

Procedural Guidelines for the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures: Mandate, Activities and Organisation

(revision December 2019)

1. **MANDATE**

The European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures was set-up following a recommendation of the EU Council¹ in order:

- to support a coherent and strategy-led approach to policy making on research infrastructures in Europe;
- to facilitate multilateral initiatives leading to a better use and development of research infrastructures acting as an incubator for pan-European and global research infrastructures;
- to establish a European Roadmap for research infrastructures (new and major upgrades, pan-European interest) for the coming 10-20 years, stimulate the implementation of these facilities, and update the Roadmap as the need arises²;
- to ensure the follow-up of implementation of already on-going ESFRI projects after a comprehensive assessment, as well as the prioritisation of the infrastructure projects listed in the ESFRI Roadmap³;
- to implement the ERA Priority 2b: Research infrastructures.⁴

In this context, the Forum acts as an informal body, composed of representatives of national authorities responsible for political decision-making and funding of research infrastructures, on issues raised by one or more country delegations and on specific mandates of the EU Council. The Strategy Forum gives national authorities the opportunity to be informed of and to explore (i.e. without *a priori* commitments) international and national initiatives of European significance. One of the expected outcomes of the Forum are variable geometry negotiations on specific projects supported mainly by Member States, for which the Forum has acted as an incubator.

2. **TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FORUM**

According to its mandate the Forum carries out the following tasks and responsibilities:

- discussion of a long term vision at European level and support to the development of a European research infrastructure policy, involving all governance levels (EU, countries, regions);
- stimulation and incubator role: bringing initiatives and projects to a point where decisions by ministers are possible;

¹ In June 2001, the Research Council invited "the Commission, in close collaboration with the Member States, to explore the establishment of new arrangements to support policies related to research infrastructures". The first meeting of ESFRI took place in Brussels on 25 April 2002

² Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council, 25-26 November 2004 and 21-22 May 2007

³ Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council, 11 December 2012

⁴ Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council, 1 December 2015

- joint reflection work (on the basis of benchmarking criteria or evolution of research environment) applicable to the development of strategic policies on research infrastructures;
- exchange of information and reporting on national and EU policies, on institutional arrangements and resources, on existing or planned national or European research infrastructures open to international use;
- joint development and continuous update of a European Roadmap on research infrastructures and capacity building;
- landscape analysis of the existing research infrastructures and gap analysis (carried out with the help of ESFRI working groups and external independent experts if necessary), based on which ESFRI should be able to provide visions for the integration of the RI eco-system into an instrument capable to address the science aspects of complex societal and natural challenges;
- analysis of the cross-thematic-boundary effect of RIs and implications on their operational goals;
- evaluation work (carried out with the help of ESFRI working groups and external independent experts if necessary): assessment of the scientific case, potential impact and maturity of proposals for the Roadmap as well as the state of implementation of the projects on the Roadmap;
- follow-up of the implementation of already on-going projects;
- analysis of the socio-economic impact of research infrastructures, including recommendations on an industry and innovation oriented cooperation of research infrastructures and their role in advanced training and education for research and innovation;
- exchange of views on new funding instruments and institutional arrangements for pan-European research infrastructures, including access to them;
- recommendations on management of research infrastructures and related human resources: integrating and training aspects, increase of exchanges, involvement of user communities including industry;
- development of international links in particular to make sure that the ESFRI projects are not only of European relevance and that they work together with their non-European counterparts to solve global challenges;
- establishing effective coordination with the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), continuous dialogue at strategic level as well as facilitating engagement of ESFRI Research Infrastructures with EOSC at operational level;
- communication to a wider public about importance and societal impact of research infrastructures.

Apart from implementing the general mandate, ESFRI also responds to specific requests from the Council.

In the scope of the implementation of ERA Priority 2b, ESFRI addresses the mandate related to the implementation of the ERA Roadmap and closely collaborates with ERAC, in particular:

- The Chair of ESFRI serves on the ERAC Steering;
- ESFRI presents to the ERAC Steering Board its plan of activities related to the implementation of ERA Priority 2b and informs ERAC on its other activities related to Council mandates going beyond the ERA Roadmap;
- ESFRI prepares a concise annual report to ERAC, providing a timely strategic and operational overview of the activities that are relevant to the development of the ERA Priority 2b and of the impact of these activities on the achievement of that Priority;
- ESFRI actively takes part in the strategic discussions on the European Research Area.

3. ORGANISATION OF THE FORUM

The Forum is a self-regulated body, operating in an open method of coordination, between the different countries mainly on the basis of consensus. The Forum takes decisions during plenary meetings or by written procedure. When consensus cannot be reached, the dissenting opinions, expressed orally or in writing, are reported. The Forum itself decides when, where and what it will discuss, according to an agreed agenda; issues put forward by at least one delegation in the Forum are discussed.

Forum meetings are held on a regular basis, typically four times a year. The meetings are attended by ESFRI Delegations, the ESFRI Secretariat and the Office of ESFRI Chair. Upon specific need, the meetings can also be attended by additional personnel supporting activities of the Forum as well as by invited external experts and observers.

The Forum may decide to hold part of its meeting in the form of a non-session. Participation in such parts of the meeting, including access to relevant documents, is limited to ESFRI Delegations, the ESFRI Secretariat and the Office of the ESFRI Chair. No official report is prepared from these parts of the meeting.

All material and documents are to be kept confidential until approved by the Forum. Once approved, the selected documents will be made available on the ESFRI website.

In exceptional cases, when the results and quality of the presentation warrant broad impact the Forum may authorize the publication of ESFRI Scripta books representing useful reference instruments for the Research Infrastructure community at large.

For its internal operations, the Forum adopts Procedural Guidelines, which are complemented by Terms of Reference adopted by the Forum for each of its bodies.

4. ESFRI MEMBERSHIP

The Forum is composed of delegations from all EU Member States and Associated Countries, wishing to take part, and the European Commission.

4.1. ESFRI Delegations

ESFRI Delegations are composed of maximum two Delegates and maximum two Permanent Experts per country. In particular cases Delegations may be assisted by *ad hoc* external experts, however the size of any Delegation may not exceed four persons at any formal ESFRI meeting.

4.2. Delegates

The ESFRI Delegates shall be senior science policy officials or equivalent representing the Minister(s) responsible for Research in each of those States⁵ wishing to take part; they shall have access to and be capable of influencing policy-making in their own country.

ESFRI Delegates are officially appointed by their Minister(s), or equivalent authority responsible for Research Infrastructures, via a dated letter addressed to the ESFRI Chair, with a copy to the ESFRI Secretariat. Whenever appropriate, reconfirmation, re-nomination or replacement of a Delegate shall be notified formally via a dated letter, as outlined above.

⁵ Member States, Candidate Countries and Associated Countries

A senior science policy official, appointed by the Director-General responsible for research, shall represent the European Commission.

ESFRI Delegates may, if necessary, be substituted at ESFRI meetings and events by permanent or ad hoc Experts. To act as a Substitute they shall have an appropriate mandate from their Delegates or Ministries with advance notice to the Chair and the ESFRI Secretariat.

4.3. Permanent Experts

Each ESFRI Delegation may include up to two Permanent Experts who are appointed by the ESFRI Delegates. Permanent Experts participate on regular basis in ESFRI meetings and receive access to all relevant documents, however they may not represent a Delegation unless specifically mandated by ESFRI Delegates on case-by-case basis.

4.4. Observers

The Forum may invite *ad-hoc* observers to participate in its meetings for those topics for which this is felt to be beneficial. Observers are invited by the ESFRI Chair at their own initiative or upon proposal of a Delegation.

In order to ensure coherence and consistency between ESFRI and the e-Infrastructure Reflection Group (e-IRG) the Chair of e-IRG participates *ex-officio*, as an Observer, in the plenary meetings of the Forum.

5. ESFRI CHAIR

5.1. Mandate

The main tasks of the Chair are:

- to conduct meetings of the Forum and of the Executive Board, and to act as a moderator for discussions;
- to propose priorities for ESFRI activities and planning;
- to prepare draft agendas for meetings, and the corresponding draft summaries;
- to propose, in coordination with the Executive Board as appropriate, official positions and documents for adoption or approval by the Forum;
- to represent ESFRI in matters agreed by the Forum, in particular in contacts with the European Commission, the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) and other international and national organisations and in relevant events;
- to present the annual report of the Forum to the Council of Ministers of the EU, the Commission and the European Parliament.

The Chair must be chosen from among the ESFRI Delegates, but once elected, he/she shall act in the general interest of the Forum and no longer as a member of a national delegation⁶. The European Commission representative may not be elected as Chair.

The Chair shall be supported in his/her tasks by the Secretariat in the preparation of meetings, drawing up of minutes and other duties in the general interest of the Forum as required. The Chair must ensure adequate own resources to fulfil the assumed tasks and responsibilities.

The Chair may be replaced by the most senior Vice-Chair in the event of unforeseen absence or "force majeure".

⁶ *It is open to the country to nominate another Delegate*

5.2. Duration of mandate

The Chair is designated for a two-year non-renewable term, which can be exceptionally extended by a maximum of 12 months by the Forum acting by consensus.

5.3. Election of the Chair

Up to twelve months before the end of the mandate of the Chair in situ, ESFRI shall form a "Search Committee" to identify suitable candidates. The Search Committee shall be formed by 4-6 ESFRI Delegates coming from different countries who would not see their country nominating a candidate, and of which one is an ex-Chair of ESFRI, if possible. Candidates for the Search Committee are nominated by their respective Delegations. The applications shall include a CV and a statement of motivation. The composition of the Search Committee must be approved by the Forum upon a proposal of the ESFRI Chair in situ, taking into account geographical and gender balance in case of higher number of candidates. The Search Committee shall appoint its Chair.

The Search Committee draws up a call for candidates outlining the main tasks expected during the next mandate of the Chair. Candidates for the new ESFRI Chair are nominated by their respective Delegations. Applications shall include a CV and a motivation letter.

The Search Committee conducts hearings with the candidates and evaluates the quality of their applications. The Search Committee presents its findings and opinion on the candidates to the Forum.

The Forum elects a candidate during a plenary meeting by secret vote with a simple majority of present Delegations. Delegations who are not present at the meeting may give the power of attorney to another Delegation, which must be communicated to the Chair of the Search Committee and to the Secretariat in advance of the meeting. Each Delegation may obtain the power of attorney only from one other Delegation. If no candidate receives a sufficient majority of votes, a second round is organised with two candidates who received the highest number of votes in the first round.

In case a decision is not reached at the meeting, Delegations will be invited to cast their vote for a candidate in an electronic voting procedure via the Secretariat in the following weeks (one vote per country delegation).

In any event, the incoming Chair should be confirmed before the last meeting of the Chair in situ, to take over responsibility from the day following the expiration of the previous Chair's mandate.

In case a new Chair is not elected on time, the mandate of the outgoing Chair is extended by six months and a new election procedure is organised.

6. EXECUTIVE BOARD

6.1. Mandate

An Executive Board shall assist the Chair in the planning, preparation, implementation and continuous follow-up of ESFRI activities. Tasks and organisation of the Executive Board are specified in the Terms of Reference of the Executive board agreed by the Forum.

6.2. Vice-Chairs

The Chair shall propose up to two members of the Executive Board to act as Vice-Chairs. This nomination shall be endorsed by the Forum by secret vote with simple majority of present Delegations. The European Commission representative may not act as Vice-Chair.

6.3. Duration of mandate

The mandate of the Board and its individual members is aligned with the mandate of the Chair. Each member can serve a maximum of two terms on the Board unless he/she is elected as ESFRI Chair or Vice-Chair, in which case a third term is possible.

6.4. Election of the Executive Board

The Board is composed of the ESFRI Chair, of the Commission representative and up to seven ESFRI Delegates. In exceptional cases, the Forum may decide to include an additional member of the Board.

Upon election of a new Chair, the outgoing Chair issues a call for candidates for new Executive Board members. Each Delegation may nominate one candidate. Applications shall include a CV and a motivation letter.

The outgoing Chair, in agreement with the incoming Chair present a written recommendation to the Forum on the composition of the Board. Every effort shall be made to ensure adequate expertise as well as good geographical and gender balance of the proposed Board. The Forum appoints the Board acting by consensus. In the event that consensus is not reached, an electronic voting procedure will be put in place to select candidates. In that case each Delegation will have seven votes and the Board will be composed of seven candidates receiving the highest number of votes. The Board must be appointed at the latest during the last meeting of the Forum before the end of the present Board's mandate.

Up to six months in advance of assuming his/her role, the incoming Chair shall also participate in the Executive Board meetings.

Each Member of the Board must ensure adequate own resources to fulfil the assumed tasks and responsibilities.

7. WORKING GROUPS AND EXTERNAL ADVICE

7.1. Permanent Working Groups

The Forum may decide to set up permanent working groups for an indefinite period of time with the aim to support the Forum in its regular activities.

Chairs of the permanent working groups are appointed by the Forum following the same procedure as Executive Board Members (see point 6.4). The duration of their mandate is aligned with the mandate of the ESFRI Chair. Chairs of permanent working groups shall be members of ESFRI Delegations. Each Chair must ensure adequate own resources to fulfil the assumed tasks and responsibilities as well as provide their group's Secretariat.

Membership, tasks and organisation of the permanent working groups are specified in their Terms of Reference agreed by the Forum.

Chairs of Permanent Working Groups may be invited to Executive Board meetings, on *ad hoc* basis.

7.2. Ad-hoc Working Groups

The Forum may decide to set-up, for a pre-defined period of time normally not exceeding two years, *ad-hoc* working groups to analyse major topical issues and to report to the Forum.

Chairs of the *ad-hoc* working groups are appointed by the Forum following a call for candidates, upon a recommendation of the Executive Board. Chairs of *ad-hoc* working groups shall be members of ESFRI Delegations. Each Chair must ensure adequate own resources to fulfil the assumed tasks and responsibilities as well as provide their group's Secretariat.

Membership, tasks and organisation of the *ad-hoc* working groups are specified in their Terms of Reference agreed by the Forum.

Chairs of *ad hoc* Working Groups may be invited to Executive Board meetings, on *ad hoc* basis.

7.3. Task Forces

The Forum may decide to set-up, for a short period of time normally not exceeding one year, task forces to address a specific issue requiring a small group of experts and to report to the Forum.

Each task force may elect a Chair from among its members.

Membership, tasks and organisation of the task forces are specified in their Terms of Reference agreed by the Forum.

Chairs of Task Forces may be invited to Executive Board meetings, on *ad hoc* basis.

7.4. External advice

The Forum, or its working groups, may also seek independent scientific, technical or socio-economic expert advice, making use of existing bodies or external experts.

8. SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat is provided for by the Commission services. It assists the Forum in its operation and organisation of its meetings. In particular it assists the Chair and the Executive Board in preparing and circulating agendas of the meetings, meeting summaries and reports as well as related documents.

Where appropriate and requested, the Secretariat may collect and/or circulate information of potential interest to the Forum, in time for the ESFRI meetings.

9. INFORMATION AND REPORTING

All information exchanged within the Forum is meant for internal use only, unless explicitly stated and agreed otherwise. Information will normally be circulated through the Secretariat, which will also ensure an adequate document repository for the Forum.

The main channel of information to national authorities should flow through the country representations themselves. A general report on the activities of the Forum will normally be prepared on annual basis. for information to the Council of Ministers, to the Commission, to the European Parliament and the general public. The general report will

be drafted by the Chair, with the assistance of the Executive Board and of the Secretariat, and approved by the Forum.

10. RESOURCES

The Forum has no budget. Each delegation shall provide the necessary resources for members of the delegation and experts appointed to ESFRI working groups to effectively implement their mandate and fulfil their tasks related to ESFRI work. The European Commission covers the cost of the Secretariat and will provide meeting accommodation at Commission premises upon request, subject to room availability.

Extra resources, as might be necessary to cover the costs associated to chairmanship, working groups, task forces or for commissioning independent advice, will have to be found in advance on a case-by-case basis. This may include an EU-funded project providing additional resources, tools, expertise and support to ESFRI structures under the guidance of the Chair and the Secretariat.

11. REVIEW

The Executive Board will review these guidelines at least every two years and report proposed changes to the Forum for adoption.