

Activities and Procedural Guidelines for the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (revision March 2017)

1. MANDATE

The European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures was set-up following a recommendation of the EU Council¹ in order:

- to support a coherent and strategy-led approach to policy making on research infrastructures in Europe;
- to facilitate multilateral initiatives leading to a better use and development of research infrastructures acting as an incubator for pan-European and global research infrastructures;
- to establish a European Roadmap for research infrastructures (new and major upgrades, pan-European interest) for the coming 10-20 years, stimulate the implementation of these facilities, and update the Roadmap as the need arises²;
- to ensure the follow-up of implementation of already on-going ESFRI projects after a comprehensive assessment, as well as the prioritisation of the infrastructure projects listed in the ESFRI Roadmap³;
- to implement the ERA Priority 2b: Research infrastructures.⁴

In this context, the Forum acts as an informal body, composed of representatives of national authorities responsible for political decision-making and funding of research infrastructures, on issues raised by one or more country delegations and on specific mandates of the EU Council. The Strategy Forum gives national authorities the opportunity to be informed of and to explore (i.e. without *a priori* commitments) international and national initiatives of European significance. One of the expected outcomes of the Forum are variable geometry negotiations on specific projects supported mainly by Member States, for which the Forum has acted as an incubator.

2. TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FORUM

Forum meetings are held on a regular basis, typically four times a year.

The Forum is a self-regulated body, operating in an open method of coordination, between the different countries mainly on the basis of consensus. The Forum itself decides when, where and what it will discuss, according to an agreed agenda; issues put forward by at least one delegation in the Forum are discussed.

¹ In June 2001, the Research Council invited "the Commission, in close collaboration with the Member States, to explore the establishment of new arrangements to support policies related to research infrastructures". The first meeting of ESFRI took place in Brussels on 25 April 2002

² Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council, 25-26 November 2004 and 21-22 May 2007

³ Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council, 11 December 2012

⁴ Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council, 1 December 2015

According to its mandate the Forum carries out the following tasks and responsibilities:

- discussion of a long term vision at European level and support to the development of a European research infrastructure policy, involving all governance levels (EU, countries, regions);
- stimulation and incubator role: bringing initiatives and projects to a point where decisions by ministers are possible;
- joint reflection work (on the basis of benchmarking criteria or evolution of research environment) applicable to the development of strategic policies on research infrastructures;
- exchange of information and reporting on national and EU policies, on institutional arrangements and resources, on existing or planned national or European research infrastructures open to international use;
- joint development and continuous update of a European Roadmap on research infrastructures and capacity building;
- landscape analysis of the existing research infrastructures and gap analysis (carried out with the help of ESFRI working groups and external independent experts if necessary);
- evaluation work (carried out with the help of ESFRI working groups and external independent experts if necessary): assessment of the scientific case, potential impact and maturity of proposals for the Roadmap as well as the state of implementation of the projects on the Roadmap;
- follow-up of the implementation of already on-going projects;
- analysis of the socio-economic returns of research infrastructures, including recommendations on an industry and innovation oriented cooperation of the research infrastructures;
- exchange of views on new funding instruments and institutional arrangements for pan-European research infrastructures, including access to them;
- recommendations on management of research infrastructures and related human resources: integrating and training aspects, increase of exchanges, involvement of user communities including industry;
- development of international links in particular to make sure that the ESFRI projects are not only of European relevance and that they work together with their non-European counterparts to solve global challenges;
- communication to a wider public about importance and societal impact of research infrastructures.

In the scope of the implementation of ERA Priority 2b, ESFRI will closely collaborate with ERAC, and in particular:

- The Chair of ESFRI will serve on the ERAC Steering Board along with the Chairs of the other ERA-related Groups;
- ESFRI will present to the ERAC Steering Board its plan of activities related to the implementation of ERA Priority 2b;
- ESFRI will submit a concise annual report to ERAC, providing a timely strategic and operational overview of the activities that are relevant to the development of the ERA Priority 2b and of the impact of these activities on the achievement of that Priority.

For its internal operations, the Forum adopts Procedural Guidelines.

3. ESFRI MEMBERSHIP

3.1. Delegates

The ESFRI delegations are composed of maximum two Delegates per country: they shall be senior science policy officials or equivalent representing the Minister(s) responsible for Research in each of those States⁵ wishing to take part; they shall have access to and be capable of influencing policy-making in their own country. A senior science policy official shall represent the European Commission.

In order to ensure coherence and consistency between ESFRI and the e-Infrastructure Reflection Group (e-IRG) the Chair of e-IRG participates *ex-officio* in the plenary meetings of the Forum and a representative of ESFRI participates in the plenary meetings of e-IRG.

3.2. Nomination of the Delegates

The members of each delegation are officially nominated by their Minister(s) via a dated letter addressed to the ESFRI Chair, with a copy to the ESFRI Secretariat. Membership shall be valid from the first day of the month following the dated letter. Whenever appropriate, reconfirmation, re-nomination or replacement of a Delegate should be notified formally via a dated letter, as outlined above.

The ESFRI Membership list may be viewed on the ESFRI website.

3.3. Substitutes

ESFRI Delegates may, if necessary, be substituted at ESFRI meetings and events. To act as a Substitute they should have an appropriate mandate from their delegation with advance notice to the Chair and the ESFRI secretariat (if not they would be considered as Experts, see next item).

3.4. Experts

Each ESFRI delegation may be accompanied by up to two Experts to ESFRI meetings and events, with advance notice to the Chair and (to ensure smooth logistics) to the ESFRI secretariat. Agreement of the Chair is necessary for participation.

3.5. Permanent Experts

A non-ESFRI Delegate can exceptionally be nominated as Permanent Expert to the Forum by the Chair of ESFRI in order to allow his/her appointment as Chair of an ESFRI Working Group. This situation can occur when it is not possible to find an ESFRI Delegate to chair a Working Group (see item 6 below).

3.6. Observers

The Forum may invite *ad-hoc* observers to participate in its meetings for those topics for which this is felt to be beneficial; this applies in particular to observers from European research (policy) organisations.

⁵ *Member States, Candidate Countries and Associated Countries*

4. ESFRI CHAIR

4.1. Mandate

The main tasks of the Chair are:

- to conduct meetings of the Forum and of the Executive Board, and to act as a moderator for discussions;
- to propose priorities for ESFRI activities and planning;
- to prepare draft agendas for meetings, and the corresponding draft summaries;
- to represent ESFRI in matters agreed by the Forum, in particular in contacts with the European Commission, the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) and other international and national organisations and in all relevant events;
- to draft the annual report of the Forum to the Council of Ministers of the EU, the Commission and the European Parliament (see item 8 below).

When the Forum needs to adopt official positions and documents, these are proposed by the Chair and adopted if there is consensus. When this is not the case the dissenting opinions are reported; opinions of ESFRI Delegates may be communicated by electronic means in matters of high urgency.

The Chair must be chosen from among the ESFRI Delegates, but once elected, he/she shall act in the general interest of the Forum and no longer as a member of a national delegation⁶. The European Commission representative may not be elected as Chair.

The Chair shall be supported in his/her tasks by the Secretariat in the preparation of meetings, drawing up of minutes and other duties in the general interest of the Forum as required.

The Chair may be replaced by the Vice-Chair (see item 5.2 below) in the event of unforeseen absence or "force majeure".

4.2. Duration of mandate

The Chair is designated for a two-year non-renewable term, which can be exceptionally extended by a maximum of 12 months by consensus by the Forum.

4.3. Election of the Chair

Up to twelve months before the end of the mandate of the Chair in situ, ESFRI shall form a "Search Committee" to identify suitable candidates. All delegations may nominate candidates. The applications shall include a CV and a statement of motivation. The Search Committee shall be formed by four ESFRI Delegates coming from different countries who would not see their country nominating a candidate, and of which one is an ex-Chair of ESFRI, if possible.

The Search Committee shall present its proposal to ESFRI, along with the CVs and statements of motivation of the candidate(s). The Forum shall agree on a candidate at this meeting by secret vote with a simple majority. In case consensus is not reached, delegations will be invited to cast their vote for a candidate (electronic voting procedure via the Secretariat) in the following weeks (one vote per country delegation, excluding voting of countries that have nominated a candidate)

In any event, the incoming Chair should be confirmed before the penultimate meeting of the Chair in situ, to take over responsibility from the next meeting.

⁶ *It is open to the country to nominate another Delegate*

5. EXECUTIVE BOARD

5.1. Mandate

An Executive Board shall assist the Chair in the planning, preparation, implementation and continuous follow-up of ESFRI activities.

5.2. Vice-Chair

The Chair shall propose one of the members of the Board to act as Vice-Chair. This nomination shall be endorsed by the Board. The European Commission representative may not act as Vice-Chair.

5.3. Duration of mandate

The selected Board members are designated by the Forum for a two-year term, which may be renewed. The mandate of the Board is normally aligned with the mandate of the Chair.

5.4. Election of the Executive Board

The Board will be composed of the ESFRI Chair⁷, of the Commission representative and up to seven ESFRI Delegates selected by consensus. Up to six months in advance of assuming his/her role, the incoming Chair shall also participate in the Executive Board meetings. No two elected members of the Executive Board shall be from the same ESFRI delegation, and every effort shall be made to ensure good geographical and gender balance. In the event that consensus is not reached, an electronic voting procedure will be put in place to select candidates (following the same rules as for the election of the Chair).

6. WORKING GROUPS AND EXTERNAL ADVICE

The Forum may decide to set-up, for a pre-defined period of time normally not exceeding two years, *ad-hoc* working groups (which may partly consist of non-Forum members) to analyse topical issues and to report to the Forum.

The Forum, or its working groups, may also seek independent scientific, technical or socio-economic expert advice, making use, as far as possible, of existing bodies and, whenever necessary, setting-up specific expert groups.

The *modus operandi* of any Working Group shall reflect the general ethos of ESFRI, in terms of their openness of operation and declarations of interest. They should not be lobbying groups. Chairs of Working Groups shall be members of ESFRI. In exceptional situations, a Working Group could also be chaired by a member of that group who may not be a member of ESFRI. In this case it will be mandatory that they are nominated as an ESFRI permanent expert by the Chair of ESFRI upon proposal of the group and/or the outgoing Chair of the group (see item 3.5).

All material is to be kept confidential until released by the Forum. Adapted Terms of Reference shall be drawn up for each Working Group, but shall make reference to ESFRI's procedural guidelines and shall be agreed upon by the Forum.

⁷ *An outgoing Chair may be invited by the incoming Chair to participate at Executive Board meetings, and may also chair ad hoc working groups reporting at the ESFRI meetings, for a further six months after his/her tenure if this is deemed to be in the interest of the Forum to ensure continuity of operations*

Once approved and released by the Forum the results of Working Groups can be open for access through download from the Commission's "ESFRI web-site".

In exceptional cases, when the results and quality of the presentation warrant broad impact the Forum may authorize the publication of ESFRI Scripta books representing useful reference instruments for the Research Infrastructure community at large.

7. SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat is provided for by Commission services. It assists the Forum in its operation. In particular it assists the Chair and the Executive Board in preparing and circulating draft agendas, meeting summaries and related documents.

Where appropriate and requested, the Secretariat may collect and/or circulate information of potential interest to the Forum, in time for the ESFRI meetings.

8. INFORMATION AND REPORTING

All information exchanged within the Forum is meant for internal use only, unless explicitly stated and agreed otherwise. Information will normally be circulated through the Secretariat. The ESFRI Delegates have access and exclusive use of a reserved area on CIRCABC. This is a communication instrument and a repository of documents.

In order to facilitate the follow-up of the Forum's activities at national level, each delegation may designate up to two additional experts who are also included in the ESFRI general mailing list and have access to the reserved area on CIRCABC.

The main channel of information to national authorities should flow through the country representations themselves. A general report on what areas of activity are being dealt with by the Forum will be made available once a year, via the Secretariat, for information to the Council of Ministers, to the Commission and to the EU Parliament. The general report will be drafted by the Chair, with the assistance of the Executive Board and of the Secretariat, and approved by the Forum.

9. RESOURCES

The Forum has no budget. Each delegation should provide its own costs. The European Commission covers the cost of the Secretariat and will normally provide meeting accommodation.

Extra resources, as might be necessary to cover the costs associated to chairmanship, *ad-hoc* working and/or expert groups or for commissioning independent advice, will have to be found in advance on a case-by-case basis, including possible EU project-based funding.

10. REVIEW

The Executive Board will review these guidelines at least every two years and report proposed changes to ESFRI for adoption.