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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	ERAC Opinion on the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024

Delegations will find in the Annex to this note the ERAC Opinion on the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024, as adopted by the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) by written procedure on 31 May 2022.

ERAC Opinion on the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024

1. Introduction

On 26 November 2021, the Council adopted Conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area (hereinafter called “the Conclusions”), including a common ERA Policy Agenda for 2022-2024, comprising twenty actions.

The Council considered that actions should “*secure the commitment of at least half of Union 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*” (paragraph 10 of the Conclusions).

In paragraph 12 of the Conclusions, the Council “*invites ERAC to provide its views on the ERA Policy Agenda by April 2022, in order to facilitate Member States and where applicable associated countries to identify within the first semester 2022 the ERA actions in which they wish to participate*”.

2. Process and timing

At the beginning of the year, the Commission provided explanatory documents for the actions in the ERA Policy Agenda. Between February and April, discussions took place in the ERA Forum on each of the ERA actions. They are living documents and will be updated as the policy design for the ERA actions progresses.

The Commission should co-create with the ERA Forum, starting before the end of April 2022, individual templates for each action to facilitate Member States’ expression of their commitment to specific ERA actions. The templates will set out the core activities that may be implemented for each action.

The Commission should then share these templates with ERAC members, representatives of associated countries and the stakeholders’ representatives in the ERA Forum, who are to express their commitment to specific ERA actions “*within the first semester 2022*” (paragraph 12 of the Conclusions).

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

3. Qualitative commitment

It must be emphasized that, as for the entire policy coordination process defined by the Pact for R&I, the participation of Member States in the implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda is of voluntary nature. Every Member State can decide not to participate and to act solely at national or regional level, following the principle of subsidiarity. Furthermore, the principle of coordination, coherence and commitment, as defined in the Pact for R&I should be applied throughout the ERA policy cycle, notably when designing, implementing and monitoring the ERA Actions.

Therefore, in order to be effective, Member States are encouraged to thoroughly assess the ERA actions in the ERA Policy Agenda with a view to taking a decision regarding the ERA actions that they wish to join. Joining an ERA action requires a qualitative commitment from Member States. This means that, for each action a Member State decides to join, the respective Member State should indicate the relevant measures at national, regional or local level. These may be existing or envisaged activities. Depending on the type of action, Member States can also indicate to what extent they wish to participate and /or dedicate resources to the activities at European level.

Committing to join an ERA action does not necessarily require a full planning of the measures at national level or an indication of the amount of resources planned to be invested. However, it is recommended to outline the envisaged nature of the national/regional actions foreseen and how they are intended to contribute to implement the respective ERA action.

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.

4. Templates

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 adapted to the specific characteristics of each action.

Each template should include an explanatory part providing a broad range of planned activities critical to the implementation of each action that may be carried out at national, regional, local or institutional level, comprising, for example, funding, participating in groups or adapting regulation.

Templates should also provide a section where Member States are invited to provide indications related to any activities that they are implementing or plan to implement regarding each action, as well as any other input that they wish to provide and that is useful in order to understand the nature of their commitment to an action. This section should allow for communicating these activities in a flexible way, respecting diversity of possible types of commitments.

5. Broad internal mobilisation

At both national and European levels, during the entire ERA policy cycle, active involvement of stakeholders as well as other policy areas in pursuit of a whole of government approach should be applied as appropriate and according to the diverging natures of the various ERA actions.

For the process of deciding on the commitment, Member States should aim for a broad internal mobilisation in order to involve relevant stakeholders and other policy areas. This will also facilitate the joint implementation of the action at later stages.

6. Other issues

The core idea of the ERA Policy Agenda is to mobilize EU and Member State activities towards common goals and priorities. The Council concluded that a commitment of at least half of the Member States to an ERA Action is required for a meaningful collaboration. 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. ERAC will discuss the results from the commitments expressed by Member States at its meeting in September 2022 and provide guidance thereon.

All Member States will be kept informed through the ERA Forum on the implementation of all ERA actions. Member States can commit to individual ERA actions also at a later stage.
