1. Introduction

In its second policy brief\(^1\) EFFLA presented a proposal for an overall foresight strategy process to be established in the Commission. This process encompasses a four-step, cyclic framework model related to Forward Looking Activities (FLA) with each step involving different stakeholders. Further, the implementation of a hub in DG Research and Innovation (RTD) coordinating the respective activities has been suggested in the first EFFLA policy brief\(^2\).

This policy brief outlines a process how Member States’ (MS) FLA can be better incorporated at European level and in particular how MS can be involved in EU FLA. In this context, we focus on MS’ (including Associated Countries) FLA meant to be used in decision making processes at national/regional level. The FLA can include different kinds of stakeholders, both public and private. After giving the reasons for involving MS in FLA at EU-level, we describe how the four-step strategy process is related to existing as well as yet-to-be-created structures of involving MS in EU activities. These structures are connected at three different levels of interaction. In the final section, we point to both immediate steps to be taken to move the process of better involving MS in EU FLA and to the mid-term challenges for making this involvement work in practice.

\(^1\) EFFLA “How to design a European foresight process that contributes to a European challenge driven R&I strategy process”, 2\(^{nd}\) Policy Brief, September 2012

\(^2\) EFFLA “Enhancing strategic decision-making in the EC with the help of Strategic Foresight”, 1\(^{st}\) Policy Brief, April 2012
2. Why it is Beneficial to Involve Member States in EU-Level FLA

The Framework Programme for research and innovation is the most important financial instrument at EU-level to implement the ERA. However, the mobilisation and involvement of MS is crucial in order to succeed with the implementation. One cornerstone in the implementation of the ERA is the “optimal transnational co-operation and competition - defining common priorities and joint research agendas, building on the Joint Programming Initiatives and input from strategic forward looking activities”. National programmes and programmes at EU-level get more and more integrated through e.g. partnership initiatives in the Framework Programme and Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs). In this context priority setting is pivotal in order to facilitate alignment of and complementarity between national programmes, joint programmes and programmes at EU-level.

Priority setting starts at a very early stage, often in form of FLA/foresight, and FLA has already been recognised as important aspect in the implementation of the ERA. Thus, a better interaction between FLA in MS and at EU-level would be most advantageous for the whole process of facilitating the coordination of research priority setting (e.g. the “next generation” of JPIs).

Beside these joint advantages, there are also various benefits for MS at hand. First, national foresight would be enriched by knowledge of EC and EU-wide activities. Vice versa, people engaged in national foresight activities might welcome the opportunity to contribute to shaping EC foresight, bringing in their ideas, issues, and knowledge. By this, mutual learning is fostered and national foresight would profit from a much better awareness of other MS’ FLA which might start from a different cultural context or scientific backgrounds, simultaneously avoiding duplication. Further, similarities and differences in foresight results from different MS perspectives can be made transparent and compared. This leads to a greater visibility of MS’ foresight activities both within the EC and EU-wide, and also globally. Finally, those countries without their “own” national FLA would be able to draw on results from elsewhere in the EU, through access to the EC activities and to those in other MS. As an overall consequence, by getting involved in FLA at EU-level MS will get a more systematic possibility to influence the long term European research and innovation agenda.

It also opens up the opportunity to move towards shared longer term views of the future, building on both EU-level and MS-level concerns and perspectives, providing a context for decisions on research priorities. This systematic view could be further enhanced by also taking into account results of FLA conducted on behalf of specific actors and stakeholders, in particular those conducted by companies, associations or civil society organisations. This benefit would accrue for both MS and European institutions.

There are several viable ways to involve MS in FLA at EU-level. One approach is to use existing structures. Several groups exist where this interaction already takes place. However, such efforts should be more systematic and streamlined. Some examples are:

- GPC (Groupe de Programmation Conjointe) consists of high-level representatives from all MS as well as Associated Countries with responsibility to implement national programmes and/or policies. GPC has developed voluntary guidelines for JPIs including Foresight Activities. In its biennial report 2012 GPC proposed to launch a foresight exercise taking into account the outcomes of EFFLA.

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3 Commission Communication “A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth”, 17 July 2012
4 See annex 1 for FLA as a part of ERA
5 For further information see annex 1.
• ERAC (ERA Committee) has in its mandate to give early strategic advice “on the identification and design of strategic priorities” (e.g. ahead of the next Framework Programme and hence having a clear forward looking character) as well as “mutual learning exercises relevant to the ERA”.
• SCAR (Standing Committee on Agricultural Research) has the task of coordinating agricultural research in Europe, involving both MS and Commission representatives.
• The ESFRI (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures) road map is one example of efforts to identify joint priorities.

With the examples given it is obvious that EC and MS research priorities are already interdependent. However, the integration and coordination of programmes requires an even enhanced joint priority setting, starting with integrated foresight activities. Moreover, this involvement of MS will facilitate the use of EU-level FLA at national level (this direction of EU – MS interaction is particularised in an upcoming EFFLA Policy Brief).

3. How Members State should be involved in the Commission’s Forward Looking Activities
The preceding analysis has shown the importance of a closer interaction between MS and FLA at EU-level. In the following it will be discussed how such involvement of MS could be structured and organised, and what the main loci of interaction would be. While this issue is of equal importance to several policy areas, the ERA, and thus DG RTD, is best positioned to pioneer such an endeavour. To do this in a systematic fashion, the four-step process model\(^6\) envisaged for future DG RTD strategy processes shall serve as starting point. At each of the steps specific actions need to be taken:

I) Strategic Intelligence: A process of gathering strategic intelligence needs to be set up that facilitates interaction with FLAs in MS.
II) Sense-making: The sense-making process, in which the proposed FLA-hub in DG RTD is expected to play a major role, should draw on expertise available at MS-level.
III) Selecting priorities: Existing mechanisms in the decision process should be used to prioritize and ensure an efficient division of labour between European and MS-level.
IV) Implementation: The implementation structure including comitology and advisory groups needs to take into account FLA, in particular in the foreseen Strategic Programmes of H2020.

For each of these steps, different level of linkages between DG RTD and MS need to be established. The top-level policy inputs by stakeholders and decisions by formal bodies (such as the Council) in the H2020 implementation process that were pointed out in the second EFFLA Policy Brief need to be complemented at various stages by strategic as well as operational interactions, including the overall decision process in the Commission (i.e. the European semester\(^7\)). In essence, three levels of interaction must be distinguished:
• Higher-level policy decisions: At this level, important advice is given and decisions on strategic priorities are taken, for instance on major thematic orientations, or ERA-related policies and the effective division of labour between MS and DG RTD/European Commission. Committees like ERAC, GPC, or SCAR play an important role as loci of interaction.
• Preparatory processes: Underneath the level of such higher-level committees, interaction processes to help prepare the higher level strategic debates and decisions are essential. For the

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\(^6\) Refer to EFFLA Policy Brief No. 2 for details on the framework model.
\(^7\) See also annex 2.
sense-making process, for instance, which is crucial to provide solid inputs to higher-level priority-setting, such preparatory processes need to be set up in structured ways. The envisaged foresight hub, possibly connected with similar hubs at national level, could play an important role in this regard in the future.

- **Shared infrastructures and networks:** Finally, in all steps of the strategy processes, it would be helpful to draw on a shared infrastructure, granting access to a futures knowledge repository as well as to a network of experts.

As mentioned before, enhancing DG RTD-MS interactions with regard to foresight should first of all build on existing structures and institutions. The most obvious candidates that could play a significant role in ensuring MS involvement are:

- ERAC, GPC, and other existing or ad-hoc groups are adequate means to ensure links between the EC’s strategy processes and MS’ priorities and programmes.
- The ERA monitoring process, to be operationalized as a Research and Innovation Observatory (RIO), will provide a powerful mechanism to help guide the future evolution of the ERA. By endowing it with forward-looking functionalities, it could well provide an important element of the infrastructure to support the Strategic Intelligence step.
- Networking with other EU-level and MS-level foresight actions, which are currently being conducted in as diverse contexts as JPIs, EIPs, ETPs, etc., but also in the context of specific EU-funded projects or national programmes. Some of these actions should be regarded as part of the intelligence network and infrastructure that is underpinning the interactions between DG RTD and MS with regard to foresight. Others may be important for sense-making at an intermediate level, for instance as regards the need to better connect with other policy areas’ future-oriented concerns (“horizontal harmonisation”).

Particular attention needs to be paid to the sense-making step of the strategy cycle as an input to an informed higher-level priority setting process. This step represents a missing element at the intermediate level of preparatory processes between high-level policy and shared infrastructures and networks respectively.

Therefore, a new foresight hub needs to be established in DG RTD which serves as the main point of reference for all sense-making activities, bundles inputs from infrastructures and networks, and serves as connection point for MS during the sense-making step, i.e. before any specific options are presented to the higher policy level.

However, as there is a great deal diversity among MS in terms of how they organise their foresight activities (national hubs on governmental level, national non-governmental organisations, distributed networks of organisations, etc.) different ways of connecting the foresight hub to MS need to be considered. For instance, formal as well as informal networks with MS’ foresight bodies might be a possibility, dedicated expert groups (with members drawn from a shared database or network) or ad-hoc working groups established in cooperation with GPC or ERAC. While this foresight hub should first be implemented in DG RTD, if successful it could be a model for other research and sectoral policy DGs.

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8 European Innovation Partnerships
9 European Technology Platforms
Overall, this delivers a framework for involving MS in the new EU-level strategy processes along the lines of structures and processes as captured in Table 1. It indicates points of attachment between the four steps of the strategy framework and the three levels of interaction presented earlier in this policy brief. The EFFLA proposal will contribute to connecting different levels and steps as indicated in green in the table.

Table 1: Connecting the framework model steps with the three levels of interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of interaction</th>
<th>Higher-level policy decisions</th>
<th>Preparatory processes</th>
<th>Shared infrastructures and networks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I) Strategic Intelligence</td>
<td>Early advice from ERAC, GPC, SFIC; ESFRI, SCAR</td>
<td>JRC, other (in-)formal networks, STOA, policy EC DGs</td>
<td>Experts (academia and industry) RIO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II) Sense-making</td>
<td>GPC (FLA)</td>
<td>DG R&amp;I FLA Hub (incl. coordination of FLA in other DGs), EFFLA, ERIAB, I4G IA</td>
<td>Expert groups JRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV) Implementation</td>
<td>Programme Committees EFFLA, DG R&amp;I FLA Hub</td>
<td>Advisory groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Having pointed out that first, existing structures should be used, and second, new structures (i.e. a hub) should be created to ensure an adequate involvement process of MS in EU-level FLA, the following section outlines next steps to be taken to approach this goal.

4. Next steps of action

In the short-term (i.e. 2013), EFFLA proposes a two stage process in order to connect the four steps of the strategy process with the three levels of linkages. In the first stage, links should be forged between EFFLA and GPC. Initially, this has been realised by EFFLA members taking part in the GPC meeting in March with a first exchange of views. The purpose was to start developing a common understanding of and to draw up an action plan on how MS could be further involved in FLA at EU-level. For the second stage, we propose to hold a workshop with GPC members, other national experts, and possibly JRC to discuss best practice and lessons learned of using FLA in decision making processes at national level. Appropriate contacts should also be established between EFFLA and other relevant ERA groups. Such a workshop should be underpinned by complementary studies to look for good organisational practices informing subsequent implementation. The workshop is proposed to be held back-to-back with the GPC-meeting in early December 2013. Additionally, the
The medium-term agenda that needs to be borne in mind includes above all the establishment and consolidation of the FLA-hub. Though this is to be started in 2013 it will require on-going activities and the piloting of other new structures and mechanisms, for instance a foresight exchange network and process, and strategy trainings within DG RTD (“futures literacy”), but also a change to an organisational culture that is open for experimentation. Another action will be the harmonisation of new structures and processes with start of H2020 and the new comitology. Moreover, this process will facilitate how FLA at EU-level could be used at national level (see upcoming EFFLA Policy Brief).

It should be noted that it will take time to build a complete and impeccable structure, and an assessment should be done during 2014. In the end, if actions are taken as recommended, we would expect FLA to be well anchored in the European semester and the involvement of MS.
Annex 1: Background to FLA as a part of ERA

This section gives a short overview of how FLAs are connected to ERA and MS. EFFLA was set up after a request from Council during the Swedish Presidency (2nd half of 2009).

Conclusions on guidance on future priorities for European research and research-based innovation, 3 December 2009:

INVITES, Member States and the Commission, with the advice of CREST\(^{10}\), to initiate during 2010: [...] c) forward-looking activities ("foresight") to support the identification of grand challenges and the corresponding priorities for research and innovation;

Earlier, the need for FLA was also identified when GPC (Groupe de Programmation Conjointe) was set up in 2008. The mandate of GPC includes:

ENCOURAGES Member States, with the support of the Commission, to consider how best to address the following issues during the development and implementation of joint programming:

— a coherent approach for foresight activities

ERAC (ERA Committee) has in its mandate to give early strategic advice “on the identification and design of strategic priorities” as well as ‘mutual learning exercises relevant to the ERA’ which implicitly also includes FLA.

In the COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION: A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth, July 2012, it says:

Conditions need to be created for all Member States to benefit from strengthened cross-border cooperation and competition through:

— Defining common priorities and joint research agendas, building on the Joint Programming Initiatives and input from strategic forward looking activities

Further, the Commission Expert Group on the Review of the Joint Programming Process, October 2012, states in two out of 16 recommendations:

8. The GPC should continue to develop its mutual responsibility for and “ownership” of the Joint Programming process. The GPC should consider and prepare a systematic process that can be used for deciding on future Challenges. The process should include the use of monitoring, evaluations and other forward looking activities including EFFLA (European Forum on Forward Looking Activities). The GPC should revisit the Voluntary Guidelines on Framework Conditions in order to integrate new operational requirements, including those related to Governance.

And as advice to the Commission:

16. Continue the EFFLA work as it could be a supportive partner for the GPC for future priority setting.

As a consequence, the GPC has in its biennial report 2012 proposed to launch a foresight exercise taking into account the outcomes of EFFLA.

From the description above it is clear that FLA is an important tool to develop ERA.

\(^{10}\) CREST was replaced by ERAC in 2010.
Annex 2: EFFLA and the European Semester

Europe 2020 is the European Union’s ten-year growth strategy. The strategy includes seven ‘flagship initiatives’ providing a framework through which the EU and national authorities mutually reinforce their efforts in areas supporting the Europe 2020 priorities such as innovation, the digital economy, employment, youth, industrial policy, poverty, and resource efficiency. The flagship in innovation and research is the Innovation Union which contains goals, e.g. to implement the ERA, pooling resources through EIP and the largest funding instrument in Horizon 2020.

All MS have committed to achieving Europe 2020 targets and have translated them into national targets and growth-enhancing policies.

Therefore the European Commission has set up a yearly cycle of economic policy coordination called the European Semester. Each year the European Commission undertakes a detailed analysis of EU MS’ programmes of economic and structural reforms and provides them with recommendations for the next 12-18 months.

The European semester starts when the Commission adopts its Annual Growth Survey (AGS), usually towards the end of the year, which sets out EU priorities for the coming year. From 2013 the implementation of ERA and the setting-up of the Research and Innovation Observatory (RIO) will become an important part of the European semester. ERAC (GPC, SFIC) has already contributed with opinions on the AGS in 2012 and 2013. The monitoring of ERA depends very much on effective facilitation of cross-border cooperation including defining common research agendas. In this context it is important to have a better interaction between FLA in MS and at EU-level. EFFLA has a role to facilitate this interaction during the start-up phase.