

EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA  
COMMITE

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– ERAC –  
Secretariat

ERAC 1204/10

**NOTE**

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To:	ERAC delegations
Subject:	ERAC Opinion on recommendations and possible options to achieve more synergies between the Knowledge Triangle and Cohesion policies at various governance levels

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Delegations will find in the Annex ERAC Opinion on the above subject, as adopted via the written procedure on 28 June 2010.

## **ERAC Opinion on recommendations and possible options to achieve more synergies between the Knowledge Triangle and Cohesion policies at various governance levels**

This document summarises the first results and suggestions for recommendations from the ERAC WG on Synergies. The advice is based on the feedback received from ERAC members to the questionnaire on “Synergies between the various programmes within the Knowledge Triangle and the Cohesion Programmes”

The ERAC group on synergies was established on the basis of the Council Conclusions on guidance on future priorities of 3 December 2009.

The aim of the group is to explore possibilities for strengthening synergies between policies within the Knowledge Triangle<sup>1</sup> as well as with the Cohesion Programmes. Stronger synergies will help to mobilize all stakeholders to realise the implementation of the ERA 2020 Vision and the Europe 2020 strategy. The results of the group will also be used as input to the upcoming Research and Innovation Strategy and contribute to the work of the ERAC group on instruments.

The ERAC synergies group prepared a questionnaire together with representatives of the relevant services of the Commission. The questionnaire was submitted to all ERAC members and subsequently the group drafted a document with key findings on the basis of the received replies. The individual responses also contained a lot of national examples of policies that cover the Knowledge Triangle. We recommend to use these for further work as a basis for extracting good practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Conform with the definition laid down by the Council : “RECOGNISES that the Knowledge Triangle of education, research and innovation relates to the need for improving the impact of investments in the three forms of activity by systemic and continuous interaction;

The results of this questionnaire were discussed at the first ERAC meeting in Santiago de Compostela on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of June. On the basis of the results of the questionnaire and the discussion ERAC proposes the following set of recommendations and policy options to the Council, Member States and the Commission:

*At the strategic level:*

1. There is a need for stronger integration and more synergies within the Knowledge Triangle **both at EU, National and Regional level**. All relevant stakeholders at these levels should be mobilized to create a common vision that will lead to holistic policy strategies and, interoperable support programmes.
2. The Knowledge Triangle with firm roots in all governance levels can **contribute to all three priority objectives of the EU2020 strategy: smart growth, sustainable growth and inclusive growth**. These areas all require a balanced combination of Research, Innovation, Enterprise, Education and Cohesion policies that contribute to the goal of improving the attractiveness and competitiveness of Europe. Developing synergies should also increase the effectiveness of investments in these areas (bang for the buck), which is a necessity for the current and future budgetary consolidation.

*Concerning governance:*

3. Better policy coordination within the relevant Commission departments and among the different Council formations - **but also cross-departmental cooperation within individual countries and regions, which is a sine qua non condition** for successful innovation policy! Various countries have experiences in this field which could be shared for mutual learning. In general, a trust-based approach is needed to overcome barriers between the different departments and levels.

4. **Better promotion of the “Knowledge Triangle” as a concept** to widen its acceptance. Especially the integration of business innovation and entrepreneurship in the fields of education and research as a major “raison d’être” is not always the case yet. Wide dissemination of the term at both the EU, National and Regional level will encourage a wide uptake. This will also be further reinforced by the inclusion of the Knowledge Triangle in other transversal recommendations like the Europe 2020 integrated guidelines and its follow-up.
  
5. **ERAC has the mandate to develop more synergies.** This should be fixed part of the work programme of the ERAC Committee, in cooperation with the relevant advisory groups on education and innovation. ERAC should in consequence also develop principles (guidelines and best practices) for stronger coordination between the Knowledge Triangle and Structural Funds building on earlier work by CREST<sup>1</sup>.

*At the instrument level:*

6. Strengthen synergies between FP, CIP, LLP, EIT and SF **addressing the whole innovation cycle** ranging not only from research to demonstration and knowledge transfer, but also possibly including business plan development, investor readiness etc. Regional programmes should be designed and implemented in line with the principle of smart specialization. It is important to take into account not only excellence but also relevance and potential impact criteria when selecting projects for funding. In this context it will be very important, in the planning of FP8 and the next CIP, to consider how research and innovation support could be better integrated, either through better coordination and opening the possibility of joint measures between FP8 and CIP or a (partial) integration of CIP in FP8.

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<sup>1</sup> See: CREST guidelines on coordinated use of FP7 and Structural Funds to support R&D [http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP7\\_NEWS&ACTION=D&DOC=40&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1193816077227&RCN=28339](http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP7_NEWS&ACTION=D&DOC=40&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1193816077227&RCN=28339) and also the Practical Guide to EU funding opportunities for Research and Innovation [http://cordis.europa.eu/eu-funding-guide/home\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/eu-funding-guide/home_en.html)

7. Interoperability between instruments should be a guiding principle (“Plug-in principle”). Although their objectives are partly different **the administrative conditions, financial framework and criteria should be compatible as much as possible and administrative barriers should be decreased**. A user-perspective is needed, especially emerging SME’s should be supported by a seamless set of interoperational instruments (1 stop approach in combination with a single set of rules to a project that makes use of several programmes). The future financial perspectives (2014-2020) will play a crucial role here. The general financial regulation should be the unique set of rules for all EU funding instruments. Structural Funds managing authorities should not complicate the access to support by "gold plating" the funding and control rules.
8. **Important role for EIT as a pilot for a “Knowledge Triangle instrument” based upon stakeholder based governance** even if the experience is still limited and still has to proof itself in practice. The KIC’s cover the complete Knowledge Triangle (best practice). In addition to large enterprises as early movers, SME’s should play an important role within the KIC’s by delivering new impulses. KIC’s link an international scope with co-location and co-creation and combine in this way international networks with strong local clusters. They can do what the future Framework Programme should also do. There shall be no preferential treatment for sectoral or geographical entities. With view of smart growth and specialisation, excellence can be found everywhere in the innovation chain as long as an ecosystem provides for a level playing field.
9. Stronger accent on links between FP, Cohesion funds and Education needed (at all education levels) for developing a **systemic approach with education** at the European level. There is a lot of potential within the LLP, including Erasmus Mundus, Marie Curie and the education mission of the EIT, focusing on increasing entrepreneurship. They should support the implementation of the Knowledge Triangle including supporting models for partnerships and mobility between institutions for higher education and research and the business sector. Also, learning mobility should be enhanced together with new types of research based education that is directly linked to business needs and employability. Finally, transversal competences such as entrepreneurship should be stimulated. They are key for the implementation and integration of the Knowledge Triangle.

10. **Pragmatic, flexible approach to synergies, not a panacea.** The lead principle must be to design policies and instruments in order to match the needs of users / beneficiaries. Thus demand led policies will include often all three elements of the Knowledge Triangle, but in a variable geometry. Ex ante impact assessment and better indicators should lead to a well-balanced policy-mix.

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