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**SUMMARY REPORT AND OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS**

***WORKSHOP WITH MEMBER STATES  
ON THE POLICY SUPPORT FACILITY***

***22 October 2014, Brussels***

**1. CONTEXT**

*The workshop on the Policy Support Facility (PSF) was organised on 22 October 2014 in Brussels to assess the demands from Member States for the new Policy Support Facility. 27 Member States were represented<sup>1</sup> together with Norway.*

*After having discussed the rationale for the PSF and Member States' experiences with the peer reviews (morning session) two breakout sessions were organised to allow each country to discuss their country specific needs with respect to the PSF.*

*The suggestions for concrete PSF actions that emerged from those sessions will be fully taken into account in designing the PSF services. The outcome of the workshop has formed a basis for the preparation of the "expression of interest" addressed to ERAC.*

**2. INTRODUCTION**

Overall rationale for the Policy Support Facility:

Robert-Jan Smits, Director-General for Research and Innovation at the European Commission, introduced the overall rationale for launching the Policy Support Facility, the new tool under Horizon 2020 to support policy-makers in designing, implementing and evaluating research and innovation policies<sup>2</sup>.

He underlined that the Commission has already received numerous requests from Member States for policy support, and that the aim of the Facility is to be able to respond to such requests in a systematic way, drawing on high quality policy advice. He also stressed the importance of the workshop to gather views on the kind of advice needed.

<sup>1</sup> See the final agenda and the participants list attached (Annex 3 and 4).

<sup>2</sup> All the slides from the workshop can be found in the Annex 2.

### **3. MEMBER STATES EXPERIENCES WITH ERAC PEER REVIEWS OF R&I SYSTEMS**

Two examples of recently completed ERAC Peer Reviews (Estonia, 2012 and Spain, 2014) were presented by those involved in the exercises both within the national governments and as independent experts.

In both cases, the Peer Review had been instrumental for national policy development: for Estonia it served as a baseline for the RDI Strategy 2014-2020; for Spain in moving to the concrete implementation of the Strategy for Science and Innovation 2013-2020 and going further in the definition of new policy instruments. Other countries represented which had recently undergone Peer Reviews (Belgium, Denmark, Slovenia) also stressed their usefulness and emphasised the need for flexibility and speed in the process as well as for ensuring relevant political commitment at the national level to undertake the reviews.

The OECD reported on their experience with country reviews, which includes the recent reviews of France, the Netherlands, Croatia and Sweden, as well as a many non EU countries. While the OECD country reports have much in common with the ERAC peer reviews, they draw heavily on in-house OECD expertise, take longer and are more extensive, and are typically paid for by the country itself. As the country reports are prepared by the OECD secretariat, there is a limited capacity for the number of countries that can be covered.

From the presentations of country experiences and subsequent interventions and discussion, a number of success factors and ways of strengthening Peer Reviews with PSF support were identified as follows:

#### Timing

- It should be conducted at the right time in the policy cycle. It should be a priority for the national government and take place sufficiently in advance of any elections.
- While previous Peer Reviews have fed into the development of national R&I strategies, in future the main need is to support the implementation and evaluation of strategies.
- The Peer Review should be completed relatively quickly, i.e. within 6 months, to ensure relevance.

#### Country commitment

- The full commitment of the country is essential. This must include the Ministers with political responsibility and the relevant ministries at senior level, to permit an in-depth analyses of the issues at stake, the involvement of a wide set of stakeholders, and the intention to take account of the outcomes of the review in the development of national reforms.
- Countries must be willing to commit the time and availability of senior policy officials, project managers to support the process, and the time needed to access and make available relevant documentation.

#### Scoping

- Reviews can clearly benefit from strong preparation at the pre-peer review stage in order to e.g. appropriately define the Terms of Reference, ensure the selection of peers and experts to allow an in-depth assessment of the issues at stake, and

put together a solid and comprehensive evidence-base including qualitative and quantitative support information. The country self-assessment report is not a necessary part of the process, but could be replaced with a strong and consistent set of baseline and reference information making use of existing information.

- There must also be a clear focus for the Peer Review covering a limited set of key issues for the country on which the recommendations of peers is needed. In addition, for widening countries, PSF support for this pre-peer review stage -to help develop the potential focus of a full Peer Review- was considered most valuable, including the preparation of the necessary baseline information.

#### The panel

- A strong panel combining peers from other countries with independent experts is essential.
- The peers and experts should be selected in agreement with the country and in line with the focus of the review.
- The panel should act as a single team, and there should be a kick off meeting prior to start of the review process.
- The Commission should ensure simple procedures for the appointment and reimbursement of the peers and experts.

#### Conduct of the review

- A wide range of stakeholders should be involved in the review.
- Hearings with the whole panel appear more effective than separate interviews.
- The panel should visit the country more than once in order to refine the analysis and deepen their understanding of the country specific factors.
- The panel should be able to draw on well documented case studies and information from other countries experiences.
- The possibility of appointing a sounding board of selected stakeholders to support the review process can be considered.

#### Final report

- There should be early agreement on the key messages among the peers and with due involvement of country representatives. A balance is needed between the experience of national policy-makers and the need to avoid a lock in to existing practices.
- The final report should contain a limited set of policy recommendations. The recommendations should be specific, forward looking and feasible to implement.
- There should be strong visibility of the report, including through national media.

#### Follow up

- It is the country's responsibility to ensure the follow up to the Peer Review and implementation of the recommendations. Presentation or discussion of the review with the national parliaments would be an asset.
- To support this responsibility, countries should be able to request the peers and/or experts to review the implementation as a light Post Peer-Review exercise.

#### **4. POLICY SUPPORT FACILITY AT WORK: PROPOSED ARCHITECTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Commission presented a proposed architecture of the PSF and the steps foreseen for implementation.

The participants of the workshop welcomed the proposed approach while requesting clarification on the following points:

- The relationship to the Research and Innovation Observatory (RIO) and the Smart Specialisation Platform (SSP), both hosted by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission: it was explained that there is close coordination within the Commission services to ensure complementarity between the PSF and the SSP (with its focus on smart specialisation and the regional level) and RIO (with its focus on the provision of data and analyses for DG RTD, as its chief client); particular care will be taken to avoid multiple websites.
- The PSF is a tool to support Member States in addressing policy challenges and reforms. Whether the PSF will support all stages of the policy cycle from design to implementation to monitoring and evaluation: it was confirmed that this is precisely the aim of the PSF.
- The allocation of budget from the societal challenge and widening participation parts of Horizon 2020: it was explained that the 2014-15 work programme allocates 4 million euro from Challenge 6 and 1 million from Widening activities. Further funding will depend on the demand from countries for PSF services and will be the subject of future work programme decisions.
- Link to ERAC and the ERA roadmap: it was confirmed that the Expressions of Interest would be transmitted via ERAC and that possibilities for supporting the ERA roadmap could be assessed once this roadmap has been developed.
- Prioritisation of PSF support: it was explained that PSF services will be provided if they fit within scope and in line with European added value taking into account the specific needs of low performing Member States.
- Role of the Commission and service provider: it was emphasised that the PSF should serve the needs of Member States. The Commission's role is to ensure the right expertise, guidance and information services are available; the service provider will provide an intelligent back office to the Commission for this role.

#### **5. POLICY SUPPORT FACILITY AT WORK: IDENTIFYING COUNTRY-SPECIFIC NEEDS**

During the afternoon group discussions, each country representative was invited to discuss their country specific needs with respect to the Policy Support Facility.

All countries intervened and the responses are summarised in the table attached (Annex 1). The main ideas emerged from the breakout sessions were presented back to the concluding session by the rapporteurs (Magnus Härviden from Sweden and Evelina Santa-Kahle from Germany).

In many cases there is a strong commonality between the policy needs of different Member States. In this light, there was a strong interest in mutual learning which addresses these needs.

For many countries the main challenge is not the development of strategies, but their effective implementation. Therefore, the mutual learning activities should focus on the challenges of implementation, including the monitoring and evaluation of impacts. While many countries did not foresee the immediate need for a Peer Review, a few countries expressed a potential interest.

## **6. OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS: *TYPES OF SUPPORT FROM THE POLICY SUPPORT FACILITY***

- **Country peer-reviews**

1. The workshop confirmed the strong support for the Peer Review process as a powerful tool to back wide ranging reforms in countries. There were also many constructive suggestions about how such Reviews can be strengthened in future, in terms of working method, analysis and recommendations. This included the suggestions for a preparatory stage for the conduct of the Reviews and for support to follow them up. The Commission will take full account of these points in supporting Peer Reviews through the PSF.

2. For those countries that have expressed an interest in Peer Reviews, the Commission will organise a bilateral meeting to discuss next steps in more detail. The Commission will also consider the idea of supporting "**pre Peer Reviews**" for all **Widening countries** that have not had a Peer Review so far.

- **In-depth mutual learning and tailored support to specific reforms**

3. The numerous examples of country specific needs that have emerged from the breakout sessions will be taken fully into account in designing the PSF services. The discussions proved that there are many topics for which countries would like external expertise and sharing of practice, although there was widespread agreement on the need to focus on concrete topics leading to actionable results. A balance will be needed between tailor-made advice on specific reforms (design, implementation or evaluation) and EU level mutual learning.

4. On the basis of the outcome of the workshop the Commission will propose potential topics for in-depth mutual learning that could be supported by the PSF. Countries will be invited to express their interest through a note that will be transmitted to ERAC delegates

- **PSF Library and experts database**

5. The participants of the workshop agreed that access to the latest evidence, including both reports and indicators, is a crucial aspect for sound policy-making. The design of the solid and dynamic PSF library is needed to ensure Member States access to the stronger evidence base. The Commission will be putting in place the arrangements to develop the PSF library ensuring complementarity with the Research and Innovation Observatory and a fully interoperable interface with the OECD Innovation Policy Platform.

## Annexes:

1. Summary of policy needs expressed by participants
2. Presentations from the workshop on the PSF
3. Final agenda of the workshop on the PSF
4. Final participants list of the workshop on the PSF
5. Final group division for breakout sessions of the workshop on the PSF
6. Background paper for the workshop on the PSF

## Annex 1

Summary of policy challenges raised during the breakout sessions	
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ No PR/PSF in the near future, internal evaluation in 2008 led to the current strategy.</li><li>✓ Challenge of raising private R&amp;D investments</li><li>✓ Venture capital</li></ul>
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ ERAC roadmap could provide useful guidance for developing activities.</li><li>✓ Education/STEM (how to attract female students)</li><li>✓ Systemic evaluations of R&amp;I policies/systems.</li><li>✓ Role of top down/mission oriented policies and programmes and how to organise them. What is the right balance?</li><li>✓ How to focus international cooperation both on country/region and topic level?</li></ul>
Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Peer review done in 2008, with positive experience (possible interest in another PR).</li><li>✓ Evaluation of research institutes and universities</li><li>✓ How to coordinate between different SF operational programmes?</li></ul>
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ How to coordinate the number of strategies</li><li>✓ Top down versus bottom up approach</li><li>✓ Developing statistical system for R&amp;I</li><li>✓ Implementation of reforms to tackle well known problems is a particular issue</li><li>✓ Cooperation public-private and increasing private sector investment</li><li>✓ Tax incentives and link to State Aid rules</li><li>✓ Evaluation and monitoring of strategies and policies</li><li>✓ Interested in peer review and mutual learning seminars</li></ul>

Cyprus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Assessment of Cypriot R&amp;I systems carried out end 2013</li> <li>✓ Increase participation of private sector in programmes</li> <li>✓ Increase private investment and cooperation with public sector (in particular in an economy dominated by services)</li> <li>✓ Technology transfer office</li> <li>✓ R&amp;I culture, entrepreneurship, education</li> <li>✓ Tailored support and mutual learning</li> </ul>
Czech Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Peer review done in 2010, still working on recommendations.</li> <li>✓ State Aid rules and how they apply to close to market actions.</li> <li>✓ Support for R&amp;I infrastructure, of which many were set up during previous SF period.</li> <li>✓ Evaluation methodology for determining institutional support and how to restructure public research system.</li> <li>✓ How to increase private funding</li> </ul>
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Recently had a peer review and international peer reviews of research councils and technology transfer.</li> <li>✓ Growth of SMEs</li> <li>✓ Recruitment of excellent researchers</li> <li>✓ How to interact with private investment?</li> </ul>
Estonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Overhaul of system to support private R&amp;D</li> <li>✓ Connecting incubation programmes with venture capital.</li> <li>✓ Reducing the number of programmes and measures and move toward tailored made solutions</li> <li>✓ Demand side innovation</li> <li>✓ How to reform the system without extra money?</li> <li>✓ Public-private cooperation, how to generate mutual interest?</li> <li>✓ How to stimulate R&amp;I that is societally relevant?</li> <li>✓ How to coordinate between different ministries?</li> </ul>
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Several major evaluations done and reforms introduced.</li> <li>✓ Restructuring in ICT and paper sector, how should R&amp;I system adapt to that?</li> <li>✓ Assessment of university performance and impact</li> <li>✓ International cooperation</li> <li>✓ Attracting foreign students and researchers</li> <li>✓ Will probably go for OECD review but could possibly go for PSF peer review in addition</li> </ul>
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Evaluation of strategy</li> <li>✓ Right investments at right time in right place</li> <li>✓ Coordination of regional, national and EU policies</li> </ul>

Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ How to adapt to new developments?</li> <li>✓ Indicators for measuring innovation performance (composite indicators not always useful)</li> <li>✓ Systemic approach to evaluation</li> <li>✓ Linkage between Horizon 2020 and SF</li> <li>✓ Implementation of ERA roadmap</li> </ul>
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Restructuring of government sector on-going</li> <li>✓ Smart specialisation, operational programmes and how to implement them efficiently</li> </ul>
Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Exploring and understanding mechanisms between R&amp;I and growth</li> <li>✓ Arguments for importance of R&amp;I</li> <li>✓ Challenge based versus bottom-up programmes</li> <li>✓ GBAORD methodology</li> <li>✓ Financial instruments</li> </ul>
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Peer review in 2014, new strategy under development</li> <li>✓ PSF could feed into development of new strategy</li> <li>✓ Research prioritisation</li> </ul>
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance of process</li> <li>✓ Unlocking multidimensional value of culture and cultural heritage as driver of R&amp;I</li> </ul>
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Coordination of research infrastructures</li> <li>✓ Scientific advice as possible input</li> </ul>
Luxembourg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Public-private cooperation</li> <li>✓ Mutual learning regarding R&amp;I policy-making in small open economies</li> </ul>
Malta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Implementation plan for national smart specialisation strategies</li> <li>✓ Pre peer-review</li> <li>✓ Tax incentives</li> <li>✓ Business participation in R&amp;I</li> </ul>



Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mutual learning</li> <li>✓ Empower advisory councils</li> <li>✓ Balance between tailor-made support and general advice in the mutual learning</li> </ul>
Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Tax credits</li> <li>✓ IPR management and knowledge circulation</li> <li>✓ Spin-offs</li> <li>✓ State aid</li> </ul>
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mutual learning/ best practice</li> <li>✓ Orchestration of funds and policies at national and regional level</li> <li>✓ Entrepreneurial discovery process</li> </ul>
Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Implementing S3</li> <li>✓ Evaluating R&amp;I policies and strategies, including infrastructures</li> <li>✓ Synergies at national &amp; regional level</li> </ul>
Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Achieving greater impact from R&amp;I funding (not only PROs but wider environment supporting R&amp;I)</li> <li>✓ Evidence base in structured way</li> </ul>
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Monitoring whole policy cycle (design, implementation, evaluation)</li> <li>✓ Follow up of Peer Review</li> <li>✓ Support for robust analysis of micro-economic impact of R&amp;I tools</li> <li>✓ Coordination of national, regional and European funding</li> <li>✓ HRM and brain drain</li> <li>✓ Library should be dynamic tool</li> </ul>
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ No PR in the near future</li> <li>✓ Balance between tailor-made support and general advice in the mutual learning</li> </ul>
UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ No PR in the near future</li> </ul>

## Annex 2

### Presentations from the workshop on the Policy Support Facility



PSF\_introduction.ppt



PSF architecture and  
implementation.ppt



ERAC peer review  
\_Spain.pptx



ERAC peer  
review\_Estonia.pptx

## Annex 3

### Final agenda of the workshop



final agenda.docx

## Annex 4

### Final participants list



final participants  
list.docx

## Annex 5

### Final group division for breakout sessions



groups.docx

## Annex 6

### Background paper for the workshop on the PSF



Policy Support  
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