

THE WORK OF THE EGERIC WORKING GROUP AS A STEP TOWARDS CZ PRES 2022

PRÁCE NEZÁVISLÉ EXPERTNÍ SKUPINY EGERIC

In June 2009, during the Czech Presidency to the Council (hereinafter CZ PRES), the Council Regulation (EC) No 723/2009 on the Community legal framework for a European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) (hereinafter the ERIC Regulation) was adopted [1]. The ERIC Regulation introduced a specific legal form that facilitates the establishment and operation of Research Infrastructures with European impact and range. Since 2009, there were 22 new ERICs established in the European Union. This is a big success.

Abstract: In 2022 the European Commission will provide the European Parliament and the Council with a report on the implementation of the Council Regulation (EC) No 723/2009 of 25 June 2009 on the community legal Framework for a European research infrastructure consortium (ERIC) under which 22 pan-European research infrastructures were established to this date. To fulfill this task the Commission appointed an independent expert group, EGERIC, which worked on a report on this topic including recommendations for the way forward with this agenda. The article describes the work of EGERIC and its outcomes also in the context of the preparation of the upcoming CZ PRES to the Council of the European Union.

Abstrakt: V roce 2022 Evropská komise předloží Evropskému parlamentu a Radě zprávu o provádění nařízení Rady (ES) č. 723/2009 ze dne 25. června 2009 o právním rámci Společenství pro konsorcium Evropské výzkumné infrastruktury (ERIC), podle kterého bylo do dnešního data ustaveno 22 panevropských výzkumných infrastruktur. K tomu, aby EK splnila tento úkol, ustanovila Nezávislou expertní skupinu, EGERIC, která pracovala na zprávě o implementaci včetně doporučení, kam tuto agendu směřovat dále. Článek popisuje práci EGERIC i její výsledky, a to i v kontextu přípravy nadcházejícího CZ PRES Radě EU.

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The Commission being the one who establishes these legal subjects by an implementing decision monitors their progress by regularly presenting ERIC implementation reports to the Council. The next one is due by 2022. Everything points to the possibility, that this report will be presented and discussed during the coming CZ PRES in the second half of 2022. This CZ PRES 2022 could thus be looking back to CZ PRES 2009 in discussing the progress of the ERICs establishment and implementation.

For the Commission, the preparation of such a report includes participation of experts with long term experience in all areas of the life of research infrastructures. Therefore, a European Commission Expert Group on the implementation of the ERIC Regulation (EGERIC) was established and worked from October 2020 to September 2021[2]. The final report of EGERIC – Assessment on the implementation of the ERIC Regulation – was published by the Commission in October 2021 [3].

The experts appointed on their personal capacity were (in alphabetical order): Amaranta Amador Bernal (ES), Jacek T. Gierlinski (PL), Edit Herczog (HU), Martin Hynes (IR), Charlotte Lindberg Warakaulle (DK), Hervé Pero (FR), Carlo Rizzuto (IT) – Chair, Silke Schumacher (DE) – Rapporteur, Naděžda Witzanyová (CZ) – Deputy Chair.

For the readers of ECHO it is interesting to mention that the EGERIC work was supported from the Horizon 2020, its Work Programme 2018–2020 “Research Infrastructures” – Other Actions, „External expertise.”

The main findings of the expert group were divided in four parts: how the ERICs contribute to the scientific capability of the European research area (hereinafter ERA), ERICs influence on overcoming of fragmentation, improving coordination and reinforcing governance and sustainability, their influence and state of the art on improving links with society, economy and competitiveness, and finally how to strengthen the global approach.

The findings required a detailed set of actions, including documents, surveys and interviews as there is a lack of aggregated and coherent data for most of the examined areas of management and impacts of the ERICs. A system for the governance of ERICs should be established, based on acquiring and assessing the relevant data in cooperation with other actors in the ERA. However, as a general outcome, EGERIC found that the ERIC Regulation has been successful and that the ERICs contribute to excellence of research by reaching breakthrough results: this is impressive taking into account the relatively short time of cumulated operation for most ERICs.

The ERICs excellence depends on their ability to attract talent. This evidently happens, and enriches even the less developed regions of Europe, but this result is still limited due to the lack of a common legal framework for employment for ERICs which hinders mobility within distributed ERICs operating in several different countries. The use of structural funds to build nodes of distributed ERICs in European regions contributed greatly to the excellence of research of the whole ERA.

When analysing ERICs contribution to the defragmentation of ERA, EGERIC was impressed by the diversity and cooperation of a multitude of national capacities interconnected through ERICs in communities which provides great flexibility in contributing to the solution of societal challenges. Even so, a lack of coherent communication and data causes a limited visibility of the impact than the ERICs are already, and increasingly, providing. The visibility of the ERICs based on reli-

able data should be enhanced. In addition to this, the ERICs largely contribute to the synergies between European, national and regional funds, based on the national smart specialization strategies. The governments have a tool to contribute to the 2030 5% target of national funds dedicated to joint programmes and to European partnerships included in the new “ERA declaration” [4]. An effective governance of the ERIC system could greatly advance this process.

Interaction with society is visible, societal challenges are being supported by most ERICs. The lack of communication, and definition of competencies in several cases limits the interaction between the center/seat of a distributed ERIC and its nodes could be made more efficient. The full engagement with society and impact of specific ERICs including their nodes is not yet sufficiently visible. An integrated management system including the nodes of distributed ERICs should be further developed.

ERICs contribute to the solving of Grand societal challenges, Horizon Europe Partnerships and Horizon Europe Missions. Especially the ones aggregated in clusters for health and environment. This should also be considered while developing relevant dedicated calls and calls of the above-mentioned tools of Horizon Europe. The attractiveness of ERICs for third countries and international organisations is tangible. Legal constraints for membership in ERICs should be evaluated and possibly made easier by the Commission and Member states.

It seems that the Commission took stock of the recommendations of the EGERIC group and already actions are being prepared and taken in order to establish an ERIC governance system including a more systematic approach to ERICs data acquisition.

The Presidencies are for the presiding state an opportunity to have a deeper look from their point of view at the life of the European Union. In 2009 the ERIC Regulation was adopted, since then 22 ERICs were established, one of them having a seat in the Czech Republic. CZ PRES could have a deeper look at their implementation. A look beyond the horizon of European research infrastructure system, as it was done in 2009.

REFERENCES

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