

## ERIC Forum builds on achievements during 2020 and re-confirms Womersley and Ussi as Chairs

### **BRUSSELS, 26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021**

The leadership group that led the ERIC Forum through 2020 has been reconfirmed, following the results of the ERIC Forum internal election process, published on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021 in occasion of the ERIC Forum Annual Meeting. John Womersley (ESS) and Anton Ussi (EATRIS) will lead the Forum for another year, following a complex year for research infrastructures, marked by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the development of the next European multiannual financial framework.

Bringing together 21 leading European Research Infrastructures Consortia (ERICs), the ERIC Forum is one of the leading science policy voices in Europe, representing a sector (research infrastructures) that is crucial to provide high level services to European researchers and make science and innovation possible.

In 2020, the ERIC Forum was instrumental in increasing visibility for the services that each ERIC can provide to researchers involved in the fight against COVID-19.

In parallel, the ERIC Forum remained the main contact point for several European stakeholders during the negotiation of the EU multiannual financial framework (MFF) and its impact on the development and maturity of research infrastructures, in particular concerning the final outlook of Horizon Europe, the world largest research and development funding scheme.

The 2021 elections, held online during the month of January, showed a strong support by the vast majority of ERICs, providing Dr Womersley and Dr Ussi a strong support to fulfil their mandate for 2021. The Chairs are responsible for the strategic planning of the Forum, and coordinate external relations with the European Commission, the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), and other stakeholders.

The Chairs will continue to be supported in their work by three other members of the Executive Board, each representing a specific scientific cluster:

- Franciska de Jong, Executive Director, CLARIN ERIC, for the social sciences and humanities cluster.
- Wolfgang Fecke, Director General, EU-OPENSREEN, for the life sciences cluster.
- Juan Miguel González Aranda, Chief Technical Officer, LifeWatch ERIC, for the environment cluster.

### Quote from John Womersley, re-elected ERIC Forum Chair:



“The ERIC Forum has evolved very much since its inception as the “ERIC Network”, and 2020 demonstrated this unequivocally. In spring, the ERICs quickly came together, using the ERIC Forum to explain and emphasise the critical role of European research infrastructures as service providers to those researchers working to understand the Sars-COV-2 virus. The Forum showed cohesion and an effective quick response. At the same time, and despite the impact of the pandemic, we came together again to maintain awareness of EU stakeholders concerning the role ERICs must have in Horizon Europe and the new European Research Area. In 2020, the ERIC Forum clearly matured, taking strong positions on broader issues in science policy, funding, emergency responsiveness. 2021 will be a year of confirmation: we will build on 2020’s achievements and continue to develop the Forum, to make it ready to be fully sustainable in the years to come.”

### Quote from Anton Ussi, re-elected ERIC Forum Vice Chair:



“It is a privilege to continue to work with such a committed community operating world class infrastructures, that time and again show huge added value to the European Research Area. The COVID-19 crisis is a case in point and confirms the need for the ERIC Forum. Together we were quickly able to develop tools and services, put forward important policy considerations, and generate important knowledge about the pathogen and its health impact. Looking forward, 2021 will be crucial - we will have to keep delivering as we did in 2020, and at the same time look at the future in the usual, highly collaborative, transparent way of the ERIC Forum. It is my pleasure to work with John and the Executive Board to continue to advance the ERIC Forum agenda.”

### Background Information

The European Union legal framework for a European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) is a specific legal form to facilitate the establishment and operation of research infrastructures with European interest. Among others, it provides a legal capacity recognised in all EU Member States, a faster process than creating an international organisation, and exemptions from VAT and excise duty.

#### What is the ERIC Forum?

The ERIC Forum brings together all European Research Infrastructure Consortia (ERICs).

The ERIC Forum aims to provide information, best practices and potential solutions to challenges which ERICs can face in the preparation phase or throughout the implementation of the ERIC Regulation.

The ERIC Forum is also a consultation body for all EU policies related to Research Infrastructures. It centralises the type of challenges that ERICs face in this regard and the potential solutions which are being implemented.

### CONTACT

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