

Proposals from EARTO Task Force on Follow-up Workshops

1. A Functional Mapping of RPOs as the Basis for Policy Considerations

It was noted, and welcomed, already in the discussions during the workshops convened to advise the consultants who performed the study that RPOs are quite diverse among themselves and that this diversity is to be welcomed. The diversity reflects the different functions of different RPOs. We believe that it should be possible to represent this diversity in a typology which is not too complicated and which is meaningful, and indeed necessary, for informed policy decisions.

The typology should consider, inter alia, the different missions of different RPOs, their funding models, their internal management models, and the different evaluation logics needed to assess their impacts.

It would be extremely helpful if a workshop of participants broadly representative of the RPO world could agree on such a typology: everybody would see their place and would recognise their complementarities (whereas, too often, people insist on the differences – and implicitly – their “superiority”).

The workshop should also specifically consider some form of regular (annual?) monitoring of the RPO world, and ideally its principal sub-categories, in order to provide the necessary visibility as well as factual information about RPOs for policy makers, e.g. through ERA-WATCH.

We should like to suggest that the workshop should be the very first activity launched following the study, because a shared understanding is a valuable first step in itself and because the discussions could very well suggest additional topics for further workshops.

2. A European Mechanism for Facilitating Strategic Research Alliances

A workshop should be devoted to considering whether and how the European Commission, through the Framework Programme, could put in place one or more instruments to facilitate strategic alliances between PROs (possibly involving other research actors, e.g. university institutes, in appropriate instances).

The focus should clearly be on longer-term strategic (structural) cooperation, with a view to permanent joint activities. The proposal is essentially the same as that made by the Horvat Expert Group on Networks of Excellence and, of course, mirrors the AERTOs ERA-NET project. The proposal relates to the familiar arguments about: duplication of research agendas, “lock-in” effects of national core funding, lack of critical mass etc. A Commission initiative could promote a transnational restructuring of the RPO landscape while avoiding the damaging effects which could arise from head-on cross-border competition among RPOs within ERA.