

EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA  
COMMITTEE

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– ERAC –  
Secretariat

ERAC 1207/11

**NOTE**

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To: ERAC delegations

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Subject: Draft Summary conclusions of the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of ERAC, held in Budapest, on  
28-29 April 2011

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The meeting was chaired by the Director General of the Research and Innovation Directorate-General of the Commission, Mr Robert-Jan SMITS (items 1-5 and 7) and by the Deputy Director General, Ms Anneli PAULI (items 6, 8 and 9).

**1. Adoption of the provisional agenda**

The Committee adopted the provisional agenda as set out in doc. CM 2592/11.

**2. Approval of the draft summary conclusions of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting**

The Committee approved the summary conclusions of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting held in Brussels on 23 February 2011, set out in doc. ERAC 1205/11.

### 3. Standing Information Points

The following written information had been distributed to delegations:

- Summary Conclusions of SFIC meeting on 25 February 2011 (doc. 1352/11)
- Summary Conclusions of GPC meeting on 15 March 2011 (doc. 1301/11)
- Information on the application of the ERIC legal framework
- Information on the launching by Eurostat of a data collection in view of the development of the Europe 2020 Innovation Headline Indicator

The Commission had informed delegations of the following policy initiatives:

#### Adopted policy initiatives

- Euratom 2012-2013 (adopted on 7 March 2011)

#### Forthcoming policy initiatives

- Communication on "Partnerships in Research and Innovation" (3rd quarter 2011)
- Communication on the modernisation of universities (3rd quarter 2011)
- Communication on a European Strategy and Action Plan towards a sustainable bio-based economy by 2020 (November 2011)
- Communication on the developments in the area of access to scientific information and Commission Recommendation on Scientific information (4th quarter 2011)
- Package of legislative proposals for future research and innovation funding programmes (4th quarter 2011)

#### Possible recommendations on Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs), depending on maturity

- "More years better lives" JPI
- "Healthy and productive seas and oceans" JPI
- "Connecting climate knowledge for Europe" JPI
- "Water challenges for a changing world" JPI
- "Anti-microbial resistance JPI"
- "Urban Europe" JPI

**4. Implementation and monitoring of IU in the context of Europe 2020  
- State of play on the European Semester**

The Commission gave a short update on the state-of-play of the European Semester recalling that Member States were expected to deliver their finalised National Reform Programmes (NRP) to the Commission by the end of April 2011. As the next step, the Commission will present proposals for country-specific recommendations in the beginning of June 2011.

**5. Research and innovation policy in Hungary**

Mr Antal Nikodémus presented the Research and Innovation policy in Hungary, where the RTDI strategy is currently under renewal. Mr Norbert Kroo gave a presentation on NEKIFUT: The Hungarian Research Infrastructure Survey and Roadmap project. The Chair thanked both speakers for the interesting presentations and noted the ambitious national plans including increased expenditure for R&D activities.

**6. The outcome of the Slovenian policy mix peer review**

Ms Jana Kolar presented the outcome and follow-up of the policy mix peer review conducted in Slovenia in September-December 2010. She also thanked the members of the Policy Mix Review Team for their work and noted the appreciation for the opportunity to conduct such a useful exercise.

## **7. Common Strategic Framework**

### **7.1 ERAC opinion on ERA-related instruments**

Mr Dan Andrée, Chair of the *ad hoc* WG, presented the draft ERAC Report on ERA-related instruments. It was recalled that the WG had been set up following the request by the Council on 3 December 2009 to review ERA-related instruments with a view to consider best ways to improve and simplify the "ERA-landscape". The input from delegations (23 Member States and 2 Associated Countries) and a number of relevant evaluation studies had been analysed and compiled in the draft report, including 10 main recommendations.

The Committee welcomed the report in general, while also some comments and requests for clarification on the report were put forward. Some delegations regretted that some recommendations were of a rather general nature and therefore less useful. The Chair noted some divergent views expressed in the discussion and concluded that it was not possible to adopt the report by consensus in the meeting. Delegations were therefore given 10 days to send their further written comments on the report. The Steering Board was asked to look into the follow-up for the adoption of the report, as well as to discuss in general the procedures with a view to adopting ERAC advice (Opinions, Reports). It was noted that, while the aim is to take decisions by consensus, the ERAC Rules of Procedure also allow for decision-taking by majority voting.

### **7.2 Preparation of an ERAC opinion on the Common Strategic Framework**

Mr Christian Seiser, Rapporteur, gave a presentation as a basis for the discussion for the preparation of an ERAC opinion on the Common Strategic Framework (CSF), with three main areas to focus the discussion upon, i.e. the structure/objectives of the Common Strategic Framework, priority-setting and the balance between activities within the CSF.

The Committee had an extensive exchange of views during which numerous suggestions and observations were made. The Commission suggested addressing more directly the questions set out in the Green Paper, which had been carefully drafted to identify key points of principle of relevance at this stage in the debate.

It was concluded that the Rapporteur would provide a draft Opinion taking into account the various observations made by delegations, who were also invited to provide possible further written comments to the Rapporteur. The draft Opinion would be presented to the Steering Board on 5 May 2011 with a view to discussion at the Committee's meeting on 24 May 2011. The aim is to adopt the ERAC Opinion at, or shortly after, the May meeting.

## **8. ERA policy**

### **8.1 Continuation of the discussion on the preparation of the ERA Framework**

The Chair introduced the topic by underlining the need to complete ERA by 2014, as requested by the Heads of State or Government<sup>1</sup>. He mentioned that the exercise should start with a thorough problem analysis of existing ERA bottlenecks. Those could be of different nature: funding, self regulation, coordination, and eventual legislation.

The Commission presented an outline for the preparation of the ERA Framework and its views on how to involve Member States in the preparatory phase, notably in the collection of information on existing and planned national legislation and soft law and identification and substantiation of remaining obstacles for the realisation of the ERA. The main issues at stake were outlined, such as the evolving political and legal context, elements to take into account for defining the ERA and its key objectives, the obstacles to be addressed, links with other EU initiatives, the role of ERAC and ERA-related groups and the public consultation, as well as a timetable with the main milestones for the process.

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<sup>1</sup> EUCO 2/11.

During the discussion several delegations highlighted the need to acknowledge in this context also the progress that has been achieved in the past few years in several areas. Various activities and initiatives, such as Joint Programming, Article 185 initiatives, and the work of the Steering Group on Human Resources, were raised as examples of the commitment of the Member States to move forward in building the ERA. However, also the need to address the remaining obstacles and bottlenecks, with the help of appropriate tools, was stressed in order to advance the process. Some delegations questioned the specific obstacles identified in the note and the appropriateness of addressing them at EU level. The continuing pertinence of the ERA Vision 2020 adopted in 2008 was recalled as basis for defining ERA and its objectives. The Commission acknowledged the comments and said they would be taken into account in further work. The Commission also reminded delegates that the clearly-stated purpose of the discussion note was to highlight remaining obstacles and not to give an overall assessment of progress in ERA policy. Of course, this should also be an important starting point.

The Chair concluded by inviting delegations to send possible written input on the issue to the Commission by 3 May 2011. A short timeslot will be included in the agenda of the next ERAC meeting in May to inform delegations of the public consultation that will be launched on 21 June 2011 by the ERAC Stakeholders' seminar. It was recalled that the ERAC Opinion on the ERA Framework is foreseen in November 2011.

## 8.2 ERAC opinion on the review of ERA-related groups

The Chair recalled the Council Resolution of 3 December 2009, in which the Council had requested that a review of the ERA-related groups be initiated by the end of 2010.

Consequently, ERAC had agreed at its meeting in December 2010 to initiate such a review and had appointed Jane Peters (UK) as the Rapporteur. A report, based on the responses from Member States and Associated countries to a questionnaire, as well as the input from the (Chairs of the) groups, had been prepared by the Rapporteur. The Steering Board had prepared a draft ERAC Opinion building on the findings and analysis of the report, that was presented to the Committee for adoption.

The main aspects of the draft Opinion were highlighted:

- Groups to engage in preparation of the ERA Framework and contribute to the implementation and monitoring of other commitments in the Innovation Union (IU) Flagship Initiative;
- Commission to provide more detailed information regarding the aspects of the IU implementation process, on which the Groups could focus their work;
- The emphasis on strengthening links between ERAC and the Groups; and
- Groups to consider their working methods along the lines suggested in the Report.

During the exchange of views it was also recalled that the role and mandate of ESFRI and its contribution towards the ERA Framework would need to be addressed.

The Chair concluded that the Committee had taken note of the Rapporteur's report on this issue. The Chair also noted the consensus on the adoption of the draft ERAC Opinion as presented to the Committee, with one addition that had been proposed during the discussion on the need for elected Vice-Chairs. She concluded that the final text would be put under short written procedure for adoption<sup>2</sup>. It was noted that the Committee would return to the issue of mandates at its meeting in November 2011. The Hungarian EU Presidency confirmed its intention to prepare Council Conclusions on this issue.

In this context the FR delegation wanted to record its position that, while the ERAC opinion states that Groups use sub-groups/task forces for the preparatory work, important discussions should take place in plenary sessions in order to involve all members in the decision-making.

### **8.3 University-related activities**

#### **8.3.1 Snapshot on ongoing university-related activities**

The Commission gave a short overview on the ongoing activities related to universities, recalling that a series of Peer Learning Activities (PLA) had been carried out from January 2010 to September 2010. The final report of the PLA process had been presented to ERAC in December 2010 by Denmark as the leading country. A Commission Communication on Modernising Universities is expected to be published in September 2011 and Denmark has been asked to act as Rapporteur, with a view to preparing for an ERAC opinion on this issue.

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<sup>2</sup> The ERAC opinion was adopted through written procedure on 5 May 2011.

### **8.3.2 Report on and discussion of ERAC seminar on universities: Peer Learning Activities for the Modernisation of Universities (30 March 2011) and first discussion on an ERAC opinion**

The Danish delegation presented the outcome of the ERAC Seminar on Universities that had been organised in Brussels on 30 March 2011. It also presented three topics (as discussed at the Seminar) with questions that could be addressed by the Committee in its opinion, namely "Structure and governance of institutions"; "Human resources and research careers"; and "Funding streams and mechanisms".

Delegations gave their first reactions on this approach and were invited to send their possible input on the topics by 10 May 2011. The Danish delegation aims to circulate a draft ERAC opinion to delegations on 17 May 2011 to be discussed at the Committee's meeting on 24 May 2011, with a view to adoption after the meeting through written procedure.

## **9. Any Other Business**

### **9.1 Agenda of the next meeting**

The Steering Board will draw up the provisional annotated agenda of the next meeting on 24 May 2011, to be submitted to the Committee after the agreement between the Chair and the Vice-Chair. Main items foreseen on the agenda (*see also ERAC Provisional Work Programme*):

- Implementation and monitoring of the Innovation Union in the context of EU 2020
- Draft ERAC Opinion on Common Strategic Framework
- Draft ERAC Opinion on Modernisation of Universities
- Update on the ERA Framework preparation
- Update of the ERAC 18-month provisional work programme