

PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT – IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ESFRI first online two-day 72nd Plenary Meeting concludes – solid steps towards Roadmap 2021 update, faster pace to implement “Making Science Happen” policies decided

The European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures concluded its first ever fully online Plenary meeting this week, broadcasting to the Research & Innovation community in Europe a clear message that, especially in these challenging times, Pan-European large scale Research Infrastructures, as a component of the new European Research Area, are a key pillar for a science-based response and a major facilitator of innovation and societal change.

Brussels, 23 June 2020

The Forum convened in full form and capacity, with 90 national delegates and experts coming from most EU Member States and Associated Countries closely following and shaping lively discussions. This was the first ESFRI Plenary meeting after the COVID-19 outbreak, as the one planned to happen in Zagreb in March had to be cancelled.

The status of the Roadmap 2021 update process was presented to the delegates together with the external evaluation of the six Projects that entered the ESFRI Roadmap family in 2016. ACTRIS, DANUBIUS, EMPHASIS, E-RIHS, EST and KM3Net were all fully reviewed by teams of experts and considered to be on track with their implementation plans.

ESFRI discussed how it should exploit its extensive know-how and capacity to summon expert effort in order to offer an enhanced edition of the Landscape Analysis, a major part of the Roadmap that attempts to map and analyse what the situation and needs for RIs are in all scientific fields. It was decided that this new edition of LA will build towards a more strategic approach, including content of broader social and political interest (Sustainable Development Goals, emergency response capacity, science impact via open access, etc.), and will be developed in closer interaction with the RIs.

Anna Panagopoulou, Director at DG Research and Innovation of the European Commission, underlined: “I am impressed how quickly and effectively the European research infrastructures responded to the COVID-19 pandemics, rapidly making available dedicated services and data aimed at facilitating the development of diagnostic tools, treatments and vaccines. This mobilisation and the impact it had on our ability to fight the virus demonstrated that our research infrastructures are capable of significantly contributing to finding innovative solutions for the societal challenges we are facing. We will work together with national governments and the research infrastructures themselves to further increase this capacity.”



Since the [“Making Science Happen” White Paper](#) has been published this Spring, it has received acclaim by all Research & Innovation stakeholders across Europe and beyond. The Forum recognised that the White Paper is now seen as a catalyst for policy making and setting priorities, as it proposes a convincing new role of the RIs as an ecosystem integral to the advancement of science, innovation, national/regional development and global cooperation. To support RIs in playing this role, the Forum discussed an action plan for implementing the key messages and recommendations of the White Paper, reaffirming the need to include all stakeholders in this work. To this end, it was decided that a Stakeholders

Forum will be set-up to create a space that will allow all voices to be heard and all hands to work together towards common goals.

Another important issue discussed at this 72nd ESFRI meeting was that of the monitoring of already established and science-producing RIs (Landmarks). The results of the work by an ad-hoc ESFRI Working Group and of the EC High-Level Expert Group

on this matter were presented and extensively discussed. It has been made clear that monitoring of RIs both via specific KPIs and other methodologies is vital for keeping the ecosystem robust and trustworthy. The exact details of the implementation of the proposals made by those two Groups are to be finalised in the months to come.

ESFRI Chair, **Jan Hrusak**, of J. Heyrovsky Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Czech Academy of Sciences, stated: “A methodology for monitoring of research infrastructures is a strategic step. It can even be compared to the creation of the very first ESFRI Roadmap of research infrastructures published in 2006. We have an opportunity to design monitoring that can be on a voluntary basis applied and adapt to any research infrastructure. The great symbolic role lies in contributing to European integration. Practically, it would allow reducing the administration burden.”

Finally, the Forum decided to extend the term of its Chair, Executive Board members and Working Group Chairs for one more year, till the end of 2021. This will allow for the smooth conclusion of the Roadmap 2021 Update process, implementation of the White Paper and alignment with the renewed ERA strategies.

ESFRI and the European Research Infrastructures

Research Infrastructures are facilities that provide resources and services for research communities to conduct research and foster innovation. They are a key pillar of the European Research Area (**ERA**) and one of its most successful achievements to date. Over the last 18 years, within the framework of ESFRI and the ESFRI **Roadmap process**, national governments have worked in close partnership with the European Commission and the scientific community to catalyse the development of pan-European Research Infrastructures (RIs) and to foster collaboration and networking among them. This has led to **the establishment of over 50 European Research Infrastructures, mobilising investments of approximately €20 billion across the EU** and radically transforming the availability of state-of-the-art facilities for our scientists and innovators.

ESFRI and the European Research Infrastructures ecosystem responds to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency

ESFRI believes that the opportunities provided by European Research Infrastructures to support the science-led response to the COVID-19 outbreak are extremely important. ESFRI is helping the scientific community by aggregating information about dedicated services offered by Research Infrastructures and communicating all relevant actions as broadly as possible. To this end, ESFRI has created the focused webpage www.esfri.eu/covid-19 that lists and provides quick links to the information gathered.

This ESFRI initiative feeds into a larger set of coordinated R&I actions at EU level presented in the [#ERAvsCorona Action Plan](#). The Action Plan sets out key measures to coordinate, share, and increase support for R&I.