

Comments in view of the third Commission Report to the Council and the European Parliament on the implementation of the ERIC Regulation

Template for the ERIC Committee

Taking into account the [EGERIC assessment](#) and the subsequent [Stakeholders workshop](#), the ERIC Committee delegations are invited to provide their views on the implementation of the ERIC Regulation using this structured template.

For each of the sections, please provide your recommendations and priorities for future action addressing short-, medium- and long-term. Please specify, as appropriate, if you support the assessment or relevant recommendations on the way forward.

Delegations are invited to present positions consolidated at national level, also taking into account the views of relevant stakeholders within and beyond the ERICs.

Delegations are invited to be succinct. However, if needed additional supporting documents can be submitted.

I. General Aspects

Delegation
ERIC Forum
General comments on the ERICs and the ERIC Regulation
<i>The section aims to address general aspects related to individual ERICs and to the application of the ERIC Regulation</i>
[Form: one page max.] ERIC regulation has been very valuable in helping to create European research infrastructures, although further efforts are needed to guarantee the application of the regulation to allow a proper operation. Community law should be interpreted using the EU legal principles. One of them is <i>Effet utile</i> or <i>useful effect</i> , meaning that EU legislation must always be interpreted with a view to effectively achieving its intent. This is even stipulated in the Regulation, Art. 18: „ <i>Member States shall take such measures as are appropriate to ensure the effective application of this Regulation</i> “. There are examples where the application of the Regulation does not allow ERICs to fully benefit from the regulation (please see reply under “ERICs in operation”). The ERIC Regulation establishes that an ERIC should be recognised, by the country hosting it, as an international body or an organisation for the purposes of the Directives 2006/112/EC on value added tax (VAT) and 2008/118/EC on excise duties. An ERIC may therefore, under certain limits and conditions, benefit from exemptions from these on its purchases in all EU countries. The exemptions are based not on a regulation but on Directives, therefore subject to the national transposition of the directives. This creates a lot of variability between the seats of ERICs, not to mention the nodes. A check from the EC on how these transpositions are applied to ERICs could help ERICs achieve their full potential. Since the ERIC Regulation mentions explicitly that " /.../ funding under the Cohesion Policy could also be possible, in conformity with the relevant Community legislation", the Members of the ERIC

should be invited to allow also the seat of ERICs and not only their Representing entities, to become direct beneficiaries, as foreseen in the ERIC Regulation.

The Commission should therefore propose guidelines not only for the initial setting up of the ERICs, but also for their operation.

ERICs in operation

This section addresses the operational issues/subjects which should be addressed or require guidance. Among them: VAT exemption for in-kind contribution, employment conditions to attract the right talent, effective communication and participation of third countries require specific attention.

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ERICs would benefit from support from the EC and the Member States to fully benefit from the application of the ERIC Regulation recognizing the ERIC as an international body in the sense of Articles 143(g) and 151(1)(b) of Directive 2006/112/EC and as international organisation in the sense of the second indent of Article 23(1) of Directive 92/12/EEC.

The implementation of the VAT exemption foreseen in the Regulation is a major hurdle for the operation of distributed ERICs. Many of them rely on in-kind contributions whereby an ERIC participating entity acquires goods and services which are then provided to the ERIC. Although this represents a very common practice in ERICs, the application of the VAT exemption in these cases is extremely difficult, time consuming and uncertain, as it is subject to the individual decision of the entity's Member State. Another example is the VAT-exempted central purchase by the ERIC 'Central Infrastructure' of instrumentation needed - and paid for - by the nodes to fulfil the missions of the ERIC. For insurance, liability or other reasons (e.g. an invoice is needed by the node to justify an expenditure), ownership of the instrumentation may have to be transferred to the nodes. This implies that the ERIC must "sell" the instrumentation to the nodes. An invoice must be established including the VAT, as this is considered an economic activity even if no profit is made by the ERIC. Solutions need to be found by the Member States and/or the European Commission to ensure that ERIC 'Central Infrastructures' and their nodes/participating entities benefit from the VAT exemption for the procurement of goods and services which are essential to fulfil the ERIC missions, in the spirit of the Regulation.

The free mobility of personnel is fundamental, especially for distributed infrastructures. Although the aspect of personnel was excluded from the regulation, leaving the decision to the single states, this is hindering the operation of ERICs. Having a European working contract in order to enable mobility of researchers, technicians and managers across the ERICs and their nodes would allow ERICs to exploit their full potential and increase their attractiveness offering better career perspectives.

ERICs should furthermore be taken into account in the same way as national public research organisations (eligibility for national funding, additional exemptions pertaining to public research organisations or Universities). Currently ERICs as such are not eligible as direct beneficiaries for national funding, including structural funds, although the ERIC regulation explicitly mentions that ERICs could be eligible for funding under the Cohesion Policy. These funds can only be accessed by the Representing Entities, who may have other priorities. This mechanism for the allocation of funds does not allow the ERIC to grow.

The ERIC Regulation should also be widely and effectively implemented locally, beyond the national level. Local administrations and private companies (e.g. local tax agencies, banks or other providers) should recognise this legal form and be able to deal with it. Support from national authorities is needed for this flow of information to be effective.

Finally, the reference to limited economic activities in the regulation is not clear. ERICs would benefit from further elaboration on this limitation, asking the EC to keep in mind that in order to be relevant actors addressing global challenges, economic activities allow a greater interaction with the private sector without distorting the market.

II. Towards a pan-European Architecture

The ERIC System

This section aims to address how to set up a “system” approach for the ERICs to strengthen the ERICs and a pan-European approach in the broader ERA context. Some 22 ERICs have been set up and more are in the pipeline addressing multiple sectors and under diverse conditions.

*A system (ancient Greek *sýstēma* "a whole composed of several individual parts") is generally referred to as a delimitable, natural or artificial "structure" that consists of various components with different properties that are (can) be viewed as a common whole due to certain ordered relationships with each other. (Wikipedia)*

The first step to “systemize” the ERIC landscape that consists of various research infrastructures coming from different domains, but sharing the same legal entity, has been to set up a network, followed by a Forum to not only exchange internally experiences, but to also to present themselves as a “common whole” and to clarify, if needed, common shared issues.

The ERIC Forum is ready to go further in this direction. Not only future ERICs should be actively supported by the rich common wealth of experience. The ERIC Forum is also ready to be an active participant in the further development of the European Research Area, in which the working conditions for researchers are constantly being improved and the competitiveness of the Union is constantly being improved.

Many useful sub-projects have been started within the ERIC Forum Implementation Project and the ERIC Forum now needs to look for ways to continue these after the project will be completed at the end of this year. This requires the support of the Commission and the Member States, who have to decide whether they want to give the ERIC Forum the chance of another INFRASUPP call or whether they support the ERIC Forum in implementing a common budget for future activities.

The other components of the “ERIC system” mentioned in the report first require a feasibility study. The ERICs and the ERIC Forum are certainly best placed to describe and document their far-reaching networks in Europe and their capabilities when it comes to global challenges.

Finally, an ERIC system also requires more clarity as to who is responsible for the ERICs: the Commission as founder or the Member States as owners and main financiers of the ERICs.

If this question is clarified, in the sense of a clear assignment, more effective progress can also be made in questions of employment conditions, taxes, etc.

Under the current conditions, the ERIC is founded on the same legal basis as joint ventures, but only shares with them certain procurement and tax privileges. In contrast to joint ventures, the Commission itself does not become a member and therefore does not contribute to the financing. At this point, an honest debate is needed between the Commission and the Member States as to whether there should be any fundamental changes to these conditions.

Overall, there is a need for better visibility and “readability” of the ERIC system: streamlining the implementation of the Regulation (e.g. recognition of ERIC statutes by Member States) as mentioned in the previous answer.

Last but not least, having more ERICs underway, for the future there needs to be a check whether the scope of ERICs to be created could not be integrated in existing ERICs.

ERIC Services

This section addresses how to set up and integrate a service-driven approach in the ERIC system to address priorities such as the green and digital transitions and the EU recovery. In particular, how to develop Pan-European multidisciplinary services, responding to the need to narrow the gap between research and innovation. This should implement interconnections both at disciplinary level (such as in the clusters) and at multidisciplinary level, and share services and resources within the 'ERIC system'.

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The outset is that ERICs have been designed to serve highly specific needs of the research community. Furthermore, member States are the owners of ERICs. Once the ERICs are formed, the Member States will decide on the priorities of activities of individual ERICs and these priorities are variable. When addressing the questions above, it should also be clear that the modus operandi of the ERICs is highly variable. Many of the ERICs are highly service-oriented, some are providing both service and R&D activities, certain ERIC services will, in turn, be important to advance R&D, and some ERICs provide data or other immaterial products that cannot be directly employed to advance specific policies or R&D. With this outset, there are a number of aspects to consider:

- When the EC is employing competitive calls to drive political priorities (e.g. related to health challenges or green and digital transition), these priorities will often provide a channel for meaningful employment of established services in many of the ERICs. In this respect, the EC should continue reinforcing the efforts seen in last calls, promoting the collaboration of RIs and prioritising partnerships that are specifically tailored for tackling the respective European challenges, including collaboration across disciplines where beneficial for the case; and through the integration with testbeds and technology infrastructures, where relevant and feasible.
- However, effective dissemination, outreach and information of existing capabilities (both disciplinary and multidisciplinary) is important to ensure that these capabilities can really be efficiently employed to meet the needs of such priority-driven calls.
- Without high visibility to the user community – whether academic or industrial – ERICs cannot realise their full potential as service providers. This is particularly true of distributed ERICs whose services require payment of access fees. Given that significant user outreach/marketing budgets are not feasible, ERICs would benefit from support from research funders, learned societies and member institutions in the profiling of these services. This area of collaboration remains under-developed and is hampering uptake of ERIC services.
- Enabling real integration and multidisciplinary action is potentially challenging. Supporting mechanisms and measures would be needed to enable synergistic cooperation and cross-disciplinary offerings between ERICs.
- Outreach is also needed for alignment amongst the EU Member States to clarify to what extent ERICs need to prioritise important policies vs. individual ERIC core activities that are supported by the Member States' funding. Additionally, ERICs are expected to offer administrative support for activities in these calls, as Member States contributions/core budget does not cover them.
- Overall, the ERICs encourage the EC to actively ensure that new, emerging initiatives, that could be fitted in one of the existing organisations, are not established as separate

entities. Rather, they should be encouraged to link to existing ERICs in order to avoid creating overlapping services and additional coordination efforts.

- The emphasis when ERICs have been established is that they should provide specific service channels to cover certain specific needs. The continuation, strengthening, and sustainability of such specific, established, and dedicated service channels are important and desirable. These service channels will provide a basis for real European power-basis of know-how and technologies to enable cutting-edges services for discovery and innovation.
- However, when it comes to integration and multidisciplinary, it would also be important to ensure facilitating legislation whereby ERICs could avoid complicated steps or establishing new legal entities when attempting multidisciplinary services or actions.
- It should be noted that highly distributed vs single/few site ERICs have many differences (e.g. access modalities, construction/decommissioning costs), and some of the challenges in operating one type are not relevant for the other and vice versa. It would be valuable to dive deeper into understanding challenges and bottlenecks that are unique to each, to develop solutions specifically tailored to their structure.
- The runway from a newly invented technology to an established research infrastructure technology is often long. To shorten the runway, active measures should be in place to integrate innovations into the service provision. Showcasing and proof-of-concept studies could be built into the RI services. Furthermore, technology calls could be employed to foster dynamic interaction between R&D-focused institutions and established ERICs.

Integrating/interconnecting resources

This section addresses how the ERIC system could be more effective, performant and impactful by further integrating and interconnecting the national research capacities through the ERICs, as well as the ERICs among themselves and with other RIs to better address (multidisciplinary) scientific challenges.

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ERICs are a good example of combination of different EU funding streams, but the eligibility for national funding is crucial for long-term sustainability.

- Both single/multisite ERICs and distributed ERICs were built by combining national, European, and cohesion policy resources. They are an example and a flagship case of combining resources for the preparation and construction of research infrastructures in Europe. However, further synergies with the Smart Specialisation Strategies should be looked into, as also highlighted by the EGERIC report (p32)
- ERICs operations are supported from contributions of their Members, Observers and partners. In addition to this, project financing is to be applied for specific purposes and in house, own, research. This is possible only by combining resources from different providers. The eligibility for national funding is crucial for the sustainability of ERICs - for both, the Nodes and the Hubs. Also the EGERIC report (p.14) states that “ERICs (should be) clearly identified as comparable to a national research institution regarding the possibility to apply for a national funding /.../”.
- By combining national resources into a pan-European RI, ERICs increase the value of national investments. There are several examples of impacts reported by ERICs in terms of national and regional benefits (e.g. increased visibility, more participation in European projects, etc). Allowing ERICs to participate as direct beneficiaries in national projects can

increase its interaction with national RIs, and therefore the benefits for the members states.

- The distributed ERICs hubs/central units are connected to tenths of national nodes many times constituted by even more national research infrastructures and labs. The central hub is usually supported from Members' contributions and some European projects, the nodes by a combination of resources specific for the state they operate in. This makes an integrated management rather difficult for the ERIC.
- Therefore, more needs to be done to raise visibility of ERICs on the national administrative level, i.e. beyond the ministry in charge of ERIC, but also at other ministries and with authorities on regional and local level.
- More visibility and connection could be also achieved nationally on connecting different ERIC's nodes and thereby reaching across clusters on the national level.
- Improved reach out and visibility among research institutions, researchers, and users will also be crucial to generate both better efficacy, impact, and return on investment from the ERICs .
- National and European Roadmaps need to be more aligned and the implementation of Roadmaps in National and European funding needs to be ensured.

The role of clusters in integrating resources:

- Scientific clusters of ERICs are formed within ERIC Forum. This is a good way forward. The drawback of this activity is the fact, that European priorities require multidisciplinary approaches (E.g., combining SSH with ENVI and HEALTH for solutions around the Green Deal).
- Beyond clustering, integration of ERICs (and other RIs) among themselves given the variety and specificity of missions, expertise and resources, is difficult. Yet, given the complementarity of some ERICs for addressing, for instance, specific societal challenges, there is room for improvement at the level of collaboration frameworks and, hence, the governance of the system.

Overall, combination of all funding sources should be facilitated in the future:

- Crucial to this approach is to have ERICs to be eligible for national funding as resources in European HE Partnerships and other co- financed activities require this condition and are an opportunity to strengthen the concept of combining resources. So, ERICs would be put even more at the service of society, solving the societal challenges we face.

Governance of the ERIC system

This section aims to address how to consider the over 22 ERICs as a system and with what governance while ensuring at the same time compliance with the Regulation. This is considered necessary to strengthen the ERICs and a pan-European approach in the broader ERA context. This could include among others how to interact with the ERICs at operational level by means of an institutional approach for the ERIC Forum.

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When considering the governance of the ERIC system, it is important to recognise that:

- a) ERICs are the builders of its communities:**

Currently in the system of the ERICs, there are the following bodies: the Commission, Member States, the ERIC committee, ERIC Forum and ERICs. Most, but not all ERICs are/were also ESFRI projects. ERICs as well as all the above-mentioned bodies are stakeholders of the European Research Area. The Commission as the one who publishes the Implementing decision is the founder of the ERIC. The Member States are the owners of the ERICs. ERIC Forum is now a platform of cooperation and sharing experience for ERICs with the potential of becoming an even more important stakeholder of the ERA. The currently 22 ERICs are the real builders of communities around the research enabled by them.

b) ERICs are the right actors to build the observatory

The EGERIC Report proposed to set up a register of ERICs which would contain data on the ERICs allowing the Member States and the Commission to have a whole picture of the impact of ERICs on the EU, Member States and regions. This is surely an activity to implement, and could be an important part of the ERIC Observatory. Due to its intrinsic knowledge, ERIC Forum and the ERICs community are the most suitable to build the Observatory.

c) Importance of ERIC clusters

ERICs cluster into groups of service providers in one scientific field. The Commission should work better with this scheme in order to solve societal challenges which lay ahead of the European society. Support for the clusters is needed, as they can provide most of the services or input into the ERIC system.

d) ERICs as a key stakeholder of the ERA

In the broader ERA context, ERICs are stakeholders of the ERA, and should be dealt with as such. The place at the table of the ERA Stakeholders Forum for the ERIC Forum is a step ahead in a good direction.

e) Need for better interactions between hubs and nodes

The interaction between the centre/hub and nodes as well as local (research/service) sites of a distributed ERIC should be improved. Managerial solutions should be investigated to do so. Establish an ERIC coordinating centre in the node whose employees would be of the ERIC could be one way forward. The same applies for the mother organisations (Universities, research organisations) to allow exemptions to departments operating the ERIC node to be able to apply same policies and processes across the whole ERIC. At the operational level, procedures and activities can be developed which guarantee the regular exchange (including staff exchange) and communication between centre and periphery as well as across nodes.

III. ERICs in the ERA and the global context

ERA - More sustainable access

This section addresses how to better integrate the ERICs in the ERA context. The Pact for R&I identifies research infrastructures as one of the priority areas for joint actions and the need for 'employing a broader range of funding sources for world-leading research infrastructures and exploring novel ways of funding transnational and virtual access'. The ERA Policy agenda 2022-2024 includes an action to 'Strengthen sustainability, accessibility and resilience of research infrastructures in the ERA' aiming, among others, at 'Broader and more sustainable access for all countries to European research infrastructures and their services'. This is notably relevant for the ERICs, more recently established (and predominantly as distributed research infrastructures) with funding models still to strengthen.

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Sustainable funding of research infrastructures, in particular ERICs, is a must. **While MS ("core") funding provides for a level of sustainability, it is often insufficient to further develop services, access to those services and interactions with key users.** In this sense most of ERICs rely on additional EU project support. Even with the stable core funding from the MS, the EGERIC report rightly points out that compared to IGOs, the funding for ERICs is "often committed to a more time-limited fashion in contrast to the multi-annual commitments for nationally structured IOs".

The key issues and some suggestions around sustainable access funding are:

- Competitive funding by the EC for specific long-term collaborations of national RIs threatens the sustainability of ERICs, where national funds need to cover the costs of the provision of transnational access.
- As regards project funding, multiannual access provision schemes supported by the EU funding are clearly needed in order for "all researchers in Europe to have the same opportunities for access to the services provided by the ERs".
- Finding good call topics will be difficult if many (often diverse) RIs are expected to participate. It might be easier to focus on topics that involve not more than 3-4 RIs; these could align with the HE missions or certain topics.
- If co-funded, sufficient time for RIs is needed to ring-fence the necessary budget, as negotiations and/or approvals are needed with the governance committees (e.g. assemblies of members) of the different RIs to allocate in-kind contributions to the co-funding calls. Cost reporting need to be kept simple.
- While the notions of access or services are not relevant for some ERICs, these ERICs are nevertheless in need of a mechanism which would allow for relationship/partnership with countries which are not member of an ERIC.

ERICs and the broader ERA context

This section addresses how the ERICs can benefit from and contribution to the ERA and other policies. In particular, how the ERICs can (i) contribute to aspects such as innovation, the economy, education, societal engagement; (ii) link to other ERA Policy Agenda actions.

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ERICs are by nature in the center of the innovation triangle of education, research and innovation. Moreover, ERICs and their provision of services have become one of the the pillars of the European R&I landscape.

In the European landscape there are already several initiatives that are a good example how to further contribution of ERICs beyond research:

- Around ERICs consortia of European Universities having programmes in specific domains of knowledge are forming. Even a European Master in specific topics are being envisaged. Without a connection to Universities, the ERICs are not able to function. The benefit for both sides encompass pure education or training. This is in line with the newly published European strategy for universities.
- Concerning innovation, several points of interaction are already included in innovation policies and strategies of ERICs. Industry must come up with innovative solutions for the construction of new instruments and their upgrades. These innovation parts or instruments can be used for more purposes than the original one, as it was proved in the H2020 project ATTRACT. This trend can continue in some actions of the EIC. A different involvement of innovative industry is at the point of the possible use of research results done at the ERIC facilities for innovative services and products. Another way of involving innovative industry by ERICs is to conclude contracts providing services to industry.
- ERICs are actors contributing to the development of regions, especially when supported from cohesion policy funding tools. ERICs influence the development of jobs in regions, employment rate, and competitiveness of the countries involvement in them. ERICs are game setters for European research as their governing bodies adopt proposed priorities of research and facility development and allocate funds according to their decision.
- Most ERICs have professional PR, enter in dialogue with local governments, regional governments and general public. Thus, they are also places of meeting between research and citizens. However, many ERICs have no budget earmarked for education and societal engagement within the national contributions. Those activities can only rely on external fundraising (notably through EU projects). This prevents the sustainable development of education and societal engagement activities
- ERICs should be considered as horizontal to all 20 concrete ERA Policy Agenda actions. E.g., Enable Open Science, including through the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) is at the heart of the management of data within an ERIC, and constitutes an ex-ante condition for the data management of ERICs.
- ERIC Forum should be considered as a player in the system formed by the Competitiveness Council, EC, EP, and groups like ESFRI Forum, ERAC, SWG HRM, GPC, SFIC, VAT Forum, and SWG OSI, as well as the ERA Stakeholder Forum.

Nevertheless, contribution of ERICs to different aspects of ERA is significant, although due to the lack of collected data difficult to quantify. **The key issues to evaluate the contribution of ERICs are the following:**

- Currently there is no central system to collect this data and also ERICs are unlikely to collect data systematically. In some cases, some member states ask individual ERICs about certain KPIs that are relevant for that particular MS, and thereby one can see an impact on individual national level. Some ERICs have started an integrated approach to data collection in order to depict its impact and value across their MS and on the EU level.
- EGERIC report made the first relevant estimations about what is approximate overall monetary contribution of resources committed through ERICs, and it also recognises that not having the data and the lack of the overall governance system impedes the possibilities of ERICs to become the "backbone of ERA". This needs to be addressed in the future.

- On the overall socio-economic impact of ERICs, the ERIC Forum project will deliver a report in summer 2022. This report will give first insights in the impact of ERICs across different policies and within the ERA.

ERICs and international cooperation

This section addresses how to foster the international dimension of the ERICs be that for individual ERICs or for the ERIC System and Services (see above).

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The EGERIC assessment confirmed that most ERICs are involved in international activities, networking and collaboration directly or through their hosting institutions. But the question remains how many international partners really recognize the ERICs as partners in Europe for scientific service provision and collaboration, and truly appreciate their actual value proposition. Therefor the ERICs suggest to commonly increase further their recognition in the global domain by building on:

Optimized communication strategy for international collaboration

- As part of their international outreach activities ERICs individually as well as at the level of ERIC Forum should be able to use every opportunity to present the essence of their service and value propositions as synthesis of national key capabilities from across Europe.
- Hosting universities and institutions need to better support their ERICs for increasing the ERICs' visibility, also offering existing international networks as starting point
- Member states need to support the international communication strategy of their ERICs with all available means (e.g., offering opportunities for presentation and networking; providing ERIC budget for communication and outreach activities, etc.).

Achieving global targets with funding coming from limited European membership base is challenging

- ERICs have different European membership basis, with more or less Member States participating in individual ERICs. In this respect achieving global targets (i.e. environmental, health) with funding that comes from a limited membership base is very challenging, also as targets of European relevance are not always covered by national activities. Thus, there is a need for an additional mechanism that would allow to fund also broader, globally linked activities of ERICs.

Increased international user access, staff exchange and training programs by ERICs

Not only for the ERICs' sustainability and their role in tackling the SDGs, but also for their visibility and recognition globally, the accessibility of their services to the international scientific community is key. This can be achieved ideally in tailored programs respecting the particularities of international access and exchange:

- Funding of international user access to ERICs covering access fees, travel and accommodation (EU funding, national funding, co-funding models)
- Reciprocal training programs for infrastructure staff (ideally contextualized respective the needs of the trainees). These can comprise international training courses, online training platforms, common training repositories etc.
- Train the trainer and RI staff: Staff exchange programs and training of RI partner tandems for international collaboration

For increasing international user access and training, the ERICs invite the EC as well as the member states to install and/or open existing user access and training funding schemes for international collaboration as much as possible.

- ERICs can employ international researchers and other employees. In this area a bottleneck is caused by the incompatibility of pension systems in between different countries. Resaver fund could be one of the solutions to this problem.

Attractiveness of ERICs to third countries and international organizations

The ERICs can conclude contracts with other legal subjects, which they gladly do. Umbrella agreements, agreements for specific projects etc. The problem arises, when a third country is not able to enter in a legal subject which is established and operates under European law (like an ERIC). This issue should be addressed and solved by the Commission, ERICs and Member States. A possible use of international arbitration should be investigated as a solution.

The ERICs ask the EC

- To provide further clarification on the legal frame and possible deviations
- To develop a focused part of the practical guidelines addressing third countries and international organizations.
- Solutions to legal constraints have been implemented in some cases; these should be studied to allow best practices and solutions easing the bottlenecks in an effective way.
- To explore the possibility of implementing e.g., association agreements as another way of connecting to third countries (i.e., beyond partnerships with institutions from 3rd countries)
- To provide guidance on the applicability of GDPR and third countries as ERIC partners (or members)
- To provide guidance on dealing with administrative challenges with UK and CH partners in EU projects.

Other

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ERIC Forum Secretariat

ERIC Forum would like to call for a long-term support for its Secretariat. The first opportunity to address this with the EC funded call is the upcoming funding for the ERIC Observatory. This would be very much welcome and would solve the need for funding the secretariat in the medium term.

A long-term perspective to address the sustainability of the ERIC Forum Secretariat is however still needed. An option would be to provide an obligation for support the Secretariat into the EC Regulation. Several ERICs face at the moment unwillingness of some Member States to support transfer of additional funds from ERICs to the ERIC Forum, no matter how small.

Currently the ERIC Forum secretariat is sustained through the ERIC Forum Implementation Project.