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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 Brussels on 6 December 2018 - Item 5.2 - Discussion paper by the Commission on "the strategic coordinating process for partnerships under Horizon Europe"

Delegations will find attached the discussion paper by the Commission on "the strategic coordinating process for partnerships under Horizon Europe" in view of item 5.2 of the agenda of the ERAC plenary in Brussels on 6 December.

Discussion paper for the ERAC Plenary 6 December 2018

Based on the Council Conclusions of December 2017 and the recommendations of the ERAC on partnerships, the Commission agreed to present to ERAC a proposal for the operational design of the strategic coordinating process for partnerships under Horizon Europe. In this regard, the Commission proposes that:

1. The strategic coordinating process is designed and implemented based on the description in the annex. It provides advice¹ and input for Commission and Member States/Associated countries with the objective to
 - a. ensure transparent and evidence-based selection of partnerships rationalising the landscape and maximising their impacts,
 - b. support the effective and efficient implementation of partnerships throughout their lifecycle and
 - c. provide strategic guidance on the overall policy approach and the partnership portfolio;
2. The selection of new and/or renewed European partnerships under Horizon Europe will be fully embedded in the strategic planning of Horizon Europe, with the Strategic Configuration of the Programme Committee² as the single entry point for the structured and early consultation of Member States and Associated Countries, providing advice on the portfolio and all individual partnership candidates;
3. The implementation, monitoring, evaluation and phasing-out phases of partnerships will be followed-up by an independent advisory mechanism with the provisional working title "Forum for European R&I partnerships") with clear interfaces to the Framework Programme governance (selection and EU funding) and ERA governance structures (other aspects), in particular ERAC. A biennial monitoring on European Partnerships and other R&I partnerships of European relevance will be a main visible product of the forum;
4. During the period 2019-2020 the Commission will organise a transitional Forum for European R&I partnerships, with nominated participants from Member States and Associated Countries. The forum will be co-chaired by the Commission and a Member States representative and deliver against a commonly agreed clear work plan, based on the draft roadmap presented in the annex;
5. The Commission will provide the support necessary for the transitional period (e.g. organisation of meetings and reimbursement of travel expenses, COM staff dedicated to the "Forum for European R&I partnerships", expert group etc.);
6. Member States and Associated Countries will ensure the follow-up of ERAC recommendations addressed to them and explore appropriate national governance and monitoring mechanisms to ensure timely and high-quality input to the work of the 'Forum for R&I partnerships' (preparedness exercise);
7. 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 will take into account a proposal put forward by the Commission and endorsed by the transitional forum, and the revision of ERA priorities and related advisory structures.

¹ The process will be organised in full respect of the right of initiative of the Commission and comitology arrangements for the governance of the Framework Programme.

² Until the formal establishment of Strategic Configuration of the Programme Committee its shadow configuration will be used

Annex: Strategic coordinating process for partnerships

Introduction

This document, prepared by Commission services, sets out the main elements of a strategic coordinating process covering the life cycle of partnerships, in line with the requirements developed by the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group and adopted by ERAC on 17 May 2018³, and reflecting the current status of the negotiation of the Horizon Europe proposal. The following boundary conditions and considerations have been taken into account, with preliminary agreements at the level of ERAC:

1. Link to the Strategic Planning of Horizon Europe

The strategic coordinating process for partnerships has to have clear links with the strategic planning of Horizon Europe. Consequently it has been agreed in ERAC that the selection phase for partnerships will be fully integrated in the strategic planning, while the other phases of the life cycle, namely the implementation, monitoring and phasing out of partnerships, will be addressed in a dedicated process.

2. Timing of preparation of first partnerships and early consultation

The ERAC recommendations already anticipated that a mechanism needs to be in place that ensures an early and structured consultation of Member States and Associated Countries, in case their preparation is expected to start before the strategic coordinating process is formally established.

The paper is structured as follows: the first part outlines the objectives of the strategic coordinating process, the second the functionalities of the process (with the ones related to the selection phase in greater detail, since it will be directly applicable), and the third part the roles and responsibilities of the involved parties and a roadmap towards implementation.

1. Objectives of the strategic coordinating process for partnerships

The ERAC report defines the overall ambition of the process: *“The strategic coordinating process is the recognised entry point for analysis and advice on the possible setup, implementation, monitoring and phasing out of R&I partnerships in Europe enabling decisions to fully exploit the potential of R&I partnerships for the EU, the Participating States and citizen in a coherent, open and effective manner.”*

In line with this ambition the following three objectives are defined:

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

The process will be guided by a comprehensive criteria framework, based on Annex III of the proposal for the Horizon Europe Regulation.

³ Final report of the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships on "Process"

2. Functionalities

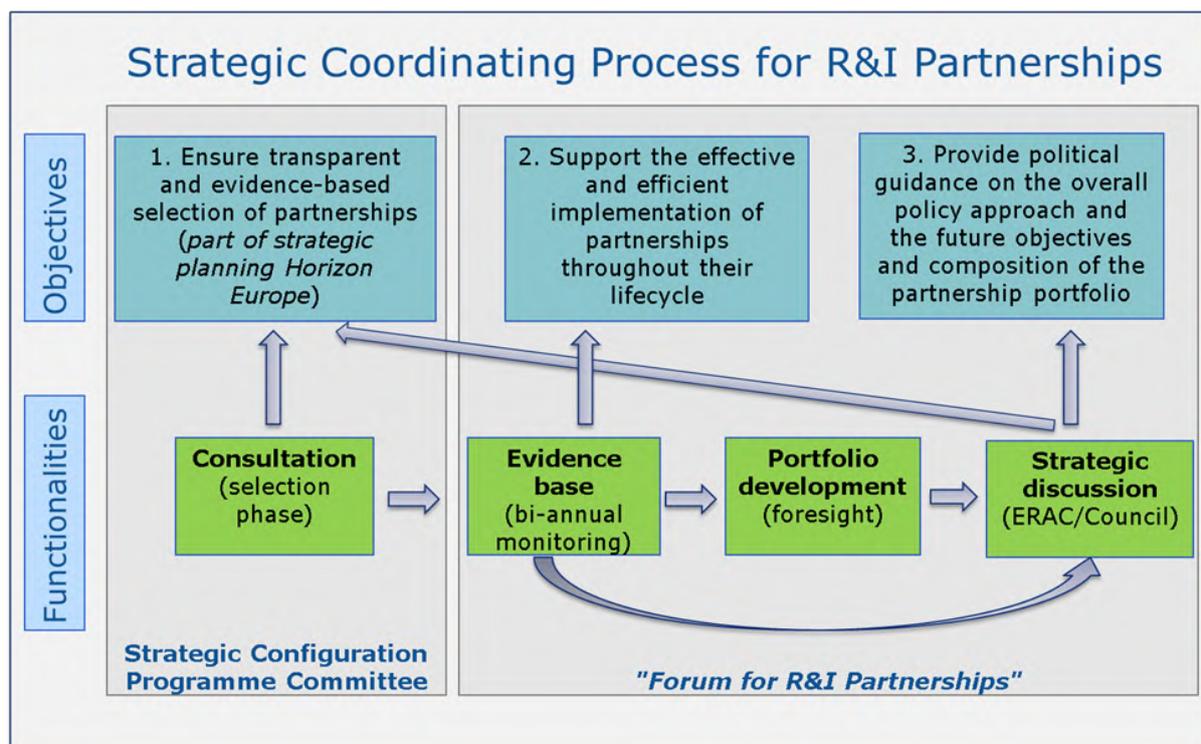
The following functionalities are considered necessary in order to achieve the three objectives of the strategic coordinating process for partnerships:

1. **Consultation (selection phase)**
Ensure advice of Member States and Associated Countries on the proposed portfolio and individual candidates for partnerships prior to the launch of their preparation;
2. **Evidence base**
Provide the necessary evidence base to guide the effective and efficient implementation of partnerships throughout their lifecycle and inform a strategic discussion;
3. **Portfolio development**
Support a long-term planning for a relevant partnership portfolio, in particular supporting the identification of emerging topics and their preparation
4. **Strategic discussion**
Jointly assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the partnership policy approach and portfolio and identify potential corrective measures;

The consultation and selection phase will be fully integrated in the strategic planning, with the **Strategic configuration of the Programme Committee**⁴ as the single entry point for the structured and early consultation of Member States and Associated countries.

The other functionalities are proposed to be organised as a **"Forum for R&I Partnerships"** (provisional working title) that will oversee the implementation and be the interface between Commission Services, Member States/Associated Countries and ERAC/Council. A transitional configuration will cover the period until the start of implementation of Horizon Europe and prepare a proposal for the final decision.

Figure 1: Link between objectives and functionalities for the strategic coordinating process for partnerships



⁴ Until the formal establishment of the Strategic configuration of the Programme Committee it is proposed to use its shadow configuration, ensuring that relevant currently associated third countries will be able to provide their feedback.

2.1 Consultation (selection phase)

The main functionality of the selection phase is to ensure advice of Member States and Associated Countries on the proposed portfolio and individual candidates for partnerships⁵ prior to the launch of their preparation. This early and structured consultation, as part of the strategic planning of Horizon Europe, will be organised in the following way:

Step 1: Identification of candidates for partnerships

As part of the strategic planning, candidates for individual partnerships will be identified. The Commission Services will prepare a concept / description for each, subject to Commission internal discussion and validation (e.g. compliance with policy ambition and criteria) before being included into the portfolio of potential partnerships.

Step 2: Structured consultation of MS (AC) on partnership portfolio

- **Configuration:** The portfolio of partnerships candidates will be presented in the Strategic Programme Committee to MS (AC), with an overall description of the portfolio and its coherence/complementarity, and individual fiches per partnership.
- **Format:** For potential Article 185 and Article 187 initiatives it will be based on the Inception Impact Assessments⁶, for co-programmed and co-funded partnerships on similar fiches including elements such as context, problem definition, objectives and expected impacts, rationale for partnership, type of partnership, composition, budget and resources, planned activities, and compliance with Horizon Europe criteria.
- **Feedback and discussion:** On this basis each MS (AC) will be invited to provide feedback on the portfolio (e.g. overall budget share, coherence/complementarity) and individual partnership candidates (type of partnership, partners' commitments and contributions, etc.), in a format to be agreed upon. The Commission services will analyse and consolidate the feedback and provide input for a discussion in the Strategic Programme Committee.
- **Timing:** The necessary lead-time for preparation will result in waves for the structured consultation: early 2019 for potential Article 185/187 initiatives, mid 2019 for others, and again at a later stage for additional partnerships.

Step 3: Commission services take the feedback into account

The feedback received and the outcome of the discussion in the Strategic Programme Committee will inform the further development of the partnerships. For any Article 185/187 proposals the impact assessment will describe how feedback has been taken into account. For other forms of partnerships it will inform the drafting of Work Programmes and underlying preparation of partnerships.

Step 4: Formal decisions

The formal decisions on European Partnerships are taken in the appropriate configurations, and in full respect of the Commission's right of initiative and comitology provisions, with decision by Council (and European Parliament) for Article 187 and 185 initiatives and adoption of the Horizon Europe Work Programmes for co-programmed and co-funded partnerships.

⁵ "Identification of themes for new KICs and related consultation of MS will take place within the preparation of the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021-2027".

⁶ The Inception Impact Assessment sets out the Commission's initial analysis of the problem, policy objectives and different solutions as well as their likely impacts. It is followed up by an impact assessment that accompanies the legislative proposal of the Commission.

2.2 Evidence base

A key requirement stemming from the recommendation of ERAC is to have a well-functioning monitoring and evaluation system for partnerships. This will provide the necessary evidence base to guide the effective and efficient implementation of partnerships throughout their lifecycle and will inform a strategic discussion. It will be based on a **biennial monitoring on partnerships**. It has to be of a strategic nature to steer appropriate discussion and provide a systematic overview of the overall partnership landscape. The exact content will vary depending on the timeline, with the first in 2022 setting the baseline, the second in 2024 providing first results that feed into the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe and providing first input to the phasing out discussion. The scope will cover elements such as the following below, while the exact structure and content would need to be defined in 2020.

- Partnership landscape in relation to Horizon Europe priorities, budget allocations, statistics on participation at partnership and project level, comparison to Horizon 2020;
- Dedicated analysis on to be agreed priority issues (e.g. addressing the guiding principles for partnerships such as coherence, flexibility, transparency, openness, etc.);
- Partnership fiches;
- Country fiches.

The monitoring will build on reporting from partnerships already in place and supplementary information considered. It will be prepared by the Commission services, while initiatives will contribute to statistics, dedicated issues to be addressed and fiches per partnerships. Member States and Associated countries will provide input on national contributions, outcomes and impacts at national level. It should feed a strategic debate on the partnership landscape, including how it fits with the overall R&I system and development of ERA.

2.3 Portfolio development

The third function of the strategic coordinating process would be an element of foresight supporting the further development of the partnership portfolio over time. In particular, the foresight element should allow assessing the gaps and emerging opportunities in the partnership landscape, as well as political priorities at country and EU level. It can also advise on highly populated areas with high pressure for phasing out existing partnerships as a pre-condition for being able to create new ones of priority areas. The foresight exercise would then feed a strategic discussion on the future objectives of the partnership portfolio and policy approach, focusing especially on underexploited and overpopulated areas of the partnership landscape.

2.4 Strategic discussion

The biennial monitoring and the information on the portfolio development will provide the input for a strategic discussion between Member States, Associated Countries and Commission Services. The discussion focusses on the policy approach and the portfolio of partnerships, not in individual partnerships and aspects directly related to funding. It is proposed to use the **ERAC plenary in DG configuration** for this purpose, since it ensures adequate level of representation, links well with the ERA dimension and allows proposing follow-up actions. The focus of the discussion should be on:

- Assessment of the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the revised policy approach;
- Assessment of the partnership landscape, its consistency with the principles and criteria for partnerships and the direction it should take for its development;
- Assessment of progress made and overall fit with the European EU R&I system, including the development of ERA.

It is important to keep in mind that whilst the discussion would also inform the selection of future partnerships and the phasing out/renewal of existing partnerships, it cannot duplicate or circumvent existing decision-making processes (comitology and Commission's right of initiative). It will remain an element of (strong) advice, while the responsibilities for giving strategic directions lie with the Council, and respective decisions to adapt partnership proposals or work programmes remain in the respective configurations.

3. Roles, responsibilities and roadmap

The strategic coordinating process requires joint ownership by the Commission and Member States/ Associated Countries in order to deliver against its objectives. It is closely tied to a clear definition of roles and responsibilities, and also to the question of resources that are required for the proper functioning of the process. Here it is useful to distinguish between the different functions of the process (see also table 1).

- **Member States and Associated Countries** have to ensure timely and qualified input to the structured consultation on the partnership portfolio and individual candidates, in particular concerning national participation and commitments. The biennial monitoring requires dedicated input on the national participations and impacts. The portfolio development has to address those areas where national priorities are aligned with agreed Union objectives, but also those areas where common priorities between MS/AC should be addressed jointly. National processes need to be in place supporting this ambition, including a consolidated position for the strategic discussion and the corrective measures proposed (in particular for phasing out partnerships).
- The **partners** (other than the Union) will be key in defining the ambition and the design of initiatives, provide input to the monitoring and evaluation informing the biennial monitoring and Horizon Europe evaluations, demonstrate achievement of objectives in the agreed framework by e.g. impact case studies and inform the further development of the partnerships.
- The **Commission Services** provide the overall coordination and ensure smooth operation of the process, in a transparent and open way and in close collaboration with MS/AC. It ensures early information, structured consultation and transparent follow-up of feedback received. It ensures timely delivery of the biennial monitoring, clear links between the strategic planning of the Framework Programmes and the portfolio development. The Commission will participate in the strategic discussion with consolidated view of services and ensure appropriate follow-up.
- Throughout the process there is the need to use **external expertise**, organised by the Commission and clearly identified in the work programmes providing the financial means (e.g. through expert groups, policy support facility, experts support to interim and final evaluations, dedicated studies), in particular for the evidence base and the portfolio development.

Table 1: Overview of functions, roles and responsibilities for the strategic coordinating process

	<i>MS/AC</i>	<i>(Potential) Partners (other than the Union)</i>	<i>COM</i>	<i>External expertise</i>
Consultation <i>(strategic Programme Committee)</i>	Provide feedback on partnership candidates and portfolio	Provide input on objectives, expected impacts, contributions, commitments etc.	Organise consultation ensure appropriate follow-up	n.a.
Evidence base <i>(biennial monitoring)</i>	Input to biennial monitoring	Input to biennial monitoring	Preparation of biennial monitoring	Input to biennial monitoring
Portfolio development <i>(foresight)</i>	Input on national priorities	Input on achievement of objectives and changing/emerging priorities	Input on emerging policy priorities and strategic planning	Support to the identification of common priorities Gap analysis
Strategic discussion <i>(ERAC/Council)</i>	National positions and consolidated views, input to ERAC or Council Conclusions	n.a.	Consolidated COM view	n.a.

The strategic coordinating process for partnerships should start becoming operational in 2019, and be fully functional at the beginning of the implementation of Horizon Europe in 2021. This transition period will allow preparing on the side of the Commission services and on the side of Member States and Associated Countries, and jointly agreeing on elements that need to be defined in that process. It will require at a later stage (towards the end of 2020) to take final decisions on the appropriate form, status, representation of participating states and partnerships, and resource allocation of the forum during the implementation of Horizon Europe. The decision will take into account the revision of ERA priorities and related advisory structures. During this transition period the Commission services would invite MS/AC to participate in regular meetings of a transitional "Forum for R&I Partnerships".

Table 2: Draft elements of a roadmap for the transitional "Forum for R&I partnerships"

	Transitional forum for R&I partnerships
Draft milestones and deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft mandate (for comments) and request for nominations for national representatives (03/2019); ▪ Kick-off meeting of the partnership forum (05/2019) and adoption of its mandate; ▪ Input to possible Terms of Reference for a group of external experts, for e.g. evaluation, monitoring and/or foresight (09/2019); ▪ Proposal for scope and structure biannual monitoring (03/2020); ▪ Support to follow-up of ERAC recommendations by MS/AC (finalised by 03/2020) ▪ Support to the design and implementation of national governance structures, national monitoring mechanisms, etc. (06/2020); ▪ Proposal for the forum and its implementation during Horizon Europe (composition, governance model, resources, link to ERA advisory structures) (09/2020); ▪ Final report (12/2020).