

InRoad response to the European Commission report on the long-term sustainability of research infrastructures

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About InRoad and purpose of this document

InRoad aims to contribute to mutual learning and stronger coordination among policy and decision-makers in Europe with regards to different aspects relevant to RI roadmapping. The goal is to work towards a better harmonisation and synchronisation of procedures and funding streams, thus contributing to the long-term sustainability of the RI ecosystem in Europe. InRoad therefore directly contributes to some of the recommendations listed in the European Commission report 'Sustainable European Research Infrastructures'. The purpose of this note is to contribute to the Commission action plan in areas where InRoad has expertise and where the InRoad consortium members believe that further action must be taken by the Commission and Member States when addressing RI Long-Term Sustainability.

InRoad conducted a **broad online-consultation** targeted at organisations in charge of national RI roadmapping procedures in order to collect information **about national Research Infrastructure (RI) policies**. The consultation concerned decision-making procedures, funding and business plans for RI. The analysis of the answers to the consultations resulted in ten preliminary policy insights, which are described in the InRoad Consultation Report. Those policy insights clearly extend some of the elements of the Commission action plan.

1. Synchronisation of national RI roadmapping processes

The Commission action plan on Long-Term Sustainability (LTS) for RI calls for an **"establishing adequate framework conditions for effective governance and sustainable funding for RI at every stage of their life-cycle"**, notably by better synchronising national and European RI roadmaps.

Indeed, the InRoad consultation clearly revealed a large variety of purposes and processes for national RI roadmapping in Europe. The consultation also showed a large interest to increase collaboration in various aspects of RI roadmapping such as monitoring and evaluation procedures as well as the prioritisation of RI.

- > InRoad therefore contributes to **recommendations 28 and 29** of the LTS report on a better synchronisation of national and European RI roadmapping processes and calls for sufficient investments for RI at national and European levels. Those recommendations must be strengthened and are key for a more sustainable RI landscape in Europe and are at the core of InRoad's objectives.
- > InRoad supports and extends **recommendations 34** by calling for a joint discussion among researchers, potential future users and policy makers on the RI roadmap procedure in order to foster a common understanding of the definition and relevance of RI as well as the purpose of RI roadmapping.
- > The InRoad consultation also showed the importance of establishing common guidelines for the RI termination stage (**recommendations 38**). The InRoad workshop and case studies in planning will also contribute to this.
- > The InRoad consultation made the case for a better inclusion of strategic priority setting in the RI roadmapping processes. InRoad calls for better linkages between funding decisions and RI decision-making processes and goes therefore further than **recommendations 29 and 33** of the Commission action plan.

InRoad would also like to point out to the need of establishing a common RI classification by , for example, developing of a common framework and of aligning timelines of the national RI roadmapping with regards to international RI roadmap procedures, e.g. ESFRI, GSO, OECD.



2. Sources for Public Funding of Research Infrastructures

The European Commission calls for “optimising the use of public funding of RI would ensure effective governance and sustainable life-cycle management” and more specifically to:

- a. Optimise the use of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) throughout the whole RI lifecycle by fostering the development of RI business plans and support RI to meet regional / national RIS3 priority objectives (recommendation 30); and,
- b. Optimise the financial planning of RI by facilitating access to EU financial instruments (EFSD, ESIF and InnovFin), namely through the new instrument InnovFin Science targeting RI (recommendation 31).

The InRoad consultation showed that ESIF are a relevant source of funding for RI for some countries. Therefore, it is important that their rules are suited for this purpose and also well understood by the relevant stakeholders. In this context, InRoad supports these recommendations and calls for targeted interventions aimed at encouraging the use of these instruments by:

- a. Analysing the limits and restrictions of the individual funding instruments, especially their coherence with national procedures and processes;
- b. Improving the availability of information; and
- c. Fostering mutual learning through the organization of trainings for stakeholders willing to familiarize themselves with the funding sources available, e.g. RI managers/operators.

RI business plans are an important element leading to RI LTS. This is the reason why, the InRoad consultation also contained a series of questions related to this. Our findings suggest, that indeed best practices and common guidelines are needed for RI business plans, but we however believe, in contradiction to the recommendation 37 from the Commission action plan, that business plans do not only concern ‘bankability of RI’ but touch also upon the governance and funding and access policies of RI.

3. Consideration of Coordination Potential of Funding Instruments

The LTS report points out the importance of better coordinate potential RI funding instruments. Recommendation 12 specifically calls for “encouraging national and regional funding programmes to support cross border access to RI”. This corresponds well to the observations made by InRoad which calls as well for a better coordination of funding and states that benchmarking could help improve the coordination of RI funding instruments among countries, thereby providing valuable information on good practices in terms of what works and what does not when combining different funding instruments (InRoad policy insight 7).

Way forward

The publication of the InRoad consultation report is a first step. We wish to continue the dialogue with all regional, national and European stakeholders involved in policy-making and funding for RI. The Second InRoad Stakeholder Engagement Workshop on 15-16 January 2018 in Brussels provides a further opportunity to discuss our policy insights, in the context of the Commission action plan on LTS. Country factsheets on research infrastructure road mapping and funding details from a large number of EU Member States and Associated will further enhance the discussion. It is only by considering the full range of stakeholders that Europe will move towards a more synchronised approach to RI roadmapping and funding. InRoad and the Commission action plan provide some key elements to this process.