

EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA
AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

– ERAC –
Secretariat

Brussels, 30 April 2019
(OR. en)

ERAC 1206/19

NOTE

From: ERAC Secretariat
To: ERAC delegations

Subject: Mandate of the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on the Future of the
European Research Area (ERA)

Delegations will find in annex the mandate of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) Ad-hoc Working Group on the Future of the ERA, as adopted by written procedure on 26 April 2019.

MANDATE

OF THE ERAC AD-HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE FUTURE OF THE ERA

1. Objectives and deliverables of the ERAC ad-hoc Working Group on the Future of the ERA

Almost twenty years after its inception, the ERA is currently in a transition period driven by:

- new trends in the field of R&I policies, mission oriented, systemic approaches, digitalisation, open science and so on;
- the upcoming Horizon Europe programme;
- the assessment of progress towards the ERA based on the ERA Roadmap 2015-2020, ERA National Action Plans and biennial progress reports of the Commission;
- the Council conclusions on the governance of the ERA which call, inter alia, for a swift implementation of the recommendations of the ERAC Opinion on the review of the ERA advisory structure through an Action Plan in 2019;
- the Sibiu summit on the Future of Europe in May 2019;
- a possible new Commission Communication on the ERA for the period beyond 2020;
- the invitation by the Council conclusions on the governance of the ERA to Presidencies of the Council to organise ministerial conferences starting in 2020, as a basis for setting ERA priorities by the Council.

Against this background, the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group (WG) on the Future of the ERA is established to contribute to the preparation of the future of the ERA, including its policy objectives and priorities.

The Ad-hoc Working Group on the Future of the ERA is expected to advise ERAC on:

- options for a new narrative/paradigm on the future of the ERA, taking into account both the experiences of 20 years of ERA policies and emerging needs for policy reforms;
- possible future ERA priorities and other relevant trends, inter alia of Horizon Europe, which may feed into a new ERA policy framework post-2020.

Taking forward the Council conclusions of 30 November 2018, the Ad-hoc Working Group will concentrate on the following aspects:

A. Options for a new narrative/paradigm on the future of the ERA

The WG will provide its assessment of the current state of play and of the factors for success or failure of the ERA policy framework so far, drawing lessons from the experience since 2000. The group will also outline possible options for a new narrative/paradigm on the future of the ERA.

B. Possible future ERA objectives and priorities

The WG will provide a rationale for possible future ERA objectives and priorities. To this purpose, the WG might also exchange with stakeholder organisations and other outside experts, and invite them to provide feedback. This work package is first and foremost future-oriented. It should enable ERAC to contribute to the Commission's reflections in view of a possible new Communication on the ERA in 2020.

The WG on the Future of the ERA shall not advise ERAC on the advisory structure of the ERA, as this will be the task of the next review cycle in 2021, after possible Council conclusions on the ERA priorities of the future in 2020.

Deliverables

The WG will submit a draft ERAC Opinion with the following deliverables to ERAC:

1. Options for a new narrative/paradigm for the ERA 2020-2030 (until September 2019)
2. Possible future ERA objectives and priorities, taking into account, inter alia, relevant interlinkages with Horizon Europe, in particular the part ‘Reforming and enhancing the EU Research and Innovation System’ (until December 2019)

A draft ERAC Opinion should be available by 1 December 2019, with a view to the ERAC plenary on 17 December 2019.

2. Duration and organisation of the work

The Ad-hoc Working Group is set up for a period of 8.5 months, commencing in April 2019. ERAC may decide to extend the duration of the Ad-hoc Working Group according to the ERAC Rules of procedure. Membership is open to ERAC delegations and nominated national experts¹, with a limitation of one member plus one alternate member per country. Participation in meetings of the WG is however limited to one member per country.

The Ad-hoc Working Group may organise its work internally between delegates along the main areas of its activity or specific issues that will be addressed. It might involve outside experts with appropriate modalities.

3. Chairperson

The Ad-hoc Working Group is chaired by a representative or an alternate representative of a Member State or of an Associated Country. The Ad-hoc Working Group shall meet at the invitation of the Chair.

¹ Nominated national experts are present as formal representatives of their country, not as individual experts (para. 11, ERAC Mandate, doc. 14875/15).

4. Secretariat and support

The secretariat of the Ad-hoc Working Group shall be provided by the General Secretariat of the Council (ERAC Secretariat). The secretariat is limited to keeping membership lists, ensuring correspondence and circulation of documents, as well as providing procedural advice concerning the documents that will be circulated. The Ad-hoc Working Group shall be supported by the Commission services within the remit of their competence.

Annex to the mandate: Background information on the historical context of the European Research Area

First phase of the ERA: 2000 -2005

The history of the ERA started in January 2000 with the Commission Communication “Towards a European research area”, taken up by the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000. The ERA was defined as a way to better integrate and coordinate EU and national research activities, and by this to contribute to the overall objective of the Lisbon strategy to make Europe the most competitive region in the world. This objective raised expectations, based on the assumption that the -at the time 15- national research and innovation systems could be easily aligned to compete with the rest of the world.

During this early phase, the ERA policies focused on setting an investment target of 3% of GDP for research for the European Union; most Member States set themselves their own national investment target in addition. In 2003, the European Commission’s Action Plan ‘Investing in Europe’ laid out a policy-mix to narrow the gap between Europe and its main competitors, notably the U.S. and Asia. This was, inter alia, the starting point of the first European Technology Platforms. At the time, the ERA was implemented by mutual learning and the Open Method of Coordination. Today’s Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility still echoes the collaboration between the Commission, Member States and Associated Countries during the first phase of the ERA.

Second phase of the ERA: 2005 - 2012

In 2005, a revision of the Lisbon process confirmed the important role of research and innovation for the creation of growth and jobs in Europe. This led to a new Communication from the Commission on the ERA entitled ‘More Research and Innovation – A Common Approach’. Some of the measures proposed in this Communication are still relevant today, such as the mobilisation of public and private resources for key technologies, or the creation of an attractive single market for researchers. In addition, the ERA became an integral part of the European Semester.

During the second phase of the ERA, its success was linked as much with research as with innovation policy. The ‘Aho Group Report: Creating an Innovative Europe’ called for creating innovation friendly markets, strengthening R&D resources, increasing structural mobility (e.g. through clusters), as well as fostering a culture which celebrates innovation.

A 2007 Green Paper by the Commission on “The European Research Area: New Perspectives” linked the concept of the ERA as an “internal market” for research with an effective coordination of European, national and regional research activities, complemented by initiatives implemented and funded at European level. The Green Paper established for the first time a set of features for the ERA which had an impact on the ERA priorities during the third phase of the ERA 2012-2020: (1) an adequate flow of competent researchers; (2) world-class research infrastructures; (3) excellent research institutions; (4) effective knowledge-sharing; (5) well-coordinated research programmes and priorities; (6) a wide opening of the ERA to the world.

In 2009, the Lisbon Treaty introduced the ERA as an objective of the research chapter under Article 179(1) TFEU.

In 2010, the Europe 2020 Strategy replaced the Lisbon Strategy. It confirmed the 3% R&D intensity target and established the ‘Innovation Union’ as one of seven flagship initiatives to overcome the economic crisis of 2008, and to tackle Europe’s major societal challenges. In one of its commitments, the Innovation Union flagship initiative announced a new Commission Communication by 2012 on a European Research Area framework.

In February 2011, the European Council underlined the need for a unified research area to attract talent and investment. The heads of state or government stated in their conclusions that remaining gaps must be addressed and the ERA must be completed by 2014 to create a genuine single market for knowledge, research and innovation.

Third phase of the ERA: 2012 - 2020

The 2012 Communication ‘A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth’ proposed five priority areas which still constitute the ERA policy framework today. In its Communication, the Commission called on Member States and research stakeholders to take on their responsibility for a swift completion of the ERA, offering support through Horizon 2020 in return.

In 2015, the Council adopted conclusions on the European Research Area Roadmap 2015-2020, which reaffirmed the priorities for the ERA as identified in the 2012 Communication. The Council conclusions endorsed the ERA Roadmap 2015-2020 adopted by ERAC and called on the Member States to develop ERA National Action Plans by mid-2016. At EU level, the Commission monitors progress on the ERA priorities and reports biennially to the Council and the European Parliament.

Since then, the ERA is being implemented both at European and national level through an ERA advisory system with dedicated groups of Member States and Associated Countries together with the Commission. Every three years, the ERA advisory system needs to be evaluated and adjusted. In 2018, ERAC conducted a first review of the advisory system which was welcomed by Council conclusions on the governance of the ERA in November 2018. In this context, the Council invited the Commission to publish by mid-2020 a new ERA Communication for the period beyond 2020, which may propose revised ERA policy priorities and ERA governance and monitoring mechanisms at national and EU level. By the same token, the Council should use the new ERA Communication as a basis for setting ERA priorities in 2020.
