

ERAC 1215/18

**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: ERAC ad hoc WG on partnerships  
- Final report

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Delegations will find annexed to this Note the final report of the ERAC ad hoc WG on partnerships, as approved by ERAC at the plenary on 6 December 2018.

**ERAC AD HOC WG ON PARTNERSHIPS FINAL REPORT**

23 October 2018

**Executive summary**

R&I Partnerships evolved into strategic elements of national, European and industrial R&I policy. A new generation of R&I partnerships is now under construction, that should make it possible to use their full potential in achieving ambitious policy objectives by reducing the complexity of the partnerships landscape and improving its openness, transparency and coherence with EU-level, national regional R&I policies and programmes.

A new systemic view on R&I partnerships is needed, that encompasses all Partnerships of the EU with Member States, Associated or Third Countries and/or other stakeholders such as civil society/foundations and/or with industry, with greater openness to international cooperation. In addition, communication and outreach should be strengthened by a clear, easy-to-communicate architecture.

The ERAC ad hoc group on partnerships was established with the specific task to translate the high policy ambitions into a concrete set of requirements and strategies for the design and the implementation of this new generation of R&I partnerships to become operational under the next EU R&I framework programme, Horizon Europe. The legal proposal for Horizon Europe incorporates already many recommendations of the ERAC WG. The on-going negotiations and discussions on Horizon Europe among all stakeholders of R&I partnerships provide a unique opportunity to catalyse the impacts stemming from a new generation of R&I partnerships for the benefit of the whole of Europe, the EU, Member States and Associated Countries, Industry, civil society organisations/foundations and finally the European citizens. The aim of this new strategic approach to the partnership landscape and the introduction of a new generation of R&I partnerships will also contribute to revitalize the ERA, by achieving more coherent and better coordinated national and EU level R&I policies.

Based on the work of the ERAC working group, the coming months will see the set-up of a strategic coordinating process for R&I partnerships, that will contribute, also in the medium- to long-term, to an optimal use of R&I partnerships. This optimal use will encompass a strategic orientation of the portfolio of R&I partnerships towards the changing policy needs by ensuring the right balance between phasing-out existing partnerships that achieved their objectives and the emergence of new partnerships addressing up-coming policy needs.

### **Introduction:**

Based on discussion during the Informal Council in July 2017 under Estonian presidency, the Council requested in December 2017 the establishment of an ERAC ad hoc group on partnerships to provide advice on the future design and implementation of the R&I partnership landscape under Horizon Europe. Based on the Council Conclusions, ERAC adopted on 6 December 2017 a mandate for the ERAC ad hoc WG on partnership with the following interlinked priorities<sup>1</sup>:

1. Propose **criteria** for selecting EU-R&I partnerships and, as applicable, Member State, industry and other stakeholder (e.g. foundations) participation in those partnership initiatives;
2. Identify options for **rationalising** the current EU R&I partnership landscape and for optimising the coherence between partnerships within the EU R&I policy framework;
3. Advise on the design of a long-term **strategic coordinating process** for the selection, governance, monitoring and phasing out from FP co-funding of EU R&I partnership initiatives;
4. Identify measures to increase the **efficiency** of partnerships' implementation

The underlying rationale was to propose a robust criteria framework for the next generation of R&I partnerships that will form the basis for the establishment of an efficient and rationalised R&I partnership landscape, supported by a strategic coordinating process.

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<sup>1</sup> WK 13677/2017 INIT

## Methodology:

The WG had eight meetings between December 2017 and December 2018 and adopted 4 reports, including corresponding conclusions and recommendations on the above mentioned issues. In total, 22 Member States and Associated Countries nominated representatives for the WG, notably AT, BE, HR, DK, DE, EE, FR, GR, HU, IE, IT, LU, ME, NL, NO, PL, PT, SE,

SI, ES, CH, UK. The WG was supported by DG RTD, by an external expert (Patric BOECKHOLT), the GPC chair (Leonidas ANTONIOU) and ERA-LEARN 2020. The WG was chaired by Maria REINFELDT (December 2017 – September 2018) and Erik HANSALEK (September 2018 – December 2018).

Based on the active contributions from delegations and additional desk research, each report includes conclusions and recommendations and an annex with more detailed analysis on the four topics, i.a. based on the Horizon 2020 interim evaluation, the ‘Lamy Report’ and corresponding partnership-related evaluations. The reports on ,Criteria<sup>2</sup> and ,Process<sup>3</sup>, were adopted by ERAC in April 2018 and the reports on ,rationalisation<sup>4</sup> and ,efficiency<sup>5</sup> were adopted by ERAC in September 2018, respectively. An additional workshop was organized in June 2018 by the WG. DG RTD and ERA-LEARN 2020 were exploring options for a more harmonised and streamlined data management system for R&I projects stemming from R&I partnerships.

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<sup>2</sup> WK 4949/2018 INIT

<sup>3</sup> WK 4950/2018 INIT

<sup>4</sup> WK 9162/2018 INIT

<sup>5</sup> WK 9164/2018 INIT

## **Main achievements**

The results and recommendations of the WG proved to be instrumental for the design of the partnership related elements of the legal proposal for Horizon Europe, in particular Article 8 and Annex III of the legal proposal, describing the life-cycle oriented criteria for European Partnerships. From the total of 31 recommendations of the WG, more than half have been addressed by the European Commission in its legal proposal for Horizon Europe and/or by Member States and Associated Countries through dedicated national activities. The legal proposal for Horizon Europe is still subject to intensive discussions at the time that this final report has been submitted but it can be expected, that by the time Horizon Europe will be adopted, most of the recommendations will be addressed, both at EU and national level.

In particular, the proper selection of the upcoming R&I partnership portfolio according to the revised criteria framework, the establishment of national partnership related coordinating activities and structures mirroring the EU level strategic coordinating process as well as ensuring an appropriate level of commitment from all partners will drive future discussions and deliberations.

**RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE CRITERIA FOR SELECTING, IMPLEMENTING,  
MONITORING AND PHASING OUT OF R&I PARTNERSHIPS**

**Report by the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships for the ERAC meeting  
on 17 May, Brussels**

## Criteria for selecting, implementing, monitoring and phasing out of R&I partnerships

**Conclusions** from the ERAC ad-hoc Working Group for the ERAC plenary of 17 May 2018:

- The criteria currently applied for the selection of R&I partnerships are sufficiently detailed but were not able to ensure a better coherence and impact orientation among R&I partnerships and between R&I partnerships and Horizon 2020. The current system is rather oriented towards validation of a partnership instead of selection between possible partnerships. Criteria for the other stages of the R&I partnership life-cycle are often missing or not visible in a transparent manner;
- Today, intervention logics are defined at the level of the individual R&I partnership, which will not be sufficient in the future. There is a need to develop intervention logic(s) at the level of R&I partnerships in general, that define why a R&I partnership is needed and more likely to achieve higher impacts than FP action and/or national action alone. At the level of the different partnerships, a better identification of the most appropriate partnership approach<sup>6</sup> to achieve specific objectives and impacts is needed;
- There is a need for an objective and impact based criteria framework for R&I partnerships that enables the elaboration and use of these criteria along the life-cycle of R&I partnerships, with enough flexibility to meet the specific needs of the different R&I partnership approaches. The guiding principles established in the Council Conclusions from 1 December 2017 provide a good basis for this;
- The criteria framework developed by the GPC for the JPIs and the ESFRI monitoring framework have to be seen in their specific context and cannot be transferred as such. However, they contain important elements that can inform the elaboration of a life-cycle based criteria framework for R&I partnerships;

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<sup>6</sup> The term 'Partnership approaches' is used to describe the different instruments, labels and legal bases that are used to support partnerships.

- The elaboration of KPIs should follow the guiding principles, objectives, impacts and life-cycle-based criteria framework and entail different but connected KPI categories, while limiting the reporting burden;
- The R&I partnership KPI framework should be integrated into the overall FP evaluation & monitoring framework, in particular for the EU funded R&I partnerships.

**Recommendations** from the Ad-hoc WG for the ERAC plenary in 17 May 2018:

1. ERAC calls on the Commission to elaborate, in close cooperation with Member States and Associated Countries, an objective and impact oriented life-cycle-based criteria framework for all R&I partnerships in view of making it fully operational before May 2019;
2. The criteria framework should be based on the guiding principles adopted by the Council and the related tentative definitions developed by the Working Group. They should form the basis of the work of the 'strategic coordinating process' and be applied to all partnership initiatives funded under the future FP, while being flexible enough to meet the specific needs of the different R&I partnerships. They should specifically take into account the following issues:
  - a) Selection:
    - justification of the R&I partnership: clearly quantified advantage of R&I partnership as compared to FP action and/or national action alone, additional efforts for creating or continuing an R&I partnership in relation to its approach, scale, scope and expected impacts at EU and national level;
    - overall coherence of the R&I partnership landscape and the relationship with agreed FP priorities and the realisation of ERA;
    - transparency and openness of the processes that lead to the elaboration of the SR(I)A of the R&I partnership and of the design of the initiative allowing to engage a wide array of competent stakeholders across Europe;
    - ex-ante demonstration of the partners' commitments, additionality and directionality of the R&I partnership, e.g. by before/after landscape analysis (vision, expected outcomes and impacts of the R&I partnership);
    - a clear life-cycle vision including the expected lifespan and the conditions for phasing out the FP funding identified from the outset.

b) Implementation:

- implementation of joint actions going beyond joint calls to ensure achievement of the desired higher impacts of the R&I partnership, including those related to regulatory or policy uptake;
- appropriate measures to ensure continuous openness and transparency during implementation, e.g. for the priority setting, for participation in projects submitted to calls for proposals, communication and outreach measures, clear open access/user strategy, etc.;
- options to ensure flexibility of implementation and regular adjustments responding to changing policy or market needs.

c) Monitoring:

- achievement of specific policy goals/ objectives, deliverables and KPIs allowing for a more systematic assessment of achievements, impacts and potential needs for corrective measures, including possible revision or termination of a R&I partnership funded from the FP in case KPIs are not met;
- coordination and joint activities with other relevant R&I initiatives ensuring coherence;
- additional activities beyond R&I calls to ensure impacts, openness and transparency of the R&I partnership;
- dedicated reporting on quantitative and qualitative leverage effects, including on financial and non-financial contributions, visibility and positioning in the international context, reduced R&I related risks of private sector investments, etc.

d) Phasing-Out:

- appropriate measures ensuring orderly phasing-out from the Framework Programme funding, according to the foreseen conditions and timeline, without prejudice of continued transnational funding by MS/AC or other EU programmes;
  - assess the achieved impacts at EU and national level in relation to defined targets and KPIs as well as additional coordination and administration efforts;
  - position any potential renewal of an R&I partnership in the overall R&I partnership landscape and its policy priorities;
  - assess the most effective policy intervention mode for any future action.
3. ERAC strongly recommends that all R&I partnerships funded under the future FP should be subject to the agreed criteria framework and corresponding KPIs;
  4. ERAC recommends that the monitoring of all R&I partnerships receiving funding from the Framework Programme should be included in the overall EU FPs monitoring and evaluation framework, including regular budgetary overview of EU contributions allocated to partnership initiatives. In view of optimal transparency and coherence, Member States and Associated Countries are invited to also include non FP-funded R&I partnerships of European relevance in the foreseen monitoring framework and the monitoring of ERA priority 2a, where relevant;
  5. ERAC calls on the Member States and Associated Countries to continuously ensure the political relevance of their participation in R&I partnerships, e.g. by monitoring and evaluating their participation in EU R&I partnerships as part of their ERA Monitoring Mechanism related efforts;
  6. ERAC calls on the Member States and Associated Countries to give the Commission access to relevant national and regional project data directly related to EU funded R&I partnerships involving additional public funding from national and/or regional sources, in an appropriate format specified by the Commission services, in order to integrate these data in their overall FP monitoring and evaluation framework (eCORDA and CORDIS);

7. ERAC calls on the Commission to ensure better access to projects funded by R&I partnerships, in particular Article 187 initiatives, and a more active and targeted dissemination, especially to Member States, Associated Countries and to the wider European industry and potential end-users.

**RECOMMENDATIONS ON RATIONALISING THE EU R&I PARTNERSHIP**  
**LANDSCAPE AND OPTIMISING ITS COHERENCE**

**Final report by the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships**

## **Rationalising the EU R&I partnership landscape and optimising its coherence**

**Conclusions** from the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group for the ERAC plenary on 17 September 2018:

1. European R&I partnerships are making important contributions to strengthening the European Research Area and to achieving related EU policy objectives, in particular those supported by the EU R&I Framework Programmes (FP);
2. The rationalisation of the R&I partnership landscape is needed to ensure that future landscape of R&I partnerships is effectively improving the coherence, functioning and quality of Europe's R&I system and that the individual initiatives are able to fully achieve their potential in creating positive scientific and socio-economic impacts and/or in addressing societal challenges;
3. The successful rationalisation of the R&I partnership landscape is highly interrelated with the effective use of the future criteria framework and the envisaged strategic coordinating process for EU R&I partnerships;
4. To this end, the rationalisation of the landscape, supported through the strategic coordinating process for partnerships, should lead to more strategic, coherent and coordinated R&I partnerships with a clear and complementary position within the given intervention areas/thematic priorities and with significant impacts.
5. Rationalisation of the landscape can be pursued at three levels, notably
  - a. the overall level of Europe's R&I policy framework;
  - b. the level of the partnership approaches; and
  - c. the level of thematic priority/intervention area.
6. On each of the three levels of rationalisation, distinct rationalisation strategies have been identified by the Working Group, which should form the basis of future action;

7. In this respect, the overall number of partnerships supported under the future Framework Programme and the budget allocated to them are crucial to minimise overlaps and ensure manageability of the R&I partnership landscape;
8. The existing R&I partnerships receiving Framework Programme support for research activities can be grouped in three distinct approaches, notably:
  - a. co-programmed partnerships based on Memoranda of Understanding or contractual arrangements between the EU, MS/AC and other partners;
  - b. co-funded partnerships for integrating EU and national public and/or other R&I funding sources and relevant activities;
  - c. institutionalised partnerships established in accordance with Article 185 or 187 of TFEU, or by the European Innovation and Technology Institute (EIT).

In addition, there is a recognised need to cover the costs of coordination without co-funding of research activities from the EU, which would allow for cooperation between funding organizations from MS/ACs, private funding institutions and/or industry associations, including for the emergence of new networks.

9. To inform the process of rationalisation, the redesign of the partnership landscape and the selection of future initiatives, a mapping analysis between the partnerships that will still be operating at the beginning of the next Framework Programme and the priorities of the next FP is considered important;

10. The detailed analysis of the 'health' field revealed important findings that are of particular relevance for rationalisation strategies at the level of thematic priority/intervention area, in particular that:
  - a. Publicly available information does not allow for a robust analysis of the R&I partnerships with respect to their overlaps and complementarity to other Horizon 2020 actions, so additional information needs emerge for the rationalisation at the level of the thematic priority / intervention area;
  - b. While there are theme-specific networks, which are easy to identify, a number of more horizontal partnerships make important contributions to specific thematic areas, which are less easy to identify;
  - c. The scale and scope of the topics differ strongly – from many partners and large budgets to fewer partners and smaller budgets, from very general topics to rather specific topics, presenting a challenge for ensuring the most appropriate level of analysis for rationalisation.

**Recommendations** from the Ad-hoc Working Group for the ERAC plenary on 17 September 2018:

1. ERAC calls on the Commission, Member States and Associated Countries to ensure consistency and coordination of ongoing and new partnership initiatives with overlapping objectives and their complementarity, avoiding all unnecessary duplications;
2. ERAC calls on the Commission to ensure clear intervention logics for partnership initiatives under FP9, on the basis of the three forms of partnerships (co-programmed, co-funded and institutional) and to ensure that all future partnerships under the Framework Programme are based on clear objectives and significant impacts for agreed Union policies;
3. ERAC calls on the Commission to ensure coordination support for partnerships between programmes of Member States / Associated Countries and civil society organisations, such as foundations and/or industry associations on common priorities of their choice, including regular bottom-up and competitive calls for proposals aiming at the continuation of existing and the emergence of new networks across Europe (on the basis of Coordination and Support Actions);
4. ERAC calls on the Commission and Member States to limit the number of labels/instruments<sup>7</sup> for partnerships under the three distinctive forms and the possible variations of the same instrument to the necessary minimum, and in this context explore discontinuing some of the existing ones. Member States and Associated Countries should be consulted before any new partnership label or variation of instrument is introduced during the implementation of the Framework Programme;
5. ERAC calls on the Commission, the Member States and Associated Countries to monitor and report on their respective budget allocation to partnership initiatives and take this into account in the decisions on new or renewed initiatives;

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<sup>7</sup> Such as PPPs, P2Ps, cPPPs, ERA-NETs, ERA-NET Cofund, FET-Flagships, EIT/KICs, EJP-Cofund

6. ERAC calls on the Commission to elaborate an overall mapping of the partnerships that will still be operating at the beginning of the next FP against the priorities of the future FP, informing any decision of the selection and design of future partnerships;
7. ERAC calls on the Commission and Member States / Associated Countries to jointly apply the identified rationalisation strategies, so that from the beginning of the next Framework Programme onwards, fewer, more coherent and strategic R&I partnerships with significant impacts will be achieved. These strategies include:
  - a. Make a ‘counterfactual’ and ensure that the planned R&I partnership fits to the nature of the EU Framework Programme;
  - b. Ensure that the set-up of partnerships is limited to cases, where the (potential) future benefits clearly outweigh the added complexity of cooperation;
  - c. Ensure that R&I partnerships fit to the intervention logics of the underlying partnership form and identify partnerships that no longer meet their requirements;
  - d. Avoid many R&I partnerships in one FP intervention area, ensure that there will remain room for a significant portion of traditional collaborative projects in each area, and always use the ‘lightest’ approach to achieve the objectives.
8. ERAC calls on the Commission, in cooperation with Member States / Associated Countries and ERA-LEARN, to identify relevant information needs concerning existing partnerships allowing for a better analysis of rationalisation potential, without increasing the reporting and administrative burden for partners.

**RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SET-UP OF A  
STRATEGIC COORDINATING PROCESS FOR THE SELECTION,  
IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND PHASING OUT OF R&I PARTNERSHIPS**

**Report by the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships for the ERAC meeting on 17  
May, Brussels**

## **Requirements for the set-up of a strategic coordinating process for the selection, implementation, monitoring and phasing out of R&I partnerships**

**Conclusions** from the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group for the ERAC plenary of 17 May 2018:

- The strategic coordinating process for R&I partnerships has to be seen in the context of the overall strategic programming process for the future Framework Programme (FP);
- The main objective of the strategic coordinating process is to make European R&I partnerships more effective and relevant elements of a European R&I system by ensuring in their selection and design that they achieve greater impacts for economy and society and contribute to a better coordination and coherence among relevant R&I partnerships and between R&I partnerships and the Framework Programme;
- The comparison with the ESFRI process provides important learning with respect to the working method, governance structure, output, resource requirements, time lines and general complexity, and can be used as a reference point during the design and implementation of the R&I partnership process, taking into account the differences between R&I partnerships and R&I infrastructures;
- The strategic coordinating process should become the recognised entry point for analysis and advice on the set-up, implementation and eventual phasing out of R&I partnerships in Europe, in particular those with cofunding/investment from the Framework Programme, in order to fully exploit the potential of R&I partnerships for the EU economy, society and its citizens in a coherent, open, transparent and effective manner;
- The strategic coordinating process should become a new element in the overall governance of Europe's R&I system with equal participation of Member States and the Commission. In order to obtain recognition, it must produce high-quality work based on strong ownership of all partners involved, including available expertise at national level, have a clear positioning in the overall governance, and develop robust and sound working methods and timeliness with regard to the needs of the R&I partnerships;

- The strategic coordinating process should be in place by summer 2019 at the latest, in order to advise timely on the selection of new and/or renewed R&I partnerships to be funded under the future FP. If the Commission starts preparation of partnership initiatives to be funded under the future FP before the strategic coordinating process is in place it should ensure provision of early information to Member States and Associated Countries and seek their feedback during the transition period;
- The operational design of the strategic coordinating process should acknowledge a number of boundary conditions and general requirements along seven dimensions: scope, positioning, participation pattern, division of labour between national and EU-level, stakeholder involvement, the choice of R&I partnership approaches ('instruments') and resources;
- More concretely, the WG concluded on the following boundary conditions:
  - a) **Scope**: the strategic coordinating process should cover the EU R&I partnerships landscape comprehensively, including all those with EU relevance;
  - b) **Positioning**: the strategic coordinating process should function as an entry point for setting up new R&I partnerships. It can only be of advisory character providing qualitative input, without duplicating and circumventing any existing decision making processes at EU and national level, namely the Commissions' right of initiative, comitology or funding decisions at national level. In this context, a clear and detailed positioning is needed in relation to existing decision-making procedures. Also, a transition mechanism is needed from the 'old' to the 'new' R&I partnership system;
  - c) **Participation pattern**: The strategic coordinating process should aim at fully exploiting the potential of partnerships initiatives in an open and transparent way, in both the set-up and the implementation of R&I partnerships. 'Variable geometry' shall remain the key approach, and partnerships initiatives must remain open to newcomers at programme and at project level. R&I partnerships should become strategic instruments for Member States, Associated Countries and, in principle, all economic sectors of Europe that contribute to sustainable growth and wellbeing;

- d) **Division of labour**: The strategic coordinating process should be jointly designed, steered and implemented by the Commission and MS/ACs. The commitment of participating states should be reflected in their national R&I policy priorities;
- e) **Stakeholder involvement**: The coordination with stakeholders (in the broadest sense, e.g. industry, researchers, users and civil society) should mainly take place at national level, they do not directly take part in the strategic coordinating process;
- f) **Choice of partnership approaches ('instruments')**: The strategic coordinating process should accommodate the variety of rationales/intervention logics of R&I partnerships. It has a role throughout their life-cycle and aims also at ensuring an overall coherence of the R&I partnership landscape, based on a very limited number of flexible instruments/approaches with clearly distinct intervention logics;
- g) **Resources**: The European Commission should provide the necessary resources for the operational design, set-up and implementation of the strategic coordinating process, including its permanent secretariat, resources for external expertise as required, data collection and analysis as well as for the establishment of possible working groups.

**Recommendations** from the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group for the ERAC plenary of 17 May 2018:

1. ERAC calls on the Commission to elaborate, in close consultation with the Member States and Associated Countries, a proposal for the Council on the operational design of the strategic coordinating process, to be discussed at the ERAC meeting in December 2018;
2. ERAC calls on the Commission to base its proposal on the conclusions of the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on R&I partnerships, in particular taking into account the seven dimensions described as boundary conditions and general requirements as well as on the guiding principles for the criteria framework;
3. ERAC calls on the Member States and Associated Countries to take into account the implications of the strategic coordinating process in the review of the ERA advisory structure foreseen in 2018;
4. In the context of the future FP, ERAC calls on the Commission to include the strategic coordinating process for R&I partnerships in the overall design of the strategic programming process;
5. ERAC calls on the Member States and Associated Countries to ensure that national policies, priorities and commitments to partnerships are reflected in their input to the strategic coordinating process;
6. ERAC underlines the need for the strategic coordinating process to ensure strong ownership from all partners, to have a clear positioning in the overall governance of the European R&I policy framework and implementation of the FP, to be based on sound working methods and to provide timely advice throughout the life-cycle of partnerships;
7. ERAC underlines that the strategic coordinating process needs to advise on the selection of new and/or renewed R&I partnerships under the future FP and consequently calls on all partners, that the strategic coordinating process should be operational by May 2019;

8. ERAC calls on the Commission to ensure an early and structured consultation of Member States and Associated Countries on any R&I partnership initiative be funded under the future FP, in particular those based on Article 185 and 187, on the basis of their Inception Impact Assessment<sup>8</sup>, in case their preparation is expected to start before the strategic coordinating process is formally established;
9. ERAC underlines the key role of the Commission for achieving a rationalised and effective R&I partnership landscape and consequently calls on the Commission to play an active role in the strategic coordinating process by providing the necessary resources for its establishment and operation, including a permanent secretariat, external expertise as required and resources for data collection and analysis, as well as for the establishment of possible working groups.

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<sup>8</sup> The Inception Impact Assessment sets out the Commission's initial analysis of the problem, policy objectives and different solutions as well as their likely impacts. It is followed up by an impact assessment when stakeholders are consulted on all key aspects through open public consultations, and that accompanies the legislative proposal of the Commission.

**RECOMMENDATIONS ON INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY OF IMPLEMENTATION**  
**OF PARTNERSHIPS**

**Final report by the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships**

**Conclusions** from the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships for the ERAC plenary on 17 September 2018:

1. The Horizon 2020 Interim Evaluation and the related Staff Working Documents on Article 185/187 initiatives, Knowledge and Innovation Communities of the European Innovation and Technology Institute (EIT KICs) and the underlying expert group reports allow for an identification of key issues to increase the efficiency of implementation of partnerships;
2. Concerning the current Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), key efficiency issues that need to be addressed are strengthening the role of and interaction with Member States/Associated Countries, a broader participation / inclusion of more and other stakeholders, notably in relation to membership policies of Joint Undertakings (JUs), submitted proposals and selected projects, and improving the communication and dissemination of project outcomes and results.
3. CORDIS and eCORDA data is still incomplete regarding data on partnership initiatives, notably for the EIT-KICs and some of the Article 187 initiatives, despite the fact that these initiatives use the Horizon 2020 IT tools;
4. Based on the survey to the Public-Public Partnership (P2P) community, notably ERAC, funding agencies and beneficiaries, the following conclusions can be drawn:
  - a. Relevance and impact of P2Ps depend highly on an increased political commitment at national level and stronger links with national policy priorities and end-users in the research and innovation (R&I) community;
  - b. For the majority of the current P2Ps, substantial efficiency risks are seen in the mostly decentralised implementation via national funding bodies and their different funding rules that need to be accommodated by transnational proposals and projects;
  - c. A more common and harmonised implementation framework for joint calls has the potential to increase the overall efficiency of implementation without compromising the needed flexibility of P2Ps;

- d. A common and harmonised data management system on proposals and projects, including financial data, and their results, outcomes and impacts can substantially improve the efficiency of monitoring and evaluation as part of the implementation of R&I partnerships;
  - e. A common and harmonised management of national funds, notably a ‘real common pot’ for the funding of transnational R&I projects, is not supported.
5. For the openness at programme and project level, some good practice approaches have been identified for individual R&I partnerships in the annex. They are at least partially transferrable and should inspire a greater openness in the design and implementation of future initiatives and their implementation of joint actions, in particular joint calls;
  6. The increased relevance of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for national and/or regional R&I policies, especially in low performing countries, calls for a better use of possible synergies between ESIF and Framework Programme (FP) funding, including for R&I partnerships, as appropriate. In this context, additional efforts should be considered to overcome the limits for the use of ESIF to co-fund R&I partnerships supported by the FP and the lack of the acknowledgement of these in the operational programmes;
  7. More analysis on the technical and legal barriers for a better efficiency, in particular in relation to centralised data management and more centralised implementation in the case of P2Ps, is needed.

**Recommendations** from the ERAC Ad-hoc working Group on Partnerships for the ERAC plenary on 17 September 2018:

1. ERAC calls on the Commission to ensure that already identified opportunities to improve the efficiency of implementation are duly taken into account in preparing and implementing partnerships under the future Framework Programme, in particular:
  - a. A broader use of non-binding forms, such as memorandum of understandings (MoU), to align activities of R&I partnerships, in particular Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), with policies at EU, national and regional level;
  - b. Introduce in all partnerships, measures to actively engage a broader set of relevant actors in their design and implementation, including revised membership policies in Joint Undertakings or the establishment of national ‘mirror groups’, and facilitating the access to research results, in particular for SMEs;
  - c. A more targeted use of communication campaigns and other measures to improve participation rates of newcomers and smaller R&I players, including a more active portfolio management and communication role of the Commission in order to disseminate the R&I results from R&I partnerships.
2. In particular, ERAC calls on the Commission to ensure that Member States and Associated Countries are better involved in the preparation and implementation of Public-Private-Partnerships and the promotion of a wider use of good practices for removing barriers for newcomers and smaller R&I players at programme and project level;
3. ERAC calls on the Commission to monitor and report on the performance of initiatives, in particularly public-private ones, in engaging with the Member States / Associated Countries and involving new and smaller R&I players;
4. ERAC calls on the Member States / Associated Countries to take the necessary measures at national level ensuring that their future participation in partnerships is accompanied by appropriate commitment and resources for the life cycle of initiatives, and a governance establishing stronger links with national policy priorities and end-users;

5. For the future design and a more efficient implementation of Public-Public Partnerships, ERAC calls on the Commission and Member States /Associated Countries to:
  - a. Acknowledge the broad support towards establishing a more common and harmonised system to manage the data related to proposals, selected projects and their follow-up, with respect to the preparation and implementation of joint calls up to the point of selection decisions,
  - b. Assess if the systems of the Framework Programme for proposal submission and evaluation, as well as legal entity validation, can, from the next FP on, be made available for all partnerships receiving FP funding as one option for a common and harmonised system for project data management;
  - c. Analyse further the possibilities and produce scenarios for such a system being available and functioning at the start of the next Framework Programme taking into account the experience of the P2P community.
  - d. Explore scenarios for a more efficient grant management and reporting of funded projects, on the basis of commonly agreed rules, procedures and single grant agreements for transnational R&I projects, including the use of Framework Programme rules and practices whenever possible;
6. ERAC calls on the Commission to provide the necessary provisions in the relevant programmes ensuring meaningful synergies between different EU funding programmes for the support of R&I partnerships, i.e. by allowing the optional combination of ESIF funding and Framework Programme funding, in particular at the level of projects resulting from the calls of R&I partnerships;
7. ERAC calls on the Member States to ensure in the design of the programmes funded by the EU and implemented in delegation or in shared management (in particular ESIF) that these operational programmes can be designed from the very beginning in a way that adequately support their participation in EU R&I partnerships, provided that policy objectives at regional level are effectively and efficiently met by this participation.