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**SEMINAR "POLICY SUPPORT TO REFORMS  
OF NATIONAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION SYSTEMS IN EUROPE"**

Brussels, 11 December 2017

**Objective**

This Seminar aims to provide a platform to exchange experiences between national authorities, high-level experts working with the [Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility \(PSF\)](#), representatives of European countries that benefitted from PSF support, and international organisations involved in reviews of national research and innovation (R&I) systems. It will examine various methodological approaches with a view to maximising the success and impact of policy support activities. Its results will feed into future European Commission activities in support of R&I policy reforms.

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Research & Innovation wishes to take stock of the knowledge generated so far by the PSF by means of an open dialogue between representatives from all parties involved in policy support. Lessons from the long-standing experience of the OECD or the World Bank in carrying out country-focused analyses covering research and innovation policies will also be presented.

Four broad topics have been identified as the pillars for discussion during the Seminar:

1. **The organization of policy support activities - the role of international organizations and the provision of a conceptual framework.** This will cover: analytical frameworks and operational models used for country peer reviews and systems analysis; exploitation of the evidence base derived from country-specific work; cross-fertilization between the activities of international institutions; synergies and sequencing of country-specific vs. thematic-focussed work.
2. **Success factors for effective policy support: issues for the host country.** It will address: how to best ensure political commitment and ownership; how to secure the broad involvement of stakeholders; the challenge of the definition of the focus areas of the peer reviews; timing, logistics and resources.
3. **Success factors for effective policy support: the role of external contributions.** This part will focus on: the selection and management of experts and peers and other contributors; the most appropriate architecture and organisation of country visits; the transferability of experiences from country to country; the methods to blend quantitative & qualitative inputs; and the tailoring of policy recommendations to the environment and needs of the host country.

4. **The follow up and the maximization of impact from policy support activities.** Finally, the last block will address: methods and success factors for the most effective implementation of recommendations and continuous policy learning practice in recipient countries; diffusion of outcomes outside participating countries; how to best monitor quality and impact of the support; raising appetite vs. absorptive capacity, in relation to policy support exercises.

## Background

The European Commission has acquired in-depth experience in providing support to countries willing to implement operational reforms that improve the quality and impact of national R&I systems. Such expertise builds on the earlier peer reviews of countries' R&I systems that took place under the aegis of the EU advisory committees for scientific and technical research between 2004 and 2014<sup>1</sup>. Such reviews identified challenges faced by national systems and proposed policy pointers, drawing on a blend of peers' and experts' insights. Policy learning workshops were also organised under various formats.

Anchored in these previous exercises, the **Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility** was launched in 2015 as a response to the Commission Communication '*Research and Innovation as Sources of Renewed Growth*' (COM(2014)339)<sup>2</sup>. With a sharpened and scaled up policy angle, the PSF established a coherent and systematic framework as well as a large pool of expertise to respond quickly and efficiently to requests for national R&I policy reforms by Member States and countries associated to Horizon 2020.

The PSF activities are **challenge-driven**, and by no means limited to studies of internal coherence of R&I systems. They examine the national systems in light of the socio-economic challenges and context faced by the country under review. The PSF is driven by its **customer-oriented spirit and is geared towards policy practice**. Its main audience consists of national policy-makers that design, implement and evaluate policy reforms to improve the quality and impact of R&I investments. The PSF activities are **evidence-based** although they take into consideration the perceptions of the national R&I stakeholders. Robust quantitative and qualitative evidence supports the PSF policy recommendations. Finally, the PSF activities are **tailor-made and flexible**, and adapt to the specific features of each country, including the political cycle.

With almost [twenty-five activities](#) carried out since its launch in 2015, feedback from PSF work perceives it as an influential tool to induce reforms of national research and innovation systems, drawing on tailor-made advice by leading experts and policy practitioners. Feedback also suggests that the PSF *mutual learning exercises* (MLEs) are particularly appreciated for their ability to sustain a learning community of peers while the *country-specific activities* (peer reviews or specific support) prove to act as catalysers of policy change in several countries.

This Seminar offers the unique opportunity to dialogue on how to enhance the effectiveness of country-specific activities and on their future design. The agenda of the Seminar is attached to this background note.

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<sup>1</sup> Former [peer reviews](#) under CREST and the [European Research Area and Innovation Committee](#) (ERAC), between 2004 and 2014.

<sup>2</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/pdf/state-of-the-union/2013/research-and-innovation-as-sourcesof-renewed-growth-com-2014-339-final.pdf>