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**NOTE**

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| From: | General Secretariat of the Council |
| To: | Delegations |
| Subject: | ERAC Plenary Meeting, 12-13 October 2026, Dublin (IE)<br>Summary report |

Delegations will find in the annex the summary report of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) plenary meeting, held on 12-13 October 2026 in Dublin (Ireland).

**ERAC plenary meeting, 12-13 October, Dublin, Ireland**
**Summary report**

On 12 and 13 October 2026, the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) held a plenary meeting in Dublin, hosted by the Irish Presidency of the Council.

The meeting was co-chaired by Marc Lemaître (DG RTD), on behalf of the European Commission, and Feite Hofman (DG at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of the Netherlands), on behalf of Member States. Representatives of seven countries associated to *Horizon Europe* also participated. William Beausang, Assistant Secretary-General at the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, welcomed participants on behalf of the Irish Presidency.

## 1. Updates by the ERAC co-chairs and by the current and incoming Presidencies

The co-Chairs updated the plenary on recent R&I activities and initiatives, such as upcoming activities of the ERA Forum; the state of play on the preparation of the ERA Act and on recently published proposals like the European Innovation Act and the Recommendation on regulatory sandboxes; and the upcoming European R&I Days.

No objections were raised to the postponement of the launch of **preparations for the next ERA policy agenda** until there is sufficient clarity on the proposal for the ERA Act and its implications for the future ERA governance framework. No objections were raised either to exploring possible solutions to ensure continuity of ongoing ERA actions and structural policies beyond the current policy cycle to ensure continuity.

The current (Irish) Presidency of the Council informed the plenary of its activities on R&I, while the upcoming Lithuanian and Greek Presidencies presented their preliminary programmes and priorities on R&I.

## 2. How to foster R&I and industry alignment

The Irish Presidency had invited Mr. Jason Lynch (CEO of Equal1), who delivered a keynote speech drawing on the experience of a university spin-out specializing in quantum computing. He noted challenges in the speed and predictability of funding, IP licensing, accessing first customers and scaling up.

Delegations highlighted the following:

- they called for the coordination and mutual reinforcement between national and European instruments, as well as between Horizon Europe, the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) and other instruments;

- they stressed the importance of focusing on fewer priorities and on involving industry users and investors early, even at the stage of having priorities identified;

- they asked for EU action in leveraging private investment into R&I and scaling up tech solutions and highlighted difficulties for startups and scaleups accessing research and tech infrastructure;

- they pointed out that cumbersome state-aid rules constitute a burden for R&I and industry in the EU;

- they also stressed the importance of demand-side measures, particularly innovation-friendly public procurement and opportunities for public authorities to act as first customers, in accelerating market uptake.

Delegations also shared national best practices, such as the DK Task Force which introduced national standardized models with common terms and conditions across all universities; and IT strategy for quantum technologies of 2025, which consolidates the national recovery and resilience plan investment for a smooth transition to validation and scale-up.

## 3. European Partnerships under the next Framework Programme

The Commission presented the **state of play on the emerging portfolio of European Partnerships under the next Framework Programme**, stressing the general effort to build a more integrated partnership landscape and the objective to achieve convergence with Member States by the end of 2026. Delegations called for fewer but high-impact partnerships in order to avoid complexity, reduced visibility and highlighted the difficulty of smaller countries and stakeholders to participate in large partnerships. There were strong calls for horizontal, cross cutting partnerships and for retaining dedicated partnerships for the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), metrology, innovative SMEs, hydrogen, advanced materials, quantum, Arctic / polar research. There were also concerns about mainstreaming certain topics, such as social sciences/ humanities and in particular biodiversity.

Concerns were expressed on the broad scope, governance complexity and financial requirements at national level of the proposed Digital Leadership partnership. Delegations stressed the need for transparent selection criteria, clear governance and funding models (particularly tripartite arrangements), for stakeholder involvement, predictable co-financing implications for national budgets and complementarity with ECF; some delegations asked for partnerships to only be used where they offer clear added value over other instruments.

With regard to the procedure of portfolio preparation, many delegations asked for more clarity on the steps ahead, on partnerships' structure, governance, and financing, the rationale behind the choice of this particular proposed partnership portfolio, and on the role of member states in shaping the goals and priorities; they suggested that discussion continue and that ERAC provide guidance, with concerns expressed on the tight timeline. Several delegations proposed additional technical follow-up before final political decisions; caution was advised on the timing of seeking endorsement, in view of pending negotiations. The Commission indicated that it will provide more background information and convene an additional PKH meeting before the end of the year.

## 4. Elaborating ERAC's role in the preparation of strategic input for Horizon Europe

Associated Countries did not participate in the exchange of views on this topic.

In order to identify the role that ERAC could have in the preparation of strategic input for the future Horizon Europe Framework programme, delegations broadly supported the establishment of a time-limited **ERAC Task Force** to prepare evidence-based, structured **strategic input** to the Commission regarding the overall **R&I orientations and priorities of the next Horizon Europe Framework Programme**.

Delegations acknowledged the need for the Task Force to begin work immediately, so that its draft report can be submitted to ERAC at its next plenary in February 2027. The Commission committed to quickly providing analytical input and strategic foresight, so as to allow the Task Force to start its work as soon as possible.

Delegations stressed the need for a concise, strategic output of the Task Force, with a focus on high-level orientation and priorities across Horizon Europe, avoiding detailed programming.

Ensuring that the next Framework Programme fosters excellence-driven, bottom-up research with respect for scientific ethics and open science and reducing the innovation divide and catering for geographical balance were listed among the Task Force's objectives. Several delegations asked for a focus on Pillar 2, "Competitiveness and Society", foreseen in the HE proposal.

Delegations also asked that the Task Force ensure broad participation across Member States, avoiding duplication with the work of other committees; they requested regular reporting to ERAC delegates.

Several Member States expressed an interest in joining the Task Force, with some stressing the requirement for a solid scientific background of participants. The Commission committed to providing evidence to support the Task Force's work as available, aiming to do so by the end of October or during the first half of November.

Since no comments were made on the draft mandate, this is considered to be standing for now, with the possibility for the Task Force to still make adjustments, should they choose to do so.

**5. Research & Innovation with dual-use potential – Practices, Principles, and Experiences**

Delegations shared their experiences and best practices on supporting **dual use R&I** through their national programmes and instruments, as well as their views on the guiding principles underlying the developments in this area; the insights shared (together with the written contributions requested) will inform the Commission's preparatory work on its proposed opening of European funded R&I to dual-use.

Delegations presented a wide spectrum of national practices ranging from civilian programmes opened to dual-use elements via targeted calls, evaluation criteria or dual-use components to hybrid models that coordinate civil and defense agencies and to dedicated defense-led schemes to stimulate innovation around potential defense applications. Delegations consider that practical guidance (particularly on dissemination, international cooperation, ownership and control, and export control obligations) could make implementation workable and proportionate. Some delegations expressed the hope that the next Framework Programme will be open to dual-use research.

Delegations mentioned the persistent tension between open science and academic freedom, on the one hand, and research security and data protection, on the other hand.They also referred to challenges such as administrative and capacity bottlenecks (security clearances, limited resources for knowledge-security screening); the risks associated with handling and sharing sensitive information across borders and between academia and defense users; and the risk of unclear definitions producing unnecessary restrictions that could harm competitiveness, SME/startup participation, and cross-border cooperation. Best practices shared included, among others, a clear definition of dual-use activity, early and continuous involvement of end users to clarify operational requirements, dedicated testbeds and classified lab facilities to validate prototypes at an early stage and in real-world scenarios, clear interfaces between civil and defense ministries.

The Commission suggested for Member States to submit written input on their interventions, to be gathered appropriately and inform the Commission's preparatory work on the implementation of dual use in European funded R&I.

**6. The role of R&I in Ukraine's recovery**

The Ukrainian delegation presented recent developments in its R&I system, including investments, reforms and efforts to strengthen integration into the European Research Area, despite the continued destruction of research infrastructure by Russian attacks. It highlighted urgent needs related to energy resilience, access to European research infrastructures and international support, and called for a coordinated European approach to further restrict scientific cooperation with Russian state institutions and affiliated researchers.

The Austrian, Swedish and Latvian delegations presented their respective initiatives to support Ukrainian researchers and institutions. The Estonian delegation informed ERAC on the upcoming Ukraine Recovery Conference, to be held in Tallinn in January 2027, where R&I will feature prominently. The Commission reaffirmed its continued support for Ukraine, including through Horizon Europe and the International Coalition for Science, Research and Innovation in Ukraine.

## 7. AOB

Under AOB, the **next ERAC plenary** was announced for 16-17 February 2027, and delegations were invited to suggest agenda topics. The Commission also announced the launch of the third phase of the Horizon Europe **Policy Support Facility (PSF)**, highlighting opportunities for Member States and Associated Countries to benefit from tailored expert support for national R&I reforms, including country-specific assessments and assistance with implementing recommendations.