Workshops on continuation
of ERA-NET networks

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Workshop on continuation of ERA-NET networks

Brussels, 8th – 9th November, 2010

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* *The report contains the author's interpretation of the presentations made during the workshops and the author takes full responsibility for any misrepresentation*

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Executive summary

In a changing world economic context and in the perspective of the Innovation Union as well as with new initiatives to help coordination of national R&D programmes such as Joint programming, the future role of ERA-NETs needs to be elaborated. While FP6 ERA-NETs can be seen to be a success in terms of mobilising participants and joint activities, in FP7 the role of ERA-NETs has changed with the thematic integration. With the launch of new initiatives involving high-level policy-makers such as Innovation Union and Joint Programming, ERA-NETs may become important instruments in the implementation of such large-scale initiatives.

ERA-NETs appear to be committed to continue their activities once started, one way or the other. In earlier workshops as well as in a survey conducted by DG Research, ERA-NET participants have confirmed their commitment to continuing with ERA-NETs as an instrument in its own right as well as a contributors to larger initiatives. A number of changes have been suggested that could improve it in the future. While a number of ERA-NETs did not obtain further funding after FP6, only a few of them completely ceased their activities.

However, continuation without European Commission (EC) funding meant scaling down the scale and scope of activities with the risk of losing some of the project legacy.

ERA-NETs with further EC funding were able to consolidate, expand their consortium and increase the scale of joint calls. Several other avenues are open such as ERA-NET Plus and Article 185, as well as linking up with the new Joint Programming Initiatives.

While there are different views as to how sustainable the ambitious activities of many ERA-NETS will be without some central funding for transaction costs, the workshop showed a great deal of consensus that in principle the instrument has been, and continues to be, extremely important in enabling new ways of variable coordination and partial bundling of national funding.

Moreover, it has been shown that there are different ways of continuing with or without EC funding. In any case, decisions should be taken keeping in mind the specific context of the individual ERA-NETs. Experiences presented in the workshop showed that there is not one best solution but a number of possible ways to go which should be kept open to individual ERA-NETs.

As to the future role for and conditions of ERA-NETs, the discussion showed that there is a demand for:

- ERA-NET to be firmly integrated into, or even acting as a catalyst for, larger scale joint programming approaches in the future following the politically defined bundling of efforts across European countries to support policies of the EU and to tackle defined grand challenges;
- ERA-NET to be kick-started in a bottom up fashion to continue structural change in Europe that follows the demands of the research and funding communities; and
- New and more flexible forms of support for ERA-NETs, for example in the form of smaller grants of 'glue money' to maintain established networks.

Preface

This report summarises the two workshops on 'ERA-NET continuation' that took place in Brussels on the 8th and 9th of November 2010. The report does not follow the exact structure of the workshops but the content has been re-arranged to avoid overlap. Sections 2 and 3 correspond broadly to workshops 1 and 2 respectively, whereas sections 1 and 4 summarise themes that were common over the two days. The report presents solely the author's interpretation of the presentations and discussions that took place during the workshop.

The Chairman's foreword:

Jakob Edler

I had the privilege to chair the ERA-NET workshops which are summarised in this document. That made for two very interesting days of discussion and offered some new perspectives on the continuation of the ERA-NETs and the ERA-NET scheme.

When the ERA-NET instrument first appeared, I was very sceptical as I entirely underestimated that the field would be ready for it, that nationally grounded programme owners would want to engage in the next step of governance, covering the middle ground between national and supranational. I was wrong. As the workshop has clearly shown, the ERA-NET scheme has been one of the most important policy innovations in European Research Policy in the last decade. It has been an invitation to responsible policy experimentation, an opportunity structure for functional integration in research funding and a change in attitude to transnational coordination for good.

In themselves, ERA-NETs do not shake the world of research funding, they do not lead to entirely new configurations of research teams as yet. We do not have any assessment of their impact on the actual research, neither in terms of new combinations of excellence or in terms of new problem solving capabilities. Some of them have never really got off the ground, and did not lead to a lasting effect in the field.

However, ERA-NETs mobilise and allow for the flexible coordination and integration in research funding that is very much needed across Europe. The ERA-NET scheme provides for the missing link of integration and coordination from the bottom up. In its *initial* design in FP6, the instrument was an offer to all programme owners and managers in Europe to coordinate, to learn and then to test joint actions, in many instances leading to joint calls. This integration was driven by the realisation of policy practitioners and funders that learning and joint action could lead to new kinds of synergies. The concept of variable geometry finally was filled with life, rather than being confined to a very limited number of Article 185 (previously Art. 169) Initiatives. In general, variable geometry in ERA-NETs is shaped by shared problems and problem perceptions, or by shared and complementary capabilities. As such it allows for *functional integration* understood as the pooling of resources and activities to fit specific problems and to match specific capabilities. This appears to be especially important in areas in which the Framework Programme does not fund, as it is in exactly those areas where we have a lack of cooperation opportunities for *researchers*. In that sense, FP7 is already a step back from the radical enabling of the early ERA-NET scheme, although still enables mobilisation in specific niches within the Framework Programme.

But why, one wonders, do we need to keep a *European* instrument to support this after a decade of experimentation and learning? If the added value for the participants is as obvious as the workshops indicate, why not leave it to them to fund the ERA-NETs? The reason is to be found in innovation policy studies and in the very ERA logic itself. Although individuals and organisations perceive a potential benefit out of cooperation, the transaction costs and

risks involved lead to a sub-optimal level of cooperation. This is the reason why research programmes, not only at the European level but in most OECD countries, are most often about mobilising cooperation and networks. The same is true for programme funders: to realise that a co-operation might have a potential value does not mean that all the transaction costs arising can and will be covered. As proponents of the ERA we want an organic growth of *functional* integration which needs seed funding to take off. Europe should provide opportunities to offer it. Of course, we need to ensure that the variable geometry experiment that is funded with EU money has an added value that spills over into the European innovation system more broadly. But the existing evidence suggests a high level of added value, even without the much needed assessment at the level of research activities funded by ERA-NETs. There is ample evidence, and the workshop has made that clear once again, that the participation in ERA-NET has "Europeanised" hitherto national or even regional funding organisations and ministerial departments. After an ERA-NET, it seems, the genie of functional integration is out of the bottle in the particular area that was funded. The numerous attempts to keep up coordination and cover transaction costs even after funding has ended are a clear indication for that.

So if we continue with ERA-NETs, should they be fully integrated into the more explicitly top down approach taken in Joint Programming and Innovation Partnerships? Of course – but not exclusively! Where appropriate, ERA-NETs can and should be catalysts for broader initiatives, linked to larger political agendas and overarching initiatives; they can and should be an integral part of Joint Programming Initiatives or linking up in Innovation Partnerships. But just as larger, challenge driven initiatives are becoming the cornerstone of the ERA in years to come, we must make sure that experimentation, the closing of gaps and the creation of new linkages that bear new opportunities are enabled. Tackling selected challenges should not be done at the expense of variety and experimentation across the board. To reduce the genie of functional, bottom up integration to a supporting act for large initiatives in selected areas of grand challenges would severely limit its magic.

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1. Introduction: The wider context

The workshops started with a look at the wider picture of coordination of national activities in research. This section provides the background and recent developments that provide the context in which the continuation of ERA-NETs should be seen.

1.1 Policy developments

Presentation: Hervé Pero, Acting Director, Directorate B, DG Research

In his intervention, Mr. Pero stressed that the challenge for European research is to face up to global competition from countries such as China, the United States and India. In the end, this is a question of creating value for taxpayers and citizens. This cannot be addressed successfully at the national level but necessitates coordination of efforts at EU level as well as national, regional and global levels in constellations of variable geometry. This is as much a cultural and political challenge of learning to work together, as it is a scientific challenge.

2010 saw a major policy development in the adoption of the EU's 'Europe 2020' strategy[1], and as part of that the 'Innovation Union' flagship initiative.[2] Here, the European Research Area (ERA) is still a priority and should be completed within 4 years. Another main component of the initiative is the concept of 'European Innovation Partnerships' which is meant to 'accelerate research, development and market deployment of innovations to tackle major societal challenges'.[3]

In the area of coordination and integration of public research in Europe, Joint Programming is now in focus. The process of Joint Programming started in 2008 by identifying themes of common interest and the first initiatives have been launched in 2010. ERA-NETs have an important role to play in relation to Joint Programming: Firstly, they have been instrumental in building partnerships that have *prepared* the ground for Joint Programming Initiatives (JPI). Secondly, ERA-NETs can prove an important instrument supporting the *implementation* of JPIs.

These developments represent a challenge for ERA-NETs which need to refine their role to make themselves relevant and contribute to achieving the aims of the new initiatives.

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[1] 'COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION: EUROPE 2020, A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' COM(2010) 2020 final, Brussels, 3.3.2010
[2] COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION: Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative, Innovation Union, COM(2010) 546 final, Brussels, 6.10.2010
[3] COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION: Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative, Innovation Union, COM(2010) 546 final, Brussels, 6.10.2010, p. 22

1.2 Coordination of national activities in FP6 and FP7

FP6 ERA-NETs

When the ERA-NET scheme was first launched as part of the 6th Framework Programme (FP6) (2002-2006), it was part of the effort of 'integrating and strengthening the European Research Area'.[4] The legal basis for this action was provided in Article 181 (Art. 165) of the EC Treaty, which called for Member States to coordinate their R&D activities and for the European Commission (EC) to promote this coordination effort.

In this context, the ERA-NET scheme was meant to "step up the cooperation and coordination of research activities carried out at national or regional level in the Member States and Associated States" by the networking of activities, including mutual opening of programmes, and implementation of joint activities. The scheme was open to proposals in all fields.[5]

Two reviews have concluded that the ERA-NET scheme in FP6 was a success in terms of attracting interest from the targeted audience and launching joint activities.[6] As of 2008, national funding bodies had committed in excess of €1bn to joint activities through joint ERA-NET actions. However, at the time, the long-term impact was difficult to assess and future role of ERA-NETs was still to be defined.[7]

From FP6 to FP7

> *Presentation: Mr. Seán O'Reagain, Acting Head of Unit, DG Research:*
> *"Overview of coordination of national research programmes."*

European countries provide a significant amount of public funding for research but only a minor part (10-15%) via transnational collaboration. This 'compartmentalised European Research Area' leads to inefficient use of public funding and makes it much harder for Europe to compete on a global scale.

With the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) (2007-2013), the ERA-NET scheme continued to provide funding for coordination (Coordination and Support Actions) but with a closer link to thematic priorities. In addition, ERA-NET Plus actions were introduced, providing top-up funding for a single joint call, and a limited number of Article 185 actions (formerly Art. 169) have been launched to achieve full integration of national programmes. The transition from FP6 to FP7 is now nearly completed: Of the 71 ERA-NETs funded under FP6, 13 are still running (2010) while new FP7 funded ERA-NETs have been added each year since 2007.

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[4] Council Decision 2002/834/EC of 30 September 2002, adopting the specific programme "Integrating and strengthening the European Research Area"
[5] European Commission, 2005-6 Work Programme for the 'Support for the Coordination of Activities' line of the FP6 Specific Programme 'Integrating and Strengthening the Foundations of the European Research Area'
[6] ERA-NET Review 2006, The Report of the Expert Review Group, Chaired by Prof. Horvat.
[7] 'Evaluation and impact assessment of the ERA-NET scheme and the related ERA-NET actions under the 6th Framework Programme' Matrix/Rambøll, May 2009

The question for these two workshops is how ERA-NETs initiated under FP6 can and should continue. A recent survey carried out by the European Commission[8] shows that out of 62 ERA-NETs responding, 50 (or 81%) continue in one form or another: with a new FP7 grant, Art. 185, ERA-NET Plus grants or on a self-sustained basis. This shows that for most ERA-NETs there *is* a 'life after FP6' with a variety of different options; the effort to achieve better coordination between national programmes continues to build on the achievements of FP6 ERA-NETs.

On the other hand, the survey showed that many ERA-NETs consider that they should still increase the number of countries, the number and size of joint calls as well as other activities in order to reach their 'optimum'. Having an 'optimal' network would greatly increase the likelihood of subsequently being able to continue as self-sustained networks. The survey further showed that ERA-NETs receiving further EC funding generally tend to do more than ERA-NETs without funding, when it comes to various activities, consultation of stakeholders and joint calls.

1.3 The ERA-NET community

The community of ERA-NET participants and stakeholders have shown great interest in engaging with the European Commission and each other on issues concerning the role of ERA-NETs in the European Research Area. During the 2009 and 2010 'ERA-NETs on stage' events, these were some of the main conclusions[9]:

- The ERA-NET scheme should be continued as an instrument in its own right.
- Continued funding may be needed for some ERA-NETs and countries.
- Flexible structures and rules should be put in place to allow ERA-NETs to evolve according to their specific needs.
- ERA-NETs need to consider different options when making decisions about how to go forward, depending on their particular situation.
- ERA-NETs need to be able to demonstrate their value to secure further funding.
- Strategic intelligence is needed to provide a sound basis for decisions about ERA-NETs .

Following up on the ongoing discussion about the future of the ERA-NET scheme, the two workshops on ERA-NET continuation provided a much needed opportunity to take a close look at evidence and share experiences with ERA-NET continuation so far, and to discuss on a more informed basis what the future of ERA-NETs could and should be. These issues have become even more pressing with the new policy initiatives that have been launched during 2010.

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[8] More about the survey is included in section 3.1 of this report. The full analysis of the survey results have been published on the Cordis and NETWATCH websites, see note 11 below.
[9] Landwehr and Guy: "ERA-NETs on Stage report, Annual ERA-NET Event, 31 March – 1 April 2009"
Amanatidou, Effie: "ERA-NETs on Stage 2010, Final Report, Annual ERA-NET Event 23-24 March 2010."

2. Experiences with continuation of ERA-NETs: continuing without EC funding for coordination

The two workshops on ERA-NET continuation aimed to draw together the experiences from actors who have found different ways of continuing their networking activities beyond the initial FP6 contract - with or without further EC funding.

From the recent survey (see footnote 11), it appears that 34, or just under half of the 71 ERA-NETs (Coordination Actions) funded under FP6, are now without EC funding for coordination. Of these, 16 have continued as ERA-NETs - 9 on a self-sustained basis without any EC funding and 7 with top-up funding for a joint call via ERA-NET Plus but without funding for coordination. The remaining 18 have ceased to exist as ERA-NET networks, although many of them continue some form of collaboration.

During the workshop on the 8th November, representatives from this group were invited to share their experiences and discuss future challenges and opportunities for their networks.

2.1 Self-sustainable networks

Representatives from three ERA-NETs shared their experiences over the last year or two, illustrating different ways of continuing an ERA-NET network on a self-sustained basis after the end of the FP6 contract.

> *Presentations:*
>
> *Dr. Simon Gardner, Evidence Manager, Environment Agency, The United Kingdom:*
> *SKEP ERA-NET: 'Scientific Knowledge for Environmental Protection'*
>
> *Ms. Ingrid van Reijsen, Programme Manager, SKB, Netherlands*
> *SNOWMAN: 'Sustainable Management of Soil and Groundwater'*
>
> *Ms. Chaterine Mével, ECORD Managing Agency Director, CNRS-IPGP, France*
> *ECORD-Net: 'European Consortium for Ocean Research Drilling'*

Motivations for becoming self-sustained
It was generally not a deliberate decision to avoid further EC funding but for the three networks, different factors lead to this situation. For one network, the timing of calls for FP7 ERA-NETs didn't allow for them to apply and for another, there was no FP7 call matching their area of operation.

Even so, for some, this situation did offer opportunities. According to Dr. Gardner (SKEP), not receiving EC funding allowed the network to concentrate on activities that would benefit the members most without worrying about negotiations with the EC or fulfilling contractual obligations. Also, it gave a 'true picture' regarding which the members were committed to investing in the network.

Strategy and resources for a self-sustained network

All three networks had some form of written agreement to define the continued collaboration, at minimum a 'letter of intent'. By way of advice to other ERA-NETs, it was recommended to prepare these arrangements well in advance (6-9 months before the end of the EC contract) and to keep them relatively 'light touch'. In addition to such documents, what really provided the glue to bind the partners together were joint calls or other activities, adding 'quick wins' and further momentum to the cooperation.

In all three cases, it was stressed that some resources were needed to keep the network going and the vital importance of maintaining a call secretariat as the centre of the network. This, of course, has a cost and figures from €30.000 to €100.000 per year were mentioned. In the absence of an EC grant, the networks operated on the basis of subscription fees from the members, although some flexibility had been necessary, for example to accept in-kind contributions such as organising network meetings as a way to keep members on board which were unable to make cash payments.

Challenges of continuing as a self-sustained network

Becoming a self-sustained ERA-NET network presented some short term and long term challenges. In the short term, some members were lost as they weren't willing or able to find the resources needed to continue the collaboration without EC funding. For the coordinator in particular, much effort is spent on securing contributions from network partners and to convince their home organisations that the ERA-NET is worth investing in.

Without funding provided by the ERA-NET scheme, long-term financial planning becomes more difficult. In this situation, each partner becomes more exposed to the changing economic climate and needs to be able to convince their home organisations to continue supporting their participation.

2.2 Networks that have ceased their activities:

Not all networks choose to continue working as ERA-NETs. According to the survey (the self-declared status of the network), 18 ERA-NETs ceased to exist when the FP6 funding came to an end. However, as the three examples from this group presented at the workshop showed, project partners often continue some form of collaboration even though the formal network ceases to exist.

> *Presentations:*
>
> *Dr. Carita Aschan, Specialized Research Scientist, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health*
> **NEW OSH ERA***: Occupational Safety and Health*
>
> *Mr. Nick Constantopoulos, General Secretariat for Research and Technology, Greek Research and Technology Network.* **FORSOCIETY***: Foresight and Society ERA-NET*
>
> *Ms.Gillian Glaze, Forschungszentrum Juelich, PtJ, (Germany)*
> **INNER ERA-NET***: Innovative Energy Research*

Reasons for ceasing ERA-NET activities

In the three cases presented during the workshop, the ERA-NETs had organised successful joint activities or calls during the life-time of the EC funded project. They had all considered the possibilities of continuing as ERA-NETs but for various reasons ceased to exist as ERA-NETs.

In the case of NEW OSH ERA (Occupational Safety and Health) the lack of funding was the essential problem, with the economic crisis affecting the ability of the members to commit financially. The special topic dealt with by centralised institutes meant that many members were research institutes rather than research funders as such and this made it more difficult to find available funding among the members to continue. In the case of FORSOCIETY, the partners were unconvinced that the ERA-NET format was the right one for future foresight activities – in particular because of the need for greater flexibility – and in any case they didn't want to compete with existing activities in the field. For INNER, the project seems to have been too ambitious. Problems with unearthing funding for selected research projects and to get the partners to contribute actively towards a joint vision remained unsolved. A further complication was the complex and rather political environment for energy research which made coordination hard to achieve.

Thus, the decision to discontinue the ERA-NETs was taken for different reasons in each case. In some cases it was a choice, in others a necessity because of lack of support and funding. In some cases, the main reasons for stopping were issues with the internal coordination and in others it was issues pertaining to the economic, organisational and political environment. In some cases, networking activities among the partners actually continued at some level after the ERA-NET and in others not.

Legacy of ERA-NETs

As mentioned, even ERA-NETs which declared that they had ceased were often involved in further activities. In the case of INNER, the network was still managing activities initiated during the ERA-NET contract, for example ongoing funded projects, evaluation and participation in expert groups.

In at least two of the three cases, the partners maintain contact and are open to future activities. For example, several partner institutes from NEW-OSH-ERA are members of the PEROSH network, carrying over the principles from the ERA-NET in their organisation of seminars and joint research projects. Furthermore, key ERA-NET partners have expressed the desire to revive the ERA-NET if and when the financial situation allows it.

Finally, FORSOCIETY stressed the fact that the members continue to benefit from the foresight planning activities carried out during the time of the ERA-NET contract.

'Lessons learned'

Some lessons learned from the experiences of the ceased networks may be relevant to other ERA-NETs. In particular, it is important to define exactly what the ERA-NET is trying to achieve and whether it is truly new and worthwhile. Particularly when programmes are very

different, it should be attempted to identify what the common ground is between them. Furthermore, depending on the field, the environment may be complicated and it can be difficult to identify relevant stakeholders and to deal with ministries and other political actors.

2.3 ERA-NET plus: Funding for calls but not for networking

ERA-NET Plus presents a special case. On the one hand, it gives the opportunity to scale up the efforts of an ERA-NET with EU top-up funding for a single joint call. On the other hand, the funding does not cover networking and so unless this funding is secured with another ERA-NET contract, the continued coordination of the network will have to happen on a self-sustained basis. The survey shows that, of the 7 ERA-NET Plus networks, 2 declared themselves 'self-sustained' while the other 5 financed networking costs from various other sources.

> *Presentation:*
> *Ms. Alice Dijkstra, Senior Project Officer, Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research*
> - **HERA JRP: '***Humanities in the European Research Area'*
> - **NORFACE Plus: '***New Opportunities for Research Funding Co-operation in Europe'*
>   *(Social Sciences)*

HERA and NORFACE are two ERA-NETs focussing on Humanities and Social Science research respectively. Ms. Dijkstra shared experiences from the development of the HERA Joint Research Programme (HERA JRP) and NORFACE, both supported by ERA-NET (CA) and ERA-NET Plus grants. During the first ERA-NET contract period (both 2004-2009), the partners had been able to build up trust, develop procedures and management structures, among other things. The motivation for going for ERA-NET Plus was to give an incentive for partners to participate in the fully fledged Joint Research Programme (JRP) (2009 onwards).

In NORFACE, an extension of the funding period of the ERA-NET contract had been agreed so that networking costs could be covered until 2011. In HERA, it was decided to spare the effort of negotiating such an extension and continue networking activities on a self-sustained, nationally funded basis. In both HERA and NORFACE, sustainable partnerships between funding agencies had been achieved and a foundation laid for trans-national research programmes with a real common pot (i.e. no *juste retour*).

Ms. Dijkstra put forward a number of 'lessons and recommendations'. One strategy to keep the partners involved was to change coordinator regularly with smaller countries taking on the role as well. A particular issue concerned the ability of especially smaller countries to contribute as needed to the self-sustained network. This could be solved by larger partners supporting travelling costs for partners from smaller countries, and to be flexible and accept different kinds of contributions from different partners. Finally, keeping the official ERA-NET status was seen to provide legitimacy, thereby making it easier to find the funding needed.

In the future, Ms. Dijkstra suggested introducing an 'ERA-NET Light' scheme. The idea was first discussed in the "ERA-NETs on Stage" event, in March 2010.[10] Addressing some of the challenges of the being a self-sustainable network, ERA-NET Light would provide limited funds for networking, acting as 'glue for the network' and give it the official ERA-NET status, whilst at the same time keeping administrative procedures to a minimum.

2.4 Summary

FP6 ERA-NETs which no longer receive funding have chosen a variety of different ways to go forward. Many have been committed to continue on a self-funded basis although this has generally meant scaling down some activities. Some ERA-NET Plus actions present the special case in that they receive funding for a call, but are self-sustained so far as networking is concerned. Even amongst those ERA-NETs that declare themselves to have 'ceased', many have continued different forms of collaboration and may, in some cases, revive their ERA-NETs at a later stage. Self-sustained ERA-NETs face a number of new challenges, for example securing contributions from their partners, making long-term planning in an uncertain environment, and maintaining the identity and connections that EC funded ERA-NETs have built up. Even so, self-sustained ERA-NETs have shown a strong commitment to build on their achievements and continue ERA-NET collaboration.

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[10] Effie Amanatidou: 'ERA-NETs on Stage 2010, Final Report', April 2010

3. Experiences with continuation of ERA-NETs: continuing with new EC funding

On the 9th November, ERA-NETs that have continued with new EC funding were invited to discuss the long-term perspectives for their ERA-NETs and the ERA-NET scheme.

3.1 Why does an FP6 ERA-NET need a second EC contract?

Presentation: Ms. Zsuzsa Konig, European Commission, 'Why an FP6 ERA-NET needed a second contract?'

Break-out sessions: 'Why was a second contract needed?' and 'Towards self-sustainability'

Zsuzsana Koenig presented some more results from the recent survey among the 71 FP6 ERA-NETs.[11] In addition, the 'break-out sessions' provided an opportunity for informal group discussions about the need for a second ERA-NET contract and self-sustainability from the perspective of ERA-NETs that are currently receiving their second round of funding.[12]

Why does an FP6 ERA-NET need a second contract?

The majority of ERA-NETs have continued beyond their FP6 contract but only some of them with further EC funding from FP7. Mrs. Koenig offered a comparison of the survey responses from these two groups, highlighting the consequences of the award or non-award of continued funding after FP6. It appears that ERA-NETs that continue on a self-sustained basis are less likely to expand their networks with new members and tend to organise fewer and smaller joint calls compared to those with further funding. Certain other activities, such as the development of research agendas and programmes, consultation with stakeholders and dissemination also tend to be terminated or have lower priority when there is no longer EC funding available.

In the break-out group discussion, motivations for continuing with a second (FP7) grant included enlarging and consolidating the network, making long-term strategies and starting new activities such as engaging with Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) and European Technology Platforms (ETPs).

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[11] The full analysis of the survey results has been published on the Netwatch and Cordis websites: http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/index.cfm/static/event_5.html; http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/coordination/about-platform_en.html.
[12] In the same session on the 9th November, two presentations were made from ERA-NETs that are already self-funded, see section 2.1 of this report.

Towards optimization

Although there was no consensus on what constitutes an 'optimal' network – that depends on the individual network – an ERA-NET should be well established before becoming self-sustainable. According to the survey, most ERA-NETs – especially those without further funding – identified network enlargement as a priority. In the discussion, other aspects were mentioned, such as defining clear objectives, roles and responsibilities and establishing links and cooperation with other organisations (ERA-NETs, JPIs, the EC etc).

In the survey, 2 out of 3 FP6 ERA-NETs replied that they need either more time or funding to achieve an optimum level. For the future, over half the ERA-NETs responding to the survey believe they could become self-sustained once they have reached their optimum.

Towards self-sustainability

Both the survey and the discussion showed that the long-term objective of most ERA-NETs is to become self-sustainable but there are different motivations for continuing on a self-sustainable basis. Organising joint calls is not necessarily the most important objective for everyone. For some ERA-NETs, maintaining capacities and networking, or addressing policy-needs are equally or more important.

The group discussion revealed that the first among the pre-conditions for a successful self-sustainable network is a high level of commitment and trust among the partners. In cases where personal relationships are important, it could be a challenge to maintain this in the long run as people may change jobs. Organisational factors are also important, for example maintaining a secretariat and staying visible by maintaining links with the EC and other networks. Maintaining a legal status is important, not least to remain visible to the outside world, but structures should be relatively 'light' and flexible.

One major challenge, the group discussion suggested, is to find the resources to run the network, and striking a workable balance between subscription fees and in-kind contribution. Another challenge is to adapt to changes in external conditions such as the economic climate and policy changes (e.g. Innovation Union). Finally, engaging with JPIs and ETPs is a new challenge and ERA-NETs may still need a better understanding of these opportunities.

While a majority of ERA-NETs believe they can achieve self-sustainability in the long run, the question arising from this discussion is how much time and funding is needed until an ERA-NET is solid enough (or 'optimized') to be able to continue on a self-sustained basis. It seems that a second contract may help ERA-NETs to further consolidate. Also, a concern was voiced that some limited funding may be needed, even in the long run: 'glue money' was mentioned, and particularly funds to cover the costs of participation from members from countries where resources may not be readily available for this type of activities.

3.2 Current planning for networks beyond the FP7 contract

Of the 71 ERA-NETs supported in FP6, the survey showed that 21 have received further funding with an FP7 ERA-NET grant and 1 as an FP7 Support Action. Their plans beyond

the FP7 funding were discussed in this session on the basis of two very different cases: EUPHRESCO and SEAS-ERA.

Presentations:

Dr. Alan Inman, Scientific Advisor, Food and Environment Research Agency (UK)
EUPHRESCO: 'EUropean PHytosanitary RESearch Coordination' (statutory plant health)

Prof. Joan Albaiges, Ministry of Science and Innovation (Spain)
SEAS-ERA: 'Towards Integrated Marine Research Strategy and Programmes'

From FP6 to FP7

The two ERA-NETs have had very different trajectories from FP6 to FP7. EUPHRESCO continues building on what they started in FP6. After developing the network structures and modus operandi during the FP6 contract, the FP7 grant has allowed it to 'deepen and enlarge', adding 10 new partners to the network and further testing the procedures paving the way for a self-sustainable network in the long run.

The FP7 supported SEAS-ERA is the result of a merger between several FP6 funded ERA-NETs focussed on marine research. The new ERA-NET has a broad set of aims, including strategic planning, joint activities as well as a plan for infrastructures, regional development and dissemination.

Towards self-sustainability beyond FP7

After the end of the FP7 grant, EUPHRESCO's aim is to use the structures and procedures developed during FP6 and FP7 to maintain a light, flexible network to facilitate collaboration between partners without binding contracts and membership fees. The administrative burdens are to be shared among the members, for example by rotating portfolios and letting partners take their share of the call management.

The SEAS-ERA network aims to go another way and has already put forward a proposal for a Joint Programming Initiative addressing the grand challenge of 'Productive Seas and Oceans'. A 'holistic' approach is taken, bringing together different dimensions of this complex issue, including knowledge of the marine system, sustainable use of resources and policy relevant knowledge.

Challenges

The potentially problematic issues identified in these two cases were similar to what was discussed above: What are the minimum legal arrangements needed? What are the resources needed and what kind of contributions (cash or in-kind) should be favoured? Finally, SEAS-ERA stressed the need to balance scientific excellence with relevance and to find an efficient way to get stakeholders involved.

3.3 Recent evolution of national RTD programme coordination

Recent developments in the coordination of national RTD programmes have given rise to a number of new initiatives. Spread over the two days of the workshop, representatives from Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs), an Article 185 Initiative and European Technology Platforms (ETPs) shared some insights about these actions. In particular, it was discussed how these relate to – and indeed sometimes are developed from – ERA-NET activities.

Joint Programming

> ***Presentations:***
>
> ***Mrs. Patrizia Bianconi, Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities (MIBAC), Italy
> JPI 'Cultural Heritage and Global Change' (JPI CH)***
>
> ***Ms. Isabelle Albouy, National institute for Agriculture Research, INRA, France
> JPI 'Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change' (FACCE)***
>
> ***Mr. Martin Schmid, Counsellor for Science and Research, Permanent
> representation for Austria: 'Joint Programming and national RTD programme
> coordination from an Austrian point of view'***

Joint Programming is a new process launched by the European Commission and endorsed by the Council in 2008. A limited number of important areas, where important societal challenges cannot be effectively addressed by national programmes alone, are identified and recommended for the implementation of Joint Programming Initiatives. Member States can then participate on a voluntary basis with variable geometry.

Two of the three Joint Programming Initiatives included in the 'first wave' (approved for launch by the Council in 2010) were represented at the workshop: 'Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change' (FACCE JPI) and 'Cultural Heritage and Global Change' (JPI CH).[13] Having gone through the process of nomination and approval, the two JPI's are now embarking on the implementation stage. The first steps include getting interested members on board, setting up management structures and formulating a joint 'vision' and a 'Strategic Research Agenda'. At the time of the workshop, the two JPI's were in the process of elaborating their 'vision' (JPI CH) and 'Scientific Research Agenda' (FACCE).

In Mr. Pero's introductory speech, he stressed the need for ERA-NETs to contribute to Joint Programming. The experiences from the ERA-NETs with regard, for example, to joint funding arrangements have already fed into the Joint Programming process more generally (see footnote 13). In relation to individual JPI's, both of the two initiatives represented at the workshop acknowledge the relevance of several ERA-NETs working within their area. JPI CH is already working with several ERA-NETs, including NET-HERITAGE (FP7) which is providing information about existing national programmes and funding mechanisms. In the case of the FACCE JPI, actual involvement has been limited so far but it is foreseen to

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[13] "Joint Programming in research 2008-2010 and beyond", Report of the High Level Group on Joint Programming to the Council, November 2010

coordinate with 16 ERA-NETs that are all relevant to the subject, as well as other international initiatives, later in the process of formulating the research agenda.

Thus, there is scope for involvement of ERA-NETs in Joint Programming Initiatives but it is still too early to say exactly how this will be done in practice. It is, for example, an open question whether ERA-NETs could be involved in the early stages of setting up and defining new JPIs or rather later as an instrument to implement already defined Strategic Research Agendas. JPIs are different from ERA-NETs in that they are much larger and more ambitious but they are still finding their place in the landscape and there should be room for both ERA-NETs and JPIs. Mr. Schmid voiced a worry that the multiplication of initiatives (with JPI, Innovation Union and the Europe 2020 Strategy) risked overwhelming smaller countries that have to prioritise limited resources but he stressed that it was still too early to pass judgement.

Article 185

Presentation: Ms. Fiona Redgrave, EURAMET EMRP, Management Support Unit, NPL, UK
Article 185: '*European Metrology Research Programme*' (EMRP)

The EMRP started as an Article 185 Initiative in 2009, coordinated between the EC and EURAMET (European Association of National Metrology Institutes).

Ms. Redgrave stressed that the EMRP Art. 185 Initiative builds on the achievements of previous projects, including the iMERA ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus. Following this step-wise approach, the working collaboration built up during iMERA was an important pre-condition for the EMRP. Compared to ERA-NET plus, the Art. 185 allows going beyond a joint call to true programme level coordination, including multiple calls and lasting structures. It allows for long-term planning and the opportunity to reuse experiences gained to improve the programme. It was suggested that Art. 185 could be a single instrument to implement a Joint Programming Initiative.

Thus, the Art. 185 is not an alternative to ERA-NET, but a possible elaboration. The former are 'super tankers' with heavy legal procedures but with long-term commitment to an integrated European programme. ERA-NETs are much smaller and more flexible.

European Technology Platforms and ERA-NET

Presentation: Dr. Luc Bourdeau, Centre Scientifique et Technique du Bâtiment (France)
ERACOBUILD: '*Strategic Networking of RDI Programmes in the Construction and Operation of Buildings*'

Dr. Bourdeau's presentation showed an example of how ERA-NETs and European Technology Platforms can work together. ERACOBUILD is an FP7 supported ERA-NET continuing from ERA-BUILD (FP6) that has, among other things, implemented a joint call in 2009-2010 on sustainable renovation (SusRen). The European Construction Technology Platform (ECTP) brings together private actors from the construction sector in a number of European countries and has established the Energy-Efficient Buildings Association (E2BA) to engage with the European Union (EU). E2BA represents the construction industry in the recently launched Energy efficient Buildings Public-Private Partnership (EeB PPP)[14] with a budget of 1bn EURO co-funded by FP7 and industry.

Since 2008, ERACOBUILD and ECTP/E2BA have sought to align their activities. First by linking ERACOBUILD's SusRen research programme with the E2BA roadmap and then by focussing their respective calls on distinctive issues. The two parties are now looking to further strengthen their collaboration, by for example aligning research priorities, organising stakeholders and unifying representation vis-à-vis the EU.

Infrastructures: ESFRI and ERA-NET

Presentation: Ms. Brigitte Weiss, European Commission

There is a need to reinforce the link between ERA-NET and actions relating to Research Infrastructures. Research Infrastructures is one of the key components of the European Research Area (ERA) and Ms. Weiss gave an overview of actions in this area. These include upgrading existing infrastructures as well as building new ones.

The European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) defines a roadmap for new infrastructures in Europe. The European Commission provides some funding but the realisation of the infrastructures also depends on it becoming a part of national programme priorities. Thus, there seems to be some scope for ERA-NETs to contribute to developing European infrastructures. Indeed, some ERA-NETs such as ECORD and SEAS-ERA see research infrastructures as part of their strategy.

3.4 Summary

Receiving a second ERA-NET contract allows ERA-NETs to consolidate and further develop their activities. This enhances their chances of successfully continuing as self-sustained ERA-NETs in the future. The two examples in section 3.2 shows that there are different ways of consolidating: merging with other ERA-NETs and enlarging an existing network. Similarly, there are different strategies for the continuation beyond the FP7 contract: Attempting to scale up with a JPI or, going for a light, flexible, self-sustained structure. Moreover, there are now several new opportunities for ERA-NETs to scale up applying for

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[14] EeB PPP was one of three Public-Private Partnerships announced in 2008 as part of the European Recovery plan. See more:
http://www.ectp.org/cws/params/ectp/download_files/36D1191v1_EeB_Roadmap.pdf

ERA-NET plus and Art. 185, or get involved in JPIs, Technology Platforms, and Research Infrastructure Initiatives.

In sum, there are a number of avenues open to ERA-NETs to progress into the future, also beyond current FP7 funding. What is the most relevant strategy is likely to differ from one ERA-NET to another, depending on objectives, resources and other factors.

4. Future of the ERA-NET scheme: concluding discussion

One of the main aims of the two workshops was to look to the future of the ERA-NET scheme and both days concluded with a discussion on this topic, informed by the preceding presentations. The further development of the NETWATCH Platform was also discussed as part of the support offered to ERA-NETs going forward.

4.1 Supporting initiatives: NET-WATCH

Presentation: Mr. Ken Guy, Scientific Officer, Joint Research Centre (JRC) – Institute for Prospective Technology Studies (IPTS)

Following up from the "ERA-NETs on Stage" events (2009 and 2010), Mr. Ken Guy gave a short overview of the services provided by NETWATCH. First, NETWATCH aims to create an online system with up-to-date information about national R&D programmes and transnational collaboration. As of August 2010, the system contained information about 42 FP7 ERA-NETs, about 80 joint calls, some 500 national programmes and more than 800 organisations.

The next step is to use this information to create intelligent analysis, including a regular mapping, monitoring and impact assessment of ERA-NET activities. This should help policy stakeholders understand the evolution and impact of ERA-NETs. Ken Guy gave some examples of such analysis, which have since been published as part a report from JRC-IPTS.[15] Finally, the web based tools provided by NETWATCH should enable discussions, exchange of information, guidelines and other resources furthering mutual learning between members of the ERA-NET community.

In the context of the discussion about ERA-NET continuation, Ken Guy stressed to the workshop participants that this could provide them with a resource for demonstrating the impact and added value of their ERA-NETs. Reversely, the quality of the data depends on what ERA-NET coordinators submit to NETWATCH and so the workshop participants were encouraged to contribute, providing up-to-date information about their ERA-NET activities. The NETWATCH resources are further complemented by the ERA-LEARN project.

4.2 Self-sustainability and the future of the ERA-NET scheme

Presentation: Mr. Joerg Niehoff, Research Programme officer, DG Research

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[15] 'Mapping ERA-NETs across Europe: overview of the ERA-NET scheme and its results' by Susana Elena, JRC-IPTS, December 2010

After an overview of the ERA-NET landscape and policy context (see section 1 above), Mr. Niehoff pointed towards some key questions to be discussed concerning ERA-NETs in FP7 and beyond:

- **Thematic focus:** What is the experience with thematic integration in FP7 and how should the thematic foci be selected in the future? What should be done about networks that fall outside the span across the chosen themes?
- **Instruments:** What is the experience with the new instrument ERA-NET Plus, and how could future light implementation structures be developed?
- **Role of ERA-NETs:** What is the position of ERA-NETs in the current landscape of initiatives aimed at coordinating national programmes, and what should their role be in relation to new policy context with Joint Programming, the Innovation Union Initiative and the Europe 2020 Agenda? To what extent should ERA-NET, ERA-NET Plus and Art. 185 be seen as instruments to implement Joint Programming Initiatives?

4.3 Plenary Discussion

The plenary discussion ending each of the two days touched on questions relating to the strategy of individual ERA-NETs as well as the future of the ERA-NET scheme as such.

The different conditions faced by different ERA-NETs means that there is no one way to achieving a long-term self-sustainable ERA-NET. Many comments related to opportunities for 'going big', launching Art. 185 and Joint Programming Initiatives. But there are many different models available; what constitutes a 'successful' ERA-NET may vary depending on the circumstances.

There was a general consensus that the ERA-NETs should contribute to the implementation of Joint Programming Initiatives as far as possible, but still continue to exist as an independent scheme. As illustrated during the workshops, there will continue to be important areas that fall outside the remit of Joint Programming Initiatives. The attractiveness of the ERA-NET scheme is exactly that it is bottom-up.

The ERA-NET scheme does, however, need adjustments: Workshop participants suggested simplified structures to allow 'quick starts' without lengthy contract negotiations and minimise the administrative burden of running the ERA-NET. It was further suggested that a limited continuous funding, providing 'glue money' for established networks, may be necessary in some cases. The ERA-NET scheme could become a 'broad umbrella' encompassing a range of different arrangements.

5. Conclusions

The ERA-NETs that were launched during the 6th Framework Programme have successfully established themselves as an important part of the effort to achieve the European Research Area. The concept and role of the ERA-NETs have evolved through FP6 and FP7 and are now being adapted to new developments, in particular the Europe 2020 Strategy with the Innovation Union Initiative and the launch of the Joint Programming process. This offers opportunities for ERA-NETs to get involved in the implementation of such large-scale initiatives but also challenges them to demonstrate their continued relevance.

The workshops confirmed that the ERA-NETs are committed to continuing beyond their contract with the European Commission: the vast majority of ERA-NETs funded under FP6 are still active after the end of the contract period. While a majority of ERA-NETs are committed to long-term self-sustainability, there is a danger that a lack of funding in the shorter-term can cause important and successful network activities to be abandoned. The question is whether and how the European Commission can support ERA-NETs to make that transition towards self-sustainability.

Further, it was clear that ERA-NETs have adopted very different strategies, for example 'going big', choosing a light and flexible arrangement', or even stopping altogether. These options do not represent either 'success' or 'failure' but should be judged by the relevance to the network partners in each particular case. This diversity should also be reflected in the funding arrangements for ERA-NETs in the future; more flexibility is widely requested by the ERA-NET community. Also, there may be certain aims, shared by the European Commission, which can only be achieved with some continued EC funding.

The workshop participants were very supportive of the new initiatives, Joint Programming and the larger Innovation Union Initiative. ERA-NETs are interested in getting involved or even acting as catalysts for these new initiatives but there is a need to know more about what the opportunities are. The workshops provided an opportunity to raise awareness among the ERA-NET community.

At the same time, the ERA-NET representatives re-confirmed that they wish to see the ERA-NET scheme continue as an instrument in its own right, and not only as a means to implement Joint Programming Initiatives. As illustrated in the workshop, some important areas do fall outside what is covered by the JPIs and new ones are likely to appear in the future. This is an argument for preserving an element of the 'bottom-up' or open nature of the original ERA-NET scheme in FP7 and beyond.