

ERIC Forum's response to the ERAC working group on ERA priorities and goals

Note by the ERIC Forum on the input paper for the second hearing on the subject of the ERA OBJECTIVES and ERA PRIORITIES

CONTEXT:

The ERIC Forum responds herewith to the request, by the ERAC WG, to address four questions on future ERA Objectives and ERA Priorities as a follow up of the discussion on the previous draft on the “Options for a New Narrative on the Future of ERA” which is now available as a final version (8 October).

The questions will be addressed in the Stakeholders hearing planned on 29 October 2019 and are based on a synthetic document proposed to us by the ERAC WG, describing three ERA Objectives towards a really functional ERA and four wide Priorities designed to achieve the three objectives.

Objectives and Priorities should be in line with the renewed ERA Paradigm, including possible legislative or soft regulatory measures. The last question specifically addresses which concrete initiatives should be launched (e.g. the ERA lighthouses).

ERA Objectives:

a) An inspiring and empowering ERA

ERA policies and actions at all levels should allow ERA stakeholders but also the wider society to become empowered and inspired by knowledge, with a smart directionality towards societal needs, in particular by contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

b) A seamless, connected and competitive ERA

In order to fully use ERA's potential for a knowledge based, innovation-led sustainable growth, ERA needs to become truly interconnected in knowledge and technologies with respect to researchers, innovators and institutions, while contributing to Europe's competitiveness;

c) An involving and inclusive collaborative ERA

ERA policies and actions at all levels should have the principles of involvement, inclusiveness, openness and collaboration at their core, with the broadest sense of geography, people and institutions, both from academia and industry.

ERA Priorities:

1. Increase the relevance of ERA for Society
2. Promote broader Inclusiveness
3. Connect through joint policy action
4. Produce seamless and competitive framework conditions, including tools for policy deployment

The ERIC Forum has circulated the documents provided by the ERAC WG to its Associates (ERA objectives and ERA priorities- Draft 16 October 2019, Outline ERA lighthouses version 11 Oct, four questions-mail 16/10/2019) proposing a set of observations and collecting comments which have produced the document here following. Due to the short time allowed, further responses may be collected from the Members and reported in the hearing.

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RESPONSE:

We report in the following the questions asked by the ERAC WG (in bold) and comments as shared by the ERIC FORUM, as well as the re-insertion (in track changes) in the document on the ERA objectives and priorities of those aspects which went missing from the narrative:

1. Do you think that the proposed draft future ERA objectives and ERA priorities fully address the main elements of the new ERA paradigm/narrative that have been elaborated by the ERAC WG?

The three objectives and the four priorities reflect most of the general indications of the final version of the ERAC WG narrative, but tend to miss some of the strategic aspects relevant for a Research and Innovation Area which were specifically outlined in the narrative.

For example, the core value of ERA, according to the deliverable 1, is to strengthen the focus on science, research and knowledge as core values of Europe. Yet science and research, let alone their excellence, are not mentioned among the proposed objectives nor priorities.

We welcome the intention to better link research, innovation and education. However, we should keep in mind that knowledge on its own cannot replace research (knowledge creation could). We believe that ERA will not meet its core value of strengthening the focus on science and research, if they are not addressed among the objectives and priorities.

As raised in our previous input, the ERIC FORUM still believes that one of the most important future objectives of the ERA should be the drive towards increase in quality and integration of

the resources of different countries and institutions for it to be able to respond to the challenges.

In the response to the following questions, we try to suggest some of the main changes which would retrieve concepts already expressed in the ERAC draft document on narrative.

2. Do you think that the draft future ERA objectives fully address the existing challenges for the further completion of the ERA? If not, which elements are missing?

There are significant elements missing in the draft objectives, as for example, the focus on quality and on the relevant contribution that R&I should play in achieving wider goals, promote the adoption of ambitious knowledge policies, the broadening of the outreach of ERA, achieve the stronger focus on science, research and knowledge as core values to realize the full potential of a knowledge driven society also through a strong and sustained political ownership.

To be more coherent with the draft Narrative, we would recommend some corrections to the wording of the objectives as in the following (underlined):

a) An inspiring and empowering ERA: Ambitious ERA policies and actions **and a strengthened focus on science, research and knowledge, implemented** at all levels allow ERA stakeholders but also the wider society to become empowered and inspired by **the best production and use of** knowledge, with a smart directionality towards societal needs, in particular by contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

b) A seamless, connected and competitive ERA: In order to fully use ERA's potential for a knowledge-based, innovation-led sustainable **international competitiveness**, ERA needs to become truly **united in the capability to produce high quality** knowledge and technologies with respect to researchers, innovators and institutions, while contributing to Europe's **well-being** competitiveness;

c) An involving and inclusive collaborative ERA: ERA policies and actions at all levels should have the principles of **quality**, involvement, inclusiveness, openness and collaboration at their core, with the broadest sense of geography, people and institutions, both from academia and industry.

3. Do you think that the draft future ERA priorities address the main issues for increasing the overall impact of the ERA? If not, which elements are missing?

Also, here there are relevant elements which went missing from the previous document, e.g.

- the strong contribution that science, research and knowledge play as core values for Europe,
- the need to overcome fragmentation, and the concept of integrating the efforts to reach a world level critical mass,
- the need to always pursue excellence to reach relevance,
- the sustainability aspects (in particular for research infrastructures),
- to position research and innovation as important enablers, etc.

We try to recover some of the most critical elements in the following suggested changes.

1) Increase the relevance of ERA for Society: Promote ***bold*** national, including regional, and EU knowledge policies ***that increase the significant contribution that R&I plays in achieving Europe's wider policy goals. This can be achieved by integrating R&I in the ERA, increasing their world relevance and*** responsiveness to societal needs, as the main element of efficient and effective R&I systems.

Particular attention should be given towards addressing the SDGs and involving stakeholders and citizens, as appropriate, in setting R&I policy priorities and in the knowledge processes. Implement a better and effective branding and communication for an improved outreach of ERA achievements;

2) Promote broader Inclusiveness: Ensure that the European, and national, ***and*** including regional, R&I policies are inclusive in the broadest sense. ***This can be achieved*** through an open and transparent involvement of all relevant actors, ***to strengthen their quality and excellence and reduce fragmentation*** encompassing all its dimensions, namely geographical, people (researchers, including gender issues and minority groups) and institutions, including the private sector. It should promote brain circulation at all levels and reduce the unintended phenomena of brain drain.

3) Connect through joint policy action: Ensure wide political support at the highest level for driving the implementation of ***the full potential of a knowledge-driven society.*** ***This can be realised by*** better coordinated knowledge-based policies, providing the smart directionality needed for transformative changes resulting from absorption of new technologies (e.g., digital transformation and the energy transition) and contributing to

meeting the SDGs and sustainable growth requirements. New priority setting and implementation mechanisms need to be established based on co-design, and co-implementation with other policy areas, including foreign policy for international cooperation.

4) Produce seamless and competitive framework conditions, including tools for policy deployment: The complex legal and administrative frameworks for knowledge policies at all levels require constant adaptation and review with respect to the needs of ***strengthening*** the ERA ***through a more complementary and coherent European policy***, in particular in connection to ***increasing the quality and*** linking to innovation, to education and to a wider ***and sustainable*** network of open, accessible research infrastructures, removing barriers to the circulation of knowledge to take full advantage of possible synergies and complementarities.

And finally, on the 4th question:

4. Which concrete initiatives should be launched in order to demonstrate the value added of ERA? (ERA lighthouses – document already sent with the initial invitation)

The Forum has already commented on the issue of the Lighthouses in the previous exchanges (see below), and the “outline” document which has been circulated does not seem to respond to our comments (i.e. to avoid the feeling that existing successful examples of “lighthouse effect” should be more directly taken into account when designing this new concept.

If the lighthouse concept should be attractive and visible and promote and catalyse coordination, synchronization and joint action, the focus should be on their effect as drivers of “high impact results”, which need to be high quality from the start.

From our previous document related to the first hearing on the Narrative:

The concept of “lighthouses” ... is still not completely clear and probably needs some more specific example, to lessen the risk of being seen as yet another “buzzword” in the already crowded glossary of the ERA and EU Framework