



Annual Joint Programming Event 2011

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Annual Joint Programming Event 2011

Brussels, 9-10 November 2011

Final Report

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Executive Summary

European societies face a number of challenges that have global dimensions and require significant efforts and resources to be combined if they are to be resolved efficiently and effectively. In recent years, therefore, the Member States of the EU have evolved a number of promising partnership approaches designed to pool resources and tackle major societal challenges. Building on positive experiences with ERA-NETs, a variety of other instruments and processes have been added to the European Research Area (ERA) toolbox, including Article 185 initiatives, Joint Programming Initiatives (JPis), and – more recently – new initiatives such as European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs).

Sharing Experiences

As the number and variety of these public-public partnerships and associated support instruments have increased, it has become imperative to exchange experiences and share knowledge gained and lessons learnt concerning their operation and utility in different contexts. In particular, sharing of this nature is needed in order to formulate recommendations for the design of future versions of instruments capable of realising the ERA and tackling major societal challenges.

The Annual Joint Programming Event 2011 was instrumental in this regard. It allowed an exchange of ideas and experiences associated with a variety of instruments (ERA-NETs, ERA-NET PLUS initiatives, Art. 185 initiatives, JPis, EUROSTARS etc.). Topics covered included the framework conditions for joint programming; the governance of public-public partnerships; the identification and selection of topics to cover within public-public partnerships; the modalities of cross-border operation; and monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.

Setting the Scene

It was generally acknowledged that joint programming offers a promising way of exploring the contribution of research and innovation to the effective and efficient resolution of grand societal challenges. Moreover, while the Commission has a political as well as legal obligation to accelerate completion of the ERA, the current climate of financial austerity makes it even more imperative to increase cross-national collaboration in research and innovation.

In concrete terms, the ERA involves the creation of a single market for knowledge; cross-border flows of researchers and knowledge; improved access to research infrastructures and funding; the opening of national programmes; enhanced cooperation and pooling of resources; shared strategies and alliances between research stakeholders; and EU-level governance in partnership with the Member States.

Progress

Although a number of steps have been taken in this direction, overall progress towards a fully functional ERA has been slow and piecemeal. Several challenges are still to be faced at different levels. These include ensuring the long-term commitment of Member States; the simplification of existing instruments; the evolution of standardised procedures; the harmonisation of procedures within national programmes across the EU; and the harmonised scheduling of initiatives to ensure complementarities and synergies and avoid duplication.

Integration

Progress towards managerial and scientific integration within public-public partnerships has been satisfactory to date, but financial integration is still a challenge. While there are some examples of good practice from which to learn, there are still many barriers to overcome and considerable scope for innovation, especially in terms of risk-sharing. Broadening the funding base via the addition of new sources is one route worth exploring. This could be done by utilising venture funds, or funds from the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Risk Sharing Finance Facility (RSFF) of the EIB and the European Commission, the Structural Funds etc. Lowering the risks for individual Member States via such strategies could facilitate progress towards the use of real 'common pots'.

Governance

At the same time, coordination and cooperation between the many different public-public partnerships that exist is needed, given the multiplicity of relevant initiatives that may compete for limited national funds. It is necessary, therefore, to improve communication channels in order to promote complementarities and synergies between the different instruments. The Commission's role as a facilitator and mediator could be important in this regard.

Implementation

Certain factors have been identified as necessary for the successful implementation of joint programming activities. These include simplifying the rules and procedures governing participation and the adoption of common principles underpinning peer review, evaluation and the management of intellectual property rights (IPR). Identifying and involving all relevant stakeholders in the identification of topics, selecting partner countries and ensuring greater clarity and transparency in the proposal and selection of topics are other critical success factors.

Overall, the sharing of experiences should help those involved in public-public partnerships to avoid 're-inventing the wheel'. JPIs should, as far as possible, align their working methods with existing European best practice. The adoption of appropriate and available tool-boxes should be encouraged, with greater use being made in particular of the ERALEARN tool-box and its components, including best-practice guides, decision tree methodologies, check-lists, skeleton agreements, reporting templates etc. When necessary, tailor-made solutions should make as much use as possible of existing modules rather than start from a clean slate. Participants in the event overwhelmingly agreed on the need to reduce complexity and emphasise simplicity and manageability.

Framework Conditions

The development of guidelines governing the framework conditions (FC Guidelines) for Joint Programming is a valid step towards good practice in the implementation of joint programming activities. However, the degree to which the guidelines are applied varies from case to case. The overall impression is that the FC Guidelines are not as well known as one might wish. Better communication and promotion was suggested at Member State level and some participants even questioned their voluntary status.

Impact Assessment

Monitoring and evaluation are learning processes that can greatly benefit programme implementation. However, given the existence of many different joint programming instruments and activities, decisions concerning which instruments to use or participate in are becoming

harder to make, especially when resources are limited. Outputs of monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment exercises are becoming increasingly important inputs to policy formulation. There are many tools and approaches that can be used to monitor and assess impacts, but the challenge lies in selecting ones capable of identifying the real impacts of transnational collaboration, including societal impacts.

Foresight

In identifying and selecting topics to support, foresight is an important process. However, it should not be regarded as a one-off activity conducted prior to the onset of initiatives, but as a continuous process geared towards the constant reassessment of the rationales, visions and objectives of joint programming initiatives. The more widespread availability of the expertise and results of past and current foresight activities would also benefit the policy community.

Cross-border Operation

Realising the ERA requires a shift from cross-border funding to cross-border operation in order to facilitate a more holistic approach to the tackling of major societal challenges. In essence, cross-border operation involves connecting and orchestrating the deployment of not only funds but also knowledge, human capital, infrastructures, facilities etc. Eventually, the cross-border operation of programmes will involve and depend upon the cross-border operation of organisations and institutions. The minimum conditions for cross-border operation include common evaluation and selection criteria and procedures; harmonised eligibility criteria across participating national programmes; and agreed principles governing IPR management. The Framework Programme rules could serve as a starting point, but they need significant simplification before they can be considered good practice.

ERA-NETS in the Future

In discussing future versions of the ERA-NET scheme, participants recognised the need for a more simplified ERA-NET Plus scheme, but noted that any redesign would have to address current implementation problems. They also noted that while a potential merger of ERA-NET and ERA-NET PLUS had merit, special efforts would be needed to avoid constructing yet another complex instrument. The positive impact of top-up funding was highly stressed, but the importance of EU top-up funding should not be overemphasised. Participants also stressed the need to continue supporting a variety of ERA-NET activities (not just joint calls) in order to ensure the quality of both networking and research.

Participants supported the notion that future actions should cover broad thematic areas and agreed with a suggestion that the possibility of ERA-NETs providing institutional funding should be explored. Increasing the number of funding sources in individual ERA-NETs was also suggested as a way of avoiding the exclusion of good projects and researchers due to limited national funds. Ear-marking part of the EC contribution for this purpose was also considered good practice.

The Way Ahead

Overall, the experience gained to date with public-public partnerships has facilitated the identification of future challenges and allowed valuable lessons to be learnt and suggestions formulated concerning the improvement of current initiatives and the design of future ones. Progress will depend on steps taken at both national and EU levels. The role of the EC will be particularly important, especially in terms of creating the ERA Framework; improving

simplification and interoperability across different instruments; promoting the sharing of knowledge and the spread of good practice; facilitating synergies with other funding sources; supporting the joint programming process; and encouraging the engagement of less research and innovation intensive Member States and Accession Countries where appropriate.

Introduction

As the variety of public-public partnerships and associated support instruments increases, it is imperative to share experiences and draw recommendations concerning ways of improving the design of these partnerships and instruments, especially in terms of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of their contribution to the solution of grand societal challenges. This was the overall aim of the Annual Joint Programming Event 2011, held in Brussels on 9-10 November, 2011.

The event offered an opportunity to discuss the latest policy thinking concerning the Joint Programming of research and innovation in Europe and public-public partnerships in general, as well as a chance to exchange views and experiences to date and draw conclusions about success factors and guiding principles for future ventures. Based on the former 'Annual ERA-NET events', the target audience for the 2-day conference was broadened to include 300-400 policy makers and research funders in Europe with an interest in public-public partnerships (e.g. GPC members, JPI representatives, ERA-NET coordinators and participants, representatives from Art.185 initiatives, ETPs, JTI,s PPPs, the EIT, EIPs etc., as well as MEPs and the members of Permanent Representations).

Following positive experiences with past events, the programme contained a mix of plenary sessions, offering overviews and a common forum for all participants, and interactive smaller sessions, involving working groups focused on key issues related to public-public partnerships in the context of Horizon 2020.¹

Although the size of the event (there were more than 350 participants) presented a challenge in terms of stimulating constructive debate, the plenary sessions and parallel workshops were productive in terms of drawing lessons and suggesting possible ways forward. Overall, the event was highly appreciated as a way of bringing together and sharing the experiences of participants involved a wide array of joint programming initiatives and instruments.

The present report summarises the main results of the discussions, with the structure of the report reflecting the general structure of the conference programme. It starts with an overview of the material presented in the plenary sessions, which framed subsequent discussions in the parallel sessions by presenting a range of perspectives on public-public initiatives. These included the Commission's position on joint programming and the preparation of the ERA Framework and Horizon 2020; the perspectives of the GPC and the European Parliament; and overviews of progress in specific joint programming activities and initiatives.

The report then summarises the challenges confronted and lessons learnt during discussions in seven 'mutual learning' workshops, each one dealing with an issue at the heart of current debates on the coordination and cooperation of national and regional research programmes. In conclusion, the report offers recommendations concerning the future of joint programming activities in general and a summary of the main points made in the event.

¹ The agenda, a list of participants and copies of the presentations made at the event can be found at <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/>

Setting the Framework

The Annual Joint Programming Event 2011 was opened with a video message by the Commissioner for Research and Innovation, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn. The Commissioner set the wider framework for the discussions noting the variety of challenges European societies face today like those stemming from the ageing of the population or health-related challenges like dementia or Alzheimer. In this regard she referred to the progress made in setting up certain Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs). However, she highlighted that more of such initiatives are needed in a variety of fields like health, energy and the environment. Joint programming and similar initiatives are a promising means to bring Member States together in finding effective and efficient solutions to grand societal challenges through research and innovation.

The value of the specific event and of the discussions to follow was particularly highlighted in light of preparing the Commission's proposals on the ERA Framework and Horizon 2020. Anneli Pauli, Deputy Director-General "Innovation and ERA" of DG Research & Innovation, noted that there is both a political as well as legal obligation to take the ERA to the next level and accelerate its completion². Furthermore, within the current climate of financial austerity it is even more imperative to increase collaboration in research and innovation.

ERA in concrete terms means a single market for knowledge; cross-border flows of researchers and knowledge, access to research infrastructures, funding, cooperation, opening of national programmes, pooling of resources, strategies and alliances between research stakeholders; and EU-level governance in partnership with the Member States. Several steps have been taken in making these objectives a reality but the overall progress is considered too slow and piecemeal.³

The ERA framework aspires to contribute to eliminating remaining obstacles and inefficiencies by defining the ERA, its overall objectives and scope, setting out key principles to be abided by at Member State and EU level. It should identify all ERA actors and their rights and obligations as well as fix the principles and modalities of governance and policy coordination.⁴ Of the key issues addressed by the ERA Framework, the discussions within the Joint Programming event were expected to contribute to the issue of knowledge circulation and open access, and of cross – border operation.

At the same time the preparations of Horizon 2020 would benefit from the discussions on joint programming and particularly the design and implementation of relevant funding initiatives supporting ERA partnerships. Horizon 2020 is oriented to tackling societal challenges by supporting excellent research and industrial competitiveness. To improve effectiveness, Horizon 2020 integrates existing initiatives⁵ and presents strengthened complementarities with the Structural Funds in research and innovation.

² As explicitly or implicitly indicated in the Europe 2020 Strategy, Innovation Union Flagship Initiative, European Council decisions February 2011, and the Lisbon Treaty (TFEU Art. 179 and Art. 182.5)

³ Anneli Pauli, (2011) 'Annual Joint Programming Event 2011' Brussels, 9-10 November 2011.

⁴ Background Note to the Members of ERAC, 'Subject: ERAC meeting 23 February 2011, agenda point 5.1'

⁵ The 7th Framework Programme (FP7) for research, technological development and demonstration; Innovation elements from Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP); and EU funding for European Institute for Innovation and Technology.

The importance of research and innovation in dealing with grand challenges was echoed by Maria Da Graça Carvalho, member of the European Parliament. This is reflected in the Commission’s proposal for an increased budget for Horizon 2020 (reaching €80 billion, 46% increase from FP7) as well as in the official position of the Parliament to suggest an even higher budget (€100 billion) to the Member States. Ms Da Graça Carvalho welcomed Horizon 2020 stressing that particular attention was paid to improve access and implementation with fewer instruments, and simplified administration and financing procedures and rules. The intention should be to ensure transparency and improve accessibility via a trust-based approach. Such an approach, she noted is equally important in joint programming activities.

Simplification was echoed as a key principle underlying the framework for all partnering initiatives as set by the latest Communication on ‘Partnering in Research and Innovation’⁶. Focusing on public to public partnerships, Seán O’Reagain, Deputy Head of Unit Joint Programming of DG Research & Innovation, noted the positive experience gained so far from various public-public partnerships that managed to bring together public and private partners to form strategic alliances in tackling certain societal challenges. These initiatives contributed to greater leverage of EU funding and improved coherence the EU research and innovation landscape in certain fields.

Overall, the partnering approach is confirmed as an important element of future European research and innovation policy. However, increased long-term commitment is needed from all partners especially in relation to financial integration as well as simplification of the partnering landscape with a new, simple, and more flexible partnering instrument by merging the existing ERA-NET, ERA-NET Plus and relevant parts of Europe INNOVA and PRO INNO Europe.

Reviewing Progress

Through the years significant progress has been made in partnering activities in various areas. Initiatives and instruments range from JPis to ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus, to Art. 185 etc. as shown in the following table.

Table 1: Examples of public-public partnerships

Current public-public partnerships	Objective
ERA-NET 100 projects since 2002	Coordinate national research programmes in a selected area
ERA-NET Plus 9 projects since 2007	Enhance joint funding by MS and EU in a selected area
Article 185 Initiatives 5 initiatives since 2003	Integrate national and European research programmes in a selected area
JPis 10 initiatives since 2008	Coordinate / integrate national research programmes to address a societal challenge

⁶ COM(2011) 572 final

SET (Strategic Energy Technology) Plan since 2007	Accelerate development of low-carbon energy technologies and streamline national research programmes in strategic technology areas at EU level
Europe INNOVA/PRO INNO Europe since 2008	Joint policy learning and development of better innovation support

Source: 'Communication on "Partnering in Research and Innovation" COM(2011) 572 final', presentation made by Seán O'Reagain (2011) at the Annual Joint Programming Event, Brussels, 9 November 2011.

Specifically in the case of JPIs, there have been two waves of setting up JPIs, indicating different stages of progress. The first wave, covering topics selected in 2009, includes the JPIs in the areas of neurodegenerative diseases/Alzheimer's; agriculture, food security and climate change; healthy diet; and cultural heritage. These initiatives are already preparing for the launch of the first joint calls for proposals. The second wave selected in 2010, covers the areas of demographic change; anti-microbial resistance; climate knowledge; water challenges; healthy and productive seas and oceans; urban Europe, global challenges – local solutions. These initiatives are waiting for the Council's approval.

However, Jacek T. Gierlinski, Chairman of GPC⁷ noted that despite the numerous JPIs, progress has been slow and the critical mass necessary to deal with grand challenges is difficult to realize. Furthermore, the level of participation by small and less research and innovation intensive Member States or Accession countries and regions in cross-border cooperation is still insufficient.

As examples, five cases of public to public partnerships were presented.



The JPI on neurodegenerative disease research and Alzheimer's, the first JPI set up in 2009, has brought together 23 Member States aiming to increase EU research capacity in neurodegenerative diseases; reduce fragmentation and unnecessary duplication of research; and improve outcomes for prevention, treatment and care throughout Europe. The main activities include the development of the common Strategic Research Agenda (SRA); identification of strategic research priorities through thematic workshops, stakeholders' consultation; implementation of the SRA through specific actions like joint calls for proposals. While waiting for the SRA to be delivered, a joint call was launched for the optimization of biomarkers in March 2011 supported by 24 countries with a commitment for € 16 Million.⁸

EMRP started as an FP6 ERA-NET, iMERA, and then evolved into iMERA ERA-NET PLUS in FP7 and then into an Art 185 initiative. EMRP currently coordinates national metrology research programmes of 22 European states under a jointly agreed strategic research agenda and a central financial management



⁷ High Level Group on Joint Programming

⁸ Amouyel, P., (2011), 'Joint Programming Initiatives JPND the example of neurodegenerative disease research and Alzheimer's in particular', presentation at Annual Joint Programming Event 2011, Brussels, 9-10 November 2011.

innovation chain, and in international cooperation with the most appropriate partners for specific global challenges (e.g. Brazil, Canada, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, USA).¹³

The presentations reflected not only the variety of initiatives and instruments but also the multiplicity of challenges and lessons learnt which are discussed in the following section.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Managerial, Scientific and Financial Integration of public-public partnerships

Programme integration in joint programming refers to three levels, i.e. the management, scientific and financial level. Art. 185 is a powerful instrument for programme coordination and integration. It allows building a critical mass of resources and expertise and the creation of a multi-annual programme, thus motivating a longer-term research strategy. It allows the existing responsible expert community to establish an implementation body and a clearly defined governance structure.

The cases of Art. 185 were discussed as a possible model for programme integration of public-public partnerships.¹⁴ Managerial integration usually takes place through the setting up of a central management and/ or implementation structure like the EURAMET e.V in EMRP or the ESE in EUROSTARS or the BONUS EEIG in BONUS. Scientific integration is facilitated through the definition of the common SRAs and the establishment of a central submission, evaluation and monitoring process. Financial integration is established with funding commitments and implementation of virtual or real common pots.

Based on the experiences of the five Art. 185 initiatives¹⁵, whereas managerial and scientific integration has been achieved to a satisfactory degree, financial integration is still a challenge, with most of the initiatives applying a virtual common pot. The major issue in this regard is to ensure long-term financial commitments from the participating countries. The EUROSTARS experience shows that this is facilitated by a well running programme with a transparent evaluation process, good quality monitoring and high success rates.

Art. 185 initiatives also face a management challenge as they have to pass through the co-decision process and be approved by both the European Council and Parliament. However, once approval is granted the dedicated structure for central management can accelerate the process of implementation. Yet, the design of Art. 185 could become more flexible to accommodate different levels of capacities, interests, resources and commitments. It was noted that in this regard it could benefit from the example of the ERA-NET instrument. The session participants also noted the lack of Art.185 reference models. In this regard they appreciated the Annual Joint Programming Event as the first opportunity to exchange experience and learn from each other.

¹³ Brandenburg, R., (2011) 'M-ERA.NET: Pilot umbrella for multi-annual programming in materials science and engineering', presentation at Annual Joint Programming Event 2011, Brussels, 9-10 November 2011.

¹⁴ Parallel session on 'Article 185 initiatives for joint research programmes: A model for programme integration of public-to-public partnerships? Chair & Rapporteur: Angus Hunter.

¹⁵ European and Developing countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP); Ambient Assisted Living (AAL); Research Performing SMEs (EUROSTARS); European Metrology Research Programme (EMRP); Baltic Sea Research (BONUS).

Other challenges that have to be dealt with include improved stakeholder communication and further involvement of policy-makers. The suggestion was also made to move towards outcome-based Art. 185 contracts under Horizon 2020 instead of the more prescriptive ones under the current Framework Programme. In relation to funding the option was welcomed to increase co-funding for over-performing Art.185 programmes and broaden the funding sources utilizing venture funds, or funds from the European Investment Bank, RSFF, Structural Funds, etc. as part of the route towards real common pots.

Governance of Public-Public Partnerships

The governance of public-public partnerships was examined through three main aspects, who is involved in the definition of the SRAs and the consequent topics for joint calls, the interaction of the specific public-public partnership with other EU level or global initiatives, and the interaction with the Commission in ensuring timely exchange of information and alignment of funding.¹⁶

Practice shows¹⁷ that the definition of common SRAs is a crucial step in the scientific integration of programmes. It is usually an intense interactive process with thematic workshops and wide consultation with stakeholders involving ministries, agencies, industry, the research community, and where applicable relevant ERA-NETs, JPIs or other international initiatives, the Joint Research Centre (JRC), and relevant Research Infrastructures initiatives (ESFRI).

Research themes are prioritized and topic calls are selected through an equally interactive process implemented by thematic task forces or working groups set up and usually involving the governing bodies of the specific public-public partnership. The Commission usually has the role of observer in this process or is one of the stakeholders to provide feedback during consultations.

The session discussions stressed that it is important to take into consideration the interest of ministries, agencies and stakeholders when developing SRAs or implementation plans. However, participants also noted that the launching of joint calls should not be the only goal of JPIs; collaboration should extend also to other types of activities (like exchange programmes, or knowledge transfer, or infrastructure sharing or creation, or standardization, etc.) with the aim to increase the impact in tackling the specific challenge under examination.

The identification of other relevant initiatives to develop linkages with, gains special attention in the preparation of the partnerships. As an indication it is usually the focus of a dedicated work-package in the coordinating and support action preparing the specific joint programming initiative. Participants also in the specific session noted that coordination and cooperation between the different initiatives is necessary. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the communication channels across by creating for example specific bodies that can foster and monitor such communication. This should aim at increasing synergies and coherence and avoiding of duplication of mapping and research efforts.

¹⁶ Parallel session on Governance and future role of Commission and Member States'. Chair: Christian Naczinsky, Moderator: Giorgio Clarotti.

¹⁷ Based on the cases of ERASYSBio+, Ambient Assisted Living Art. 185 and JPI on Food, Agriculture and Climate Change.

The Commission's role as a facilitator and mediator is important in this regard. In addition, long-standing structures like COST could be used to complement existing networking activities among stakeholders. In particular, COST's expertise in involving stakeholders from all over Europe could be a very good asset for JPIs.

The session participants highlighted the important of compatibility of JPIs thematic focus and the Framework Programme given that it will not be possible for the EC to fund initiatives that do not align with the FP research priorities. At the same time, a true dialogue is crucial between the EC and the Member States in demonstrating European added value and justifying EC funding.

Implementation and Funding of Public-Public Partnerships

Certain success factors have already been identified for successful implementation of actions. The EIP AHA for example stresses that they key principles should be engagement, inclusiveness in relation to all relevant actors and constituencies, critical mass in the resources that are mobilized, real partnership by working together, timely delivery of agreed outcomes and advocacy, i.e. inspiration and political support from Member States.

The experience of EMRP shows that a stable and well structured organisation for central management is essential. Placing EMRP under such a structure contributed to achieving wider impacts. Another key principle is fairness. This is reflected in the distribution of the national commitments which are pre-defined at ministerial level and associate with stable and fairly weighted voting rights. Another successful case as judged by participants, EUROSTARS, claims that principles of success include simplification, thematic focus and efficiency with a strong governance mix from ministries, funding and executive bodies.

Simplification was echoed as a major factor for success in a number of occasions. The Partnering Communication¹⁸ recommends the creation of a more flexible and simpler ERA-NET instrument, while the different initiatives highlight the importance of simplifying participating rules and procedures alongside common principles in peer review, evaluation and IPR management issues. The point was also made that leverage should be sought not only in mobilising and coordinating national efforts in research and innovation but also in simplifying and opening access to national and regional programmes.

In relation to funding the Partnering Communication recommends that the Commission supports the development of SRAs but in general decisions on how to support implementation are to be taken on a case by case basis and that EU funding is conditional on the appropriate application of the Voluntary Guidelines for Framework Conditions for Joint Programming.¹⁹ In this regard, the appropriateness of the voluntary nature of the Framework Conditions was questioned.

¹⁸ COM(2011) 572 final

¹⁹ O'Reagain, S., (2011) 'Communication "Partnering in Research and Innovation"', presentation made at the Annual Joint Programming event 2011, Brussels, 9-10 November 2011.

The use of Structural Funds is also another option to consider. It was suggested for example that regions can make use of Structural Funds in the cases where shortages of national budgets prevent the support of excellent projects.²⁰

In addition, the Communication stresses that all partners, both public and private, must maintain their commitment to partnering initiatives on a long-term basis and that Member States should make up-front multi-annual financial commitments and honour them. In this regard, commitments to all partnering initiatives will be confirmed by public declarations, on the part of governments from participating countries in the case of JPIs.

Identification and Selection of Topics

The issue of identifying and selecting research topics of common interest to support was discussed in a parallel session.²¹ It was noted that a variety of approaches exist in different contexts. For example, the JPI process involved recommendation of topics by Member States and final selection by the GPC based of stakeholder consultations. The criteria for selection are defined and the European Council and applied by the GPC.²²

The SCAR²³ approach refers to the systematic application of foresight methodologies. The 3rd SCAR Foresight aspires to help decouple production from the presently high resource dependence and build more resilient and environmentally benign (sustainable) agriculture systems able to feed 9 billion people by 2050. Topics identified through the SCAR foresight process are then fed in the FP work-programmes as the thematic focus of future ERA-NET or ERA-NET PLUS calls for proposals.²⁴

Identification of topics for the FET flagships, on the other hand, is a process included in the relevant FP ICT work-programme. The process is enabled by a call for coordination and support actions leading to the complete design and description of consolidated candidates for FET Flagship Initiatives including assessment of feasibility in scientific, technical and financial terms. The selection is based on the so-called FET flagship dimensions, i.e. the topic has to be science-driven and multi-disciplinary, reflecting a unifying goal, with high scale of ambition, long-term objective, with a nucleus in FET ICT field and enabling a federated effort with the involvement of other programs.²⁵

A totally different context for identifying topics to support is that of the European Forum of Forward-looking Activities (EFFLA). EFFLA provides a permanent forum for decision-makers and stakeholders to debate most outstanding forward-looking activities analyse visions and

²⁰ MEP Maria Da Graça Carvalho, Key-note Speech at the Annual Joint Programming Event 2011, Brussels, 9-10 November 2011.

²¹ Identification and selection of topics for future public-to-public partnerships. Moderator: Rolf Annenberg, Rapporteurs: Joerg Niehoff and participants in charge of subgroups.

²² Experiences with the identification and selection of topics for the initial JPIs, Rolf Annenberg, FORMAS, presentation made at the Annual Joint Programming Event, Brussels, 9-10 November 2011.

²³ Standing Committee on Agricultural Research

²⁴ The SCAR example: identification of topics for future ERA-NETs and their calls, links with the relevant JPIs, Niels Götke DASTI, presentation made at the Annual Joint Programming Event, Brussels, 9-10 November 2011.

²⁵ FET Flagships: involvement of scientific communities in the pre-selection of topics, Francisco Ibanez Gallardo, DG INFSO, presentation made at the Annual Joint Programming Event, Brussels, 9-10 November 2011.

pathways and make recommendations for policy options. EFFLA brings together experts, EU decision makers, industry, academia, research and funding organisations, NGOs, think tanks under the mission to enhance collective forward looking intelligence, to help the EU in tackling upcoming societal challenges and to devise comprehensive and pro-active European research and innovation policies. By drawing on existing knowledge and creating new insights EFFLA would detect “missing” Grand Challenges, detect missing research and innovation challenges within a specific grand challenge and advise the Commission accordingly, and advise the Commission on how to embed FLAs in its Research and Innovation policy-making.²⁶

The difference cases presented stressed the importance of involving the right communities and of the capacity and clear evidence of commitment from key stakeholders. The session participants repeated the point made earlier that it is important to involve all relevant stakeholders in the identification of topics but also noted that greater clarity and transparency is required in the proposal and selection of topics, as well as the participating countries. It must also be clear whether the aim of individual programmes is research excellence or cohesion (in the form of capacity-building) as it can be difficult to achieve both. Beyond this, due to the high demand for resources in various initiatives the decision on how to integrate and coordinate programmes should be a case-by-case decision. This decision might benefit from a toolbox – type solution setting the appropriate conditions on which instrument to use, when and with whom.

Guidelines for Framework Conditions

The relevant session²⁷ on Framework Conditions (FC) Guidelines allowed stakeholders to discuss the first experiences from applying the FC Guidelines and the approach for translating them from general principles into practical tools in the implementation of Joint Programming Initiatives, as well as other form of public-public partnerships. Contributions covered the plans of the project "JPIs to Co-Work"²⁸ in support to the refinement and promotion of the FC Guidelines, the ERA-NET Learning Platform experience, the Norwegian point of view in applying the FC Guidelines and the perspective of Science Europe.

While the session produced theme specific conclusions for each of the framework conditions as presented in the sessions below, it drew also more general conclusions for relation to the refinement and adoption of the FC Guidelines. The various contributions made were indicative of the vast experience already available found in projects for example like ERA-NETs, or organisations like EUROHORCS - ESF. The discussants noted that Joint Programming Initiatives should, as far as possible, align their working methods to existing European best practices, avoiding the temptation of “re-inventing the wheel”. The adoption of appropriate available tool-boxes should be encouraged (such as best-practice guides, ERA-LEARN tool-box²⁹, decision trees, check-lists, skeleton agreements, reporting templates, etc.). When necessary, tailor-made solutions should be achieved through an intelligent use of modularity, rather than by developing

²⁶ The mandate and promises of the " European Forum on Forward Looking Activities", Paraskevi Mega, DG RTD, presentation made at the Annual Joint Programming Event, Brussels, 9-10 November 2011.

²⁷ Parallel session 2 Day 1

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http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP7_PROJ_FR&ACTION=D&DOC=19&CAT=PROJ&QUERY=0133bbf48b11:74d8:222d491e&RCN=101037

²⁹ <http://www.era-learn.eu>

monolithic ad-hoc processes. The overall message was to reduce complexity, and ensure simplicity and manageability.

The degree that the FC guidelines are applied varies from case to case. The overall impression is that the FC Guidelines are not as known as one would expect. In this regard, session participants noted the important role of the JPI to CO-WORK in raising awareness about the FC guidelines apart from refining them and facilitating their application. At the same time, the FC should also reflect the importance of Joint Programming for the Innovation Union. This would help promote not only the FC Guidelines among the relevant stakeholders but joint programming actions themselves among Member States.

Peer review and programme evaluation, monitoring and impact assessment

The issue of peer review and programme evaluation was discussed under the session on Framework Conditions. Discussants noted the availability of European best practices for peer review and programme evaluations that could be adopted. Within a JPI peer review of proposals should aim at identifying both the scientific excellence as well as the potential impact of the proposed research on the socio-economic challenge being addressed. The use of classical peer-review but also of special evaluations focusing on socio-economic impacts would be relevant in this regard involving academics but also policy-makers, regulators, social scientists, etc.

Referring to programme evaluation, defining a clear set of objectives at an early stage of a JPI is a pre-requisite for a successful ex-post programme evaluation. Policy makers, regulators and social scientists should take part in the evaluation processes. As the Joint Programming approach will be evaluated at different levels (project, single JPI, global) it would be important to adopt common reporting standards in order to facilitate data comparison and aggregation.

The issue of evaluation and impact assessment was discussed in more detail in a separate session³⁰. Four approaches to monitoring and impact assessment were briefly introduced³¹. These were followed by an interactive discussion on lessons learnt. Practice shows that there are different purposes, objectives and dimensions of monitoring and impact assessment. Purposes may defer depending on the level or reference (researcher level, actor/agency level, programme/ network level, instrument level) or the timing of the evaluation (ex ante, monitoring progress, ex-post). Objectives can also be different reflecting the different purposes for transnational research programme collaboration (defragmentation, de-duplication, alignment of programmes and budgets). Other dimensions include who it is performed by (internal vs. external) or its specific focus (spatial, comparison between different schemes, managerial/financial/scientific, thematic monitoring) or the importance of specific impacts like spill-over effects of transnational collaboration on industry. Thus, it is important to define the entity and the purpose of the evaluation.

³⁰ 'Monitoring and impact assessment', Chair: Ken Guy – Wise Guys Ltd., Rapporteur: Karel Haegeman – JRC-IPTS.

³¹ These referred to the JPND, NETWATCH, review of ERA-NET participation <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/index.cfm/static/eralearn/smartcoord.html>, Cost-benefit analysis of ERA-NETs and the relevant approach in ERA-LEARN.

At the same time, indicators are very important in monitoring and impact assessment. Given the different types of indicators the selection of the most appropriate ones should enable the identification of the real impact of the transnational collaboration. Indicators should be collected at the start of the activities to be evaluated, relate to their specific objectives and be comparable.

While there are quite advanced indicators for measuring efficiency and outputs, methods and indicators for measuring societal impacts are still underdeveloped. Measuring of societal impact faces several challenges. Societal impacts vary from one domain to another, while they also have to be measured in the medium as well as the longer – term. At the same time, it is difficult to identify causality links between actions and certain impact or across different societal impacts. Thus, attribution problems emerge. The guiding principle here should be to be realistic as far as possible and complement societal impact assessment with theoretical analysis on possible causality relations.

The session discussions also revealed that there is a variety of available tools to use covering all three levels of agency, network, and instrument. For instance there is the ‘smart co-ordination support’³² created under ERA-LEARN supporting portfolio analysis at the level of agencies or Member States. In addition, there are methods like cost-benefit analysis, or network analysis, and benchmarking, which can be used for EU level and MS level impact assessments. Overall, there is a well developed set of tools already. The need now lies in complementing this with tools and indicators for measuring societal impacts.

Overall, evaluation is a learning process that should benefit both the evaluators as well as those evaluated. Yet, there are some delicate issues that need attention; for example whether data collection should be mandatory or voluntary or what are the consequences of under-performance.

Foresight activities

The session devoted to discussing the Framework Conditions noted in particular for foresight that it is important for reaching a common understanding of problems. Foresight activities form the basis for developing joint perspectives and visions and, more specifically, for a rational identification of research topics. This is relevant in the area of identification and selection of research topics to focus on. However, within a JPI, foresight should not be regarded as a one-off event, but a continuous process helping to achieve the stated objectives throughout the duration of the initiative. Foresight should also be used on a recurrent basis for revisiting and revising the rationale of the joint programming activities as well as the visions characterising them. The session participants also noted that the expertise and data deriving from past and current foresights activities should be used and made available (through the European Foresight Platform or other relevant institutions like the European Science Foundation, or JRC/IPTS).

Funding of cross-border research and cross-border operation

The discussion of cross-border funding under the Framework Conditions for Joint Programming noted there is lack of political willingness to apply the FC in this area. There is a need to

³² <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/index.cfm/static/eralearn/smartcoord.html>

communication the added value of JP at the political level to justify the additional effort needed to overcome national barriers in cross-border funding.

The issue of cross border funding was also discussed in the parallel session on cross-border operation of public-public partnerships³³. Participants in this session noted that we need to move from issues of cross-border funding to cross-border operation to enable a more holistic and thus effective solution to the challenges in this area. Cross-border operation refers to operating the national programmes into another context. In essence cross-border operation means connecting available resources across borders. Available resources are not only funds but also knowledge, human capital, infrastructures, facilities, etc. Eventually, cross-border operation of programmes is about cross-border operation of organizations and institutions. There are different experiences in international cooperation. For instance in Norway international cooperation is decided at the strategic level enabling national programmes to operate across borders. In Poland, international cooperation is promoted only where in line with national priorities and when a strong potential is ensured for the research community. On the other hand, a bottom-up approach is applied in the case of Austria, where international cooperation is not a goal in itself.

Cross-border operation is facilitated by common evaluation and selection criteria and procedures as well as funding. Practice has shown that when proposal evaluation and selection is not done at national level it is possible to respect a single ranking list resulting from international scientific peer review based on excellence. Cross-border operation will also be eased if the quality of national research in the specific research field targeted is comparable to that of the other countries involved and the valorisation of results is agreed before the launch of the joint call. A mechanism to harmonise eligibility criteria and procedures of the participating national programmes is even more important than variations in funding rates across the different programmes.

In relation to the minimum principles for cross-border funding participants noted that FP rules could serve as common practice but they need significant simplification to become good practice. At the same time it is important that the participating organisations become aware of the differences in budgetary procedures across the different programmes. Flexibility is also important to use different cross-border funding modes is important depending on the special characteristics of each public-public partnership case. It should be possible to move from 'light cooperation' where it is possible to retain national rules to 'deeper cooperation' as in the case of EUROSTARS for example.

Use of research findings and IPR

The dissemination and exploitation of research results was discussed under the FC Guidelines session. Discussants noted that it is important to establish common IPR management principles throughout the different JPIs. These common principles should be based on European best practices and possible deviations should be appropriately justified. Those applied in the case of the EC Framework Programme are a good starting point.

³³ Parallel session on 'Minimum conditions for cross border operation of public-to-public partnerships', Moderator: Wolfgang Wittke. Rapporteur: Julia Prikoszovits, Evelyne Testas.

Under an integrated approach to research and innovation, the dissemination and exploitation of research results is equally important as the actual research itself. The dissemination and exploitation strategy is sine qua non for any joint programming activity. Each JPI should develop a dissemination and exploitation strategy as early as possible in its programme development cycle, paying particular attention to the identification of all potential target audiences and areas of application.

The Next Version of ERA-NETs

The case of ERA-NETs was given special attention in a separate parallel session.³⁴ Participants had the possibility for an open and interactive discussion on user expectations and requirements for the future implementation of ERA-NETs. This was based on the model of a simplified single ERA-NET instrument, merging the support for coordination (ERA-NET) and the top-up funding of joint calls and programmes (ERA-NET Plus).

Overall, the session participants agreed with the need for a more simplified ERA-NET Plus scheme in the future but noted that its design needs careful consideration. They also highlighted that the merger of ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus is a suggestion worthy of further elaborating but requires special attention not to create yet another complex instrument. The positive impact of the top-up funding was highly stressed. However, the focus on the EC top-up funding may be a limited approach. The importance of maintaining a variety of ERA-NET activities (not just joint calls) was noted in ensuring the quality of both networking and research.

Participants also noted that future actions should cover broad thematic areas and agreed that the possibility for institutional funding under ERA-NETs is an area that deserves attention. Multiplicity of funding sources in ERA-NETs was also an important point to consider as this would provide more chances for funding excellent projects. The use of EC contribution to cover for funding excellent projects in the cases of shortages of national funds was also considered a good practice. Suggestions were also in the direction of more bottom-up selection of research topics to focus on. Consortia should come with their own proposals about what to support provided funding is available. Support should also be provided for ERA-NETs to encourage participation of researchers from Third Countries. The international dimension should be further strengthened in ERA-NETs based on a selective approach.

In more detail, the suggestion for the merger of ERA-NET and ERA-NET plus attracted several recommendations in view of simplicity and clarification. Discussants stressed that clarifications are needed on the minimum amount for call commitments, the number of top-up calls to support and the timing for declaring budget commitments and the definition of top-up amounts. It is also important to consider that it is difficult for small countries and regions to join the scheme if a minimum budget is fixed that it is too high for them to afford. In addition, the option should be kept possible for networks related to supporting policy-making with no obligation for launching joint calls.

³⁴ 'The future ERA-NET instrument: increasing impact and flexibility'. Moderator Joerg Niehoff, Rapporteurs: Roland Brandenburg, Ivan Conesa, Imelda Lambkin, Dan Andree, Peter Hahn, Christian Listbarth, Ilmari Absetz, and Jan-Arne Eilertsen.

The simplified implementation of ERA-NET Plus was welcomed by the session participants. The suggestion was that the EU contribution and the reporting should be exclusively output based and that the public funding should be provided per call. This is considered real simplification in the overall management of the Grant Agreement and reporting. The output-based approach, the simple periodicity of reporting and the comfortable pre-financing would help to enable a stable funding process and reporting for the transnational projects.

However, it was also noted that this tool was more suitable for mature networks with established trust and decision making mechanisms aware of excluding the 'juste retour' principle. This entails significant responsibility for the coordinator and the whole consortium and requires strong ownership and endorsement of the joint programming initiative.

Regarding the scale and scope of future actions an overwhelming majority opted for broad thematic coverage versus a more narrow focus. This was justified on the grounds that broader thematic coverage allows for better identification of available national programmes, larger coverage of Member and Associated States as well as offering more opportunities for collaboration to smaller countries. However, session participants differentiated between a broad network focus and narrow call topics. The Joint Programming Initiative was described as a suitable vehicle to encompass a broad thematic coverage where the ERA-NET scheme was considered suitable as the instrument to facilitate more focused joint calls.

The discussion on the costs and benefits of joint calls and actions attracted mixed comments. Some noted the shortages of national funds for trans-national programmes or the high costs for funding joint calls. Internal resources were considered by many as having a limiting or even prohibitive effect for the participation in ERA-NETs and their joint calls. Others stressed that political considerations, mind-sets and general reluctance are the most limiting factors. The overall impression however was that if a Member State considers the topics addressed a national priority they would overcome constraints to participation.

Strengthening the international dimension in ERA-NETs was also a topic of discussion for future schemes. Two options were discussed in this direction: the open approach, i.e. partners from any selected country can be part of research consortia that submit proposals provided they secure their (national, or third party) funding up-front, and secondly programme-based ERA-NETs could include selected national programmes from Third Countries in their calls. The first option was preferred by the majority of the session participants but it was also noted that the first option could be an introductory step towards the second. In relation to cooperation with countries beyond Europe, discussants noted that this should be based on topics of common interests, a starting point could be a bilateral approach (e.g. EU – India), and that the gained experience from existing networks like those built under relevant INCO-NETs should be utilised. Overall the international dimension should be based on win-win approaches with shared interests and mutual benefits.

Certain options were also discussed for facilitating the participation of funders while avoiding exclusion of researchers or countries due to unavailability of national funds or programmes. Three options were discussed in this regard. The first one suggested the participation of the researchers at their own costs. The second one referred to the possibility to ear-mark part of the EC contribution to the call for covering the costs of participation of researchers from specific

countries, whose national funds available may have run out. The third option suggested that participation should only be allowed in case of existence of relevant national programmes and available funds. Session discussants noted that the second option 2 (era-marking of EU contribution) is a possibility to facilitate participation and avoid exclusion. However, many participants regard this option as (i) having potential to undermine commitment (of particularly small countries), (ii) being unfair by trend, (iii) rather a solution for countries with less funds available and (iv) needing a set of conditions/settings to be specified. On the other hand, participation at own expenses (option 1) was considered the most 'independent' solution.

The possibility of allowing institutional funding in ERA-NETs was welcomed by the session discussants. However, it would face difficulties in practice as there are many differences in the way block funding is provided to research performing organisations across the different countries. Institutional funding could support targeted actions that would be selected through a process of stakeholder consultation. The experience gained under the SET-Plan, Art. 185 or the pilot FET Flagships could be utilised in this regard. Institutional funding could also support the participation of research performing organisations alongside competitive calls. In this case they should be able to spend some of the national funding on specific calls, accept contribution in kind, or focus more on certain selected areas.

Finally some overall points were also made in the direction of the focus of future ERA-NETs. More specifically, the sharing of infrastructure was not considered sufficiently supported and should be a priority within future ERA-NETs. The focus of ERA-NETs should be closer to innovation, while at the same time addressing the Horizon 2020 grand challenges. ERA-NETs can be an instrument for the implementation of JPIs but a better understanding of the synergies and complementarities of the different instruments is important.

The Way Ahead

As noted in the Partnering Communication the efforts made thus far to develop a partnering approach in research and innovation at European and national level have yielded positive results. However, further progress is needed in overcoming duplication and fragmentation. Relevant joint programmes should be implemented on the basis of common strategic research and innovation agendas in key areas where major societal challenges must be addressed and where European competitiveness is at stake. To this end, the Commission envisages making greater use of partnering concepts and instruments developed and implemented at European level, recognising the need at the same time to avoid adverse effects on competition. A number of steps have been identified to address the challenges in relation to governance, implementation/funding and framework conditions.³⁵

At the same time the GPC agrees that the way forward should be marked by policy measures that support effective cross-border operations and transnational research and stimulate engagement of Member States and Accession Countries in a manner that is conducive to reaching the goal of excellence and relevance in research. The ERA Framework should stimulate development of an effective EU research and innovation policy strategy for cross-border cooperation, strengthening world class research in a coordinated manner at national and EU

³⁵ COM(2011) 572 final

levels and with other policy areas. The role of the Commission should focus on support for the joint development of strategic research agendas and as appropriate innovation activities, and coordination and implementation of joint programmes, based on the positive experiences gained so far. Engagement of less research and innovation intensive Member States and Accession Countries should be encouraged through the enhancement of national programmes to make them compatible with regard to the ERA initiatives (namely JPIs) on major societal challenges and also by using cohesion (Structural) funds at their disposal.³⁶

Creating synergies between Structural Funds and the Framework Programme and utilizing Structural Funds was also stressed by MEP Maria Da Graça Carvalho, who envisaged virtual common pots under Structural Funds for research and innovation with similar participating rules as the Framework Programme but allowing the application of the 'juste return' principle. In a similar vein, ERAC suggests among others to create a common framework for support to coordination of national/regional programmes and durable cooperation, more synergies between Horizon 2020 and Structural Funds and work towards more harmonisation, interoperability and alignment of different instruments.³⁷

Conclusions

The ERA tool-box already includes several types of initiatives each with special features, advantages and disadvantages and varying degrees of progress. The initial phase of rapid change that accompanied their introduction is replaced now by more modest and incremental change focusing more on improving implementation and synergies.

The significant experience gained has been well framed for future use either in the form of the FC Guidelines, or tool-boxes like those developed under ERA-LEARN or services like NETWATCH. Based on this knowledge certain good practices are identified. It is important that they are disseminated across the national and EU levels. It is timely now to adjust lessons learnt and good practices across different tools and contexts. Equally important is the identification of indicators and criteria enabling a comprehensive evaluation and impact assessment of the different instruments also in view of better establishing justification of their value. Account should be taken both of the quality of research, as well as impact on the grand challenges addressed.

The accumulated experience calls for more efforts in the direction of simplification, harmonisation and interoperability. Key elements in this regard are simplified procedures, standard forms and tools, common principles in peer review, evaluation and IPR management. The focus should not be on partial elements like top-up funding or joint calls but on an integrated approach of complementary activities, reflecting shared interests and mutual benefits in trans-national cooperation, and ensuring the free circulation and sharing of not only funds but even more importantly knowledge, researchers, infrastructures, and facilities.

³⁶ 'Towards an effective ERA Framework for Joint Programming' Jacek T. Gierlinski, Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Chairman of GPC, Key-note speech at the Annual Joint Programming Event 2011, 9-10 November 2011.

³⁷ As referred in the contribution made by Dan Andrée - Special Advisor Swedish Ministry of Education and Research under the parallel session of the Future of ERA-NETs

We should move from enabling cross-border funding to cross-border operation of organizations and programmes. At the same time there should be flexibility in use of (cross-border) funding modes, multiplicity of financing tools to cover for national participations, and an 'open' approach to international collaboration under broadly defined themes of common interest.

Despite the progress made, barriers are still strong at national level. However, the overall impression is that they can be overcome if the thematic areas addressed are of interest to participating countries and mutual benefits are identified. The role of the EC is important at various levels, i.e. in improving simplification, and interoperability across the different instruments, in sharing the knowledge gained and spreading good practice elements, in facilitating links between different sources of funds (FP, SF, EIB, etc.) but also in supporting the variety of research activities and networking under the different partnering initiatives.

Opening up of national programmes and committing efforts and resources to public-public partnerships is a big challenge for MS, but it is commonly acknowledged that there is strong potential of public-public partnerships in dealing with grand challenges in a coordinated, more effective and efficient way.

Joint programming is not only a new approach but also a new way of thinking that needs to be adopted at all levels (institutional, programme, national, EU). The keywords are trust, flexibility and open mindedness to new ideas.