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MEETING DOCUMENT

From:	ERAC Secretariat
To:	ERAC (European Research Area and Innovation Committee)
Subject:	ERAC plenary on 2 October 2019 (Helsinki, FI) - Item 4.1 ("Outline for a policy approach on ERA Lighthouses")

In view of item 4.1 of the agenda of the ERAC plenary on 2 October 2019, delegations will find attached the document for discussion " Outline for a policy approach on ERA Lighthouses", prepared by the Chair and the Rapporteur of the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on the future of the ERA.

Outline for a policy approach on ERA Lighthouses

To be discussed at the 43ʳᵈ ERAC meeting (2 October)

DISCLAIMER:

This paper was prepared by the Chair and Rapporteur of the Ad-Hoc Working Group as a summary of the ideas discussed on this subject during the WG meetings.

The text was not discussed nor agreed by the WG and it is solely meant as a support document prepared by the authors to allow for a more informed discussion of the concept of "Lighthouses" at the ERAC Plenary meeting.

Outline for a policy approach on ERA Lighthouses

Why do we need ERA lighthouses?

Based on available analysis and the work of the ERAC ad hoc group on the future of ERA, it can be concluded that ERA policies at national and European level did not so far create sufficient tangible positive results and impacts for the main practitioners of R&I policy, notably researchers, higher education and research institutes, companies and citizens, and they thus do not really feel part of the ERA.

The ERA lighthouses could be the appropriate means for an effective implementation of the new ERA paradigm, but within the ERAC ad hoc group there was not sufficient time to agree on their boundary conditions, design and implementation modalities. Consequently, this document outlines a possible approach on ERA lighthouses and seeks guidance from ERAC on their further elaboration.

The main objectives of the ERA lighthouses are the following:
1. To achieve a faster and more tangible ERA implementation, starting small and scaling up later, in order to increase ownership by ERA stakeholders and policy makers because they would then feel 'empowered';
2. To focus on common interests and seizing opportunities of joint action towards future EU policy approaches rather than on the removal of (legal) barriers to the ERA implementation at national level;
3. To achieve an effective cooperation and coordination with sectoral policies in order to make knowledge and R&I policy pivotal to their design and implementation, turning R&I policy as an effective driver of policy change.

How should ERA lighthouses look like?

ERA Lighthouses shall not entail either new funding instruments or streams, nor necessarily new policy measures. They shall not at all be "missions" nor "improved JTIs". Instead, they will <u>connect</u> the existing measures and actions into a coherent multi-level framework, focused on delivery and impact. Lighthouses would have variable geometry but their implementation would require the interest of a majority of EU MS/AC as well as the Commission.

One main objective of ERA lighthouses is to seize opportunities for joint action. In other words, ERA lighthouses would be set-up only in areas where the Member States and the Commission see potential for practical implementation of the new ERA paradigm. They will be constructed differently and tailor-made to their intended objectives/goals. However, whatever their implementation mode would be, they should include the following components:
   a) Start by mapping the challenges and possible existing approaches to their resolution, allowing for an exchange of best practices – the element of mutual learning is a key added value for policy making;
   b) Promote and catalyse coordination, synchronisation, cooperation and joint action among the Member States an on EU level – this element is needed to make ERA tangible for the practitioners and stakeholders;

    c) Ensure engagement of sectoral or horizontal policy makers relevant to the selected area – this co-design from the start is essential for their ownership and to allow R&I policy to act as a recognised driver of change in policy making and policy implementation (see recommendations 16/17);

    d) Explore options for aligning actions and measures on all levels (national, including regional, and EU) towards the commonly agreed policy goals – this orientation towards action is crucial for empowering the R&I systems and their actors, to create, disseminate and exploit knowledge and to demonstrate the feasibility of the new ERA paradigm in action.

The <u>identification</u> of ERA lighthouses should be made with the help of external experts screening different areas with regard to their potential for concrete action and then <u>endorsed</u> at political level, including the R&I policy makers (ERA ministerial) and the concerned sectoral policy makers (co-design mode). They could and should be linked to the ERA priorities that will be defined for the renewed ERA.

The <u>design</u> of the lighthouses should be driven in a first step by R&I policy makers (e.g., an ERAC ad-hoc WG) and practitioners and, in a second step, bringing in sectoral policy and broader societal actors. The decision for their final go-ahead and implementation should only be made when a broad consensus is reached. The design should ensure that the lighthouses will act as demonstrators of the added value of ERA.

The <u>implementation</u> will be guided by R&I and sectoral policy (co-implementation). The implementation should work through the empowerment of actors and build on their respective interests and resources while allowing for policy experimentation to drive potential policy change on all levels in the medium term.

What could be possible areas for ERA lighthouses?
Within the ERAC WG, while some delegations would limit lighthouses to structural areas, others would also favour lighthouses for thematic areas. In order to facilitate discussion and clarify the concept of lighthouse, and for strictly illustrative purposes only, two potential areas, presented at the last meeting of the Ad-Hoc WG, are described next in more detail, as examples of what a lighthouse could be, the first as a structural lighthouse, and the second a thematic lighthouse.

On this basis, ERAC is asked to address the following issues:

- Should the concept of "ERA lighthouse" be pursued or dropped?
- And, if they are to be pursed, should they be structural only, or should they also be thematic?

Example 1: Structural ERA lighthouse
Topic: Knowledge for sustainable growth: Science-industry links

Strengthening science-industry links is one of the core CSRs in the Semester process as a means to better activate the innovation capacity in industry to eventually strengthen overall competitiveness. There is a long history and a wealth of activities on that issue, from TTOs at universities to collaborative R&D funding, etc.

The objective of the ERA lighthouse would be to empower actors at local and regional level to create more inclusive and effective science-industry links for sustainable growth. So, it would not be on science-industry links in general but on science-industry links in relation to sustainability.

In a first step, good practices would be identified across Europe and scaled-up via existing cooperation between regions, e.g., such as the many 'city friendships'. The ERA lighthouse would only act as a catalysator and 'connector' here. A second step would be to initiate innovative cooperation formats between schools, universities and companies at local/regional level and connect to similar regions (having a similar industrial structure) for having an European dimension. A third step would include to improve framework conditions and legal frameworks at local/regional/national/European level that would facilitate science-industry links for sustainability.

Consequently, this 'structural' approach would not entail a 'programming' or funding focus (as with the JPIs) or an EU policy related focus. It is also not a mission, as it doesn't include thematic programming, nor a quantitative target. One main differentiator to the EIPs would be to actually start small with connecting and sharing knowledge and only afterwards turn to the issue of framework conditions when more practical experience and ownership of actors has been achieved.

Example 2: Thematic ERA lighthouses
Topic: Knowledge against Forest Fires

Forest fires are a growing challenge for the EU and its MS and attracts high media and political attention. Climate change is/will worsen the situation, while forests are a key asset for fixing CO_2, maintain biodiversity, create jobs and growth and provide for leisure time of citizens.

The whole society needs to get empowered to better prevent and deal with forest fires. This empowerment includes education activities at school for raising awareness and mobilize young people to actively participate in monitoring (citizen science) and restoration activities, e.g. with EU wide competitions. Science is needed to develop better prevention, forecast and management methods while innovation in forest management is needed to better deal with the risks and outbreaks of forest fires. This includes also a better cooperation between fire fighters at local, regional and national level across Europe and better technologies to manage fire outbreaks. A close coordination and cooperation between European regions with similar challenges should be included here. An international dimension might be included, as forest fires are a global challenge.

There are already many related on-going activities with very diverse scale, scope and outreach. The idea of the ERA lighthouse would be to connect the existing initiatives, to facilitate sharing of knowledge and to communicate success and best practices in a coherent manner but tailored to the local/regional needs, including language issues. In the medium-term, the ERA lighthouse might lead to changes (more or less formal) in the legal framework for forest management that exist across Europe.

Consequently, even such a 'thematic approach' would not entail a 'programming' or funding focus (as with the JPIs) or an EU policy related focus (as with the EIPs). It is distinct from a mission, as it doesn't focus on R&I challenges, has no direct impact on funding decisions, nor includes a quantitative target.

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