opportunities and risks of international cooperation in R&I:

- A one-stop shop in the form of a digital portal accessible to everyone
- Organisation of Mutual Learning Exercises (MLE)
- Open-source intelligence
- Establishment of Foreign Interference Committees at institutional level

In the ensuing debate (doc. WK 4235/2022), delegations pointed out that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has clearly revealed the importance of being prepared to respond quickly and effectively to foreign interference.

ERAC members stressed the shared benefits of strengthening cooperation at EU level in this field, welcomed the toolkit as a valuable instrument for Member States and stakeholders, and agreed to launch a MLE on foreign interference. With regard to the establishment of Foreign Interference Committees delegates pointed at the institutional autonomy and limiting of administrative burden. The latter could be reduced by inter-institutional or national/regional support structures.

Furthermore, ERAC members broadly supported:

- the design and implementation of a digital one-stop-shop that could help avoid duplication of efforts and facilitate the identification of information gaps
- the consideration of creating an Open-source intelligence to produce actionable intelligence to contribute to the identification and assessment of opportunities and risks. This tool should enable R&I institutions to easily access relevant information about foreign institutions or individuals, assisting them in their due diligence processes and in identifying opportunities
- exploring the establishment of a light networking structure on foreign interference with a view to exchanging with cross-border committees and improve coordination at EU level

6. The role of ERAC in the renewed ERA governance

The ERAC members exchanged views on the role of ERAC in the renewed ERA governance (doc. WK 4236/2022) and provided orientations and ideas with a view to efficiently carry out its mandate, including on:

- the need to target clear follow-ups, purposes on impact and outcomes resulting from the ERAC deliberations
- providing a more political input and strategic advice while avoiding technical discussions

- having fewer topics for discussion in order to go deeper into the analysis of the selected ones
- the need for closer alignment with the programmes/priorities of Trio-Presidencies
- explore more innovative formats for meetings, like in the form of “workshops”, breakout groups or joint meetings
- to appoint “ERAC ambassadors” for transversal and cross-sectorial issues

ERAC also discussed its Draft ERAC Work Programme 2022-2023 (doc. WK 4237/22) with a view to its finalization and approval by written procedure. The Committee accepted a proposal to include the topic “Innovation policy” in the Work Programme.

7. Draft ERAC Procedural Arrangements

ERAC adopted without discussion its Procedural Arrangements (doc. 8227/22).

Pursuant to Article 14 of the ERAC mandate⁵, the Committee is to adopt its own Procedural Arrangements in accordance with the Council’s Rules of Procedure.

8. Any Other Business

- The Commission provided information on the **Policy Support Facility exercise on a “Whole-of-government approach for a transformative R&I policy”** (doc. WK 4612/22), and informed that three other mutual learning exercises will be launched (on EU mission implementation, foreign interference and inter-sectoral mobility of researchers).
- The **next ERAC meeting is scheduled on 13 and 14 September 2022** (two half-days) in Prague, Czech Republic (an informal dinner is planned on 12 September).

⁵ Council Decision (EU) 2021/2241 of 13 December 2021 on the composition and the mandate of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (OJ L 450/143 of 16.12.2021).