

# Summary report: ESFRI Workshop on the Future of Research Infrastructures in the European Research Area

6-8 November 2019, Los Cancajos, La Palma, Canary Islands

## Session 6. Research Infrastructures in the evolving European Research Area: the role of ESFRI – Part 1

Chair: Inmaculada Figueroa

### Session Objectives

(As formulated in the program)

*Research Infrastructures play a crucial role for the excellence and competitiveness of the European Research Area. This session will take stock of the ongoing discussions on the future of ERA and will explore how to reinforce ESFRI and the European RIs to help make ERA stronger and more successful.*

### Session Presentations (Part 1)

- Future of the European Research Area – 15', Inmaculada Figueroa, ESFRI Vice-Chair ([download the presentation](#))
- Improving implementation of Research Infrastructures – 15', Giorgio Rossi, Chair of European Commission High-level Expert Group on Research Infrastructures ([download the presentation](#))

### Round-tables introduction

The European Research Area was created about 20 years ago. Its purpose is to increase the competitiveness of European research institutions by bringing them together and encouraging a more inclusive way of work. ERA policies produced significant advances during the last two decades, but many ERA objectives fell short of the initially set goals. A new paradigm for the ERA is being prepared. ESFRI feels the need to contribute with a clear vision on ERA where research infrastructures stand as pillars of European cohesion.

### Round-table discussion focus

Participants were asked to engage in round table discussions focussed on the following 3 questions:

- 1. How RIs can contribute to the strengthening of ERA? What is the role ESFRI must play in the new ERA narrative?**

Discussion of this question demonstrated that outreach actions to give publicity to ERA and ERAC and its groups are needed. The new ERA narrative should contain clear objectives and indicators. ESFRI should keep a prominent role in the new ERA. Stronger interfaces between ESFRI and other ERAC related groups are crucial. Diverse contribution of ESFRI to ERA was discussed together with future actions involving promotion of ERIC legal structure, support to the RIs along different RI lifecycle, contribution to SDGs, better actions in communication to the citizens, education and training or more directed approach towards missions and partnerships in the Horizon Europe.

## 2. How could ESFRI and the EC work better together to facilitate the implementation of RIs?

The participant agreed that the real collaboration between EC and Countries should move towards the sustainability of the overall ecosystem with special attention to the distributed infrastructures. A co-funding model was discussed as a possible way how to strengthen the commitment of Member States. A smoother transition from EU-funded preparatory phase to Member States funded implementation phase shall be ensured. Future actions might think of EC collaboration with ESFRI in establishing a central office providing horizontal services. EC support to the horizontal activities of ESFRI across the lifecycle (e.g. implementing the monitoring framework) was discussed.

## 3. How to foster stronger collaboration of European RIs with those at national and regional level?

Within this discussion participants mostly agreed that better communication and visibility of existing RIs and national nodes is essential. There ESFRI could work as a mediator to structure the national community and help in dialogue to identify the relevant research institutes to be part of the national network.

*A full summary and evaluation of responses is provided below.*

### Discussion summary

**Q1: How RIs can contribute to the strengthening of ERA? What is the role ESFRI must play in the new ERA narrative?**

Outreach actions to give publicity to ERA & ERAC and its groups are needed. A general lack of knowledge about them is reported in relation to their mandate, composition, governance, etc. New draft of the ERA narrative is considered very broad and generic, not innovative. There is a lack of clear objectives, and indicators to measure their development. The definition of "lighthouse" is not clear ESFRI has already a prominent role and must keep it and when possible improve it in the new ERA.

**ESFRI should be pivotal with others ERAC WG. ESFRI is at crossroad of others ERAC related groups, to strengthen the interfaces between ESFRI and other ERAC related groups is crucial to define and boost a new ERA in aspects like:**

- European partnerships
- Mobility
- International Cooperation
- Open Science
- Gender

**ESFRI contributes to the ERA construction by means:**

- The strong incubator role it plays. ESFRI is a mature well recognised Forum of MS, AC and EC, which based in solid procedures and trust ability contributes to the definition of the European RI ecosystem beyond national interests and borders and developing and putting in place RIs European policies as required by the Council.
- The important role of ESFRI roadmapping exercise, which becomes a solid methodology to identify gaps and to promote the construction and operation of pan-European RIs offering support along the different RI lifecycle stages.
- The promotion of ERIC regulation, how proves the broad use of the ERIC legal structure in the implementation of the pan-European Research Infrastructures.
- Accessibility is a key for new ERA, and RIs could act as hubs of research for "inclusive excellence" across Europe. Transnational Access has a clear value fort the ERA construction and need to be maintained.

### Possible future actions

- a) Possible involvement of ESFRI in the setting-up of the recommendations of the HLEG, in particular in a possible implementation of the Readiness Level proposal.
- b) While the ERIC regulation is considered a clear asset in the contribution of ESFRI and its RIs in the construction of the ERA, is probably time for a revision of the regulation to improve the inclusion and for offering new possibilities to the widening of the Membership. Special attention deserves the incorporation of third countries willing to be part of the construction and operation of the ERIC offering funding resources.
- c) To improve the societal approach and in particular contribute to the SDGs, it is needed a better cross-domain collaboration among ESFRI RIs. In this regard, also deserves special attention RIs involvement in EOSC, and the need to strengthen the role of the Social, Cultural and innovation RIs. The Landscape analysis should be an important tool to achieve this purpose using the “cross-domain” view it offers.
- d) ESFRI can help to stimulate better communication to the citizens and better outreach in preparation for the new ERA.
- e) In relation with EOSC it is proposed that ESFRI plays a "match maker" role contributing not only to the top-down approach but also to the cultural change required through a bottom-up approach.
- f) To promote the inclusiveness through more and better actions of the RIs in the education, training and innovation areas.
- g) More directed approach towards missions and sectorial activities in connection with other ministries. ESFRI has to be capable to contribute to all the HE missions and partnerships by identifying how RIs can support the goal of the missions.

### *Q2: How could ESFRI and the EC work better together to facilitate the implementation of RIs?*

- The real collaboration between EC and Countries should move towards the sustainability of the overall ecosystem. Special attention should be need for distributed infrastructures.
- Co-funding would strengthen the commitment of MS – in this model the MS would come earlier in the process while the EC would continue its support for a longer period, smoothing out the transition.
- Work together and with other services of the EC to facilitate the Use of structural funds – DG REGIO are less aware of RIs, and if possible propose to extend the use for access and operation, or at least pre-operation.
- Ensure a smoother transition from EU-funded PP to MS funded implementation phase. Stronger involvement in discussions with MS funders during the PP. Maybe, limiting the Preparatory Phase or changing the scope of this call.
- Analyze if the Legal entity should be established soon and preferably at the beginning of the process. ESFRI could offer support through an Advisory panel for each legal entity.

### Possible future actions

The EC could collaborate with ESFRI in establishing a central point/office with some horizontal services. Stronger EC support for the horizontal activities of ESFRI across the lifecycle, ex. implementing the monitoring framework.

### *Q3: How to foster stronger collaboration of European RIs with those at national and regional level?*

- Information and communication of existing RIs and the services they offer to researchers and national RIs along Europe is needed.
- Spread over Europe the added value of the European RI and work in the possibilities to possible collaborations/agreements with national RIs.

- Improve visibility of the work of the national nodes, and strengthen them facilitating the inclusion of new national partners (national/regional infrastructures). Included the possibility to have standardised fiches to present them.
- ESFRI could work as a mediator to structure the national community and help in the dialogue to identify the relevant research institutes to be part of the national networks.
- Improve the visibility of the national nodes and the whole RI in a standardised way, standardised fiches/forms might help to develop a common understanding and language for RI internal and external communication.
- Cooperation between them should be included in the funding regulations.
- Regular assessment of the nodes should be necessary at European and at national / regional level
- To foster communication regular annual meetings with all nodes could be desirable.
- Recover the Regional RI work done by ESFRI in 2013, but never approved nor pursued, ... and look in detail if some concepts could be updated and applied.
- ESFRI could have a role to promote the use of Structural Funds for instance through exchange of experience events. And maybe establish a network of delegates which gather the info on their use , and could serve to guide other countries. Use the tools of Smart Specialization Strategy with a Strategic approach (and not only the financial approach).

## Session 6. Research Infrastructures in the evolving European Research Area: the role of ESFRI – Part 2

### **Panel 1 – Strategic Orientations – 30'**

1. RIs as knowledge hubs and pillars of competitiveness – Jana Kolar, Executive Director, CERIC-ERIC ([download the presentation](#))
2. RIs responsiveness to the society & contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals – Juan José Dañobeitia Canales, Director General, EMSO ERIC ([download the presentation](#))
3. Global dimension: Global Research Infrastructures, internationalization, membership widening to third countries – Andrew Williams, Institutional Relations Officer, European Southern Observatory ([download the presentation](#))

### **Panel 2 – RI's as part of the EU Research & Innovation environment – 30'**

1. RIs role in support of Horizon Europe Missions & Clusters – Christos Arvanitidis, Chief Executive Officer, LIFEWATCH ERIC ([download the presentation](#))
2. RIs contributing to the EU big initiatives & policies: the case of Energy – Jose María Los Arcos, CIEMAT ([download the presentation](#))
3. RIs and HR training, skills and links with higher education – Caterina Petrillo, ESFRI Delegate ([download the presentation](#))