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WORKING PAPER

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MEETING DOCUMENT

From:	ERAC Secretariat
To:	ERAC (European Research Area and Innovation Committee)
Subject:	ERAC Plenary in Helsinki on 2 October 2019 - Item 6 - "Standing Information Point - Update on Partnerships" given by the Commission

In view of item 6 of the agenda of the ERAC plenary on 2 October, delegations will find attached the "Standing Information Point - Update on Partnerships" given by the Commission.

ERAC - Standing Information Point
Update on Partnerships
Brussels, 17 September 2019

I. Background: Strategic Coordinating Process for Partnerships

Horizon Europe will support European Partnerships to deliver on global challenges encapsulated in the SDGs, and industrial modernisation through concerted R&I effort with the Member States, private sector, foundations and other stakeholders. Partnerships as a policy approach provide mechanisms to link R&I closely to policy needs, develop synergies with national and regional programmes, bring together a broad range of innovation actors to work towards a common goal, and turn research into socio-economic results. As such, they are concrete attempts to address global challenges by translating broad priorities into concrete roadmaps and activities.

The Strategic Coordinating Process for Partnerships is part of the strategic planning of Horizon Europe and set up following a recommendation of the Council and ERAC to:

- Ensure transparent and evidence-based selection of Partnerships, rationalising the landscape and maximising their impacts;
- Support the effective and efficient implementation of Partnerships throughout their lifecycle;
- Provide strategic guidance on the overall policy approach and the future objectives and composition of the Partnership portfolio.

It was endorsed at the level of ERAC that the strategic coordinating process consists of two parts:

1. The selection of Partnerships will be fully integrated into the Strategic Planning of Horizon Europe, with the Strategic configuration of the Programme Committee as the single entry point for the structured consultation of Member States/Associated Countries. This will ensure focus on commonly agreed objectives and expected impacts, and the overall coherence between the different activities of the Framework Programme, while respecting the existing decision-making processes.
2. The implementation, monitoring, evaluation and phasing-out of Partnerships will be followed by an independent advisory mechanism, the 'Forum for European R&I Partnerships'. To prepare the forum and ensure it will become operational in 2021, there will be a 'Transitional Forum' for the interim period from mid-2019 to December 2020 to further design the process and help prepare Member States and Associated Countries to participate in the strategic coordinating process.

At the plenary in March, ERAC exchanged views on the structured consultation process for future European Partnerships (doc. WK 3344/2019) and on the draft mandate for the transitional Forum for R&I Partnerships 2019-2020 (doc. WK 3343/2019) based on a presentation by the Commission on the state of play of preparations, and pending political agreement on related parts of the Horizon Europe programme. This note is a progress report on activities carried out since March.

II. Structured consultation of Member States in the Shadow Strategic Configuration of the Programme Committee

In May 2019, the Commission launched a consultation of Member States on 44 possible candidates for European Partnerships as part of a strategic coordinating process to ensure their early involvement in the prioritisation and definition of objectives and scope. The Commission services identified these candidates for European Partnerships as part of the first Strategic Planning of Horizon Europe (2021-2024), taking into account the areas for possible institutionalised partnerships defined in the Regulation. It is important to consider that this exercise has taken place at early stages of preparations of the partnerships (i.e. before the Impact Assessment work and discussions with the partners). The feedback provided by 30 countries (all Member States, Iceland and Norway) has been analysed by the Commission services and summarised (overall and per partnership candidate) in a draft report¹.

The main conclusions from the structured consultation, and the subsequent discussion at the meeting of the Shadow Strategic Configuration of the Programme Committee can be summarized as follows:

1. Overall positive feedback on the proposed portfolio, but thematic coverage could be improved

The results indicate a high level of satisfaction with the overall portfolio, the level of rationalisation achieved, and policy relevance. Delegations are in general satisfied with the thematic coverage, but the feedback suggests the coverage could be improved in cluster 2 “Culture, creativity and inclusive society” and cluster 3 “Civil Security for Society”.

2. Critical view on the high number and openness of Joint Undertakings

Country feedback suggests dissatisfaction with the high number of proposed Article 187 TFEU partnerships. Notably smaller as well as EU-13 countries raise concerns with regards to the potential insufficient transparency and openness. The Impact Assessments will carefully analyse for each if objectives could be reached with the co-programmed model.

3. Lack of cross-modal perspective and systematic approach to mobility

The current list foresees 5 partnerships in the area of transport (for rail, air traffic management, aviation, connected and automated driving, zero-emission road transport), and 2 that in closely related technologies for radically reducing carbon emissions (hydrogen, batteries). Delegations called for a systemic approach to developing mobility and addressing related challenges.

4. Partnership composition: the role of Member States in industry partnerships

In the feedback, Member States express their interest to contribute to or join as partner in partnerships that have traditionally been industry-led. It needs to be discussed further what the involvement of Member States could mean in practice (notably in terms of contributions, in the governance), and what would be possible scenarios/options in Horizon Europe. The Commission services are currently preparing 3 workshops with Member

¹ https://www.era-learn.eu/documents/results_structured_consultation_ms

States representatives in the areas of mobility, digital, and industrial technologies to further explore the issue and identify practical options.

5. Additional priorities proposed for partnerships by delegations

Countries put forward in their written feedback a high number of additional priorities to be considered as European Partnerships, 25 in total. A closer examination suggests that these additional proposals are motivated by very different reasons, from addressing gaps in the portfolio to the wish of maintaining existing networks, or worries over some topics not being sufficiently covered under Horizon Europe.

At the Shadow SPC meeting on 27 June the Commission recalled the boundary conditions arising from the political agreement of Horizon Europe (e.g. criteria, capping, uncertainty over the budget) and proposed to strictly limit the number of additional partnership candidates that would be included in the portfolio, and to continue discussing over the summer to come back to this question at the next Shadow SPC meeting on 12 September.

Over the summer delegations and Commission services further developed proposals for the following 8 priorities and prepared respective partnership fiches:

1. Cross-cluster “One Health” AMR;
2. Brain health;
3. Social transformation and inequalities;
4. Smart and zero-emission waterborne transport;
5. Sustainable, smart and inclusive Cities and Communities;
6. Materials and Production;
7. Future Forest and Forestry;
8. European Geological Service.

In addition, the French delegation submitted a partnership fiche on “Cultural heritage”.

For the Shadow SPC meeting on 12 September delegations expressed their priorities among the 9 fiches. The tentative conclusions, for validation at the next meeting on 24 October, requiring another round of input from the Member States and Commission, are:

- For two proposals for additional partnership candidates (Sustainable, smart and inclusive Cities and Communities, One Health/ Antimicrobial resistance) the Commission will invite delegations to provide detailed feedback, in line with the previous consultation. This would in addition include the possible EIT-KIC on Culture and Creative Industries that has been identified in the Commission proposal for the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda.
- Three additional priorities proposed as partnerships require more work until the next meeting in October, before a judgement can be made: Future Forest and Forestry; European Geological Service; Smart and zero-emission waterborne transport;
- Three additional priorities proposed are important but rather to be further prepared towards a European Partnership for the next strategic planning process by 2024: Social transformations; Brain health; Materials and production.

The Commission raised reservations on the proposed partnership for cultural heritage with the invitation to re-assess, given the multitude of ongoing and planned activities related to cultural heritage. If it would develop a strong vision and ambition beyond what is proposed so far, then this could be relevant post 2024 (to be confirmed).

6. Next steps of preparation for the portfolio

For the 44 candidates identified in the context of strategic planning it was underlined by the Commission at the meeting on 27 June that they would now go into the next steps of elaboration, taking into account the feedback received by Member States. Commission services will start discussions with partners to align objectives, expected impacts, and discuss possible partners contributions. For the institutionalised partnerships based on Articles 187 and 185 TFEU, the Commission will start impact assessment work, in which a central part will be assessing whether there is justification for going for the institutionalised form or whether the objectives could be achieved as or more effectively with other partnership forms or calls for proposals. In this context, it will also look at further options for rationalisation.

Therefore, it should not be taken for granted that all current candidates would in the end materialise, or that all candidates for institutionalised partnerships would end up in a legislative proposal, but they may.

III. Transitional Forum for R&I Partnerships

The Transitional Forum for R&I Partnerships is created as part of the strategic coordinating process for partnerships to support a strategy-led and coherent approach to R&I partnerships in Europe. At the ERAC Plenary of 6 December 2018, it was agreed that that the Transitional Forum will be set up for a period until 2020, and that a Forum for R&I partnerships will only become fully functional at the start of Horizon Europe. By the end of 2020, the appropriate form, status, representation of participating states and partnerships, and resource allocation of the forum during the implementation of Horizon Europe will be decided at the appropriate level. The decision, based on a proposal put forward by the Commission and prepared with the Transitional Forum, will take into account the revision of ERA priorities and related advisory structures.

The mandate of the Transitional Forum takes into account the comments provided by delegations during and after the ERAC plenary in March. Letters inviting to identify national representatives have been sent to the Member States, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway. 29 countries have so far appointed delegates.

The first meeting of the transitional Forum took place on 11 September, with 23 delegations, the GPC chair and the Commission attending.

The Transitional Forum is co-chaired by a representative of the European Commission, Kurt Vandenberghe, Director for Policy Development and Coordination in DG Research and Innovation, and an elected representative from among the Member States representatives. The delegations elected Erik Hansalek, Head of Unit for Research and Innovation in the EU, BMBF, Germany, as Member State co-chair.

A support group will assist the co-chairs in the planning, preparation and follow-up of the activities of the Transitional Forum. The composition of the support group is currently the following, but will be revisited if it is considered necessary to increase the resources:

- Szonja Csuzdi (HU)
- Mafalda Dourado (PT)
- Alex Grablowitz (for the MS co-chair)
- Timo Haapalehto (FI)
- Joerg Niehoff (for the Commission co-chair)

At the first meeting the delegations discussed in detail the scope and requirements for the first three deliverables that the group has to prepare:

- Recommendation for the scope and structure of the biannual monitoring and the necessary processes and data request
- Recommendation for the scope, approach and necessary resources of foresight activities
- Common guidelines (enabling conditions) for the design and implementation of national governance structures, national monitoring mechanisms, etc.

Additional written input has been provided by delegates in writing after the meeting to feed into the work of the support group. The next meetings are scheduled for the support group on 23 October, and for the Transitional Forum for 18 December.

IV. State of preparation

The Commission has started a number of preparatory steps for Horizon Europe that are directly or indirectly relevant for European Partnerships:

- The Survey: "Horizon Europe Co-design 2021-2024" on the orientations towards the first strategic plan for Horizon Europe is open for feedback until 4 October²;
- The Survey: "Horizon Europe Implementation Strategy" is open until 4 October³;
- Draft Inception Impact Assessments for 12 partnership candidates for institutionalised European Partnerships based on Article 185/7 have been published, as well as a roadmap for a successor to the High Performance Computing Article 187 initiative. They set out the initial problem definition by the Commission Services, objectives and expected impacts, as well as the possible options in addressing the them. The feedback period of four weeks has been closed, and comments received been published⁴;
- The Impact Assessment Work has started, and is supported by external study that will provide coordinated input, based on desk research, Commission and stakeholder consultation, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis and inputs from panels of experts. It will develop a single common methodology to ensure coordinated inputs to individual impact assessment studies of each envisaged partnership;
- The Open Public Consultation for partnership candidates for institutionalised European Partnerships based on Article 185/7 has been launched and is open until 8 November 2019⁵;
- The new policy approach for European Partnerships, as well as current and potential future partnerships, were centre stage at the first R&I days in Brussels on 24-26 September.

² https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/HorizonEurope_Codesign_2021-2024

³ https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/HorizonEurope_Codesign_Implementation

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives_en

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/consultationpartnershipshorizoneurope?surveylanguage=en>