

Brussels, 1 October 2025
(OR. en)

13149/25

ERAC 26
RECH 405

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) plenary meeting, 16-17 October 2025, Copenhagen
The role of research and innovation ecosystems and synergies between regional, national and European levels, also in the context of the new MFF proposal and the proposal for the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation

European Research and Innovation Area Committee (ERAC) delegations will find attached a background note on the subject “The role of research and innovation ecosystems and synergies between regional, national and European levels, also in the context of the new MFF proposal and the proposal for the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation”, with a view to the strategic debate at the ERAC meeting on 16-17 October 2025.

The role of research and innovation ecosystems and synergies between regional, national and European levels, also in the context of the new MFF proposal and the proposal for the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation

Strategic debate

Context

Well-functioning and robust regional, national and European research and innovation (R&I) ecosystems that complement and strengthen each other are crucial for a resilient and competitive Europe. Horizon Europe (2021-2027) and previous European framework programmes have supported building connections and interlinkages between regional, national and European R&I ecosystems.

The Commission published a guidance notice to facilitate the implementation of operational synergies between the two key EU funding sources supporting R&I (Horizon Europe and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)).¹ Next to this, the ‘Research & Innovation and Cohesion Managing Authorities Network (RIMA)’ under the ERA Forum presented ‘success examples’, challenges and recommendations². European Partnerships can be seen as examples of Horizon Europe instruments facilitating these connections. They work on topics and challenges that are often too international and complex for individual regional and national R&I ecosystems. European Partnerships are proposed also by the new Horizon Europe (2027-2034) and they are part of its links with the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF).

Other instruments that can be similarly useful are part of both Horizon Europe programmes. They include the support to infrastructures, to the realisation of the European Research Area and to innovation ecosystems. Upstream/downstream synergies emerge when EU support provides a coordinated and seamless framework for all steps of the R&I innovation process: from capacity-building and basic research to commercialisation and uptake of innovative solutions by private enterprises.

¹ Commission Notice Synergies between Horizon Europe and ERDF programmes [2022/C 421/03](#)

² <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?lang=en&fromMainGroup=true&groupID=103692>

The development of such synergies requires strong infrastructures to build on and close cooperation between EU, national and regional authorities involved in the programming and implementation of R&I supporting funding sources.

To ensure optimal supporting conditions within Europe for R&I ecosystems to thrive, expand and connect, it is important that the strategic choices and the design of European (such as Horizon Europe) as well as national and regional programmes should aim to foster better alignment and complementarity between existing and new instruments, thereby facilitating synergies where feasible. Synergies between instruments could reduce duplication and propel knowledge developed in regional and national R&I ecosystems to larger European R&I ecosystems and as such realising a more connected European Research Area. Achieving synergies is also an opportunity to leverage the stronger role that these instruments should play in supporting ERA and encouraging national investments to build stronger, more competitive research ecosystems. Moreover, the discussion should also link to reflections on the ERA governance and on how to enhance strategic alignment across governance levels, namely on the role of ERAC for contributing to a whole-of-government perspective on R&I policy.

Some elements from the partnership approach can be beneficial in creating strong European R&I ecosystems, in particularly joining forces thematically and aligning EU and MS policies and investments towards common objectives. In the future Framework Programme, the thematic dimension of the ERA should be more systematic: common R&I agendas in thematic domains (SRIAs – currently a mandatory part of the partnerships) should be developed to guide the R&I programming of both EU and Member States' funding.

Objectives

During the discussion the following questions can be discussed:

- Do you have examples of emerging R&I ecosystems in your country that have effectively exploited (synergies between) instruments at different levels? How did EU partnerships contribute in facilitating and strengthening synergies? How to best optimise synergies between Horizon Europe instruments and other (regional, national, European) instruments, in order to better support emerging R&I-ecosystems on strategic themes?

- How do you ensure that national and regional priorities in your country are aligned with EU priorities, i.e., what mechanisms are currently in place? What would be needed at the EU level to further support or improve this alignment in the future?

Setting:

- The discussion will start with a Plenary introduction by the co-Chairs.
- The ERAC will break out in 3 groups to enable a more in-depth discussion on this topic.
- Each break out group will have a moderator who will give a summary of the discussion in the Plenary meeting.
- After the 3 summaries, there is still time for the delegates to bring up topics they feel have not been addressed sufficiently. This to ensure that the loss of information due to the breakout groups is reduced to a minimum.

Outcome:

- Best practices and potential for strengthening synergies, for instance through Horizon Europe (2027-2034), in order to build strong and strategic European R&I ecosystems and advance the ERA.
 - A summary report delineating the discussion in a broad and general way will be drafted and shared amongst ERAC participants.
-