



Assessment on the implementation of the ERIC Regulation. Discussion with ERIC Forum

Carlo Rizzuto

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

The task of EGERIC

- Assessment of the implementation of the ERIC Regulation (not of individual ERICs) identification and analysis of good practices and added value, lessons learnt, success stories, identification of bottlenecks and recommendations to overcome them.
- How main features of the Regulation were translated and used in practice, identification of good practices for: financial sustainability, national investments, VAT exemption, in-kind contributions, and participation of Third Countries and International Organisations.
- Outlook on future perspectives concerning the implementation of the ERIC Regulation, its possible extension, and its expected impacts.

The method of work

- Defining the assessment criteria from Regulation and ERA context.
- Organized data being unavailable: acquired information and data from:
 - a) Previous two EC Reports, ERIC Statutes, ERIC annual reports.
 - b) Surveys: Ministries, ERICs (through the ERIC Forum), some Stakeholders (Associations: Universities, TT-JRC, COST....)
 - c) Institutional and individual interviews: ESFRI and ESFRI's stakeholders, Committee of Regions, Experts in EU law-tax-HR-evaluation&impact assessment, International Organizations....
- Specific focus: issues raised in previous reports and from stakeholders
- Discussion within EGERIC and with EC, drafting and reviewing.

The 19 assessment criteria:

Enhancing the scientific capability of the ERA: Excellence, assessed by publications and attractiveness to international users; Attracting and retaining talent; Activities in training; Mobility and diversity of staff and users; Supporting Open Data and EOSC; Participation by Cohesion MSs.

Overcoming fragmentation, improving coordination and reinforcing Governance and Sustainability: Flexibility of implementation; Structuring and integrating effect of resources; Interplay between national, regional and EU R&I system; Synergies with Smart Specialization Strategies; Impacts on the governance of the ERA.

Improving links with Society, Economy and Competitiveness: Support and collaboration with value-adding organizations; Dissemination of science to society; Extent of implemented IP policies; Possible ERIC approach to set-up Innovation and/or University structures?.

Strengthening the global approach (response to the twin transitions): Extent of the engagement of ERICs in Challenges, Partnerships and Missions; Support of the Grand Societal Challenges and international commitments as set-out in SDGs and Climate goals; Increased visibility of European science at international level; Attractiveness of ERICs to Third Countries and IOs

Summary Outcomes: the positive part

- 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.

Most ERICs show a positive & steep “learning curve”

Summary Outcomes: 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:

A 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.

Recommendations II

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.