



European Strategy Forum
on Research Infrastructures

High-Level Launch of the ESFRI Stakeholders Forum

Paris, 24/3/2022

Summary Outcomes

Introduction

The [ESFRI White Paper](#), adopted in 2020, prepared the ground for a broader engagement with stakeholders by stating: "*ESFRI will investigate the possibility of organising a platform for regular discussion among the different European Research Infrastructure (RI) stakeholders, e.g., an ESFRI Stakeholders Forum*". In this way, ESFRI and RIs would position themselves at the heart of the research and innovation ecosystem, closely interlinked with different actors - research, education, policy, citizens, business, and others. The [European Research Area \(ERA\) Policy agenda](#) Action 8 'Strengthen sustainability, accessibility and resilience of Research Infrastructures in the ERA' envisages a strengthened engagement with a broad range of Research and Innovation (R&I) stakeholders.

The involvement of stakeholders in ESFRI is relevant, timely and can build on the preparatory work of the last two years.

The [High-Level Launch event](#) of the ESFRI Stakeholders Forum (SF) (24.03.22, online event) was organised under the aegis of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU, which underlined the political attention and commitment and provided the right political momentum to kick-start the SF.

Among others, the high-level event aimed at officially establishing the ESFRI Stakeholders Forum; raising awareness about the engagement of ESFRI with the broad R&I stakeholder community among policymakers, key stakeholder organisations and research infrastructures; and learning from stakeholders about their interests, needs and expectations.

Key Messages from Stakeholders

Importance of stakeholder involvement

- Need for an evolution of the stakeholders' ecosystem
- RIs play an important role in this ecosystem
- Need for enhanced cooperation between RIs, with the key stakeholders (notably, RPOs and Universities), and with ESFRI

Role of ESFRI

- The identification of an RI by ESFRI provides visibility, legitimacy, and an excellence label.
- ESFRI plays a strategic role in the European landscape.

Further development of RIs

- Interoperability, uniform standards and protocols, cooperation across silos.
- Digital infrastructures, digital transformation, and contribution to EOSC. In this respect, RIs were recognised as data factories.
- The impact of FAIR data should be increased (starting from use-cases), and the long-term sustainability of European data services enabled.
- Environmental challenges of RIs, especially linked to energy consumption.
- Need for visibility to smaller RIs and resources that are not in ESFRI (how to make them sustainable, avoid duplications and operate them as an academic community).

Access and services

- Development of services to support non-expert communities and addressing complex societal challenges, thus maximising impact on science and societal challenges and further support to excellent science.
- Need to enable broader access, especially for students, also by bridging the awareness gap
- Need to reinforce the mobility of experts.
- Need for right, better coordinated and sufficient, long-term investments, with resources for scaling up.
- Investments in large RIs are challenging to plan for universities.

Innovation

- RIs and TIs are naturally complementary and need to be in dialogue.
- ESFRI processes can inspire processes for TIs with adequate customisation.
- Distributed RIs need more attention; their awareness and recognition in national systems should be increased.
- The impact of RIs should be harnessed.

Proposed take-up by ESFRI/EC:

General points

- Stakeholders' feedback will be addressed in: (i) the implementation by ESFRI and the Commission of the ERA Policy Agenda Action 8, in particular the stakeholder involvement, landscape analysis, access to RIs and funding strategy, as well as other actions on the ESFRI draft Work Plan, such as

ESFRI communication strategy; (ii) in the Commission policy proposals and preparation of Horizon Europe work programme in 2022.

- ESFRI will organise a more structured and targeted dialogue with different groups of stakeholders in dedicated upcoming Stakeholders Forum meetings; it will thus identify the targeted public, which various communication activities should address (e.g., invitations sent to young researchers, students, universities, etc. to identify their needs better).
- ESFRI will keep the stakeholders informed via the website about the way the raised questions are tackled.

Specific points

- Regarding complementarity between ESFRI and national RIs: ESFRI's mandate is not only relevant to the ESFRI RIs. Smaller, national RIs are primarily addressed at a national level, where ESFRI can contribute good examples of funding (a part of the Work Plan) and governance to avoid duplications through the national parts of the Roadmaps. The national RIs increasingly integrate into the distributed ESFRI and other EU RIs, which also addresses the issues of visibility and sustainability.
- The interaction with universities is also an important point that different speakers raised during the launch event. Universities are also involved in smaller national RIs. Thus, this issue can be probably linked to the previous point concerning national RIs and the questions about services to broader, non-specialist public and students.
- ESFRI has recognised the need to integrate better with the TIs, and a particular emphasis should be dedicated to TIs in the ERA A8, stakeholder engagement, and ERA A12.
- Bottlenecks of distributed RIs on a national level, most of them organised as ERICs, have been raised by the EGERIC report. EC is preparing the ERIC Report, which could/should highlight these issues.
- The draft ESFRI Work Plan has a dedicated action on impact assessment, which should contribute to identifying impacts. The activities linked to the closer collaboration with TIs, and cooperation of RIs with industry, both included in the Work Plan, should further support the harnessing of the impacts of RIs.
- The involvement of stakeholders in the landscape analysis and identifying research and innovation needs of research infrastructures should be emphasised.