

# ERIC Forum Implementation Project

## Annual Meeting Report

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### Executive summary

The document reports the outcome of the ERIC Forum Annual meeting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first ERIC Forum Meeting 2021 took place virtually on 26-27 January. It brought together more than 170 participants from the ERIC community, ESFRI, the European Commission (DG RTD), the European Innovation Council, and more.

The event was divided in two distinct moments:

- Day 1: 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 (the role of ERICs as key stakeholders in the new European Research Area and in innovation policies). At the end of day 1, it was organized a networking session and a hybrid dinner.
- Day 2: ERIC Forum General Assembly and ERIC Forum Implementation Project General Assembly.

The report outlines the impact of the project in the life of the ERIC Forum and underlines how the projects support the development of the Forum, while having a large impact on the European research infrastructure policy.

Main outcomes:

- The event was opened by John Womersley, ESS Director General and the Chairman of ERIC Forum. The new governance body entered in force.
- A report on the project's outcomes was presented to the Forum and approved by the project's partners.
- ERIC Forum WP3 and WP6 contributed to the organization of the event's sessions, also to the development of the WPs' deliverables, maximizing the project's funds and impact.

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## Document log

Issue	Date (yyyy-mm-dd)	Comment	Author/partner
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## ERIC Forum Meeting 2021

26 - 27 January 2021 | Online

Join the discussions with the ERIC Forum's key stakeholders on:

- ERICs in the new European Research Area.
- ERICs and the new ESFRI Stakeholder Forum.
- ERIC guidelines.
- European Innovation Council: Opportunities for ERICs.

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THE  
DATE**

ERIC Forum has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N° 825278

### Agenda

Day 1. January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 / Morning

10:00	<b>Welcome</b> <b>Results of the ERIC Forum Chair and Vice Chair elections</b> John Womersley, Director General, European Spallation Source ERIC ERIC Forum Chairman
<b>Session #1:</b>	<b>ERICs as Key Stakeholders in the New ERA</b>
10:10	<b>Report on ERIC Forum Achievements 2020</b> Franciska de Jong, Executive Director, CLARIN ERIC Member of the ERIC Forum Executive Board
10:30	<b>ERICs in the New ERA</b> Anna Panagopoulou, Acting Director of Research and Innovation Outreach, DG RTD
10:45	<b>The Up-dated ERIC Guidelines</b> Johannes Klumpers, Head of Research and Industrial Infrastructures Unit, DG RTD
11:00	<b>ERICs' Role in the New ESFRI Stakeholder Forum and the New ESFRI Roadmap</b> Jan Hrušák, ESFRI Chairman
11:15	<b>Panel Discussion and Q&amp;A from the Audience</b> Moderator: New ERIC Forum Chair Participants: Speakers of the morning session
12:00	End of Session #1

Day 1. January 26th / Afternoon

**Session #2: ERICs and Innovation**

- 14:00      **The European Innovation Council: Opportunities for ERICs**  
Jean-David Malo, Director, European Innovation Council
- 14:20      **The EIROforum and Its Innovation Activities: Collaboration Opportunities with ERICs**

Helmut Schober, Chairman, EIROforum; Director, ILL

- 14:40      **Showcasing the Socio-economic Impact of ERICs and ERIC-industry Collaborations**
- Claudia Pfander, Industry Board Coordinator of Euro-BioImaging
  - Martin de Kort, Senior Scientific Programme Manager of EATRIS
  - Darja Fišer, former vice-director of CLARIN ERIC
- 15:10      **Panel Discussion**  
Moderator: New ERIC Vice-Chair  
Panellists: All speakers
- 15:55      End of Session #2

Day 1. January 26th / Evening

**Session #3: Hybrid Dinner**

- 19:00      Welcome / Explaining the “rule” for the evening
- 19:10      Cultural performance – Fado singer Cláudia Madur with accompaniment:  
Portuguese guitar: André Mariano  
Viola de Fado: Rafael Carvalho Jr.
- 19:20      Break up into dinner tables / hybrid dinner
- 20:00      End of evening

Day 2. January 27th / Morning

**Session #4: ERIC Forum General Assembly & Implementation Project meeting**

**10:00 Welcome and Opening**  
Francesco Florindi, Project Coordinator, BBMRI

**10:10 Reports and plans for 2021**  
WP 2: ERIC Forum Governance Model  
WP 3: Operations, Administration, HR and Finance of ERICs  
WP 4: Evaluation and Impact Assessment  
WP 5: Communication and Dissemination  
WP 6: Role of ERICs in European Science Policy and Research Strategy  
WP 1: Coordination and Project Management

**Session 5#: ERIC Forum General Assembly Plans for 2021 and Beyond: discussion for the Members of the Forum**

**11:15 Agenda points:**

- Results of the elections and duration of the mandate
- Kick-off conversation on the sustainability of the ERIC Forum
- Improving our communication – your feedback
- AOB

**12:30 End of ERIC Forum Annual Meeting**

[Session #1: ERICs as Key Stakeholders in the New ERA](#)

**Report on ERIC Forum Achievements 2020**

Franciska de Jong, Executive Director of CLARIN ERIC and member of ERIC Forum Executive Board, presented the other members of the Executive Board.

Chair and Vice Chair:

- John Womersley, Director General, European Spallation Source ERIC, physical and analytical facilities & energy cluster
- Anton Ussi, Operations and Finance Director, EATRIS ERIC, biomedical sciences cluster

Members:

- Franciska de Jong, Executive Director, CLARIN ERIC, social sciences and humanities cluster
- Wolfgang Fecke, Director General, EUOPENSREEN ERIC, life sciences cluster
- Juan Miguel González Aranda, Chief Technical Officer, LifeWatch ERIC, environment and earth sciences cluster

She highlighted the Implementation of new governance structure (updated [Rules of Procedure](#); new ERIC Forum bodies: ERIC Forum Executive Board and ERIC Forum Secretariat; and the Annual Meeting in Brussels in February 2020).

She talked about the Positioning of the Forum towards Horizon Europe and the raising-awareness activities about the ERIC Forum through international conferences. She showed the ERIC Forum position paper on Horizon Europe mission areas.

As an example of collaboration, she explained the response of the ERIC Forum to COVID-19 outbreak.

The work done towards the update the ERIC Guidelines and the amendment of the Rules of Procedure was also presented by her. At the end of the session, she explained how the Forum is preparing for the dynamics to come.

### ERICs in the New ERA

Ms. Anna Panagopoulou (Director of Common Implementation Centre at DG RTD) summarized the successes and points of improvement of ERA. The aggravation of Europe societal, ecological and economic challenges paves the way to retool ERA so that it delivers on Europe's recovery to accelerate the twin transition, strengthen resilience and crises preparedness, and support Europe's competitive edge.

She highlighted Action 10 of ERA Communication: "Support ESFRI to work towards a world class research infrastructures ecosystem focusing on the broader range of the EU's policy priorities and improve its governance to address the broadened focus of its activity by the end of 2021 and establish a new governance structure for Technology Infrastructures". She focuses on the support of RIs in Horizon Europe and the policy initiatives in 2021-2022 with 5 Destinations.



**Research Infrastructures in Horizon Europe** – how it will support our policy initiatives in 2021-2022

Novel 'Impact-driven intervention logic', starting from long-term 'destinations'

- Destination # 1 : Developing, consolidating and optimising European Research Infrastructures to maintain global leadership
- Destination # 2 : Enabling an operational, open and FAIR ecosystem for the EOSC
- Destination # 3 : RI services to support health research, accelerate the greener and digital transformation, and advance frontier knowledge
- Destination # 4 : Next generation of scientific instruments, tools and methods and advanced digital solutions
- Destination # 5 : Network connectivity – Enabling collaboration without boundaries

 European Commission

## The Updated ERIC Guidelines

WP3 prepared input for the European Commission (EC) regarding certain aspects of the ERIC Guidelines in 2020. So far, the guidelines have not yet been updated by the EC.

## ERICs' Role in the New ESFRI Stakeholder Forum and the New ESFRI Roadmap


Jan Hrušák (ESFRI Chair) highlighted the Contribution of RIs to the European Policy Objectives. Also, how ESFRI will support the RIs ecosystem in growing and optimizing its alignment with the European strategic agendas, across borders of sectorial domains and it will voice the RI needs.

He continued with the [White Paper: "Making Science happen, A new ambition for RIs in the ERA"](#) frames an innovative European RIs vision for post-2020". This White Paper is ESFRI's response to the new challenges lying ahead of Europe. It shows how RIs contribute to the main priorities of the renewed ERA such as increasing Europe's competitiveness and identifying significant solutions to global challenges. Main messages from the White paper


- RIs as essential pillar of the ERA
- RIs as strategic investments
- RIs as knowledge and Innovation hubs
- Coherence of European, national, and regional priorities
- Infrastructures as major promoters of Open Science Research
- ESFRI's contribution to RIs policy

He also presented ESFRI Roadmap 2021 and developed its content: Landscape of RIs in Europe and globally, List new pan-European RI projects and operational RIs (Landmarks), ESFRI strategic perspective, Methodology. He also talked about ESFRI Stakeholders Forum, the Consolidation, socioeconomic benefits and impacts of RIs. He finished with long-term research sustainability.

### Long term research sustainability



- Contribution to the economies of scale
- Sustainable resources use
  - financial resources + people + management of RIs + data management
- Open science as a solution for more effective science
  - speed up sharing knowledge
  - support the transparency and reproducibility
  - produce comparable and reusable data
  - support the science quality
- Connect RIs together and use what have been already created
- Added value is interdisciplinary research – needs of all research disciplines should be included
- Secure and regulated working environment
- Minimum restriction and obstacles to keep EOSC open for all researchers


JAN HRUSAK

## Panel Discussion and Q&A from the Audience

136 people participated in the Q&A section

Q: Should de ERIC guidelines also provide instructions to the management ERICs? Or just limiting to setting-up ERICs?

A: In the guidelines there are issues for the management of the ERICs such us: access policy for users, scientific evaluation, dissemination policy, governance, voting rights etc.

Q: What about the ongoing role of the EC on the follow-up of ERICs as one of the main stakeholders?

A: The interaction with the European Commission is not part of the ERIC. ERIC is not a body depending on the Commission once established. There is no institutional link. The EC follows up annual reports, but there is not a deeply intervention. Perhaps the EC could help to explain member states the ERIC structure instead of the ERICs having conversations country by country. There is inexperience in many member states with the ERIC structure (taxation, privileges to international organizations not always applying to ERICs etc.).

Q: For the implementation of Research Infrastructures, does ESFRI prioritize the legal structure of the ERICs?

A: ESFRI is aware of the great advantage of the legal structure of ERICs. Nevertheless, ESFRI do not have preferences over any legal structures for the implementation, or in the evaluation and monitoring process. It is a serious process. ERIC is probably the most common legal structure but in the landmark, it can be seen many legal structures.

Q: There is a number of ERIC projects that are being considered. If there are changes in the rules, how they will do: continue working or wait?

A: They can work with the existing rules for the moment.

Q: Which is the future relation of the UK in ERICs.

A: There will be an association agreement. Not huge differences for the ERICs are expected. Smaller elements may be affected, like the “.eu domain”, which may not be able to be used.

Q: Which is the situation of ERICs with other countries like Switzerland? And what about countries who do not belong to the ERA?

A: All associated countries are included.

Q: Regarding the debate to federate ERICs working in the same areas, which is the position of ESFRI and the Commission on this?

A: ERICs provide services. There are instruments that can be used by researchers of various disciplines.

## Session #2: ERICs and Innovation

### The European Innovation Council: Opportunities for ERICs

Jean-David Malo (European Innovation Council - EIC) explained what's holding back European innovation and who will lead the next wave of breakthrough and disruptive innovation. He described the financing gap between venture capital US vs EU. He focused on what the European Innovation Council is and how it works. He reviewed The EIC pilot phase (2018-2020) under Horizon 2020 and explained what will the EIC look like in Horizon Europe. EIC Advisory Board vision statement (2020) and their key partners. He highlighted the relevance for European Research Infrastructure Consortia (ERICs)

**EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL** eic

**An important role to play for Research Infrastructures, in particular ERICs, in synergy with the EIC (*for discussion*)**

**Why?**

- ✓ Involvement of RIs and TIs **already in EIC Pilot** (especially in FET/ pilot Pathfinder)
- ✓ **EIC will be major part of Horizon Europe** (Innovation equivalent of ERC, alongside innovation ecosystems and EIT)
- ✓ **EIC focus on "deep tech"** especially relevant for many ERICs
- ✓ Together with EIC in the field of disruptive innovation, ERICs to help cover the **continuum of needs** from fundamental knowledge creation to technology deployment
- ✓ Together with EIC, ERICs to support the implementation of **European technology leadership**

**How?**

- ✓ Find ways so that EIC supported companies/ projects **can access innovation infrastructures** (testing facilities, etc.)
- ✓ ERICs as **partners in EIC Pathfinder** to generate new results
- ✓ ERICs teams to use **EIC Transition to turn results into spin-outs/ commercial opportunities**
- ✓ ERICs **spin-outs as applicants to EIC Accelerator** for development and scaleup
- ✓ Role of **EIC Programme Managers** to interact with RIs within their thematic portfolios

### The EIROforum and Its Innovation Activities: Collaboration Opportunities with ERICs

Helmut Schober, EIROForum Chair, talked about the collaboration opportunities with world-class Research Infrastructures. He explains how to fulfil our mission we push technology and how exploiting synergy to foster innovation. Their innovation activities, the cross-support in bilateral projects, the marketplace, the EIROforum school of instrumentation. Then, he focused on collaboration opportunities between EIROforum – ERIC Forum and its future.

## Collaboration opportunities

Identify areas of common interest despite our diversity  
(e.g. optimal re-use of research data and research data challenges)

- Learn from each other
- Align outreach, promotion and lobbying activities
- Coordinate project funding and implementation

The EIROforum partners differ in their practices but face a number of common challenges, shared by many other RIs in Europe



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### Showcasing the Socio-economic Impact of ERICs and ERIC-industry Collaborations:

- CLARIN ERIC: Darja Fišer, Former Vice-Executive Director  
Darja presented “ParlaMint” (<https://www.clarin.eu/content/parlamint-towards-comparable-parliamentary-corpora>)  
Parliamentary data directly reflects the most recent events with a global impact on human health, social life, and economics such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. The goal is to provide policy making resources and tools for focused observations on trends, opinions, decisions on lockdowns and restrictive measures as well as on the consequences with respect to health, medical care systems, employment, etc. during pandemic times.  
The Scope: Coverage: 16 languages, 20+ million words each.
- Euro BioImaging: Claudia Pfander, Industry Board Coordinator  
Claudia Pfander explained the highlights from recent EBIB activities. Networking in the times of SARS-CoV-2. Future focus of activities and stimulating collaboration with industry through Industry Board Membership, industry as infrastructure users, and publicly funded consortia.

## Stimulating collaboration with Industry



### Industry Board Membership

- Ensure return-on-investment through activities that serve the mutual needs of industry and facility staff – trainings, exchange on technology, identifying collaboration opportunities
- Outreach to companies in the Imaging field through personal communication and representation in various European initiatives

### Industry as infrastructure users

- Outreach to pharma and biotech to advertise Euro-Biomed service offer and mode of access

### Publicly funded consortia

- Identify relevant calls calling in which RIs participate or that have an imaging dimension and attract industry to opportunities for involvement

- EATRIS-ERIC, Martin de Kort, Senior Scientific Programme Manager

Martin de Kort showed the tailored approach to collaboration with industry as they have a broad range of user types. EATRIS-ERIC has an Innovation Hub that gives added value to Private and Public Partners. It was also explained how is to work with research funders and how to optimize the patients benefits.

## Innovation Hub – added value

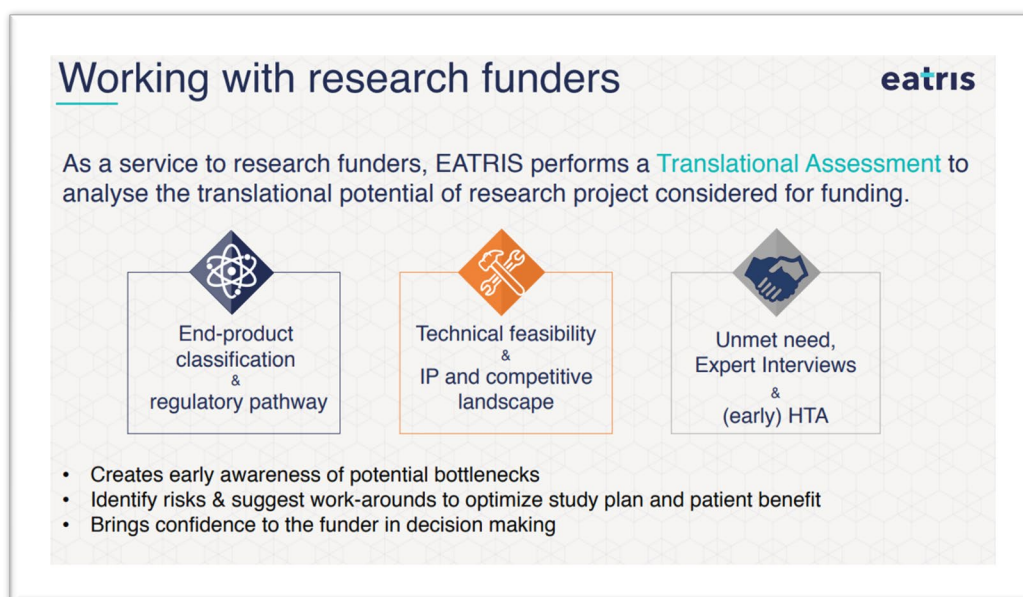


### To Private Partners

- ERIC acts as trusted third party – single point of contact & management
- Increased quality and execution of research components
- Access to a network of external (clinical) experts
- Enhanced innovation capacity for industry

### To Public Partners

- Co-funding opportunities to develop new research methods
- Faster application of academic research towards patients
- Multidisciplinary collaboration with company scientists & expertise



## Panel Discussion

These were the most relevant questions raised during this panel:

Q: Where are the main innovation gaps? Could the community from RIs solve that?

A: Even if we learn a lot from the pilots, the gaps remain. It is necessary to work more on the side of the innovation ecosystem at large. The EC is addressing issues to move promising technologies in terms of moving from TRL 4-5 to industrialization.

Q: Which is the success of “Attract” project?

A: It is a perfect facilitator bringing together people that want to use these technologies.

The difference with the USA is that in our research bodies it is very rare to have researchers that have in addition to their work launched a start-up. While in the USA, is the opposite. Therefore, this link is created with the industry.

Q: Does the ERIC legal structure helps to create socio-economic impact?

A1: It opens opportunities for cooperation.

A2: The legal structure is helpful from the development side. For the industry interaction, it may be useful in terms of sustainability.

A3: The language of the ERIC (English) could be useful for example to open a start-up in the USA.

Q: Lessons learned to engage citizens.

A: You need to show results that the society think it is useful, built successful stories, use social media and invest in communication.

### Session #3: Networking Dinner

A networking online dinner was organized on the evening of 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Attendees included representatives from the ERICs, ESFRIs and European Commission.

The event provided an informal opportunity to network and discuss more in depth the issues mentioned on the first day of the ERIC Forum Annual Meeting, while, at the same time, maintain some of the social added value of the face-to-face ERIC Forum gatherings.

The event was opened by John Womersley, Chair of the ERIC Forum, who set the tone for the evening and explained the basic concept of the event. He also introduced a 10 min. cultural performance by a Portuguese fado ensemble, to celebrate the start of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union, offered by the ERIC Forum Chairs.

The participants were randomly assigned to virtual breakout rooms, where they could meet new members of the RI community, discuss the main issues of the event, and share knowledge. The breakout rooms were animated by members of the ERIC Forum Secretariat and Project Management Team, to ensure smooth transitions between plenary/breakout rooms and facilitate dialogue.

### Session #4: ERIC Forum General Assembly & Implementation Project meeting

Francesco Florindi, former Project Manager, opened the General Assembly and Implementation Project of the meeting. All Working Packages reported on their work with the following highlights:

#### WP2: ERIC Forum Governance Model

WP2 has been working on regular revisions of the Rules of Procedure, with the focus of shaping the election process for the Chair and Vice Chair. By defining those, WP2 has finished all tasks and deliverables, providing a permanent governance for the ERIC Forum. WP2 remains available for any future contribution and advice on the needs for further adjusting the Rules of Procedure.

#### WP3: Operations, Administration, HR and Finance of ERICs

WP3 presented their work related to the revision of the ERIC Practical Guidelines. They summarized input submitted by ERIC Committee members, collected additional best practices through a questionnaire to ERICs and prep-ERICs and coordinated experts' input to identified challenges.

WP3 also held bilateral interview of 9 prep-ERICs in order to inform them about best practices and discuss preliminary insights for toolbox. WP3 then planned for early 2021 to have additional bilateral interviews with ERICs to discuss survey responses in preparation for two upcoming deliverables, i.e., D3.1- Guidance document

on GAAP for ERICs and D3.4 - Report on practices and challenges in recruitment for distributed ERICs. They concluded by introducing the deliverables due in 2021.

#### WP4: Evaluation and Impact Assessment

WP4 presented its tasks included in the WP and in particular the outcome of deliverable 4.1. Monitoring and Developing KPIs for ERICs. 21 ERICs responded, as well as 11 ERICs that were in preparation phase. The aim was to assess the current status of KPI implementation across the community of ERICs and prep-ERICs, collect feedback on ESFRI KPIs. 52% of ERICs already has adopted KPIs and the reasons for having them were specified as follows:

- To have an internal management tool that helps the ERICs to achieve tangible results and enables the monitoring of progress against set objectives
- To document improvements and developments
- To have an instrument for communicating the successes of the ERICs
- To improve the longterm impact and value of the ERICs
- To mitigate risks by detecting problems early on
- In case of distributed ERICs, to better evaluate the work of headquarters.

KPIs that ERICs consider more difficult to track and report on are publications, users and directories, events, financials, human resources, qualitative KPIs, socio-economic impact, KPIs and data protection as well as the ESFRI KPIs. WP 4 also put forward the following proposals for adjustments to the ESFRI KPIs:

- Perform regular reviews
- Focus on key RI competences
- Make KPIs more universal
- Bring down the number of KPIs
- Develop a detailed implementation protocol and
- Consider the difference between single-sited and distributed RIs.

#### WP5: Communications and Dissemination

WP5 included its tasks in the WP and presented in detail their actions, communication channels, listed all the initiatives and reports that had been done in the past year. They also showed increase of page views and visitors of the ERIC Forum webpage and impact from on-line outreach via Twitter and LinkedIn. They also identified new audiences and listed them and finished with their plans for 2021.

#### WP6: Role of ERICs in European Science Policy and Research Strategy

WP6 presented its tasks included in the WP and in particular two reports and their main recommendations: The first was the first policy report on funding models for access to ERIC multinational/transnational services (D6.3). Key recommendations were:

- ERICs should be fully eligible and be recognized by national funding agencies

- ERICs and funding bodies at all levels can join efforts to improve ERICs visibility and attractiveness
- Transnational Access mechanisms must be safeguarded, and expanded to support ERIC consolidation
- Simplification of the application and financial processes for distributed RIs in Horizon funding
- Dialogue and collaboration among national, regional, and European funding bodies must be strengthened

The second report was the first technical and innovation report on creating synergies for smart specialization (D6.10). Main recommendations were:

- ERICs have a high impact in regions as catalysts of economic growth
- Regional Smart Specialization Strategies are a pre-requisite for a region to leverage ERDF funds.
- ERICs must become aware of RIS3 to understand how and where they can add value real benefit to their local stakeholders.
- ERICs should seek for ERDF funds to help the development of the RIS3.
- Spain is the first Member State that has launched a specific call for projects to maximize this synergy, this can be used as best practice.
- A coordinating Bureau should be established in order to promote and implement a framework to multiply and channel ERICs efforts to this direction.

#### WP1: Coordination and Project Management

WP1 The project manager reported on the main achievements for the past year:

As the main deliverables mentioned:

- D2.1 Final Draft proposal for a governance model for the ERIC Forum
- D4.1 Report on proposed approach and dashboard for common ERIC KPIs
- D6.2 Definition of priorities for the next ERIC FORUM seminars and policy report – 2
- D6.7 Final science policy report – 1
- D6.10 Final technical & innovation policy report – 1

Overall, there were over 160 visibility opportunities (meetings, press releases, news, presentations, posters etc.), 164 ERIC staffers involved in project activities, and 185 Stakeholders involved/informed of our activities. It was also reported on the state of the preparation of the amendment and on financial aspects, where it was seen that the project's partners are slightly underspending. The Project coordinator gave an outlook of the expected deliverables and mentioned that there are some delays due to COVID-19 (on average 6 months).

#### Session #5: ERIC Forum General Assembly Plans and beyond – discussion

The session in chaired by John Womersley, Director General ESS, Chair of the Forum, with the support of the Executive Board and the Project Coordinator.

#### Results of the elections

The election was overseen by an Election Committee nominated by the Directors composed of:

- Wolfgang Fecke, EU-OPENSREEN
- Andrea Oepen, SHARE

- Francesco Florindi, BBMRI

The Election Committee followed the new election procedure, as amended in November 2020, a report following the reception of the candidatures, and a final report on the results of the elections. The Election Committee reported that the submission of candidatures and voting processes were carried out in line with the Rules of Procedure.

#### Chair, Vice-Chair and Executive Board Election

For the election of the Chair, the Election Committee received only 1 candidature, from John Womersley, ESS. The candidature fulfilled the criteria set by the Rules of Procedures and is therefore admissible. John Womersley was elected as Chair of the ERIC Forum. Also, the composition of the Executive Board was therefore re-confirmed for 1 year:

- Chair: John Womersley, ESS (spallation)

**Note: When John Womersley left ESS, elections for a new Chair were organised and Francisco Colomer, JIVE Director General, was elected Chair of ERIC Forum for a term of 2 years on 2 April 2021.**

- Vice Chair: Anton Ussi, EATRIS
- Other members: Franciska de Jong, CLARIN; Wolfgang Fecke, EU-OPENSREEN; Juan Miguel González Aranda, LifeWatch.

#### Discussion on the sustainability of the ERIC Forum

- The discussion had the objective to gain perspective on how to make the ERIC Forum sustainable once the project funding will be over. The conversation focused on two main issues, i.e., the toolkit and ERIC Forum intranet, as well as proposal from Carlo Rizzuto on establishing the ERIC Forum as a legal entity.

##### A) Toolkit

According to the ERIC Forum Implementation Project grant agreement, the project shall produce an online repository, freely available, containing the information accumulated during the project's lifetime, a sort of knowledge base, for existing and new ERIC to consult freely. Such platform, the toolkit, will be developed by ICOS, in partnership with all the Project Management Team (PMT) members and partners. One needs to bear in mind that science policy environment changes and the toolkit should be designed so that the knowledge base does not become obsolete. There was a vibrant discussion about the exiting platform and as an action point, ICOS and the PMT will take the input from the ERIC Forum and continue to look for the right platform to build the toolkit on.

##### B) ERIC Forum sustainability

Carlo Rizzuto presented to the Assembly a proposal for ERIC Forum to set up a legal entity, so that it could be the key entity taking care of all records on ERICs across Europe and at the EC against a fee. There was a vibrant discussion amongst the ERICs with the action point to set up a Sustainability Working Group which will look into different options for ERIC Forum to be sustainable after the expiration of the ERIC Forum project.

### C) Improving communication

The Chair and the Project Manager introduced the agenda item: the existing communication plan of the Forum was outgrown by the maturity level of the Forum itself and the expanding topics and issues on which the Forum pronounces itself. Salma Baghdadi (WP5) prepared and presented few slides portraying possible solutions to some for the communication issues already identified. After a vibrant discussion it was decided to review the ERIC Forum Communication Strategy with a redefinition of the main goals, stakeholders, with the aim to further boost the presence on social media and the visibility of the website. Also, in the future there should be stronger communication between the Executive Board and WP5.