

## Report on the debate on “Horizon Europe interim evaluation”

### 1. Summary of the discussion

At the ERAC plenary meeting on 13 and 14 September 2022, in Prague, the Commission presented an overview and timeline of the ongoing evaluations in the context of the H2020 ex post evaluation and the Horizon Europe interim evaluation, and encouraged the Member States to inform their constituencies about the upcoming, broad stakeholder consultation.

The ensuing debate was held in two breakout sessions, moderated by the Polish and Dutch ERAC members respectively.

Delegations were asked to share their views on three issues:

- a) synergies and complementarities between the H2020 programme and/or Horizon Europe programme and other EU and national R&I programmes;

The need for synergies between EU programmes and national programmes was highlighted as a prerequisite for a successful R&I policy, for enabling a coherent planning of investments, for instance in developing Teaming projects, partnerships or missions. The difficulties are well known, both legal and administrative – as well as the measures needed to overcome those difficulties, such as the alignment of timelines, reporting obligations and so on.

Delegates acknowledged that the situation has improved, that there are more possibilities today (e.g. enabling research infrastructures) and acknowledged the Commission’s efforts in issuing the Guidelines on synergies. They also noted the need for more transparency and information to make applicants aware of the possibilities, such as information sessions (which should involve NCPs and managing authorities).

Missions were mentioned as a possible testbed for enhancing synergies, and the Horizon Europe interim evaluation as a learning opportunity.

- b) the additional value resulting from the Framework Programmes, compared to what could reasonably have been expected from Member States and Associated Countries acting at national and/or regional levels;

Member States agreed that the Framework Programme has a strong added-value, mentioning examples such as international cooperation in the projects, or broadly accepted and trusted evaluation standards. Institutions that succeed in Horizon Europe are acknowledged as excellent institutions. The criterion of excellence should be maintained as a core essence.

Another point that was mentioned was the aggregating value of the Framework Programmes, bringing stakeholders closer together, creating joint R&I agendas, countering fragmentation and generally tackling challenges together. Some delegations underlined the “double” role of researchers – on the one hand collaborating with each other, on the other hand competing. Both aspects strengthen their competences.

It was suggested that the interim evaluation should look at issues such as oversubscription, the impact of missions and the functioning of partnerships.

- c) how to organise ERAC's work towards a comprehensive ERAC opinion on the next Framework Programme

ERAC discussed the possibility of preparing an ERAC opinion on the future Framework Programme (FP 10). It was suggested that an ad hoc temporary task force could be set up to discuss the topic and work on an ERAC opinion in the near future.

The two chairs of the breakout sessions (Dutch and Polish ERAC members) volunteered to take a leading role in developing such an opinion.

## 2. Way forward

Following the discussion described above, ERAC members are asked to agree to the next steps as follows (in written procedure):

An ad hoc temporary Task Force will be set up, according to article 10 of the ERAC Procedural Arrangements<sup>1</sup>. Membership of the Task Force shall be open to a maximum of one of the appointed representatives to the committee of each ERAC member.

This Task Force will have the specific task of preparing ERAC's early advice on the next Framework Programme, pursuant to Article 1 of the ERAC mandate<sup>2</sup>. Each participating member shall take an active role in the work of the Task Force, providing broad strategic guidance on the architecture of the programme, on the performance of existing instruments as well as on possible new areas of activity.

Furthermore, Mateusz Gaczynski (Polish ERAC delegation) and Feite Hofman (Dutch ERAC delegation) are, with their agreement, appointed as Rapporteurs, on the basis of article 11 of the ERAC Procedural Arrangements, with the task of preparing the setting up of the Task Force and drafting a proposal for an ERAC opinion that reflects the outcome of the discussions of the Task Force.

Pursuant to Article 10(4) of the ERAC Procedural Arrangements, the Task Force may invite experts and stakeholders to contribute to its work<sup>3</sup>.

The work of the Task Force, as well as that of the Rapporteurs, will end when a draft opinion will be submitted to ERAC for adoption by June 2024 at the latest.

ERAC delegates who do not participate in the Task Force shall be regularly informed of its work, and may contribute their views in writing.

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<sup>1</sup> Council doc. 8227/22.

<sup>2</sup> Article 1 of the ERAC mandate states that its tasks include "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." COUNCIL DECISION (EU) 2021/2241 of 13 December 2021 on the composition and the mandate of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC)

<sup>3</sup> Including from Associated Countries and third countries.