

**THE STATUS OF THE HELSINKI AND SGHRM GROUPS IN VIEW OF  
THE TRIENNIAL REVIEW OF ERA-RELATED GROUPS**

**DISCUSSION NOTE TO ERAC**

32nd plenary meeting of ERAC  
Agenda point 6.5  
Brussels, 2 December 2016

This discussion note has been prepared by the ERAC Steering Board following its meeting on 18 October 2016. The Steering Board recommends that at its plenary on 2 December 2016, ERAC has a discussion on the status of the Helsinki and SGHRM groups in view of the triennial review of the ERA-related groups.

**Background**

The October 2015 ERAC Opinion on the review of the ERA advisory structure<sup>1</sup> and the December 2015 Council Conclusions on the same issue<sup>2</sup> form the background for the discussions:

ERAC Opinion on the review of the ERA advisory structure

In its Opinion, ERAC agreed notably the following:

- **mandates of the ERA-related groups** will be **formally reviewed** in line with the procedures set out by ERAC at least **every three years**, with the **first review** taking place **in 2018**; and
- with a necessary period of transition, **all other ERA-related groups**, by extension of ERAC itself, **should be ultimately accountable to the Council** (rather than the Commission as is currently the case for some groups), with representation of national competent authorities rather than individual experts, with support from the Council Secretariat.

Council Conclusions on the review of the ERA advisory structure

In its Conclusions, the Council agreed notably the following:

- the **first full review** of the mandates of the ERA-related groups should **take place no later than 2018** in line with the procedures outlined in the ERAC Opinion. This first triennial review process should be **started no later than the 1st half of 2018**; and
- with a necessary period of transition, **all ERA-related groups should be ultimately under the remit of the Council**. The Council therefore invited the Commission to consider the mandates of HG and SGHRM with a view to converting these groups into standing working groups of ERAC no later than the first triennial review by 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> doc. 1212/15.

<sup>2</sup> doc. 14875/15.

## **Current situation**

The ERA-related groups currently include ERAC, the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), the Strategic Forum for International Science and Technology Cooperation (SFIC), the High Level Group on Joint Programming (GPC), the Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation (HG), the ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility (SGHRM) and the ERAC Standing Working Group on Open Science and Innovation (SWG OSI).

ERAC with its two configurations GPC and SFIC as well as SWG OSI are under the remit of the Council. HG and SGHRM are under the remit of the Commission. In practice this means that ERAC, GPC, SFIC and SWG OSI are assisted by the General Secretariat of the Council in their operations, whereas HG and SGHRM are assisted by the Commission services.

The Commission services also assist ESFRI in its operations, and ESFRI has a Secretariat under the remit of the Commission. It has to be noted however the ESFRI has an additional strategic role beyond that relating to the ERA and the ERA Roadmap.

## **Conditions set in the Council Conclusions**

In its Conclusions, the Council agreed that the first full triennial review of the mandates of the ERA-related groups should take place no later than 2018 and be started no later than the 1st half of 2018.

The Council also agreed that the conversion of HG and SGHRM into standing working groups of ERAC should take place no later than the first triennial review. The Council however did not impose any specific starting date for this conversion. The steps to convert these groups into standing working groups of ERAC can thus be started at any moment. This entails first of all that the Commission takes the decision and the necessary procedural arrangements to discontinue HG and SGHRM as groups working under its remit. ERAC should then agree to establish these groups as Standing Working Groups of ERAC, with support from the Council Secretariat.

## **TWO OPTIONS FOR ERAC TO CONSIDER**

On the basis of the discussions at its meeting on 18 October 2016, the Steering Board asks ERAC to consider two options relating to the status of the Helsinki and SGHRM groups in view of the triennial review of the ERA-related groups:

**Option 1)** Establishment of HG and SGHRM as ERAC Standing Working Groups before the triennial review, with a necessary period of transition.

A transition period is required to support the work these two groups are currently carrying out. Thus, in this option it is proposed that the two groups are discontinued by the Commission with effect date 30/06/2017 and are established under the remit of ERAC as of 01/07/2017. This entails that the Commission goes through the necessary procedural arrangements to discontinue HG and SGHRM as groups under the remit of the Commission, and that ERAC decides to establish HG and SGHRM as its Standing Working Groups. This option would also imply that all ERA-related groups, with the exception of ESFRI, would be under the remit of the Council by the time of the triennial review process.

OR

**Option 2)** HG and SGHRM remain under the remit of the Commission until they are converted into Standing Working Groups of ERAC no later than the first triennial review in 2018.

This option would mean that the current situation is maintained until the first triennial review process in 2018 and that not all groups would be under the same conditions for that process. The review of the mandates of HG and SGHRM under the first triennial review process would have to entail, among possible other issues, their conversion into Standing Working Groups of ERAC.

The Steering Board has decided to recommend to ERAC **Option 1**.