

ERIC Forum Implementation Project

Annual Meeting Report

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Author(s)	Juan Miguel González-Aranda, Christos Arvanitidis, Cristina Huertas, Jana Pavlic-Zupanc, Viridiana Beltran

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Executive summary

This document reports the outcome of the ERIC Forum Annual Meeting 2022. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the third ERIC Forum Meeting 2022 took place virtually on 26-27 January. It brought together more than 150 participants from the ERIC community and key stakeholders to discuss, among other topics, ERICs' sustainability and role in the European Research & Innovation panorama, key conclusions of the EGERIC report, as well as joint efforts to address key challenges in R&I.

The two-day event was divided into open and closed sessions:

- Open sessions: Enriched by the participation of policy makers both at EU (European Commission) and national levels (ministries), the open sessions stimulated interesting discussions between the ERIC Forum and its main stakeholders about ERICs' role in the ERA and key science policy issues.
- Closed sessions: ERIC Forum General Assembly and ERIC Forum Implementation Project's General Assembly were held, attended by the ERIC Forum members only.

In detail, the event was divided in fourth distinct moments:

- Day 1 January 26th - Morning: a set of open sessions, enriched by the participation of stakeholders as both speakers and attendees, during which the Forum discussed high level science policy issues
- Day 1 January 26th – Afternoon: ERIC Forum General Assembly and ERIC Forum Implementation Project General Assembly.
- Day 1 January 26th – Evening: Online Evening Event.
- Day 2 January 27th – Morning: Plans for 2022 and beyond, sustainability of ERIC Forum

Long-term sustainability of ERICs and their role in the EU Research and Innovation arena

The first session brought together representatives from the French, Czech and Slovenian Presidencies of the EU Council, the European Commission, and the EGERIC (Expert Group on the ERIC Regulation) to present and tackle relevant aspects of policies pertaining to ERICs.

Representatives from the French and Czech ministries highlighted the objectives and plans of their respective Presidencies, as well as the priorities with respect to the European Research panorama and RIs in particular. It was followed by the outcomes and recommendations of the RIs' session for the ERA organized in the frame of the Slovenian Presidency in October 2021.

An overview on the main conclusions of the EGERIC Report, assessing the implementation of the ERIC regulation, were also presented. The EGERIC report is the basis for the European Commission's consultation process on the implementation of the ERIC Regulation. The prospective activities in that regard were presented by Head of Unit Ms Apostolia Karamali

from DG RTD, who also highlighted the upcoming policy developments including the ERA policy agenda, RIs' call in Horizon Europe, and RI work programme for 2023-2024.

ERIC Forum and its partners

The second session was focused on highlighting the collaborations that the ERIC Forum could establish and deepen with key players in the European R&I and science policy panoramas, including the EOOSC Association and EIROForum. The exchange of knowledge and best practices about core topics for RIs' sustainability was also addressed.

The meeting was also the occasion to announce the publication of the ERIC Forum policy brief on the 'Impact of big science on the research ecosystem'. The report highlights, among others, the role of RIs and ERICs in the European research development and innovation ecosystem. Case studies from ERICs and established ERICs illustrating innovations that address key challenges were also showcased.

Conclusions from the ERIC Forum Meeting 2022

It is demonstrated that ERICs are a success story in the ecosystem of Research Infrastructures. Their strong engagement in the ERIC Forum consolidates this unique platform, where best practices and common problems are shared, coordinating responses to global challenges, and providing a unique voice to engage with the EC, other associations and stakeholders for the implementation of ERA.

The report outlines the Annual Meeting in detail.



Agenda

**ERIC Forum Annual Meeting
26th and 27th January 2021
Online**

DAY 1. JANUARY 26TH / MORNING

26 January – OPEN TO EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS BY LUNCH	
09:30	Welcome <i>Francisco Colomer</i> ERIC Forum Chairman
Part #1 Long-term sustainability of ERICs and their role in EU R&I arena	
09:45	Views and Plans of the French Presidency of the EU Council <i>Elena Hoffert</i> Head of Implementation of National and European Research Infrastructure Roadmaps, ESFRI Representative and Member of ESFRI Executive Board French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation
10:00	Views and Plans of the Czech Presidency of the EU Council <i>Levák Lukáš</i> Director, Department of Research and Development. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
10:15	Key conclusions of the EGERIC report <i>Carlo Rizzuto</i> Chair of the EGERIC Working Group
10:30	Upcoming policy developments <i>Apostolia Karamali</i> Head of Unit, European Commission
10:45	Panel Discussion and Q&A from the Audience Moderator: <i>Francisco Colomer</i> , ERIC Forum Chair Setting the scene: Slovenian EU Presidency Conclusions – <i>Jana Kolar</i> Participants: Speakers of the morning session
11:15	End of Part #1 - Break

Part #2 ERIC Forum and its partners: Working together towards addressing key challenges in R&I	
11:30	ESFRI – Address by the new ESFRI Chair <i>Jana Kolar</i> ESFRI Chair
11:45	ERIC Forum and EOSC Association – perspectives for closer collaboration <i>Ute Gunsenheimer</i>

	EOSC Association Secretary General
12:00	ERIC Forum and EIROForum – joint efforts of Research Infrastructures for a stronger ERA <i>Francesco Sette</i> EIROForum Chair
12:15	Presentation of ERIC Forum Report – Scaling-up research projects through ERICs: Impact of big science on the research ecosystem <i>Golbahar Pahlavan</i> WP 6 Lead, ECRIN
12:25	Presentation of ERIC Forum Report - Report on integration of ERICs into pan-European infrastructures. The example of EOSC <i>Juan Miguel González-Aranda</i> WP6 CTO Lifewatch
12: 35	Panel Discussion and Q&A from the Audience Moderator: <i>Anton Ussi</i> , Vice Chair ERIC Forum Participants: Speakers of the morning session
13:00	End of Part #2 - Lunch

DAY

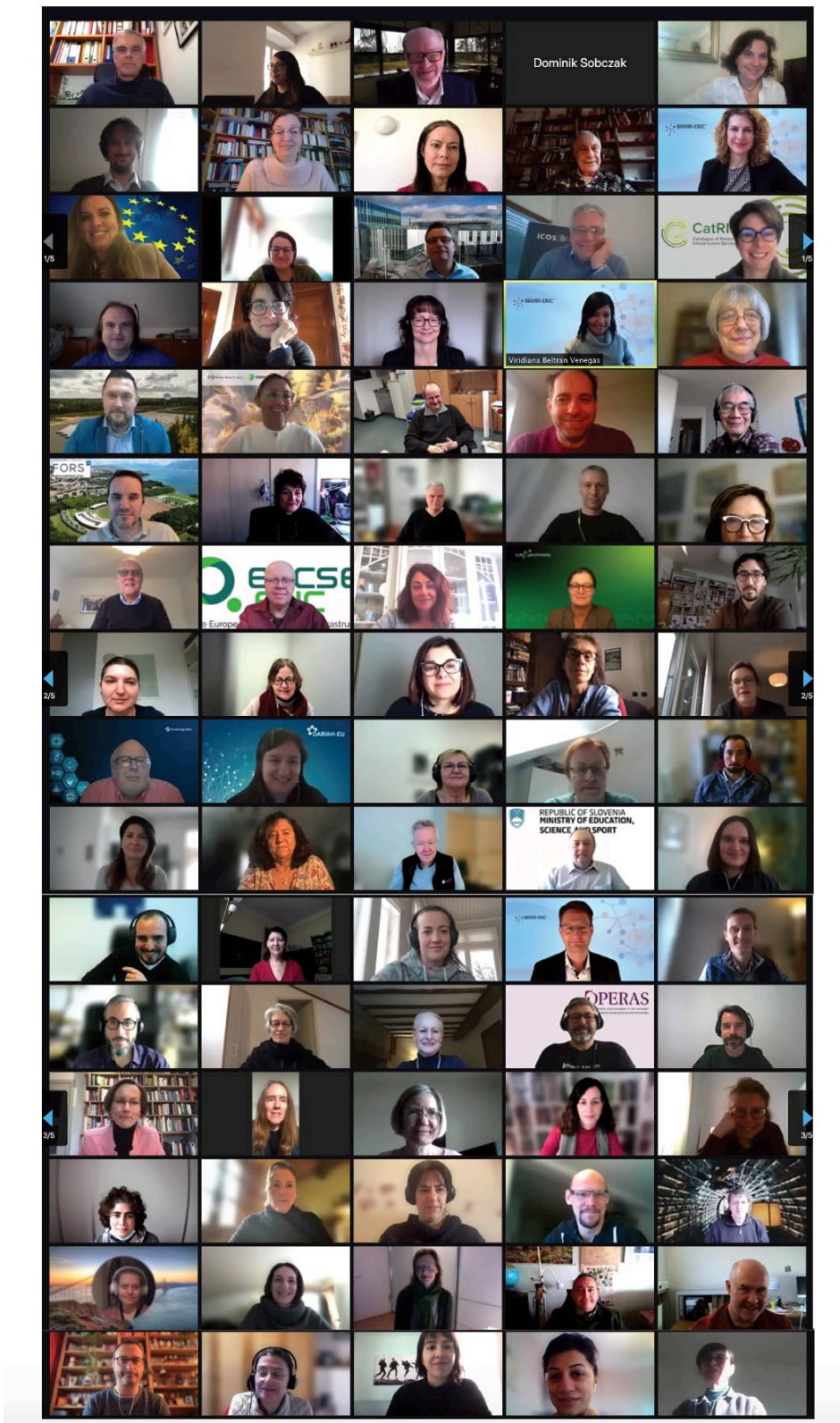
1.

JANUARY 26TH / EVENING

Part #4 Online Evening Event/Dinner	
19:00	ERIC Forum First Serious Games Edition
20:00	End of evening

DAY 2. JANUARY 27TH / MORNING

27 January - CLOSED MEETING (For ERIC Forum only)	
Part #5 Plans for 2022 and beyond	
09:30	Report from the Working Group on Sustainability of ERIC Forum <i>Francisco Colomer</i> , ERIC Forum Chairman and the Chair of the Working Group
10:00	Discussion with Members: - Key topics for future collaboration - Format of future collaboration - Financial aspects of future collaboration
11:30	Conclusions and concluding remarks <i>Francisco Colomer</i> , ERIC Forum Chairman and the Chair of the Working Group <i>Jens Haberman</i> , ERIC Forum Coordinator
12:00	End of ERIC Forum Annual Meeting



Note: The group picture of the ERIC Forum Annual Meeting 2022 was shared on Twitter with the consent of the attendees featured.

Meeting presentations.

Introduction to the ERIC Forum Meeting 2022

Francisco Colomer, ERIC Forum Chair

Presentation: [here](#).

The ERIC Forum Chair presented the agenda of the event. Then, he presented the ERIC Forum as a bottom-up collaboration of all European Research Infrastructures Consortia, who are organized in 5 clusters. He also described the governance of the ERIC FORUM: General Assembly, Executive Board and Secretariat.

The Chair explained the Mission and the achievements of the ERIC Forum. He continued with the role of ERICs and RIs in ERA, the Expert Group on ERIC (EGERIC) report, and the collaboration between EF-ERIC Committee. At the end he leaved some topics for discussion:



► For discussion

- Role of ERIC Forum
 - Representation, governance of diversity
 - Help ERA policy and inform of position, data registry, etc.
- Impact and contribution to challenges & Missions
 - Research performing vs. Science facilitator service organisations
 - Access !
 - Attracting third countries for global communities
- Communication and visibility (of ERICs, nodes, actions, impact)
 - In Member States
 - Interaction with Universities (for nodes), ERIC personnel
 - Tax exception: for members, for in-kind

Session #1: Long-term sustainability of ERICs and their role in EU R&I arena

Views and Plans of the French Presidency of the EU Council

Elena Hoffert, Head of the National Research Infrastructure Development, ESFRI delegate and member of ESFRI Executive Board

Presentation: [here](#).

Ms. Hoffert explained that the objective of the French presidency is to contribute to the construction of solidary and sovereign Europe. Overall, the French EU Presidency has three ambitions: “a more sovereign Europe”, “a new European model for growth and a humane Europe” and “a humane Europe”.

She highlighted the three priority axes for the French Ministry for Higher Education, Research and Innovation: “Implementation of the knowledge square”, “Young Europe: Europe serving

the future generations”, and “Global Europe”. She finished with the three events dedicated to European research infrastructures: ESFRI days:

- 23 March 2022 (79 ESFRI plenary meeting March 2022)
- 24 March (Launch of Stakeholders discussions)
- 25 March (The ESFRI 20th anniversary conference: European Research Infrastructures at the heart of scientific discoveries)

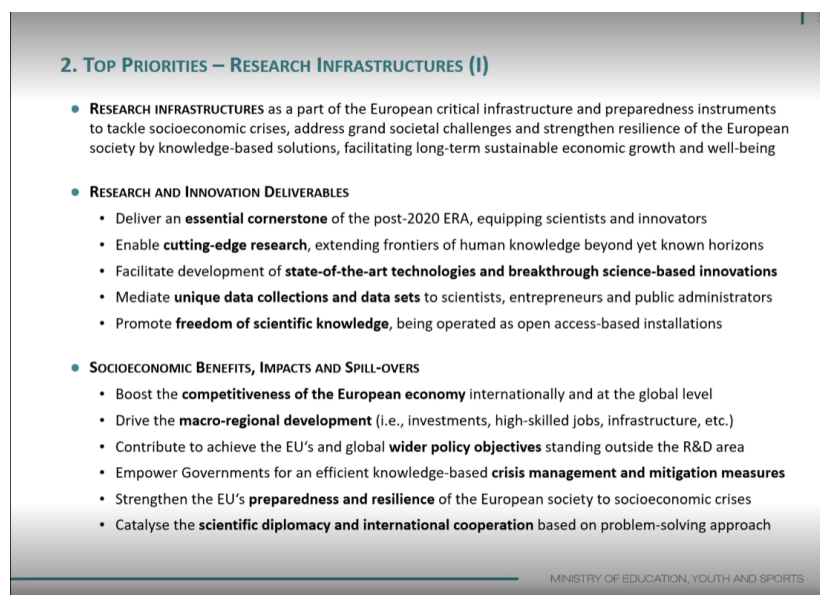
Views and Plans of the Czech Presidency of the EU Council

Levak Lukas, Director, Department of Research and Development, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Presentation: [here](#).

Mr. Levak started with an overview of the European Research and Innovation Policy Framework. The conclusions on the new European Research Area were highlighted, as well as the council recommendation on a Pact for research and innovation in Europe. Also, the Council conclusions on the Future Governance on the European Research Area.

Mr. Levak explained the priorities for research infrastructures. He described the “Brno Declaration” as a way to develop a fully integrated and interoperable global ecosystem of research infrastructures to become a key component of the critical infrastructure to address grand societal challenges. He concluded with the key presidency events (see below).



2. TOP PRIORITIES – RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES (I)


- **RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES** as a part of the European critical infrastructure and preparedness instruments to tackle socioeconomic crises, address grand societal challenges and strengthen resilience of the European society by knowledge-based solutions, facilitating long-term sustainable economic growth and well-being
- **RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DELIVERABLES**
 - Deliver an **essential cornerstone** of the post-2020 ERA, equipping scientists and innovators
 - Enable **cutting-edge research**, extending frontiers of human knowledge beyond yet known horizons
 - Facilitate development of **state-of-the-art technologies and breakthrough science-based innovations**
 - Mediate **unique data collections and data sets** to scientists, entrepreneurs and public administrators
 - Promote **freedom of scientific knowledge**, being operated as open access-based installations
- **SOCIOECONOMIC BENEFITS, IMPACTS AND SPILL-OVERS**
 - Boost the **competitiveness of the European economy** internationally and at the global level
 - Drive the **macro-regional development** (i.e., investments, high-skilled jobs, infrastructure, etc.)
 - Contribute to achieve the EU's and global **wider policy objectives** standing outside the R&D area
 - Empower Governments for an efficient knowledge-based **crisis management and mitigation measures**
 - Strengthen the EU's **preparedness and resilience** of the European society to socioeconomic crises
 - Catalyse the **scientific diplomacy and international cooperation** based on problem-solving approach

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2. TOP PRIORITIES – RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES (II)

- **POLICY-MAKING FRAMEWORK**
 - **ESFRI White Paper 2020:** Making Science Happen – A New Ambition for Research Infrastructures in the European Research Area
 - **ESFRI Roadmap 2021:** Strategy Report on Research Infrastructures by the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures
- **HIGH-LEVEL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**
 - Reflection of ESFRI strategic orientations in a particular series of the **Council Conclusions**, to be endorsed by EU Research Ministers to outline the top-priority actions to strengthen the EU's research infrastructure ecosystem
 - Call for action by the **Brno Declaration** to develop a fully integrated and interoperable global ecosystem of research infrastructures to become a key component of the critical infrastructure to address grand societal challenges
- **KEY PRESIDENCY EVENTS**
 - **European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures** 18th – 19th October 2022 in Brno
 - **International Conference on Research Infrastructures** 19th – 21st October 2021 in Brno



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3. TOP PRIORITIES – SYNERGIES (I)

- **SYNERGIES** between the EU Cohesion Policy Funds and the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation, and the European- and national-based research and innovation funding in general, as an instrument to maximize the potential of cooperation in research and innovation in Europe
- **ENABLER AND FACILITATOR**
 - Enable to maximise the **coherence** in research and innovation funding in Europe
 - Facilitate **alignment** of funding approaches at the EU and the Member State levels
 - Simplify the **co-funding** of the EU Framework Programme projects where necessary
 - Encourage to implement the "**Seal of Excellence**" financing by the Member States
 - Result in the **harmonisation** of policy-making and funding approaches in Europe
- **COHESION POLICY CONTRIBUTOR**
 - Help achieve the goals of the **EU Cohesion Policy** in line with the R&D agenda priorities
 - Promote **participation of the "Cohesion Countries"** in the EU Framework Programmes
 - Contribute to **bridge the gap and close the research and innovation divide** in ERA
 - Improve **efficiency**, prevent from **fragmentation** and avoid **duplication** of efforts
 - Increase the **potential** of cooperation in research and innovation in Europe



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Key conclusions of the EGERIC report

Carlo Rizzuto, Chair of the Expert Group on the assessment on the implementation of the ERIC Regulation (EGERIC)

Presentation: [here](#)

Mr. Rizzuto explained the tasks, the methodology of work and the 19 assessment criteria. He made a summary of the main outcomes:

Positive:

- Most (18/22) ERICs are distributed. Overall, they connect hundreds of universities and institutions. Not limited only to external users but also integrating research and training between most MSs, with synergies between national-EU-regional resources.
- Successful implementation of 22 new Research Organizations, evolving as an «ERIC System» (in particular through clustering) strengthening the ERA and producing excellent science and training.
- A paradigm shift: from RIs to Research Entities capable to respond to challenges; most ERICs translate results into economy and society, connected to data & EOSC, and to Global outreach.

Issues (&scope for improvement):

- Lack of overview and governance, both by the EC and by several Governments (but some do show best practice examples); lack of organized and comparable data
- Unfavourable employment frame, staff discriminated vs other EU entities;
- Limited implementation of VAT (in particular on in-kind contributions)
- Lack of coherence between formal (statutes) and effective (reports) commitment of ERIC members (Governments) in distributed operations: possible effects on long term sustainability (some confusion with EU projects), and effects on the visibility and recognition of the ERICs;
- ERICs ready to develop services in EU projects and partnerships, but need specific support;
- Disconnect centre-to-periphery (at governance and ERIC levels)
- Attractive to third Countries, but limits in formal participation

Some technical suggestions

- National and EU evaluation and participation to projects should be equally open to ERICs as to national institutions/universities. Positive evaluation if they host an ERIC hub/node?
- Practical Guidelines should be extended to the operations phase and underline the best practices now available (e.g. on tax exemptions for in-kind contributions)
- A registry function, collecting and curating FAIR data on ERICs: it could be contracted (e.g. to an Agency or the ERIC Forum). Also, some expert-based joint support services could be developed in a cost-effective way.
- A template for the annual reports would help future assessments.
- An expert review of the existing Statutes could help to improve some and develop a more detailed reference template and a more coherent glossary
- Representing Entities should always be clearly given the exercise of specified rights and discharge of specified obligations
- Countries could agree on additional statute provisions not planned in the Regulation (for example on personnel) as done in International Organizations

Recommendations I (to MS and the EC)

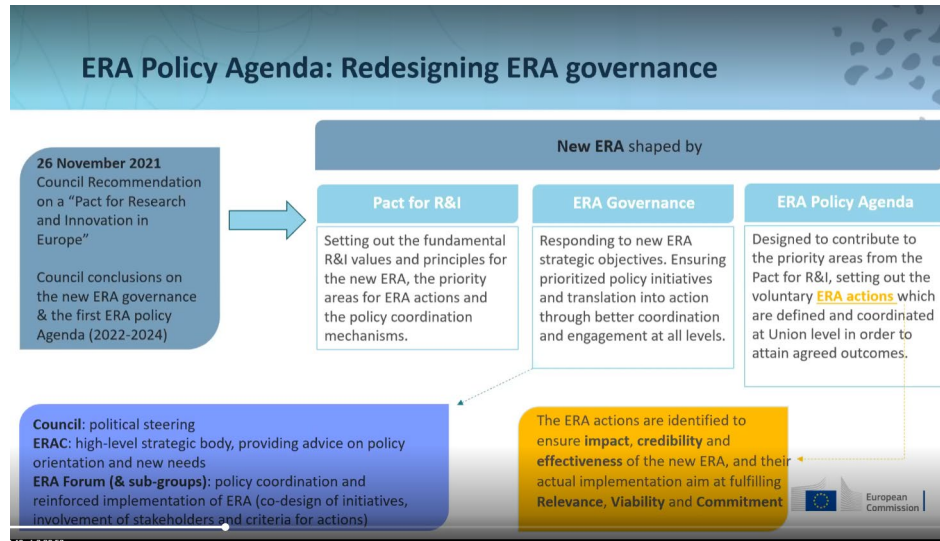
- Enhancing the scientific capability of the ERA: recurrent (yearly) appraisal based on standardised data should allow assessment, visibility, and effective “System Governance”. The status of ERIC personnel and its mobility should be harmonized to that working for the EU. Training activities should be expanded throughout. Diversity at top level should be improved. Potential as multidisciplinary data aggregators should be supported. The use of structural funds and tax exemptions should be increased by implementing also through nodes.
- Overcoming fragmentation, improving coordination and reinforcing Governance and Sustainability: Set-up a knowledge-based Governance of the ERIC system including distributed activities with a Register-like function supporting the ERIC Committee, ESFRI and ERIC Forum. Support development of joint multidisciplinary services. Implement ERIC synergies in projects and in R&D targets by all funding streams. Overcome duality between centres and peripheries and recognize hosting of ERIC activities.
- Improving links with Society, Economy and Competitiveness: Allow full interaction of ERICs with value adding organizations, recognize distributed activities at same level of their hosts. Dedicated investment in communication, dissemination and in TT should be available. Clustering and multidisciplinary responses as services to external requirements should be supported, while sharing resources. Overlap and potential conflict with hosting institutions should be solved by recognition of added values. The consortium legal frame could link more widely university and research systems.
- Strengthening the global approach: Full participation of distributed ERIC’s hubs and nodes in missions and partnerships should be implemented by clear policies also on national funding. Focused support is recommended to guide ERICs potential towards SDGs and international challenges. Communication strategy should target global dimension. Clear guidelines should help Third Countries to enter ERICs as members.

Upcoming policy developments in the EC

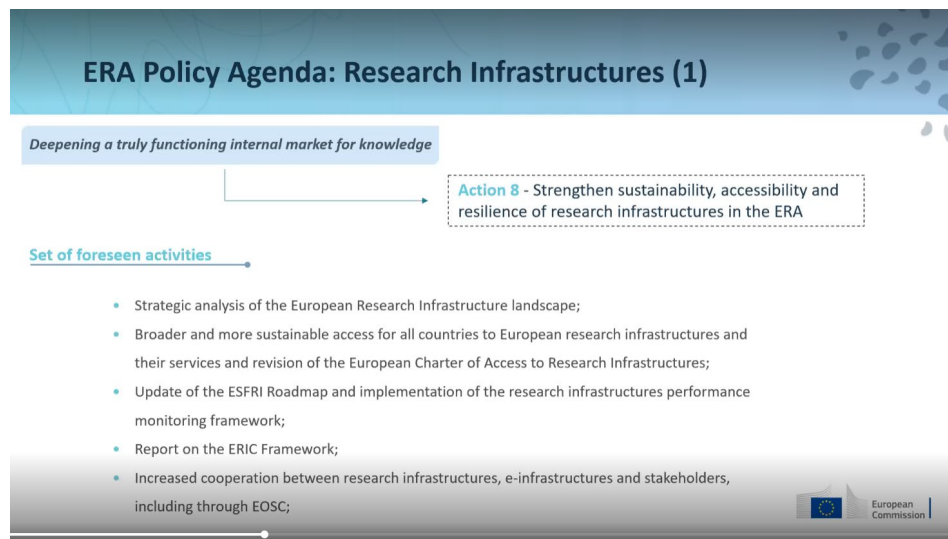
Apostolia Karamali, Head of Unit, European Commission

Presentation: here <https://www.eric-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/05.-Upcoming-policy-developments.pdf>.

Ms Karamali first presented the policy developments:



She continued by the Actions of the ERA Policy Agenda. The Research Infrastructures were highlighted.



Ms Karamali highlighted the next steps for the EC, i.e., preparation of the report on the implementation of the ERIC Regulation, and summarised the key upcoming events, stressing the importance of RIs's input during 2022, when the Work Programme for 2023-2024 is being prepared.

Panel Discussion and Q&A from the Audience

Setting the scene

Jana Kolar, on behalf of the Slovenian EU Presidency

Presentation: [here](#).

Ms Kolar presented the recommendations of the Slovenian EU Presidency that pertain to research infrastructures and a discussion followed.

The ERIC Forum Chair asked the Chair of the EGERIC Report how to best organise the observatory. The EGERIC Chair explained that it would be best to define the data that would need to be collected. Overall, he recommended working with university associations, and universities which host National Nodes in general. Ms Karamali explained that the data must be "processable", for a example, through a dashboard and designing the right indicators. Ms Karamali also suggested for ESFRI and ERIC forum to work together in a "strategic partnership" to tackle the issues pertaining to Research Infrastructures.

Session #2: ERIC Forum and its partners: Working together towards addressing key challenges in R&I

ESFRI – Address by the new ESFRI Chair

Jana Kolar, Chair of ESFRI

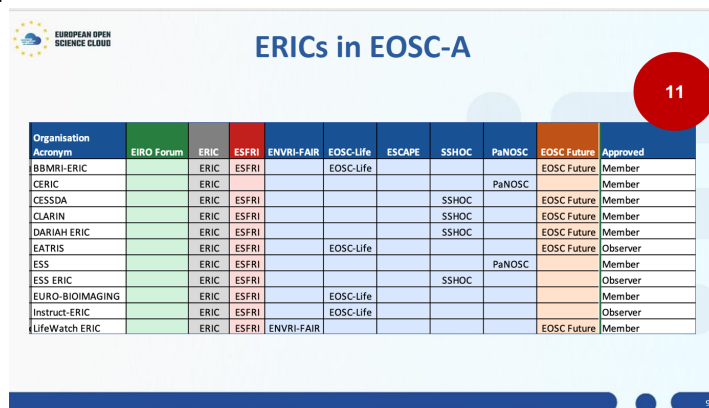
The ESFRI Chair highlighted the importance of engaging different stakeholders in ESFRI. She explained that ESFRI is actively taking part in the new ERA governance, that they are developing priorities for the next 3 years, and that there will be new Executive and Chairs of Strategic WGs starting their mandates. ESFRI will also give its own input on the implementation of the ERIC Regulation.

ERIC Forum and EOSC Association – perspectives for closer collaboration

Ute Gunsenheimer, Secretary General, EOSC Association AISBL

Presentation: [here](#).

Ms. Gunsenheimer updated the participants on the EOSC Association and its member base, as well as on the EOSC partnership.



Organisation Acronym	EIRO Forum	ERIC	ESFRI	ENVRI-FAIR	EOSC-Life	ESCAPE	SSHOC	PaNOSC	EOSC Future	Approved
BBMRI-ERIC		ERIC	ESFRI		EOSC-Life				EOSC Future	Member
CERIC		ERIC						PaNOSC		Member
CESSDA		ERIC	ESFRI				SSHOC		EOSC Future	Member
CLARIN		ERIC	ESFRI				SSHOC		EOSC Future	Member
DARIAH-ERIC		ERIC	ESFRI				SSHOC		EOSC Future	Member
EATRIS		ERIC	ESFRI		EOSC-Life				EOSC Future	Observer
ESS		ERIC	ESFRI					PaNOSC		Member
ESS-ERIC		ERIC	ESFRI				SSHOC			Observer
EURO-BIOIMAGING		ERIC	ESFRI		EOSC-Life					Member
Instruct-ERIC		ERIC	ESFRI		EOSC-Life					Observer
LifeWatch-ERIC		ERIC	ESFRI	ENVRI-FAIR					EOSC Future	Member

The secretary General put forward the following collaboration possibilities:

- Assessment of interest of ERIC Forum in becoming a Mandated Organization in EOSC-A (statutes change required)
- Active participation in upcoming MAR consultation
- Collaboration for the organization of EOSC Partner Days in MS/AC

ERIC Forum and EIROForum – joint efforts of Research Infrastructures for a stronger ERA

Francesco Sette, EIROForum Chair

Presentation: [here](#).


Mr. Sette explained what is EIROforum, the EIROforum Charter, the Council, and their relations with the European Commission. He stressed the work of their School of Instrumentation and the role that EIROForum plays in science education. He pointed out some potential areas of cooperation between EIROforum and ERIC Forum.

- Governance and Long-Term Sustainability of Research Infrastructures: KPIs, Socio-economic impact of RIs, Environmental impact and carbon neutral policy
- Joint outreach actions / position papers
- Research and Innovation: Interaction of RIs with industry (e.g. BSBF 2022)

Presentation of ERIC Forum Report – Scaling-up research projects through ERICs: Impact of big science on the research ecosystem

Golbahar Pahlavan, ECRIN

Presentation: [here](#).



The image shows two panels from a presentation. The left panel is the cover of the 'ERIC Forum Policy Brief' titled 'SCALING-UP RESEARCH PROJECTS THROUGH ERICs: IMPACT OF BIG SCIENCE ON THE RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM', dated January 2022. It features a grid of six images: a large scientific facility, a person looking at a petri dish, a group of people in a meeting, a server rack, a hand holding a petri dish, and a laboratory tray. The right panel is a 'TABLE OF CONTENTS' slide with a dark background and white text, listing sections with their corresponding page numbers: 3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, 6 BACKGROUND, 7 INTRODUCTION, 10 ERICs: CROSS-DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION HUBS, 19 ERICs: DRIVERS OF EUROPEAN RESEARCH EXCELLENCE, INTEGRATION AND COMPETITIVENESS, 36 CHALLENGES, and 39 RECOMMENDATIONS. A small '02' is visible in the bottom right corner of the right panel.

Ms. Pahlavan described the key challenges for ERICs in today's big science arena:

1. Visibility of the ERIC
2. Competition between the ERIC and partners
3. Lack of RI recognition as stakeholder
4. Member States' support for RI: Access to national funding streams
5. Inclusion in European Research funding schemes
6. Legal constraints
7. Collaborations with Industry and SMEs
8. Sustainability of RIs
9. Translation of science results in policies

Key recommendations from the report were thus the following:

1. The added value of Pan-European Research Infrastructures as Big Science instruments should be further underscored among the research community and key stakeholders including the industry at national and international levels.
2. The benefit of joining and/or collaborating with an ERIC should be manifest when individual partners engage in projects in order to create synergies and increase impact by the prioritisation of research questions and the collaborative design of research protocols. Authorship rules, evaluation criteria and career development policies should be developed to promote the participation of research and infrastructure staff in highly collaborative competitive projects. The operational and legislative frameworks for data standards, sharing, reuse and analysis should be strengthened.
3. Member State support for ERICs should be promoted in competitive funding calls in the framework of national programs, supporting the national nodes and hubs and increasing the quality and impact of the proposed activities.
4. Funding mechanisms should be adapted to unfold the full potential of ERICs to meet the needs of large science projects in terms of volume and multinational and cross-border availability, as well as prioritisation criteria in order to fully benefit from the ERIC infrastructure support.
5. ERICs are valuable to Industry. The visibility of these collaborations can be promoted by creating an "ERIC label" that Industry can exploit as a label of excellence.
6. The EC must maintain its role and support ERICs beyond the preparation phase, through instruments such as the INFRADEV contracts and promoting their participation in all the pillars of the EU Framework Programme, to support and facilitate the international collaboration.
7. Evidence-based policy-making should be supported by strengthening the dialogue between ERICs and policy-makers through dedicated fora to promote regular formal and informal communication.

Presentation of ERIC Forum Report - Report on integration of ERICs into panEuropean infrastructures.
The example of EOSC

Juan Miguel González-Aranda, LifeWatch ERIC

Mr. González-Aranda described the key conclusions and recommendations of the report:

Conclusions:

- There is much potential when ERICs seek a degree of collaboration and integration of at least some of their assets. The outcome of this process surpasses the outcomes of the individual ERICs and reaches far wider audiences (added values);
- The European Science Open Cloud (EOSC) provides a good example of this process;
- Many useful lessons may be taken from the history and current operation of EOSC and at multiple levels, such as: strategic-political, structural-developmental, operational, communicational, etc.

Recommendations:

- The example of EOSC shows that once a framework is in place, such as EOSC, the ERICs should, first, run the exercise of identifying their surfaces of interaction or trading zones at which their integration may take place;
- When there is a plan, this integration has a lot more chances to succeed;
- In any such process of ERIC integration, it should always be clear that the fundamental properties of producing evidence-based knowledge are guaranteed through the process of integration: quality, transparency and reproducibility. Open (FAIR) access data, reproducible analytics and mobilized communities are such property examples;
- Robust policies should be built to ensure the continuous and effective operation of the integration process.
- Any integration should be regarded as an ongoing process and not on a project-by-project one.

[Session #3: ERIC Forum General Assembly & Implementation Project meeting](#)

The third session started with an address from the ERIC Forum Coordinator, Prof Jens Habermann, BBMRI-ERIC Director General. Prof Habermann highlighted the efforts of BBMRI-ERIC in its role as the coordinator and its commitment towards ensuring this project is a success for the ERIC Forum.

Jana Pavlic-Zupanc, Project Manager, then gave more information about the incoming EC review of the project, presented the agenda, and the key timelines for the preparation of the reports needed to conclude the second reporting period.

Afterwards the Work Packages presented their work for year 2021.

Work Package 1: Coordination and Project Management, explained the preparation of and the need for the first and the second amendment that were submitted to the EC, reported on the state of the budget and presented its work in the Sustainability working group as well as the role of BBMRI-ERIC in supporting the ERIC Forum and its Chair, acting as de facto Secretariat. The Project Manager also listed the meetings that have taken place in the past year and outlined the main priorities for the future. The Project Manager was also acting as the main contact point for the EC.

Work Package 2: ERIC Forum governance model, lead explained that the main output of the WP had been a permanent governance, which has undergone a revision process in M24. Importantly, the governance put in place is independent from the project and can be thus used even after the project ends. For year 2022 the WP would be ready to continue offering legal and governance advice, also in case of a preparation of a new more formal, legal structure after the end of the project.

Work Package 3: Operations, Administration, HR and Finance of ERICs listed its main achievements as the following: They organised a 2-day workshop on the topic of research quality and reproducibility, a webinar on procurement rules and VAT, and submitted all of the deliverables. In order to disseminate the findings of their deliverables, another seminar in February 2022 that will focus on secondments and best employment practises would be organised, as well a further one to present best practises in relation to intellectual property, insurance and contracting for ERICs. In addition, WP3 was liaising with the EGERIC expert group to provide the insights from their work, organised in the project deliverables.

Work Package 4: Evaluation and Impact Assessment, had a key deliverable in M24 focused on development and monitoring of KPIs for ERICs. This deliverable served as a basis for all other deliverables that were in preparation during 2021 and which are due in mid and late 2022. In particular, a large survey amongst ERICs has been conducted to gather information on socio-economic impact of the ERICs. In this task WP4 and WP6 intend to work closely together and exploit mutual synergies. In addition, a conversation with ESFRI was launched on the scientific evaluation of ERICs.

Work Package 5: Communication and dissemination, presented the number of campaigns, reports and events where ERIC Forum was promoted in 2021. WP 5 issued 6 Newsletters during 2021 and increased its Twitter and LinkedIn followers by 35% and 207% respectively. Regarding the website, there were new plugins and sections introduced. Visitors increased by 7%, and pageviewers by 15%. Most new visitors came from the following countries: 83% NL, 82% Italy, 43% USA, 83% from NL, 156% Finland, 86% China, 47% France, 15% Germany, 10% UK. Policymakers were amongst the new visitors and this is in line with updated Communications Strategy, which was submitted during 2021. For 2022 WP5 plans participation at key events, such as ESOF and ICRI, as well as it is preparing its key deliverable "Toolbox", which will serve as a repository of all key data sets and reports of the project.

Work Package 6: Role of ERICs in European science policy and research strategy, finalised the second policy and innovation and technical reports report during 2021. They were presented during the ERIC Forum Annual Meeting. In the absence of a dedicated Seminar, to engage stakeholders, due to time constraints and that of an independent External Advisory Board, in order to ensure the link with the

ERIC community at large and external stakeholders and avoid a siloed perspective, the second WP6 Policy Report was kindly reviewed by the EGERIC and ESFRI Chairs:

- Policy Report 2: Scaling-up research projects through ERICs: impact of Big Science on the research ecosystem
- T&I Report 2: Integration of ERIC development into Pan-European e-Infrastructures, particularly in the new European Open Science Cloud-EOSC
- In addition, "Annual ERIC Forum Seminar" reports were also delivered within this reporting period.

The third, and final, planned reports during the next period are on the topic of the socio-economic impact of ERICs and on the topic of international cooperation.

Session #4: Online Evening Event/Dinner

ERIC FORUM Networking event was divided in two activities. The first one, a Kahoot (<https://kahoot.com/home/mobile-app/>) "competition" and the second one, a discussion around the topic "Young Europe, putting forward suggestions into how to involve youth in ERICs.



**HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW
ERIC FORUM?**

From LifeWatch ERIC we have prepared this game where you will have to answer some questions related to the ERIC Forum.

Each question will have 4 answers BUT ONLY ONE will be the correct one. You will have ONE MINUTE to choose your choice.
Don't worry, we won't torture you a lot. We hope that you know at least one answer, if not...

**IT DOESN'T MATTER!!
We will have a great time anyway!!!**

**THE
"WINN-ERIC"
WILL HAVE A
PRIZE!!!!**

ERIC FORUM

Session #5: Plans for 2022 and beyond

Session 5 was led by Paco Colomer, the ERIC Forum Chair. First the Project Manager was invited to present the draft Work Plan for 2022. The Work Plan was organised on a monthly basis, and it consisted of the following meetings: ERIC Forum Executive Board meetings, project management meetings, all key external meetings in the R&I arena, as well as bi-monthly Newsletters were noted. All deliverables for 2022 were noted, including the already planned seminars. With addition of a few other external events that were brought to the attention of ERIC Forum by the French and the Czech Presidencies a day earlier, the Work Plan was then deemed complete and was adopted.



The ERIC Forum Chair presented the possible key topics of future engagement for the ERIC Forum members, that were aligned with the recommendations of the EGERIC Report. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that these issues need to be addressed and that ERIC Forum needs to continue its role in the arena also post project.

The ERIC Forum Chair then presented the Work of the Sustainability Working Group. The Working Group has put forward the following suggestions for the ERIC Forum sustainability post project: funding an internal secretariat, where BBMRI offered to continue the service against a small fee, an external, i.e. outsourced secretariat, and establishing a new legal entity, which would also be linked to additional costs. There was a very lively debate amongst the members, with many supporting the continuation of the internal secretariat. As a conclusion the Working Group was given a mandate to continue developing options for the future and, if possible, to organise an extraordinary meeting in summer 2022, to decide on the final sustainability model. In parallel, options for support from an EU-funding will continue to be sought.