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WORKING DOCUMENT

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

Subject: Follow-up on the commitments of Member States to actions in the ERA Policy
Agenda

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 13-14 September 2022.

Agenda point for the ERAC Plenary:

“Follow-up on the commitments of Member States to actions in the ERA Policy Agenda”

Why this topic in ERAC?

In April, the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) held a strategic debate on the ERA Policy Agenda in order to provide guidance to Member States on how to express national commitments to an ERA action, as laid out in paragraphs 10 and 12 of the Council conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area, adopted on 26 November 2021.

Based on the ERAC opinion subsequently adopted¹, Member States have been invited to fill in templates by the end of June in order to express their commitment to participate in ERA Policy Agenda actions. As the Council requested, ERA actions need to *“secure the commitment of at least half of the Member States representing a critical mass in order to ensure a broad political support and to provide opportunities beyond the participating States to benefit all Member States”*. Associated countries and stakeholders have also been invited to express their interest.

What guidance would be needed?

At the ERA Forum meeting on 13 July the commitments of Member States to the ERA Policy Agenda actions, as expressed in the templates, were examined and discussed with Member States, associated countries and stakeholders. Based on this discussion, the Commission will submit its analysis to ERAC members.

Depending on the outcome of the commitment exercise, several issues may arise, on which guidance from ERAC would be necessary:

1. Actions that have received sufficient commitment

The Commission will provide an analysis of the commitments expressed by the Member States. It would be important for ERAC to provide its views on:

- Whether it considers that the implementation of certain actions should be treated by the ERA Forum as a matter of priority.
- Whether it shares the Commission’s analysis and interpretation as to which actions have received a sufficient expression of commitment from the Member States.

2. Actions not passing the threshold

¹ Council doc. 9735/22.

The ERAC opinion states that if *“an ERA Action fails to achieve support from at least half of the EU member states, this does not impede activities at national or EU level”*.

However, some questions remain.

First, why those actions did not have the support of half of the Member States, despite having been agreed by the Council.

This also leads to the question as to what the next steps should be.

Should the action be put on hold and revisited at a later stage (eg. at an ERAC plenary meeting in 2023) in order to ascertain whether sufficient commitment from Member States has in the meantime been gathered?

Or should it rather simply be left out of the ERA governance altogether, and eventually be kept in reserve for the discussions on the next ERA Policy Agenda of 2025-27?

3. “Hop on/Hop off”

The ERAC opinion states that *“It will also be possible for Member States to revise their commitments to ERA actions in the course of designing and implementing the respective national measures. Such changes should be communicated to the Commission and the other Member States via the ERA Forum.”*

In principle, hopping on or off an action should be expected during the implementation of an action, and should not offer much difficulty.

However, the situation could arise when an action, which had received enough support, is no longer supported by at least half the member states due to one or more Member States hopping off. Should this action then be treated as not having passed the threshold (see point 2 above)?

Follow-up

After the discussion in the plenary, ERAC could provide its guidance through the swift adoption of an ERAC opinion.