



First meeting of the Partnership Knowledge Hub

13 October 2021 (13h00-17h00)

Digital meeting over WeBex

Minutes

Brussels, 14 October 2021

Nature of the meeting

This meeting was non-public.

List of points discussed

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Director of EC DG R&I Common Policy Centre, Commission co-chair, welcomed the participants and outlined the objectives of the meeting: to launch the Partnership Knowledge Hub (PKH). The group has the main aim to implement the new strategic coordinating process for partnerships. The PKH allows to have joint discussions with MS/AC, and where relevant the partnerships themselves, on the implementation and monitoring of the new policy approach to partnerships and ensure a strategic oversight of the portfolio.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was approved.

3. Election of the Member State co-chair

A call for expression of interest for MS co-chair was launched some days before the meeting. Two expression of interest were presented, but one of them was withdrawn. The only candidate left (DE representative), was elected MS Co-chair by consensus. The Commission co-chair and all other participants congratulated the new co-chair.

4. Terms of Reference and the working method of the Partnership Knowledge Hub

The Commission (Unit G4) presented the modus operandi of the Group with regard to the Terms of Reference and the Rules of Procedures, already shared with the participants in advance. In particular, the Group will act on request of its co-chairs and meetings will be held on regular basis. In the case of physical meetings, only one representative per member and per meeting will be reimbursed for their travel. In order to keep the meetings constructive, it was proposed as a general rule that one person per delegation attends the meetings and/or speaks on behalf of the delegation. DG RTD will provide the secretariat,

the Group will take decisions by consensus, DG RTD, in agreement with the Member State co-chair, may invite experts, and the minutes will be drafted by the Secretariat. European Partnerships are granted an observer status (nomination letters have been sent out). Observers may take part in the discussions (subject to invitation from the co-chairs) and provide expertise, but do not participate in the formulation of recommendations or advice of the group.

*** The participants agreed that the minutes should be actionable and focus on main conclusions and next steps, and on the use of Microsoft teams for the management of the future meetings, but also as collaborative space.*

Furthermore, the Secretariat presented for discussion the possible deliverables expected from the Partnership Knowledge Hub for 2021/22, such as:

A) preparation of the Biennial Partnerships Monitoring (BPM) report:

- Deliverable 1: Provide feedback to the overall report (indicators and data used, etc.)
- Deliverable 2: Provide (qualitative) input to the country fiches + validation of the fiches (Chapter 3 of the report)
- Deliverable 3: Provide feedback to the common guidelines for optimising monitoring and assessment efforts between MS/AC and EC, including on the state of play of launching national monitoring systems

B) the strategic discussions on key policy issues

- Deliverable 4: opinion of the Partnership Knowledge Hub on the first biennial monitoring report, reflecting on specific policy aspects, such as synergies (theme of the first report) or international collaboration.

During the discussion on the expected deliverables, there were several requests for clarifications from the participants, in particular with regard to the difficulties to focus on foresight, considering that the partnership process has just started, and concerns on the amount of work requested to the MS.

*** It was agreed to give priority for the time being to the BMR, including receiving inputs from countries to the fiches.*

*** With regard to the other tasks, such as foresight, strategic discussion and community building, more time is needed in order to digest all the information and details received during the meeting. In this respect, the tasks will be defined together having in mind the main objective to provide meaningful information and recommendations for policy-makers.*

*** The co-chairs will develop a work plan for 2022 in view of the next meeting based on the feedback received.*

5. Discussion on the preparation of the tasks identified in the Terms of Reference

5.a. Preparation of the biennial monitoring report for partnerships;

The Chair and experts of the EC Expert Group introduced:

- The proposed structure of the BMR, the expected first main task of PKH, and the tentative timeline. The expert group has identified a dual approach for the “thematic approaches” - with an inward (how the partnership instrument is working) and outward (contribution to the EU priorities) element. The themes of the first report are synergies and contribution to the twin transitions and resilience. As priorities will change over time, it is best to keep the thematic approach flexible (food for thought) and focus on the process for determining the thematic approach (a sort of a decision-tree).
- The task 2b on optimising monitoring and assessment efforts and gathering harmonised data, with a main focus on the consultation of Member States, as well as the work carried out with the MS pilots involving three volunteers (EE, ES, and PL).
- The chapter on the aggregate performance of the portfolio of European Partnerships, with a focus on the selection of indicators to be used in the chapter.
- The Country Fiche: the expected contribution from the MS, as well as the timeline. Countries will receive template fiches that are pre-filled with quantitative data starting from end of October/ early November (we will inform country-by-country). Countries’ qualitative inputs are mainly needed in the comment boxes on pages 1, 2 and 3 in relation to the current situation or future intentions. The first full draft country fiches are expected to be ready towards the end of November that should receive final comments/validation from countries by 6 December.
- The individual performance of European Partnerships where the partnership profile fiche is the main item. 38 out of 49 partnerships (including 8 KICs) will be considered in this first exercise considering that 11 of them will start only in 2023-24.

The following points were raised/ clarifications made:

It is very important that the BMR captures the added value of partnerships as a policy instrument – whether more impacts were generated than with traditional calls. This allows MS to make better decisions on which initiatives to co-invest.

The qualitative input on the common criteria #2 on the additional investments triggered by the EU contribution (comment box on page 2 of the country fiche) can mean e.g. a national programme launched because of a participation in a partnership.

The partnerships implemented under the Euratom Treaty are not in the scope of the first BMR.

**It was agreed that the PKH will be closely involved in the process of the first BMR, including sending a draft report for consultation so that they could do a quality check before publishing.*

*** it is important to minimise the burden of reporting and administrative efforts of MS and partnerships to what is necessary, while the success of the report will depend on the quality of inputs received from countries and partnerships due to the lack of H2020 quantitative data.*

*** The proposed way forward for the thematic approaches was accepted.*

5.d. Preparation of the foresight activities supporting the identification of priorities for possible R&I partnership candidates of European relevance;

The Commission (Unit G3) introduced the strategic planning process in view of identifying future priorities, including foresight process in support of the second strategic plan. The Horizon Europe Strategic Plan (2025-2027) will identify possible new co-programmed and co-funded partnerships. The presentation provided background and context for the role of the PKH in providing advice on preparing foresight activities that would support the identification of priorities for possible R&I partnership candidates.

The MS co-chair underlines that the foresight activities of the PKH should not only focus on new priorities but also to provide advice on highly populated areas with high pressure for phasing out existing partnerships.

5.c. Preparation for the strategic discussions on key policy issues to ensure strategic steering and political guidance on the policy approach and collective progress of EU R&I partnerships;

As the further implementation and development of the portfolio of European Partnerships will be done against the background of the European Research Area, the Commission (Unit A2) presented the delegates with an update on the European Research Area and its state of play, including the Pact for R&I and the policy agenda. The strategic discussions should become a distinct component of the PKH. They should cover issues related to partnership R&I policy and in particular where these interact with ERA priorities and values (structural objectives, such as investments in transnational collaboration, public-private cooperation, knowledge transfer and broader ERA objectives), as well as progress in achieving thematic objectives. Strategic discussions will be prepared using the input resulting from the monitoring and the foresight activities, as well as e.g. the results of the interim Evaluation of Horizon Europe.

The MS co-chair stressed that it is important for the PKH to have a general overview of the different monitoring exercises and to ensure complementarity, notably with what is planned in the context of the new ERA.

*** It was agreed that there is a need to ensure appropriate coordination between the work of the PKH and the ERA governance currently under discussion (in particular the ERA Forum for Transition).*

*** A list of topics for strategic discussions should be identified as part of the PKH work plan that are on the interaction between partnerships and the rest of ERA*

5.b. Community building and mutual learning across the community involved in EU R&I partnerships, including the organisation of an annual Partnership Stakeholder Forum.

The Commission (Unit G4) introduced the future organisation of the Partnership Stakeholder Forum, triggering the discussion on possible content, timeline and so on. The PKH members were invited to reflect on their input to the Task 3 of the expert group “Recommendations for next steps and necessary support for the Strategic Coordinating Process”.

The MS co-chair stressed the need to discuss with the PKH members what countries can do to best support the strategic coordinating process, including planning resources from their side.

6. Conclusions and next steps

Agreed actions:

- PKH tasks and workload: the scope and concrete deliverables of the tasks will be defined together in the PKH. Important is to provide meaningful information and recommendations for policy-makers
- A clear priority for the time being is delivering the first biennial monitoring report, including receiving inputs from countries to the fiches.
- PKH will be kept closely involved in the preparation of the first biennial report, including sending the draft for consultation before publishing.
- On the points on foresight, strategic discussion and community building – the first meeting provided some food for thought but more time is needed to develop these.
- Any further comments on the foresight work and strategic discussion topics are also still welcome in writing to the Secretariat by 15 October.
- The co-chairs will prepare based on feedback received a work plan for 2022, including topics for strategic discussions at the intersection with the rest of ERA.
- Documents need to be sent earlier to the participants.

7. Next meetings

The next meeting should be organised in the first half of December 2021 (to be confirmed).

Possible topics to be discussed at the next meeting in December 2021:

- Work plan for 2022
- Take stock of the first biennial report
- Task 2b of the expert group “Optimising monitoring and assessment efforts and gathering harmonised data

8. Any other business

DG RTD took the opportunity to inform the participants on the first call deadline for the topic “Support for policy makers” in the ERA WP (deadline September 2021), asking participants their support in disseminating information on this call in advance of its next deadline in April 2022, so as to attract more interest for this call.

9. List of Participants

MS Representatives of: AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IS, IT, LT, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI

AC Representatives of: IS, NO

Commission expert group on support for the strategic coordinating process for partnerships:

1. Maria Chiara Carrozza (Chair),
2. Jari Romanainen (Rapporteur),
3. Henric Johnson,
4. Effie Amanatidou,
5. Krzysztof Gulda,
6. Ülle Napa

European Commission Services represented: DG RTD/G, RTD/G4, RTD/G3, RTD/A