

EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA
AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

– ERAC –
Secretariat

Brussels, 29 November 2021
(OR. en)

ERAC 1205/21

NOTE

From:	ERAC Secretariat
To:	ERAC delegations
Subject:	ERAC Annual Report 2020

Delegations will find in annex the **ERAC Annual Report 2020** as adopted by written procedure on 10 November 2021.

THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE (ERAC)

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Contents

1. Editorial by the ERAC co-Chairs	2
2. Key achievements of ERAC and ERA-related groups.....	5
a) Introduction.....	5
b) Key achievements.....	5
c) List of Chairs.....	10
3. Appendix.....	11
Priority 1: More effective national research systems	12
Priority 2a: Optimal transnational cooperation and competition.....	16
Priority 2b: Research infrastructures	18
Priority 3: Open labour market for researchers.....	23
Priority 4: Gender equality and mainstreaming in research.....	27
Priority 5: Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge	33
Priority 6: International cooperation.....	36

1. Editorial by the ERAC co-Chairs

During 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has provided a new context for research and innovation; it has speeded up the transition towards open science, international and pan-European collaboration, strengthening public-private linkages and the need for strong ownership. The pandemic and its effects show the need to accelerate the transition towards more sustainable, equitable and resilient societies and economies. To deliver these transformations, Research and Innovation (R&I) will be essential; to realise existing potential and overcome some of the observed limitations, R&I policies will need to be redefined.

2020 can also be considered as the point of inflection for the recasting of the new European Research Area (ERA), twenty years after its creation back in 2000.

The European Leader's Agenda 2019-2024 recognises the need for a new ERA vision, underlining that *'we must step up investment in people's skills and education, do more to foster entrepreneurship and innovation and increase research efforts, in particular by addressing the fragmentation of European research, development and innovation'*.

The Commission Communication on 'A new ERA for R&I' issued on 30 September 2020 and the Council conclusions on the new European Research Area adopted on 1 December 2020 are two key pillars for the foundation of a renewed ERA for the years to come.

ERAC was proud to note that both the Council conclusions and the Commission Communication are built on the 'Opinion on the future of the ERA' by ERAC at the end of 2019, which proposed a new and comprehensive framework for the ERA with a high level of ambition in terms of objectives and sustained investments aimed at solving societal needs.

This new forward-looking vision for the ERA will also greatly benefit from the in-depth analysis contained in two reports adopted by ERAC in the second half of 2020: 'The Action Plan for the Advisory Structure of the European Research Area' and the 'Report on Monitoring ERA Priorities with ERA Roadmap National Action Plans'; they should also serve to feed the upcoming reflections and debates to shape the new ERA and its future governance and to improve the real impact of R&I policy changes.

The first ERA ministerial conference held in Bonn, Germany, on 20 October 2020, marked the launch of deep reform of the ERA. A reinforced political commitment to the shared policies and principles of the ERA should now follow with the adoption in 2021 of a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe, which is being prepared in cooperation between the Commission and EU Member States, in consultation with Associated Countries and R&I stakeholders.

These achievements took place in a difficult and unprecedented context of major disruptions caused by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

These achievements owe much to all ERA-related groups, which in a context of major disruptions caused by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic reacted swiftly by bringing their expertise to the service of common European efforts, notably within the framework of the 'ERAvsCorona Action Plan'.

Finally, effective collaboration among Member States, the Commission and Associated Countries is crucial to establish a new, sustainable and inclusive ERA, to build trust and define common values for a common and more ambitious European R&I agenda engaging different stakeholders and civil society.

Jean-Eric PAQUET

Director-General for Research and Innovation

European Commission

Commission ERAC co-Chair



Barbara WEITGRUBER

Director-General for Scientific Research and International Relations

Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research

Member States ERAC co-Chair (as of 21 September 2021)



Clara Eugenia GARCÍA

Counsellor for Science and Innovation

Permanent Representation of Spain to the EU

Member States ERAC co-Chair (until 14 July 2021)



2. Key achievements of ERAC and ERA-related groups

a) Introduction

ERAC is a strategic policy advisory committee whose principal mission is to provide timely strategic input to the Council, the Commission and the Member States on research and innovation issues that are relevant to the development of the ERA.

Throughout 2020, for each of ERA's six priorities, the ERA-related groups took responsibility for specific areas of development and implementation and reported on them to ERAC. This Annual Report¹ has been prepared by ERAC and summarises challenges faced by ERA-related groups, their achievements in 2020, and plans for 2021 and beyond.

The key achievements of the ERA-related groups are summarised below.

Full individual reports from each of the groups are presented in the **Appendix**.

b) Key achievements

1. *ERA Priority 1 – More effective national research systems, led by ERAC*

ERAC succeeded in adapting to the difficult environment imposed by Covid-19 and helped coordinate actions jointly undertaken by the ERA-related groups in the context of the 'ERAvsCorona Action Plan'. It also paved the way to building stronger links between the European Research and Education areas. On aspects related to ERA governance, the Committee approved the Action Plan on the ERA advisory structure together with an Opinion on the lessons learned from its implementation which, together with the recommendations made in the 'Final Report on Monitoring ERA Priorities with ERA Roadmap NAPs' and the work to be carried out by the expert group on the 'ERA Forum for Transition', serve as the basis for the design of a new ERA governance structure for this decade.

¹ The Council conclusions on the review of the ERA advisory structure adopted on 1 December 2015, state that the ERA-related groups 'will provide a short annual update to ERAC on progress and impact against the ERA Roadmap and that ERAC will annually report to the Council to ensure that Council is regularly and comprehensively sighted on progress'.

2. ERA Priority 2a – Optimal transnational cooperation and competition, led by the High Level Group for Joint Programming (GPC)

2020 was a turbulent year for the GPC, due to the pandemic but also because of the uncertainties surrounding the future governance of the ERA, which was sketched only towards the end of the year. This resulted in doubt and reduced interest in creating new GPC tasks and working groups as delegates' major focus was on the new partnership approach via the Transitional Forum for Partnerships. Nevertheless, the GPC concluded the activities related to openness and transparency of networks – looking beyond (only) JPIs (Joint Programming Initiatives) and also included Art.185s and Joint Undertakings in their analysis, continued its monitoring of the implementation of priority 2a of the ERA Roadmaps and advocated the importance of Joint Programming in general.

3. Priority 2b – Research infrastructures, led by European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI)

In 2020, ESFRI contributed to the progress in ERA Priority 2b primarily in four ways.

First, by setting out a vision on the role of research infrastructures in the renewed ERA. This is presented in the ESFRI White Paper and includes how to foster long-term European leadership in this field globally and how to ensure that investments in research infrastructures have a greater impact on the broader economic, social and environmental goals.

ESFRI reinforced its stakeholders' engagement strategy by introducing the Stakeholder Forum and regular Open Sessions as new concepts to strengthen structured constructive dialogue with broad community of stakeholders.

Second, ESFRI launched the update of its Roadmap for European Research Infrastructures, due in 2021. This update will further strengthen Europe's global competitiveness in research and innovation, in particular in relation to addressing global societal challenges and supporting the environmental and digital transitions.

Third, ESFRI further strengthened the dialogue with the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), facilitating the transfer of knowledge and expertise between research infrastructures and other EOSC actors and contributing to the preparation of EOSC operations.

Fourth, ESFRI supported the science-led response to Covid-19 by setting up a platform, which hosts the activities of and services provided by around 100 research infrastructures.

Priority 3 – Open labour market for researchers, led by the ERAC Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility (SWG HRM)

The main achievement of the SWG HRM during 2020 is the improved dialogue achieved with ERA-related stakeholders and ERA-related groups. The contact and connection made with the EURAXESS network has been very positive and the information produced by the SWG HRM is now available on the EURAXESS website. In addition, the joint task force initiated this past year has improved synergies with other ERA-related groups and a bilateral meeting with ERA stakeholders has taken place in the context of a task force.

4. Priority 4 – Gender equality and mainstreaming in research, led by the ERAC Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation (SWG GRI)

In 2020, the Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation focused on three key areas: firstly, in an immediate reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, the group collected the first examples of gender-sensitive practices and delivered recommendations on the COVID-19 outbreak and its gendered impacts on researchers and research. Secondly, the group finalised its report on Sexual Harassment in the Research and Higher Education Sector together with a policy brief. The group stated that gender-based violence in higher education received very little attention both in terms of research and at policy level in Europe, and it called on all stakeholders to take further concerted policy action. Lastly, the group contributed to discussions about the new ERA by submitting recommendations on the future gender equality priority in the ERA 2020-2030 and by contributing an Opinion on the Commission Communication 'A new ERA for R&I'.

5. Priority 5 – Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge, led by the ERAC Standing Working Group on Open Science and Innovation (SWG OSI)

The ERAC SWG OSI has continued to work towards fulfilling its mission, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The SWG adapted its working methods, including holding meetings via videoconference. The work programme had to be adapted too and, as a result, one of the main outputs was the Opinion on Open Science and Open Innovation in times of pandemic, which focused on the opportunities and challenges brought about by the pandemic in this field, provided a number of recommendations and included an open register of Open Science and Open Innovation-related initiatives in the context of COVID-19. The SWG also adopted an Opinion on the future Open Science and Open Innovation priorities in the ERA 2020-2030. These two Opinions focused on the main areas of research policy across the EU and Member States in 2020.

6. Priority 6 – International cooperation, led by the Strategic Forum on International Cooperation (SFIC)

SFIC's role is to advance the EU/Member States/Associated Countries partnership on international S&T cooperation and to contribute to the external dimension of the ERA by providing strategic advice to the Commission, the Council and its Member States. In 2020, despite the difficult COVID-19 situation, SFIC managed to stay active with seven partly virtual meetings (4 plenaries and three workshops) and published a number of key documents:

Opinions: 'International R&I cooperation in view of the global COVID-19 pandemic', 'Relevance of International Cooperation in research and innovation for the EU – boosting the international dimension of the ERA & Horizon Europe' and the 'new European Research Area. Reports: SFIC Africa Task Force Strategic Report, SFIC Task Force on Science Diplomacy' 'Science Diplomacy input paper' and 'Anchoring science diplomacy in Horizon Europe developing specific subjects and activities'.

c) **List of Chairs**

ERAC Co-Chairs:	Jean-Eric Paquet, Christian Naczinsky (until 22 September 2020) and Clara Eugenia García (from 14 December 2020 until 14 July 2021)
GPC Chair:	Emmanuel Pasco-Viel (until 1 June 2020), replaced by Petra Žagar as acting Chair from 2 June 2020
ESFRI Chair:	Jan Hrušák
SWG Human Resources and Mobility Chair:	Cecilia Cabello Valdés
SWG Gender in R&I Chair:	Marcela Linkova
SWG Open Science and Innovation Chair:	Marc Vanholsbeeck
SFIC Chair:	Martina Hartl

3. Appendix

Full reports from each ERA-related group

ERA Priority	ERA Priority	Group responsible for the ERA Priority	Page
1	More effective national research systems	ERAC	12
2a	Optimal transnational cooperation and competition	GPC	16
2b	Research infrastructures	ESFRI	18
3	Open labour market for researchers	ERAC Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility	23
4	Gender equality and mainstreaming in research	ERAC Standing Working Group on Gender in R&I	27
5	Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge	ERAC Standing Working Group on Open Science and Innovation	33
6	International cooperation	SFIC	36

Priority 1: More effective national research systems

ERAC was no exception and in 2020 suffered the disruptive effects of the Covid-19 pandemic together with the other ERA-related groups.

Changes in the usual working conditions in 2020 meant that one ERAC plenary under the Croatian presidency had to be cancelled and the remaining ERAC plenaries that year were held by videoconference as informal meetings. In the absence of physical meetings, all ERAC official decisions had to be taken by means of written procedure.

In spite of the difficult situation, ERAC succeeded in adapting to the new circumstances in order to fulfil its mandate related to ERA Priority 1, namely 'Strengthening the evaluation of research and innovation policies and seeking complementarities between, and rationalisation of, instruments at EU and national levels'.

R&I actions in response to Covid-19

In the context of the 'ERAvsCorona Action Plan', ERAC helped coordinate actions jointly undertaken by the ERA-related groups in response to Covid-19 to increase support for R&I in line with the objectives and tools of the ERA.

Synergies between the ERA and the EHEA

One of the major subjects dealt with by ERAC in 2020 was to help prepare the ground for building synergies between the European Research and Education areas. The outcome of Committee discussions will greatly contribute to progress in the rapprochement of these two areas in the coming years.

This topic, which featured prominently at the R&I Days in September 2020, was discussed at the ERAC plenary on 4 June 2020 based on written input provided by the ERAC Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility on ways of establishing stronger links between the ERA and EHEA. Moreover, the discussion in ERAC benefited from the input provided at the high-level conference held in 2018 in Helsinki during the Finnish Presidency on facilitating cooperation between the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) and ERAC.

The subject was discussed again at the ERAC plenary on 10 September 2020, against the backdrop of the Trio-Presidency agreement (DE-PT-SI) to follow a common roadmap on education, research and innovation targeting synergies between the ERA and EHEA, including the role of European University Alliances.

Expert group on the 'ERA Forum for Transition'

At its December 2020 plenary session, ERAC discussed 'Co-designing a new ERA governance framework' on the basis of a background note jointly drafted by the Commission and the Presidency-Trio (DE-PT-SI), and agreed to set up a Commission expert group to deliver advice on the future of ERA governance.

The expert group, made up of representatives of the Member States and the Commission, was tasked to deliver advice during 2021 on ERA governance (including the features of the permanent 'ERA Forum for Transition') and on the 'Pact on Research and Innovation', as well as the future 'ERA Scoreboard'. The two key reference documents of the new group are:

- the Council conclusions on the 'new European Research Area' adopted on 1 December 2020, and
- the Commission Communication on 'A new ERA for Research and Innovation' adopted on 30 September 2020.

The adoption of these two essential documents for a major modernisation of ERA was preceded by an ERA ministerial conference convened by the German Presidency that took place on 20 October in Bonn.

Final report of the ERAC Action Plan 2019

On 11 December 2020, ERAC adopted the final report on '[The 2019 Action Plan for the Advisory Structure of the European Research Area](#)' by written procedure. The Helpdesk in support of the implementation of the ERAC Action Plan presented the final report at the ERAC plenary on 16 December 2020.

The report is aimed at helping the Member States and the Commission to build the future ERA governance framework. The overall assessment of the report is that ERAC accomplished its mission as regards the [2018 Council conclusions on the governance of the ERA](#).

In its conclusions, the Council welcomed the 'ERAC Opinion on the Review of the ERA Advisory Structure', and called on ERAC and the other ERA-related groups to implement swiftly its recommendations through an Action Plan.

In addition, the Helpdesk for the implementation of the ERAC Action Plan also drafted a proposal for a 'Supplementary ERAC Opinion on the ERA Advisory Structure: Lessons learned and issues arising from the successful implementation of the Action Plan on the ERA Advisory Structure', which was endorsed by ERAC on 9 October (1210/20). This Opinion was forwarded as input to the German Presidency during the preparations of the draft conclusions on the future of the new ERA.

Monitoring ERA National Action Plans

Progress on implementing all ERA priorities through the National Action Plans (NAPs) is the responsibility of ERAC and the other ERA-related groups.

The 'Final Report on Monitoring ERA Priorities with ERA Roadmap NAPs' was adopted by written procedure on 17 September 2020 (1209/20).

ERAC considered this report a useful contribution to the assessment of ERA priorities and that the lessons learned from the monitoring exercise should feed the upcoming reflections and debates to shape the new ERA and its future governance, together with the study that the Commission launched on several aspects of the existing ERA framework, including evaluation and the real impact on policy changes. The work on this study started in November 2020.

Other important issues in 2020

- Strategic Coordinating Process for R&I Partnerships

ERAC was regularly debriefed on and discussed 'The Strategic Coordinating Process for Partnerships and the role of the Forum for R&I Partnerships'.

The Final Report of the Transitional Forum for Partnerships was presented to ERAC at its December plenary meeting.

The Transitional Forum for R&I Partnerships was set up in 2019 to provide advice on the future design and implementation of the strategic coordinating process through the following deliverables:

1. Recommendation for the scope and structure of the biennial monitoring report and the necessary processes and data requests;
2. Recommendation for the scope, approach and necessary resources of foresight activities;
3. Common guidelines (enabling conditions) for the design and implementation of national governance structures, national monitoring mechanisms, etc.;
4. Report on the status of preparation of Member States/Associated Countries;
5. Opinion on the proposal for the Forum and its scope, implementation and governance during Horizon Europe;
6. Final report of the Transitional Forum to ERAC.

Part of this work was built on the previous work elaborated by the ERAC ad-hoc WG for partnerships².

- ***Labour market for researchers, skills, assessment and monitoring - ERAC workshop***

An ERAC workshop on 'Labour market for researchers, skills, assessment and monitoring' took place on 15 December with a view to providing, among other things, input for the draft Council conclusions under the Portuguese Presidency in 2021 on 'Deepening the ERA: Providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions and making brain circulation a reality'. One of the main conclusions of the workshop was the need to update the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers³.

- ***New ERAC co-Chair from the Member States***

Clara Eugenia García (ES) was elected ERAC co-Chair from the Member States on 14 December 2020 following a vote by written procedure, and was appointed to the post from that date for an initial period of three years. She replaced the former ERAC co-Chair, Christian Naczinsky (AT), who stepped down from this position at the end of his three-year official term on 22 September 2020.

² ERAC 1215/18, [Final report](#).

³ 2005/251/EC of 11 March 2005.

Priority 2a: Optimal transnational cooperation and competition

1. Monitoring progress and implementation of Priority 2a of the ERA Roadmap

As requested by ERAC, an update of the progress and implementation of Priority 2a of the ERAC roadmap was carried out by the GPC in 2020, using the 'GPC tool' already developed in 2018. This was the third such update since 2018.

The impact of the developed 'GPC tool' can be seen both at national and European level.

The contribution at national level is to stimulate delegates' thinking about whether other countries' measures/approaches to national ERA Roadmaps and Action Plans can be transferred to their national ERA Roadmaps and National Action Plans. Continuous reporting of monitoring ERA Priority 2a featuring presentation of cases can also spark ideas for possible updates of ERA Roadmaps, to include measures other MS/ACs have used. Another impact can be seen in using the 'GPC tool' itself for monitoring progress at national level for countries' own, national ERA Roadmaps (for all priorities).

As regards the impact at European level, we can say that the 'GPC tool', although slightly modified for some priorities, was used for monitoring progress of the ERA Roadmap priorities at other ERA-related groups, including Priority 1 - Effective national research and innovation system.

2. The Report on Openness and transparency of networks

In the context of the new approach on partnerships, the GPC launched new activity in relation to inclusiveness, which is a topic of major importance in the ERA. The Task Force on Openness and Transparency of networks was established in 2019 and the group's work was continued and completed in 2020. Based on the work done and the analysis made, the group has made eight recommendations, two at national level (preconditions), three at the level of partnership initiatives and three at EU level. Recommendations to the EC are to do more in the field of encouraging widening countries to increase their involvement in partnership initiatives, allowing flexibility of instruments used by partnership initiatives in such a way that widening countries can be valuable partners and advocating the importance of bridging the innovation divide.

Some impact at the level of partnerships which were covered with the questionnaire was already reported during the survey for the Report, as there were numerous ideas on various partnerships (Joint Technology Initiatives and Art.185s) with a specific questionnaire on different measures to use for increasing inclusiveness.

The report was endorsed by the GPC on 18 March 2020 ([ERAC-GPC 1302/20](#)).

3. Measuring the impact of the Joint Programming Process at national level

In the context of the future of the ERA and the transition to a new approach for partnerships and Joint Programming (JP), the GPC decided to publish a report on the impact of JP at national level, more than ten years after the launch of the Joint Programming Process (JPP). In 2019 the questionnaire dedicated to the impact of JP at national level was prepared by a taskforce with GPC delegates and JPI representatives and with the help of ERA-LEARN. Implementation of the task was stalled in 2020 due to the pandemic and the idea of organising a workshop with different stakeholders was abandoned. Later in 2020, the Commission adopted a Communication on a new ERA for R&I where one of the 14 key actions was focusing on JP. The GPC, with the cooperation of ERA-LEARN, will continue to work on the impact of JP at national level as the preliminary results of the survey were very interesting and might help with new initiatives in the new JP framework. One of the overall results is actually the variability of the impact at national level.

4. Contributing to the discussion of the partnerships in Horizon Europe and the future of the Joint Programming Process, in the context of the new ERA

The GPC continued to be involved in the preparation of the new approach for partnerships. Both Chairs of the GPC started to take part in the Transitional Forum for Partnerships, as observers, and a significant number of delegates in this Forum were also GPC delegates. This has served to ensure that the JPP is also included in this new approach on partnerships as strong expertise on JP and JPIs will be very useful for the success of future partnerships.

5. Other

GPC Chair Emmanuel Pasco-Viel (FR) stepped down from his duties as GPC Chair from June 1. It was decided that Petra Žagar (SI), who was elected GPC Vice-Chair would take over as acting Chair of the GPC. During the remainder of 2020, she promoted GPC activities on several occasions, such as at the ERAC plenary and within the ERAC Steering Board and the ERA-LEARN Advisory Board, etc.

Priority 2b: Research infrastructures

Key achievements supporting the implementation of the group's specific ERA priority

Within its general mandate to support a coherent and strategy-led approach to policy-making on research infrastructures in Europe, ESFRI's main contribution to the ERA manifests itself in joint investments of MS/ACs and the European Commission in the development and consolidation of European research infrastructures. During 2020, ESFRI contributed to the progress of the ERA through the following actions:

1. ESFRI White Paper on the Research Infrastructures in the ERA

The [White Paper](#) 'Making Science Happen' presents ESFRI's contribution to the new ERA discussion with a clear vision for developing a robust, connected ecosystem of Research Infrastructures, based on the highest scientific standards, contributing to increased societal resilience and supporting Europe's competitiveness. This requires consolidating the existing Research Infrastructure landscape and continuously strengthening its capacity through investments in unique, cutting-edge scientific instrumentation and services, and working jointly to serve researchers' needs across disciplines.

This vision is closely related to achieving the following objectives:

1. **Research:** ESFRI's primary mission is to maintain an absolute edge globally in Research Infrastructure capabilities to serve ambitious, curiosity- and demand-driven, societally relevant, scientific and technological research, thereby increasing the attractiveness of the ERA for researchers, industrial users and international partners;
2. **Innovation:** accelerate the exploitation of European Research Infrastructures as knowledge and innovation hubs, boosting their role as drivers of economic growth, social and environmental transitions, and place-based innovation;
3. **Education:** engage Research Infrastructures and Higher Education institutions in specialised training of students, young academics and industrial scientists on next-generation technologies, inter-disciplinary methodologies and data management skills;
4. **Policies:** increase coherence between European, national and regional priorities and policies for Research Infrastructure development and funding, and effective synergies with other European policies and funding instruments;
5. **Data:** exploit the data science and data engineering expertise of Research Infrastructures for the development of the European Open Science Cloud;

The White Paper was publicly presented on 27 April 2020 and discussed during the Croatian Presidency Conference⁴ on 'European Research Infrastructures for a smarter future' on 15 May 2020, which explored the potential of European RIs to make a meaningful impact on the European strategic agendas and identified the ways in which this could be achieved.

In line with the goals of the White Paper and the Commission Communication of 30 September 2020 on 'A new ERA for Research and Innovation', which highlighted ESFRI achievements and recognised the need to implement the vision expressed in the White Paper, ESFRI started working on the following actions, identified as priorities by the Forum:

- *Review of the ESFRI governance and support structure with a view to improving their effectiveness*

An informal working group was established to explore options for reinforcing the ESFRI support structure and increase its capacity.

- *Reinforcing ESFRI stakeholders' engagement strategy*

Work started at the level of the ESFRI Executive Board on a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy that will include a Stakeholder Forum and regular Open Sessions. The first meeting of the ESFRI Stakeholder Forum is planned for December 2021, back to back with the ESFRI Roadmap Launch event under the Slovenian Presidency of the Council. The main objectives of the planned ESFRI Stakeholder Forum will be to create a structured constructive communication channel with a broad community of stakeholders, to contribute to better integration of the RIs in the different communities and to contribute to improved RI services for specific communities. The ESFRI Open Sessions will become a part of ESFRI's quarterly meetings and will represent a direct two-way communication between ESFRI and selected RI communities. The purpose of this activity is to increase the transparency and immediately communicate ESFRI progress and decisions to the RIs and to receive feedback on RI actions and achievements within identified thematic domains. The first Open Session will take place during the March 2021 Forum.

- *Implementation of the performance monitoring framework for research infrastructures on the ESFRI Roadmap*

⁴ The conference report is available at: <https://www.esfri.eu/esfri-events/european-research-infrastructures-smarter-future-conference?qt-event=5#qt-event>

An informal working group was established by ESFRI to identify options for the implementation of the common monitoring framework for ESFRI Landmarks and to work out further details of the methodology. A final decision on the framework is expected in the autumn of 2021, with implementation starting in 2022.

2. ESFRI Roadmap 2021 update process

In response to the invitation of the Competitiveness Council⁵, ESFRI has announced the publication of the next Roadmap in 2021. The Public Guide describing the applied methodology, and other related documents, are available on the ESFRI website.⁶

The 2021 update of the ESFRI Roadmap, similarly to the two previous editions in 2016 and 2018, consists of a call for new proposals, monitoring progress towards implementation of ongoing ESFRI Projects as well as a reviewed Landscape Analysis of the available Research Infrastructures in Europe.

It is planned that the ESFRI Roadmap 2021 will be presented to the public during a dedicated event under the Slovenian Presidency of the Council in December 2021.

The 2021 ESFRI Roadmap update process is underway:

- The monitoring of Projects that entered the Roadmap 2016 has been finalised. The assessment of the Projects showed good progress and most of the RIs are on course to be implemented by the 10-year deadline;
- The monitoring of Projects that entered the Roadmap 2010, with the aim of updating the list of ESFRI landmarks, will be finalised in May 2021;
- Following the extension of the deadline to 9 September 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak, 18 new research infrastructure proposals were received for the ESFRI Roadmap 2021. The evaluation process will be finalised in May 2021;
- The Landscape Analysis will provide a comprehensive picture of the large-scale RIs available in Europe, with a particular focus on the impact of RIs' services in three areas: SDGs, crisis response and digital transformation.

A decision of the ESFRI Forum on the Roadmap is expected at the end of June 2021.

⁵ **Council conclusions of the European Union of 30 November 2018** on the Governance of the European Research Area 14989/18, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14989-2018-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁶ <https://www.esfri.eu/esfri-roadmap-2021>.

3. The European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)

To maintain effective coordination between ESFRI and EOSC, as stipulated by the Competitiveness Council in 2018⁷, the ESFRI Task Force on EOSC organised a second ESFRI-EOSC Workshop 'Research Infrastructures shaping EOSC' on 5 and 6 October 2020.

The event was fully digital and brought together over 250 participants.

Below are the main calls made during the event:

- Thematic RIs - as key stakeholders - need to stay informed about EOSC developments in the EOSC vision and priorities have to be developed in collaboration with RIs. The EOSC research infrastructure Cluster projects funded under Horizon 2020 cover large thematic domains, which are needed to create the EOSC. These Clusters are mini EOSCs, acting both as producers and consumers of data and services, and are interacting with horizontal providers at national/regional/European level. There is considerable existing expertise within RIs. Effective exchange of experiences and knowledge across RIs, the different disciplines and at national/international level, is very important for the effective development and use of the EOSC.
- The EOSC must address the actual needs of the research community. There were calls for either a strong EOSC stakeholder forum or a role in governance to solicit user/research community needs and inputs. EOSC users are very important and their satisfaction with EOSC services can be seen as a KPI for the EOSC's success. End users have to find added value when using the EOSC.
- A consensus on an interoperable metadata framework has been perceived as needed and to be agreed with e.g. RDA in order to federate with national/thematic infrastructures. Collaboration with the HPC and EuroHPC community is also considered to be very important for the future as are the national building blocks and engagement of Research Performing Organisations.
- The EOSC Association membership fee does not cover the cost of operating the EOSC, which will be substantial.

⁷ **Council conclusions of the European Union of 29 May 2018** on the European Open Science Cloud 9029/18, <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9029-2018-INIT/en/pdf> and **Council conclusions of the European Union of 30 November 2018** on Governance of the European Research Area 14989/18, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14989-2018-INIT/en/pdf>.

4. Response to Covid-19

European Research Infrastructures have played an important role in the science-led response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Many of them promptly offered dedicated services to facilitate the development of diagnostic tools, treatments and vaccines. To facilitate access to these services, ESFRI set up a dedicated website in April 2020, which aggregated all the relevant information from close to 100 Research Infrastructures at European and national level. This information is continuously available and updated at <https://www.esfri.eu/covid-19>. This initiative was part of the ERAvsCORONA Action Plan.

Priority 3: Open labour market for researchers

Key achievements supporting the implementation of the group's specific ERA priority

During 2020, due to the coronavirus crisis, scientific advice and Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policy response to the pandemic became a top priority for European governments. The lockdown and work-from-home situation drastically affected everyone's response rate, efficiency and effectiveness during the 2020 work year. Consequently, everything not directly related to the health crisis was affected and levels of engagement shifted, resulting in corresponding delays and time lags. Nonetheless, against this background during 2020 the main achievements for the SWG HRM include the following:

- **Review of ERA Roadmap National Action Plans (NAPs) for Priority 3**

In the final review process of ERA roadmap National Action Plans for Priority 3 using the common methodology agreed which included the degree of implementation, the SWG HRM classified the actions in the NAPs according to five typologies which showed that the majority of the actions (65%) are initiatives related to researcher mobility (Removal of legal barriers and Support EURAXESS):

Type of action	# Actions	% of Total
1. Remove legal and other barriers	73	53%
2. Support EURAXESS	17	12%
3. Support innovative doctoral training	33	24%
4. Adopt the Charter&Code principles and implement the HRS4R	12	9%
5. Other types of actions	4	3%
TOTAL	139	100%

With respect to the degree of implementation of the measures, by 2020 the majority of them (82%) were either fully completed or had been accomplished to a large extent.

Type of action	ON-GOING		CANCELLED	TOTAL	
	FINISHED (greater or = 50%)	(less than 50%)			
1. Remove legal and other barriers	33%	53%	11%	3%	100%
2. Support EURAXESS	47%	47%	6%	0%	100%
3. Support innovative doctoral training	42%	30%	27%	0%	100%
4. Adopt the Charter&Code principles and implement the HRS4R	17%	50%	33%	0%	100%
5. Other types of actions	50%	25%	25%	0%	100%
TOTAL	36%	46%	17%	1%	100%

From the analysis of the types of actions, some of the final conclusions drawn regarding Priority 3 were as follows:

- Most countries have actions aimed at removing legal and other barriers to researcher mobility. Nevertheless, some of these measures overlap with other types of actions as they are ultimately aimed at incorporating innovative doctoral training principles, supporting career development and the open and transparent recruitment of researchers, or facilitating the attraction and retention of international research talent. The next most common type of action were those linked to international talent attraction and retention, with countries actively promoting the use of EURAXESS Jobs for advertising positions, but also some specific funding programmes, as well as legal measures linked to the transposition of EU Directive 2016/801.
- Regardless of the type of action, one clear aim which most countries have in terms of Priority 3 is increasing the share of researchers in the private sector, either by pushing forward strategies or policies increasing the capacity of enterprises to participate in research activities (particularly PhDs) or facilitating intersectoral collaborations.

Furthermore, most actions in support of career development of researchers are actually aimed at facilitating intersectoral mobility.

- **Communication and ERA-related stakeholders**

The communication strategy for the group was updated. In summary, the group will attempt to increase visibility by publishing results and information in the Austrian ERA portal as well as the European Commission's EURAXESS portal.

In addition, in the context of improving the dialogue with ERA-related stakeholders, a back-to-back meeting was organised in November between the European Commission EURAXESS network Bridgehead Organisations (with representatives from Member States and Associated Countries) and the SWG HRM. The discussion focused on various issues but the main purpose was to improve the relationship between the policy dimension of human resources and mobility as addressed (through ERAC SWG HRM) and the implementation of these policies (through the EURAXESS BHO network). The discussions covered the following aspects: new ERA communication, research careers and professions, accompanying measures for research careers policy, and the next steps for collaboration (ERAC SWG HRM and EURAXESS BHO).

- **Triangle Task Force (OSI - GRI - HRM)**

Finally, in collaboration with ERA-related groups, the Triangle Task Force (OSI - GRI - HRM) defined and set up a joint task force. The scope of the group, called the Triangle Task Force, addresses the interfaces between the human resources policies in R&I, gender equality in R&I and open science and innovation. The Triangle Task Force has representatives from the three standing working groups and is divided into subgroups to cover two interrelated goals:

- **Goal 1:** Recommendations on training, incentives and evaluation of researchers with an open science & innovation and gender equality perspective (chaired by the OSI delegation). The group has two meetings, desk research has started and a survey has been launched. Work will continue in 2021.
- **Goal 2:** Reviewing and potential update of the [Charter & Code](#) at the light of the future of ERA developments, in particular open science& innovation and gender equality (chaired by the HRM delegation). The group itself has three meetings and several bilateral meetings with relevant ERA stakeholders, university associations, etc. to gather input and suggestions for the revision. Work will continue in 2021.

The initial work of the Triangle Task Force was presented in the ERAC workshop held in December.

- **SWG HRM Opinion on the Horizon Europe Programme**

In August 2020, the SWG HRM finalised the work and formally approved an Opinion with recommendations for the implementation of the Horizon Europe Programme concerning issues related to human resources and mobility (WK 8406/2020).

Priority 4: Gender equality and mainstreaming in research

Key achievements supporting the implementation of Priority 4

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the SWG GRI has contributed significantly to the policy dialogue and coordination on gender equality in research and innovation (R&I).

POLICY ADVICE

- **The COVID-19 pandemic**

Recognising the gravity of the pandemic for gender equality in R&I, the SWG GRI launched a task force immediately in April 2020 to address the gendered impacts of the pandemic on researchers and research. In the position paper, the group presented inspiring gender-sensitive practices that had been adopted across Member States and at an institutional level and that addressed the following areas: 1) The importance of women's participation in tackling COVID-19 in decision- and policy-making roles; 2) The importance of the social sciences and humanities for managing the COVID-19 outbreak and its aftermath; and 3) The importance of gender-sensitive research for managing the COVID-19 outbreak and its aftermath. The group delivered recommendations to the Commission, national authorities, research funding and performing organisations, and academic publishers.

- **The new European Research Area**

Review of the ERA was at the centre of the year 2020. The SWG GRI contributed to these discussions and negotiations on multiple occasions. First, in May 2020, the group presented its own vision of the future gender equality priority in the ERA 2020-2030. The group's two main messages were that: 1) gender must remain a priority in the new ERA and must place a new emphasis on the intersectoral dimension; and 2) institutional change must remain the core approach to reforming research and higher education institutions. In this respect, the SWG GRI called for a revision of the Charter and Code and the HR Excellence in Research Award requirements. In terms of the policy framework, the SWG GRI called for enhancing the integration, coordination, and mainstreaming of gender in other ERA priorities, coupled with a robust policy structure that would bring together EU and national levels. The SWG GRI also called for concrete measures and actions to combat gender-based violence in academia, which negatively affects large portions of students and researchers. Lastly, the SWG GRI highlighted the need to integrate the gender dimension in research and innovation content, particularly in the crucial policy areas of the Green Deal, Digitalisation, and Artificial Intelligence.

In addition, the SWG GRI contributed to the negotiations around the Council conclusions on the new ERA and, in December 2020, it published its Opinion on the Commission Communication 'A new ERA for Research and Innovation', where it expressed strong appreciation for the intention to require GEP (GEPs) from Horizon Europe applicants as an important step forward. In this respect, the SWG GRI acknowledged the importance of providing guidance and stressed the urgent need to develop and implement a Europe-wide system for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of GEPs. It also reiterated the need for a synchronised co-evolution of the R&I system across the national and EU levels, including the existence of gender equality structures at national and EU levels, and reaffirmed its responsibility for providing guidance and fostering further policy coordination in the area.

- **Sexual harassment in academia**

At the beginning of June, the SWG GRI published its much-awaited report on *Sexual Harassment in the Research and Higher Education Sector: National Policies and Measures in EU Member States and Associated Countries* and the related policy brief *Mobilising to Eradicate Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment: A New Impetus for Gender Equality in the European Research Area*. Gender-based violence including sexual harassment is an under-studied and under-recognised issue in academic and research life in many countries that has severe negative consequences. The report highlighted the considerable differences in how European countries and institutions address the issue and noted with concern the lack of recognition of the risk faced by internationally mobile, particularly early-career researchers. The report specifically pointed out the need to acknowledge gender-based violence as an existing problem in the research and higher education sector across Europe, to develop research-based knowledge on the topic, to build effective support structures for victims, and to take bold measures to create diverse, inclusive, and respectful research and study environments. The report provided recommendations to the Commission, national authorities, research funding organisations, and umbrella organisations. Some of these include seemingly self-evident actions, such as collecting sex-disaggregated statistics, recognising gender-based violence as part of research misconduct, putting policies and procedures in place, and building the knowledge base, as well as actions where further deliberation will be necessary, such as research funders imposing academic sanctions or requiring hosting institutions in the framework of a funding scheme for international mobility to have policies and procedures in place.

- **Follow-up to the Guidance to facilitate the implementation of targets to promote gender equality in research and innovation**

The SWG GRI also carried out a follow-up mapping of the status of the implementation of seven recommendations on the targets and quotas contained in the 2018 Guidance. Twenty-five countries provided a follow-up overview. The report highlighted the continued differences in the degree of implementation of the recommendations. On a positive note, statistical sex-disaggregated data collection has improved over the years and statistics on decision-making positions and on Grade A positions are now generally available. In total, 23 out of 25 countries reviewed have this recommendation in place. In addition, efforts have been made to promote gender balance in decision-making positions and professorships with adequate awareness raising and training implemented in 20 countries. A significant proportion of countries (14) are implementing and regularly evaluating targets and/or quotas through legislation. Almost half of the countries have introduced incentives or sanctions to stimulate gender balance in decision-making. In contrast, gender balance among Grade A positions is rarely used as an evaluation criterion in institutional assessments of higher education institutions in Member States and Associated Countries, with only four countries implementing it. In addition, although half of the countries are implementing mandatory GEPs (or equivalent) for universities and research organisations, only one country is institutionalising GEPs as an assessment tool in the accreditation of universities.

- **Other taskforces and subgroups**

In 2020, the SWG GRI also launched the following subgroups and taskforces, which are continuing their work in 2021: a) the Task Force on Gender Equality Plans; b) the Subgroup on Gender and Digitalisation; c) the Task Force on Intersectionality, Diversity and Racism.

POLICY COORDINATION

The ERA and the implementation of NAPs

The SWG GRI provided input on the Final Report on Monitoring ERA Priorities with ERA Roadmap National Action Plans, and that input was based on a data collection conducted among members using the Progress Tool. SWG GRI members also regularly provide updates on national developments at the group's meetings and in 2020 updates were presented by CZ, IE, IL, NO, and FR.

Cooperation with other ERA-related groups

Cooperation with other ERA-related groups is crucial for ensuring that gender is mainstreamed across all priorities. In 2020, the Triangle Taskforce was launched with the Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility and the Standing Working Group on Open Science and Innovation, with a view to updating the Charter and Code to better integrate gender equality and open science issues.

Cooperation with the Commission

The SWG GRI and the DG RTD Gender Sector have maintained very active exchange with a view to coordinating policy developments. The SWG GRI contributed to a discussion of the policy briefs that will accompany the next edition of 'She Figures'.

POLICY OUTREACH

The SWG GRI and its Chair took a pro-active approach to communicating its recommendations to the relevant stakeholders by speaking at national and international events and participating in policy design actions – for example:

- Publication of an article on EurActiv presenting the recommendations of the SWG GRI on gender equality in the future ERA: ['The new ERA must do more for gender equality'](#).
- Presentation of the SWG GRI position paper on the gendered impacts of COVID-19 on researchers and research at the [EMBL virtual conference 'The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women in science: Challenges and solutions'](#) on 9 September 2020.
- [An update on the SWG GRI position papers, policy briefs, and reports as well as recommendations](#) has been circulated to ERA stakeholders.
- Participation in the EU Research and Innovation days Co-design Session ['Get ready: A new ERA for Equality is calling'](#) together with Jean-Eric Paquet and Curt Rice on 22 September 2020.
- Invitation by *Times Higher Education* to comment on the new ERA Communication for the article ['Europe expected to tie research funding to gender equality action'](#) published on 5 October 2020.
- Presentation of the [Report on the Implementation of Targets: Follow-Up on the 2018 Guidance Recommendations](#) at the ACT Matching Events – Decision-Making ERA Priority Group on 16 October 2020.

- The profile of the SWG GRI on the [ERA Portal Austria](#) has been updated.
- The Women and Science Unit of the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation has published the most recent [position papers from the SWG GRI on its website](#) in order to disseminate these works among the different institutions and stakeholders in the Spanish STI system.

Priority 5: Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge

Key achievements supporting the implementation of the group's specific ERA priority

As indicated in previous annual reports, the current description of the 5th priority of the ERA Roadmap is outdated and does not correspond fully to the remit of the ERAC SWG on Open Science and Innovation. Since its creation in 2016, the SWG OSI has been working on a broader notion of Open Science compared to the focus on Open Access and Knowledge Transfer of ERA Priority 5, which did not encompass the notion of Open Innovation that the SWG OSI has also been covering. In 2020, the SWG OSI has therefore continued to organise its work around the complementary notions of Open Science (OS) and Open Innovation (OI), with the aim of achieving a more harmonised OS and OI approach in the ERA. Moreover, the SWG OSI has further contributed to reinforcing the cooperation between standing working groups, whether by inviting chairs from other groups to participate at OSI meetings, presenting at other groups' meetings or through the launch of a triangular task force on research evaluation, together with SWGs HRM and GRI.

It should be noted that the work of the group during 2020 was heavily influenced by the particular context of the COVID-19 crisis.

In particular, the SWG OSI has been focusing on:

- **In the context of the ERA:**
 - **Monitoring ERA National Action Plans:** a preliminary report on the 2019-2020 NAPs monitoring of ERA Priority 5 was sent to ERAC as an input to their overall discussion on the ERA NAPs.

- The ERAC SWG OSI **Opinion on future Open Science and Open Innovation priorities in the European Research Area (2020-2030)** was adopted on 1 April 2020. One of the main conclusions of the paper is that much more attention is paid to Open Science than to Open Innovation in national policies, in particular as regards the drafting and implementation of national and institutional plans. The paper also highlights shortcomings that should be addressed in the future ERA, including the needed change of culture in academia and beyond, the transformation of the traditional knowledge ecosystems, and the provision of proper incentives and rewards to researchers.
- In 2020 the SWG also started a **mapping exercise of Open Science and Open Innovation groups**, including groups at national level the impact of which goes beyond national borders.
- Launch of the new **joint Task Force (ERAC SWGs OSI-HRM-GRI) on researchers' training and research evaluation**, the so-called 'Triangle Task Force'. A survey covering the current state of policies and achievements on these issues was carried out and is currently being analysed. The aim is to produce a joint paper on these issues, including assessing to what extent and under which conditions taking into Open Science account in research assessment can contribute to favour gender equality and inclusiveness. Work is expected to be completed in 2021.

- **In the context of the COVID-19 crisis:**

The SWG OSI **Opinion on Open Science and Open Innovation in times of pandemic** was issued on 14 December 2020. The paper is based on evidence collected through desk research and via a dedicated register and sets out the opportunities and challenges that the coronavirus crisis has brought in terms of open science and innovation practices. It provides concrete policy recommendations that relate to Open Access to publication, Open Research Data, Open Science services, infrastructures and tools, Open Science related principles and policies, (Open) Science Communication and the Science of Open Science. The paper includes an **open register of Open Science and Open Innovation initiatives in the context of the pandemic** providing information on Open Science and Open Innovation initiatives taken at institutional, national, European and international level, with a dedicated section on social sciences and humanities.

Furthermore, the SWG OSI has continued its outreach to ERA stakeholders, including the other ERA-related groups, particularly the SWG GRI and HRM in the context of the Triangle Task Force and ESFRI in the context of Open Science monitoring and indicators for Open Science and Open Innovation, as well as ERA stakeholders such as EUA and CESAER and the European university alliances, particularly in the context of the ongoing work on researchers' training and research evaluation.

The SWG has also continued its practice of presenting national **case studies** at every meeting of the group, including two French case studies on Open Science in research funding and researchers' training, and the Barometer of Open Science project, as well as Austria's Open Innovation Toolbox.

Priority 6: International cooperation

Key achievements supporting the implementation of the group's specific ERA priority

The SFIC Work Programme 2019-2020, adopted by SFIC at its plenary on 12 June 2019, groups SFIC's seven main activities as contained in its mandate (7308/16) into **five priority areas of action**. The priority areas reflect SFIC's strategic mission, cover ongoing SFIC initiatives and new activities, and build on work already done in the current international context.

1. Strategic advice on international S&T cooperation

Within this area, SFIC has adopted an opinion on 'International R&I cooperation in view of the global COVID-19 pandemic' (ERAC-SFIC 1354/20) highlighting the importance of global coordination and cooperation to overcome the pandemic. Within its opinion on the 'Relevance of International Cooperation in research and innovation for the EU – boosting the international dimension of the ERA & Horizon Europe' (ST 1356/2020) SFIC has developed recommendations to strategically integrate the international cooperation (INCO) perspective in the ERA, Horizon Europe and at national level. The Task Force on Science Diplomacy has developed a paper (ST 1357 2020 INIT) specifying topics that could be integrated in the different clusters of Horizon Europe to strengthen the Science Diplomacy component of that Programme.

2. Contribution to the ERA including the co-operation within ERAC & ERA-related groups

- Regarding the monitoring of the National ERA Action Plans (NAPs), SFIC has continued the self-assessment procedure by adapting the tool used by GPC. That tool was circulated to SFIC delegations to bring it up to date, and based on the data collected, SFIC has contributed to the ERAC report on the monitoring of ERA priorities with ERA Roadmap National Action Plans (WK 9405 2020 INIT);
- In response to the Commission Communication on the new ERA (11140/20 + ADD1), SFIC approved in November 2020, an Opinion on a new European Research Area (ERAC-SFIC 1359/20) with recommendations calling for a strategic approach to international cooperation and increased coordination between the EU and MS level and examples of future joint actions in the field;
- Finally, the SFIC Chair and Vice Chair continue participating in the ERAC Steering Boards and Plenaries whenever possible. The SFIC Chair is informally participating in the Triangle Task Force to contribute to international cooperation issues which are relevant for the revision of the Charter and Code as well as in the Advisory Board of the Gender Action <https://genderaction.eu/> project linked to the Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation.

3. Joint strategic approaches and actions for international R&I cooperation, including pooling and sharing relevant knowledge on third countries

Work has continued on China and Africa in the following way:

- China: A second survey on China activities in the Member States has been launched and a report has been drafted in this context (WK 4905/2020 REV1). The initial plan of forming a Task Force/Working Group on China has not been followed up, since the European Commission held a meeting with MS at Director-General level in February 2020, where the development of guidelines regarding foreign interference was announced. Moreover, the European Commission has established an EU Knowledge Network on China intended to serve as a dedicated dialogue platform with Member States. This Network is organised via the International Service Facility. There is a dedicated China Core Group (CCG) with representatives from ministries (to a large extent also SFIC members) that already met for three official CCG Meetings in 2020 and early 2021;

- Africa: The Africa Task Force has produced a Strategic Report (ERAC-SFIC 1355/1/20) on EU and MS activities in Africa and related success stories, obstacles and future priorities that was adopted in July 2020. However, SFIC delegates felt that, also in light of EC priorities, it would be necessary to further develop the work with and on Africa. A Working Group on Africa was therefore established (see adopted mandate from October 2020 WK 11317/2020 and the draft work plan WK 13588/2020);
- Based on the output from a strategic workshop in December 2020, and further written input from delegations it has been decided to include the following new geographical and thematic foci into the Work Programme 2021/2022: Indo-Pacific Region, USA, UK and Strategic Autonomy, Knowledge Triangle and Follow-up of the Bonn declaration.

4. Sharing and structuring information and good practices on international R&I cooperation activities

- The Task Force on Science Diplomacy has delivered two main papers in 2020: The 'Input Paper on Science Diplomacy' (ERAC-SFIC 1352/20) tackles conceptual as well as strategic issues regarding the increased integration of Science Diplomacy at EU level. The paper on 'Anchoring science diplomacy in Horizon Europe developing specific subjects and activities' (ERAC-SFIC 1357/20) includes concrete topics and issues that could be integrated into Horizon Europe Work Programmes to further strengthen its Science Diplomacy dimension. Moreover, a survey has been launched to map the activities in Member States and Associated Countries in the field⁸;
- The work of the Mutual Learning Exercise 'National Strategies and Roadmaps for International Cooperation in Research and Innovation' in which 15 countries participated has been finalised, culminating in a SFIC-MLE dissemination workshop on 6 October 2020;
- SFIC has continued to collect structured input from MS about their current INCO activities via written comments in a specific form created for the 'Tour de Table' (see e.g. WK 10831/2020 and WK 14141/2020);
- SFIC has held two specific 'Tour de Tables' related to INCO activities in the context of COVID-19 and has collected feedback on the challenges MS/AC have been facing in their INCO activities due to the pandemic (see e.g. WK11337/2020);

⁸ The related report was adopted in March 2021 (WK 3435/2021).

- As a number of delegations have asked for increased integration of Innovation issues in the work of SFIC but the set-up of a Task Force has not been considered appropriate, a number of steps to address this have been identified (see WK11863/2020). These include the integration of innovation aspects in the work of the Task Forces and Working Groups, in the agendas and plenary meetings, etc.

5. Networking and coordination

- Regarding the dialogue with relevant stakeholders, SFIC invited an OECD representative to the plenary meeting in March 2020; Moreover, the SFIC colleagues engaged in the OECD international cooperation activities are regularly reporting on news in the plenary meetings. SFIC had contacts with the African Union as part of the Africa Workshop in March 2020, the African-European Radio Astronomy Platform (AERAP) as well as other selected contacts with stakeholders such as the European External Action Service COST, EUREKA, etc.

There has been a visible increase in communication activities, firstly by revamping the SFIC part on the <https://era.gv.at/governance/strategic-forum-for-international-st-cooperation/> website, and secondly by creating a LinkedIn Group 'Facilitating International Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation'.
