ERAC 1211/16

NOTE

From:	ERAC Secretariat
To:	Delegations
Subject:	ERAC Opinion on the streamlining of the expert groups set up by the Commission

Delegations will find attached the ERAC Opinion on the streamlining of the expert groups set up by the Commission as adopted by written procedure.

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ERAC OPINION ON THE STREAMLINING OF THE EXPERT GROUPS SET UP BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Rationale

The Council conclusions on the review of the European Research Area advisory structure of May 2015, Article 5:

RECALLS that the EU research and innovation policy landscape includes a number of advisory structures providing inputs and expertise and URGES the Commission to carry out an inventory to identify these structures and highlight any possible overlaps with ERAC and the other ERA-related Groups and to submit its assessment to ERAC by 30 June 2015; ENCOURAGES ERAC, with the support of the Commission, to strive for close interaction with any relevant groups regarding the ERA-related aspects of their work programmes;

Objective

The objective of this draft opinion is to formulate ERAC's view on the added value of and the room for improvement in the context of certain groups within the frame of ERA priorities for the MS/AC. The scope of this exercise is to look principally at the groups set up by the Commission. It does not cover the ERA-related groups (GPC, ESFRI, SGHRM, Helsinki Group, the new ERAC SWG on Open Science and Innovation and SFIC) in any detail, though it looks at potential overlaps between the ERA-related groups and Commission groups.

Process

The ERAC delegations were asked to formulate their view on the list of questions (see Annex) and to provide input based on this. The main purpose of this was to identify the value MS/ACs derive from participation in Commission groups and the use they make of this in their national processes.

Based on the inventories provided by the Commission during the process after the Council conclusions the number of the groups selected for this inventory was 10. The selection was made based on an assessment of the mandate of each group and its liaison to ERA priorities. The 10 groups were divided in two: A) Expert Groups in which the representation is based on MS/AC participation and B) Expert Groups in which the representation is based on individual expertise.

The input was provided by fifteen delegations[1]. The questionnaire was open for seven weeks in July and August 2016.

Based on the input provided the rapporteur has compiled a draft opinion on the significance of each group from MS/AC perspective and on the opportunities to develop the system.

The final decisions about the future of the advisory structure will be for the Commission to take as the groups have been set up by the Commission, but the Commission has asked ERAC to be clear and direct in putting forward MS/AC views as an input to its thinking.

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[1] AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, DK, ES, FI, IE, IS, IT, NL, NO, SE, SI

ERAC Opinion

General remarks

Overall the input from the delegations was well-grounded and provided a good starting point for drafting the opinion. Several delegations had even used national coordination mechanisms or otherwise collected the input from a wider range of stakeholders.

In general the opinions on the relevance of each group were divided. Common to most of the replies was that more information and communication is asked for on most of the groups. Delegations asked for information to be provided by the Commission, e.g. in the form of circulating the mandates and the minutes of the groups. However, the mandates and the minutes are in general included in the Commission register of expert groups which is openly available for anyone. Thus, it might be that the lack of information experienced by the delegations is due to the vast amount of information surrounding us and in parallel the lack of time to handle it. Hence, this might be remedied by organising the provision for information in a more structured and targeted way, e.g. by providing opportunities for dialogue between different groups that share interests. As one delegation mentioned, inviting the chair of a Commission Expert Group to the meeting of one of the ERA-related groups is a functioning way for finding common interests and avoiding overlapping work. The detailed considerations on each group are listed below.

Another recurring notion was that the variety of views should be guaranteed when setting up expert groups. In order to allow for best possible deployment of knowledge gathered in the expert groups the groups should be composed of members coming from as diverse backgrounds as possible regarding geography, gender, sector, scientific field etc.

With the newly established ERAC SWG on Open Science and Innovation there are possible overlapping interests for several groups, namely the Digital ERA Forum, the National Points of Reference for Scientific Information and the Open Innovation Strategy and Policy Group. The scope of the work of ERAC SWG on OS and I is to promote the top action priority 5 of the ERA Roadmap 2015-2020 which is an important task in realising ERA. The scope of the work of those others groups should be further assessed and after this reflection the conclusions should be drawn on possible merging of certain groups or discontinuation of some groups.

Detailed views on the listed Expert Groups

The delegations were asked to indicate for each of the below mentioned groups which of the following views best represents their position, and to provide a short explanation for the choice:

- This group brings or shows a clear potential to bring added value for achieving the ERA priorities in line with its original mandate. Thus, its work should thus be continued.

- The added value of this group is limited and its work should be discontinued or merged with another group

As the indication was based on voluntariness (i.e. not mandatory to reply to all questions) the number of responses received per question varies. Furthermore, the groups were divided into two sections: A) Groups in which the representation is based in MS/AC nomination or equivalent and B) Groups in which the representation is based on individual expertise.

A)   Expert Groups in which the representation is based on MS/AC participation

- *e-Infrastructure Reflection Group (e-IRG)*

Eight delegations considered e-IRG to bring added value for ERA priorities and that the work should be continued. Three delegations considered the added value of e-IRG limited and that thus its work should be discontinued or merged with another group.

The importance of the topic of e-IRG was highlighted by many of the participants of the inventory. It was mentioned that the existing dialogue between e-IRG and ESFRI could be reinforced in the future. Furthermore the work of e-IRG currently has connections the High level Expert Group on European Open Science Cloud and the dialogue between these two groups should be enhanced. The independent nature of e-IRG and the limited connections with national administrations were considered to slow down the exploitation of the results of the work of e-IRG especially at national level.

- ***European Network of Research Integrity Officers (ENRIO) and National Ethics Councils (NEC) Forum***

Nine delegations replied that the ENRIO brings added value but three delegations considered the opposite. 12 delegations considered that the work of the NEC Forum should be continued whereas only two delegations replied that the work could be discontinued. Research integrity as a theme was considered to be of great importance for realising ERA. However these two networks were not directly considered as Commission Expert Groups like some of the other groups included in this exercise. The nature of ENRIO and NEC was considered to be independent especially in providing a cooperation forum for those working with research integrity at national level in different MS/AC. It is therefore questionable whether these groups should be involved in the streamlining exercise. However it would be important to include all interested MS/AC to the work of these networks. It is also worth assessing whether two separate networks/forums are needed.

- ***The Digital ERA Forum (DERAF)***

This group seems to be a clear exemption as only two delegations considered the work of DERAF worth continuing. Nine delegations expressed that the added value of this group is limited and a possible merger should be considered. On one hand, a merger of this group with ESFRI, e-IRG or ERAC SWG on Open Science and Innovation was suggested by a clear majority of delegations. On the other hand, the group was also considered by a few to have a clear independent task as combining individual experts (and not only official MS representatives) to allow for efficient distribution of knowledge.

- *National Points of Reference for scientific information*

This group clearly divided the views of the delegations. Five delegations considered that this group has added value and simultaneously six delegations replied that the group is not bringing added value. Correspondingly to the previous group (DERAF) many of those responding to the questionnaire highlighted the similarities in the scope of the work of this group and other groups dealing with open science issues, especially the ERAC SWG on Open Science and Innovation and the Open Science Policy Platform.

- *Enterprise Policy Group - Working Group on Innovation*

This group also created mixed feelings among the delegations. Seven delegations considered this group as important and having added value whereas five delegations considered the added value limited. The more hesitant assessment might be partly reflecting the fact that this group does not seem to be familiar to the ERAC delegations. Also it was suggested to assess the opportunities for merging this group with the Open innovation Strategy and Policy Group in order to create synergies. Based on the input provided, closer collaboration between different sectors, especially between research and innovation sectors, and at organisational level, between different DGs of the Commission was asked for.

B) **Expert Groups in which the representation is based on individual expertise**

- *High level Expert Group on European Open Science Cloud*

Here the delegations replying were almost unanimous. This group seems to be adding the value for achieving the ERA priorities as 10 delegations considered so and only one participant selected the other option. This group is considered to be essential for the successful implementation of the EOSC. Close cooperation with this group and the ERAC SWG on Open Science and Innovation should be ensured. Also, possible overlapping activities with the Open Science Policy Platform were observed.

- ***Open Innovation Strategy and Policy Group***

Six delegations considered the work of the group worth continuing whereas three delegations thought the opposite. For several delegations the scope of this group seemed unclear and possible overlapping activities with ERAC SWG on Open Science and Innovation were noticed. To overcome the innovation divide in Europe, a more balanced representation in groups such as this one, was mentioned. Moreover, even here the closer links between the different DGs were asked for. The OISPG was originally established to support the creation of European Innovation Area (and not directly to support ERA).

- ***Research, Innovation and Science Expert (RISE) HLG***

This group again divided the views. According to seven delegations RISE is adding the value for achieving the ERA priorities whereas four delegations raised concerns. The input from the delegations emphasised this group to be particularly important as advisor for the Commissioner and thus to have common elements with the work of the Scientific Advisory Mechanism. Due to the specific character of this group nominated by the Commissioner, the group has clearly less liaison to the policy advice at national level. The participants of this inventory would appreciate to have more regular information on the considerations of RISE.

- ***SFRI: "Strategic Foresight for R&I Policy in Horizon 2020***

This group again divides the views of the delegations. Five delegations reported that this group has added value but four delegations were in favour of discontinuing the work of the group. The importance of strategic foresight was emphasised by several delegations. According to certain delegations there seems to be a potential risk for duplication of work with the Horizon 2020 Advisory Groups set up by the Commission as part of the Strategic Programming of Horizon 2020. Also here the delegations found that more information on the work of the group and a dialogue between ERAC and this SFRI group would be welcome.

Other considerations

Finally the delegations were asked about the opportunities for remedying the experienced lack of information both at national level and in general. Some countries already organise or are planning to organise coordination meetings, consultations or round-tables in different formats (physical or virtual) at national level for improving the information flow between different groups, especially the ERA-related groups. It seems, however, that the members from the Expert Groups set up by the Commission more rarely are invited to these meetings. It was acknowledged clearly that for those groups where the representation is based on individual expertise the experts serve in their own capacity. Their views and opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the country, nor is there any systematic dialogue between these experts and the relevant national authorities.

Improving dialogue with these experts would require more transparency. Even if the independent experts are not representing their country an information flow was considered to be of everybody's interest and beneficial. On the other hand it was stated that because these groups are advising the Commission and not the MS/AC, a constant information flow is not necessary but the results of the work should be provided in a transparent way.

On improving the information flow in general it was considered that the role of the ERAC Steering Board (SB) is essential. The changes made in the composition of the SB were assessed to have improved the information flow between ERAC and the ERA-related groups but this does not seem to cover for the Commission Expert Groups. According to the input more could still be done regarding the information flow from the Commission expert groups.

Regarding the views on how the Commission could enhance the information flow between different groups several aspects were pointed out. Firstly, the information provided through the webpages and equivalent could still be improved and made more easily accessible and transparent. Secondly, the mapping exercise can be continued and the awareness on the importance of avoiding overlapping groups to be set up should be maintained high. The Commission was asked to consider MS/AC views when setting up new Expert Groups to cherish the collaborative nature of building ERA. Several delegations indicated that the streamlining of the Commission Expert Groups is important and that there are too many groups for efficient way of working, especially for smaller countries.

Finally, the collaboration and information flow inside the Commission between different DGs should be improved in order to assure the work towards shared objectives.

Recommendations for the Commission

1. The Commission should ensure that there are opportunities for dialogue between different expert groups that share interests and that the provision of information continues to be user-friendly and structured.

2. The Commission should inform the Member States/Associated Countries when establishing new expert groups to be composed of MS/AC representatives. The Commission is invited to duly consider the existing groups already active in related areas when setting up new expert groups, notably by using the expert register, in an inclusive and well-coordinated process involving all relevant services of the Commission.

3. The Commission should take care that the ERAC is regularly informed on ERA-related issues on which the expert groups work and the results of their work, as well as of the establishment of new expert groups on ERA-related matters.

4. The mapping exercise of the expert groups of the Commission should be continued and the possibilities for reducing overlapping of the groups' activities should be considered further.

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Ministry of
Education
and Culture

Inventory for providing input for an ERAC Opinion on the streamlining of the experts groups set up by the Commission

Rationale

The Council conclusions on the review of the European Research Area advisory structure of May 2015, Article 5:
"RECALLS that the EU research and innovation policy landscape includes a number of advisory structures providing inputs and expertise and URGES the Commission to carry out an inventory to identify these structures and highlight any possible overlaps with ERAC and the other ERA-related Groups and to submit its assessment to ERAC by 30 June 2015; ENCOURAGES ERAC, with the support of the Commission, to strive for close interaction with any relevant groups regarding the ERA-related aspects of their work programmes."

Objective

To formulate ERAC's view on the added value of and the room for improvement in the context of certain groups within the frame of ERA priorities for the MS/AC. The scope of this exercise is to look principally at the groups set up by the Commission. It will not cover the ERA-related groups (GPC, ESFRI, SGHRM, Helsinki Group, new WG P5 and SFIC) in any detail, though it will look at potential overlaps between the ERA-related groups and Commission groups.

Process

The ERAC delegations are asked to formulate their view on the list of questions and to provide input based on this. The main purpose of this is to identify the value MS/ACs derive from participation in Commission groups and the use they make of this in their national processes.

Based on the input provided the rapporteur will compile a draft opinion on the significance of each group from MS/AC perspective and on the opportunities to develop the system.

The deadline for input is 10 August 2016.

1. Background information on the respondent

Name   [_____]

Lastname   [_____]

Email   [_____]

Country   [_____]

Organization [_____]

For each of the below mentioned groups, please indicate which of the following views best represents your position, and provide a short explanation for your choice

A) Expert Groups in which the representation is based on MS/AC participation

2. e-Infrastructure Reflection Group (e-IRG)

To contribute to the implementation of Horizon 2020, the European Unions's new funding programme for research and innovation for the period 2014-2020, and in particularof the Part 'Research Infrastructures' within the 'Excellent Science' pillar, by giving advice to the Commission services (the advice provided will contribute to a broader policy context: to the Europe 2020 Strategy, the innovation Union, and other relevant EU policies).
http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2940

○ This group brings or shows a clear potential to bring added value for achieving the ERA priorities in line with its original mandate. Thus, its work should thus be continued

○ The added value of this group is limited and its work should be discontinued or merged with another group

3. Please motivate

[   ]

4. European Network of Research Integrity Officers (ENRIO)

An initiative by the then director of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) to bring together people who were dealing with questions about research integrity, or lack of, within their national organisations.

Not included in the Commission register.

○ This group brings or shows a clear potential to bring added value for achieving the ERA priorities in line with its original mandate. Thus, its work should thus be continued

○ The added value of this group is limited and its work should be discontinued or merged with another group

5. Please motivate

[   ]

6. National Ethics Councils (NEC) Forum

An independent informal network of representatives of the National Ethics Councils for the exchange of information, experience and best practices on issues of common interest in the field of ethics and science.
http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=1806

- ○ This group brings or shows a clear potential to bring added value for achieving the ERA priorities in line with its original mandate. Thus, its work should thus be continued
- ○ The added value of this group is limited and its work should be discontinued or merged with another group

7. Please motivate

8. The Digital ERA Forum (DERAF)

Following the publication of the ERA Communication in July 2012 (COM(2012)392 final) it was decided that the scope and role of the e-IPF should be revised and its mandate extended in order to meet the requirements of the Digital ERA Forum. This Forum would support specific Digital ERA actions as well as provide broader support for policy development on e-infrastructures, digital research services and digital science. The revised draft Terms of Reference are attached.
http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2614

- ○ This group brings or shows a clear potential to bring added value for achieving the ERA priorities in line with its original mandate. Thus, its work should thus be continued
- ○ The added value of this group is limited and its work should be discontinued or merged with another group

9. Please motivate

10. National Points of Reference for scientific information

Directly implemented as a follow up of the 2012 Recommendation to Member States (cf: NCP network to encourage open access to scientific publications and research data for re-use, through policy coordination and adoption, long-term preservation, and deployment of the supporting e-infrastructure.

Not included in the Commission register.

- ○ This group brings or shows a clear potential to bring added value for achieving the ERA priorities in line with its original mandate. Thus, its work should thus be continued
- ○ The added value of this group is limited and its work should be discontinued or merged with another group

11. Please motivate

12. Enterprise Policy Group -Working Group on Innovation

http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=1264

○ This group brings or shows a clear potential to bring added value for achieving the ERA priorities in line with its original mandate. Thus, its work should thus be continued

○ The added value of this group is limited and its work should be discontinued or merged with another group

13. Please motivate

B) Expert Groups in which the representation is based on individual expertise

14. High level Expert Group on European Open Science Cloud

The Expert Group will advise the Commission regarding the shape of a 'European Open Science Cloud' initiative. Overall, the group should provide strategic advice to the Commission on the strategy for the European Open Science Cloud initiative as part of the Digital Single Market.
http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3353

○ This group brings or shows a clear potential to bring added value for achieving the ERA priorities in line with its original mandate. Thus, its work should thus be continued

○ The added value of this group is limited and its work should be discontinued or merged with another group

15. Please motivate

16. Open Innovation Strategy and Policy Group

Open Innovation Strategy and Policy Group (OISPG) is the driver of the Open Innovation 2.0 paradigm: it catalyses modern innovation adoption and creation of open innovation ecosystems where the serendipity process is fledged. OISPG believes that involving citizens directly in the innovation process allows rapid prototyping in real life and shows which ideas fly in reality and which are worth scaling up. This fosters entrepreneurship in Europe, creates jobs and boosts sustainable economic and societal growth. Therefore, the group suggests actions and approaches to the industry and other innovation partners to stimulate and strengthen competitiveness in its all dimensions: wealth, well-being and welfare, at a policy making level. OISPG's members' connections with institutional and industrial level makes the group focal point in the field of Open Innovation 2.0.Group's thinking on Quadruple Helix innovation models – involving institutional bodies, research sphere, business sector, and citizens in the process. This new generation of open innovation leads to stronger economic impact and better user experience in Europe.
http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3169

○ This group brings or shows a clear potential to bring added value for achieving the ERA priorities in line with its original mandate. Thus, its work should thus be continued

○ The added value of this group is limited and its work should be discontinued or merged with another group

17. Please motivate

18. Research, Innovation and Science Expert (RISE) HLG

RISE shall give direct strategic advice and support to the European Commissioner for research, science and innovation on aspects related to the formulation and implementation of policies under his remit. It shall notably address how EU research, innovation, and science policies should be formulated and implemented to improve the framework conditions for Open Innovation, Open Science and R&I Open to the World. RISE shall also provide insight on how research and innovation can best contribute to economic growth that is smart, sustainable, and socially inclusive for the EU and associated countries within a globalized world. RISE members are expected to think proactively and "outside of the box."
http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3385

○ This group brings or shows a clear potential to bring added value for achieving the ERA priorities in line with its original mandate. Thus, its work should thus be continued

○ The added value of this group is limited and its work should be discontinued or merged with another group

19. Please motivate

20. SFRI: "Strategic Foresight for R&I Policy in Horizon 2020

The purpose of expert group will be to support the strategic approach to research programming in Horizon 2020 through the provision of foresight intelligence and rapid-response sense-making of signals that change in society, economy, and technology is occurring on issues deemed relevant for strategic programming in Horizon 2020 and research and innovation policies in general.
http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3332

○ This group brings or shows a clear potential to bring added value for achieving the ERA priorities in line with its original mandate. Thus, its work should thus be continued

○ The added value of this group is limited and its work should be discontinued or merged with another group

21. Please motivate

22. In which ways could the MS/AC improve internally at national level the information flow between your representatives on ERAC, the other ERA-related groups and the expert groups?

1000 characters remaining

23. In which ways could the MS/AC improve the information flow in general between ERAC, the other ERA-related groups and the expert groups?

1000 characters remaining

24. In which ways could the Commission improve the information flow between its expert groups and ERAC and the other ERA-related groups?

1000 characters remaining

25. Any other comments or recommendations on the streamlining of the groups

2000 characters remaining