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**ERAC 8
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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Towards a European Science for Policy ecosystem

ERAC delegations will find in Annex the document "Towards a European Science for Policy ecosystem", with a view to the ERAC meeting on 21-22 June 2023.

Agenda point for the ERAC Plenary on 21/22 June 2023, Lund/SE

“Towards a European Science for Policy ecosystem”

1. Why this topic in ERAC?

Scientific knowledge and evidence play a fundamental role in informing policymaking, contribute to the identification and analysis of problems, and the design of effective interventions. However, when facts are uncertain, values are in dispute and decisions are urgent, relying solely on a mere presentation of scientific evidence is insufficient to adequately inform any policy for which science is a key element. Rather, the identification of solutions and options to cross-cutting policy challenges requires interdisciplinary expertise and input.

Policy challenges arise over varying time horizons, geographical regions, and political systems, each requiring a distinct response. Modes of scientific advice that are beneficial in crisis situations such as managing floods, dealing with the COVID 19 pandemic, or responding to the recent energy crisis in Europe, are often distinct from the approaches suitable to address long-term planning and foresight.

The EU and the Member States can respond more adequately to the complex problems that our societies are bound to face when policy actions are informed by knowledge that is produced by a well-functioning science advice ecosystem¹.

In October 2022, the Commission published the Staff Working Document (SWD) on ‘Supporting and connecting policymaking in the Member States with scientific research’ (SWD (2022) 346 final of October 2022). This SWD can be seen as an opening chapter in a pan-European debate on how to create and support a robust science for policy ecosystem (S4P) in Europe that reinforces and connects diverse national and sectoral ecosystems to deal with the complex issues today’s societies and policymakers face².

¹ A Science for Policy (S4P) ecosystem is understood in this note as a complex of organisational structures and entities, processes, and networks that interact to support the mobilisation, acquisition, synthesis, translation, presentation for use, and application of scientific knowledge in policymaking processes Commission Staff Working Document on ‘Supporting and connecting policymaking in the Member States with scientific research’ (SWD (2022) 346 final, p.4).

² [Commission Staff Working Document on Science for Policy in the Member States – An Invitation for a Pan-European Debate on Evidence-informed Policymaking | Knowledge for policy \(europa.eu\)](#)

This SWD triggered a ministerial policy debate on “Science as an instrument to facilitate policy making in the Member States” organised by the Czech EU Presidency during the COMPET Council meeting of 2 December 2022. The Ministers welcomed the discussion on the role of science in Member States’ policymaking, acknowledging that the subject is important and timely in view of current and emerging challenges. They reflected on how to improve the use of scientific advice to develop public policies and expressed interest in establishing, developing, and networking S4P actors. They proposed for the Commission to play a key role in supporting further policy development of S4P across Europe ³.

In line with the support for S4P already expressed by the Czech and Swedish Council Presidencies, the upcoming Spanish Presidency (2nd semester 2023) confirmed the interest to propose Council Conclusions on this policy priority. Similarly, the upcoming Belgian presidency (1st semester 2024) expresses its intention to further follow up on these concerns. This paper aims to initiate a policy brainstorming at ERAC level on the added value of the creation of a European S4P ecosystem, and in this frame on setting up better S4P connections between Member States.

2. What guidance would be needed

While there is broad agreement that policies informed by the best available scientific knowledge are desirable, the uptake of science into policymaking processes remains patchy and often *ad hoc* across different policy fields and varies between Member States. This is a consequence of **three main challenges**:

- a lack of **institutional connections** between policymakers and scientists within state institutions, and across institutions that further scientific knowledge integration, mobilisation and diffusion in support of public policymaking (connections & relationships between Science and Policy);
- challenges to the **sharing of knowledge** regarding the conditions under which scientists and policymakers can effectively work together to support of science-informed public policies (S4P governance); and
- a scarcity of professionals who have **competences** required to work at the science-policy interface both on the side of policymakers and on that of science producers (building individual competences for S4P).

³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/compet/2022/12/02/>

These - and other - challenges can be addressed by fostering a systemic approach to develop, strengthen, and network S4P ecosystems.

ERAC is invited to provide guidance in view of achieving:

- *development and interconnection of Science for Policy ecosystems across Europe*
- *formulation of policy and support measures to sustain that development*

Further developing Science for Policy across Europe

There is no “one size that fits all” and the diversity of existing national ecosystems should be preserved. S4P ecosystems should bolster our capacity to take on the complex challenges of our time in a comprehensive and efficient manner; sustainably interconnected S4P ecosystems are a key objective of evidence-informed policymaking in Europe.

A regular Policy Dialogue on S4P between the Member States and the Commission would facilitate the policy development in a co-creative manner. In view of shaping a European S4P Policy Agenda, the Commission may set up a network with Member State S4P coordinators.

Policy guidance from ERAC is sought on the following questions:

- *How to develop an inclusive and sustainable European S4P ecosystem?*
- *How could the Commission coordinate actions on S4P and – at a meta-level – support S4P policy development?*

Building better connections between Member State Science for Policy ecosystems

A broad range of structures and institutions provide scientific advice to policymakers. This reflects the diversity of cultures, traditions, and organisational practices. Advisory councils or committees, national academies, learned societies or a chief scientific adviser are frequently the providers of evidence, as well as knowledge brokers that provide science advice to policy makers, alone or supported by evidence gathering structures.

Improving coordination and cooperation among the S4P actors across Europe is a key step towards an efficient S4P ecosystem. To this end, the Commission will enable the sharing of good practices and lessons learnt among Member States, will explore future needs for skills and professional competences and will develop codes of practice for different ecosystem stakeholders.

In this context, policy guidance from ERAC is sought on the following:

- *How to facilitate cooperation between Member States on S4P, including mutual learning and sharing of experience?*
- *Which features should a S4P ecosystem have to support the uptake of science into policy making at Member State level?*