



PLATFORM

PLATFORM POLICY BRIEF

Series, No. 1

The future of cooperation and collaboration in public-public partnerships between Member States – ‘Think Back, Act Forward’



PLATFORM POLICY BRIEF No. 1

The future of cooperation and collaboration in public-public partnerships between Member States – 'Think Back, Act Forward'

Context

As Horizon 2020 changed conditions and settings for the Member States coordination activities profoundly, there is a necessity to think about new, sustainable and alternative models of future cooperation and collaboration between national publicly funded research programmes. Main challenges within existing instruments of collaboration need to be identified and improved schemes of future collaboration in public-public partnerships between Member States need to be envisioned, designed and discussed. Therefore PLATFORM has organised in March 2015 a World Café Workshop 'Think Back, Act Forward' on collaboration between Member States. Several concerns are raised on the implementation of the H2020 instruments Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) and European Joint Programme (EJP).

General concerns

1. Scattered resources of funding agencies

In the Bioeconomy there many different initiatives fostering the European Research Area (ERA): over 20 ERA-NETs, 9 European Technology Platforms (ETPs) with mirror groups, 3 Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs), 1 Joint Technology Initiative (JTI), etc. Most of these initiatives ask for a contribution from National funding agencies, either in financial- and/or human resources. PLATFORM would like to stress that the introduction of FPA and EJP needs to have a positive impact on the deployment of resources. The new instruments should offer solutions for a scattered resources of funding agencies. The consequences have to be evaluated carefully.

2. Development and decisions on topics

By having the ERA-NETs in the Work Programme, the development and decisions on topics follows the same procedures as for collaborative research projects. For the ERA-NETs in the Bioeconomy this means that Member States are engaged in the process both through

the Programme Committee (PC) and through the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR). Consultation may be sought from various expert groups, existing ERA-NET Actions and joint programming initiatives, the platform of Bioeconomy ERA-NETs, and other stakeholders, in particular those that develop or implement strategic research agendas. Changing the embedding of ERA-NETs means that the preparation and decision processes will have to be rethought as well.

3. Lack of funding for implementation of calls

Member States see great opportunities in pooling research funding in ERA-initiatives like ERA-NET Cofunds and JPIs. Between 2004 and 2013, covering the period of FP6 and FP7, 153 ERA-NETs and 23 ERA-NET Plus actions were created. The networks have organised some 325 joint calls with a total of estimated € 2.4 billion public funding in the Bioeconomy area alone. A main bottleneck for effective implementation of these initiatives is the lack of a proper instrument to fund implementation of calls through international "call secretariats". Based on the Commission presentation, neither FPA nor EJP will fund call implementation, therefore this problem seems to remain unresolved. The FPA/EJPs needs to provide a possibility for funding of the call administration.

4. Lack of instrument for networking and additional activities

The context against which calls are developed is dynamic and changes over time. Therefore, there is a need for exploring new areas for ERA collaboration, for scoping activities, for networking and for building bridges between disciplines and sectors. The ERA-NET managers call for instruments that take into account the need for networking and various other additional activities to build longer lasting collaborations and means for creating more impact from a joint call.

Specific concerns regarding the implementation of Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA)

5. Complexity of legal contracts

The past years we have seen great improvements in simplification and diminishing the administrative burden of participating in European projects. However, the administration concerning contract signing and contract amendments remains an extremely complex, meticulous and time consuming task. An FPA will be a single contract with an estimated 100 partners. Each Cofund partner will need to sign at least three legal contracts: the FPA, the consortium agreement to the FPA, and the Specific Agreement to each of the Cofund actions to which they allocate research budget. Moreover, many funding agencies, like national science councils or national enterprise agencies, finance research in various areas, and so the number of contracts will multiply accordingly. We fear that the administrative burden of management of FPA's will increase the overhead of implementation of ERA-NET Cofunds.

6. Bioeconomy is by definition not limited to a single societal challenge

Research in the Bioeconomy is not limited to a single societal challenge. This is reflected by bioeconomy related projects and ERA-initiatives in H2020 under health, agriculture & food, marine research, ICT, biotechnology and environment. Initiatives are more and more working together to foster multidisciplinary research. However, each individual FPA will cover only one specific societal challenge. We fear the FPA will, in this way, raise a new barrier to fund multidisciplinary research in ERA-NET Cofunds.

7. Extra barriers for international collaboration

Cooperation between the European Research Area Networks and organisations in global research can benefit the bioeconomy. Global cooperation can increase the outreach and impact of ERA-NET activities through having access to the best available knowledge and avoiding duplication of efforts and can address research areas with a clear global dimension. It is unclear if funding agencies or initiatives from outside Europe will benefit from the FPA; however they will need to accede to the FPA contract in order to participate in ERA-NET Cofunds. Consequences for international collaboration in terms of FPA raising additional barriers have to be evaluated carefully.

Specific concerns regarding the implementation of European Joint Programme (EJP)-Cofund

8. Long term financial commitment vs short term work programme

The EJP-Cofund demands that member states, more specifically funding agencies, give a commitment for a programme of 60 months. However the work programme of a specific EJP will be for 12 months, to be submitted 90 days before the end of a reporting period and to be evaluated by the European Commission. This way the European Commission will gain control over national funding without any obligation to consult Member States about the work programme of the EJP.

9. Cascading funds

The EJP-Cofund offers the opportunity, like an ERA-NET Cofund to fund research through competitive calls (so-called Cascading funds). However, unlike in ERA-NETS the funding rules cannot be adapted to national funding rules; the rules and reimbursement rates of the EJP always apply. Furthermore, projects under the EJP-Cofund scheme cannot run beyond the 60 months of the EJP. This means that, even though the EJP claims critical mass in funding, integration and maturity of the research, projects will typically run for a duration between 2 and 4 years. We fail to see the benefit of this instrument - with these conditions- for funding agencies.

10. Type of Activities

The European Joint Programme ('EJP') under Horizon 2020 is a co-fund action designed to support coordinated national research and innovation programmes. The EJP aims at attracting and pooling a critical mass of national resources on objectives and challenges of Horizon 2020 and at achieving significant economies of scales by adding related Horizon 2020 resources to a joint effort. The EJP-Cofund can fund a wide range of activities, ranging from research to coordination and networking activities, including training activities, demonstration and dissemination activities, support to third parties etc.

This "look and feel" of the EJP-Cofund scheme is reminiscent of the failed instrument of Network of Excellence (NoE). The NoE was an instrument under FP6 and FP7 aiming at attracting and pooling a critical mass by funding coordination and networking activities, including a joint research programme, training activities, demonstration and dissemination activities. The NoE was abolished as an instrument after very critical reviews in the midterm and *ex-post* evaluations on FP6.

Introduction to PLATFORM policy briefs

The Platform of bioeconomy ERA-NET Actions brings together funders and programme managers in European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs) in the fields that make up the bioeconomy: food, agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry, climate, biodiversity and biotechnologies. PLATFORM aims to improve exchange and cooperation and to strengthen the impact of the ERA-NET Actions on the European Research Area and the European bioeconomy.

PLATFORM was supported by FP7 in 2012-2014 (Grant number 288422) and is currently supported by Horizon 2020 (Grant number 652635) for the period 2015-2017. PLATFORM has become a robust forum and offers mutual learning and networking opportunities to the ERA-NET actors, thus enhancing coordination and maximising synergies. The project also engages other public-to-public (P2P) coordination networks, such as Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) and Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Working Groups.

During its current course, PLATFORM will publish at least three policy briefs to communicate results of analysis and discussions to decision makers at national and European level. The policy briefs are produced in frame of the Work Package 2 Policy: "Bottom-up recommendations to improve impact". The intention of policy briefs is to support and inform national programme owners and managers in their endeavours towards better coordination, the need for P2P cooperation and also towards opening up to currently underrepresented Member States that would be interested to join. The actors within the existing ERA-NETs and JPIs have, collectively, a good oversight and expertise and are well-positioned to explore opportunities for collaboration, as well as to give recommendations on new networks needed.

Policy Brief No. 1

This Policy Brief is the outcome of the discussions that took place at the PLATFORM World Café workshop 'Think Back, Act Forward' on collaboration between Member States, held March 27th, 2015 at Schiphol Airport in The Netherlands. It has been sent as a letter to the European Commission Directorate General Research and Innovation (DG-RTD) and Directorate General Agriculture and Rural Development (DG-AGRI), to the members of the Standing Committee of Agricultural Research (SCAR) and the Programme Committee (PC) for Societal Challenge 2 (Bioeconomy) (SC2). The letter was sent with a list of questions based on the conclusions of the workshop. The main conclusions of the workshop were provided as input for the EC workshop on April 27th, 2015 about the new instruments for Cofund Actions in SC2. The PLATFORM World Café Workshop focused on sustainable and alternative models for cooperation between public research programmes. Topics of debate were the new instruments the Commission proposes to introduce in the 2016-2017 Work Programme of SC2, the main challenges, and improved schemes for collaboration between Member States. Nineteen managers of ERA-NETs and JPIs from nine countries: France, Germany, Belgium, Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Denmark, United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. We thank all participants for sharing information and ideas and their contributions to the debate. The content of the policy brief has been prepared by the leaders of the PLATFORM Project Tasks 1.1 and the Project Coordinator. It reflects the views of the authors and is not an official position of the ERA-NET Community.

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PLATFORM

PLATFORM POLICY BRIEF Series, No. 2

Co-creation of a Global Bioeconomy



PLATFORM POLICY BRIEF No. 2

Co-creation of a Global Bioeconomy

Vision

Global food security, climate change, fossil resource depletion, as well as its own global competitiveness are major critical challenges Europe is facing at the beginning of the 21st century. The new vision of a knowledge-based bioeconomy will contribute to address these challenges.

The concept of a bioeconomy aims to simultaneously securing global nutrition, producing safe and healthy food, shaping sustainable agricultural production, developing energy sources based on biomass and supporting the industrial use of renewable resources are challenges that call for the targeted use of biological resources and procedures. This can only be achieved sustainably on a global scale. Thus, world-wide cooperation at political, economic and scientific level has become imperative.

Challenge

The implementation of a bioeconomy requires great political, economic and scientific effort. Most of the industrialised countries are promoting the vision of a bioeconomy and many of them have dedicated political and research strategies to implement a bioeconomy. Approaches towards strengthening the bioeconomy can also be found in emerging and in less developed countries¹. In many developing countries, economies are still largely dominated by a large agricultural sector providing food. Opportunities exist to utilise so far unused side products or residues from agricultural production as raw material for innovative products and energy without compromising food security. The high biodiversity and local rich food ingredients and drugs have a high global value and offer additional opportunities for rural areas. Also innovative processing and refinement of food and side products might add value. In contrast, for China, India and other emerging economies, the knowledge-based bioeconomy is identified as an opportunity for further industrial development. Cooperation among industrialised countries is required to achieve agreement on

sustainability, environment and use of natural resources. The collaboration in biotechnology and bioeconomy with these countries results in activities under key topics such as “closing technology gaps”, “from work bench to own developments” and “true co-development on equal level”. However they are often accompanied by uncertainties in legal status of the actors, difficulties in the context of intellectual property rights and deficits in quality assurance and absence of standards.

Proposed approach

With these specificities in mind, the PLATFORM partners suggest that it is possible and imperative – given the societal challenges of the 21st including such as scarcity of fossil resources, climate change and increasing world population – to co-develop a bioeconomy on a global scale with all interested partners worldwide.

Therefore long-term partnerships have to be built with the target countries and regions on equal level and step by step. Building of trust is certainly the first step, and in some research areas cooperations with regions or countries outside Europe have already started. Common interests might be identified based on exchange of information via workshops and mapping, followed by networking activities and pilot actions laid down in roadmaps and action plans. In depth R&D&I cooperation is thereby an important goal in many cases. Generally, the character of the cooperation will differ from country to country, region to region or sector to sector based on the nature and status of development.

In any case a clear mutual benefit (“what’s in it for each of us”) should be the engine to promote international cooperation. Thereby, partners of PLATFORM, mainly R&D&I funders, should focus on those joint initiatives in which innovation in the context of R&D is needed. Benefits of cooperation might be enhancing economic cooperation, mutual contribution to food security, opening new markets, capacity building, enhancing mobility opportunities and mobilising resources. But, whenever this benefit is doubted by one of the parties, the cooperation needs to be critically evaluated.

Further it seems appropriate not to re-invent the wheel and develop new cooperation formats from scratch but to use well proven instruments already available. Over

¹ For review see http://www.bioekonomierat.de/fileadmin/international/Bioeconomy-Policy_Part-II.pdf

the years an increasing number of ERA-NETs in the bioeconomy include international partners from outside the EU as associated partners; e.g. Russia was partner in ERA-IB and EuroTransBio, the United States of America was partner in EraSynBio, New Zealand is involved in Surplus, FACCE-ERA-NET Plus and ERA-GAS. In each case different motivation triggered the cooperation but it turned out to be of mutual benefit and it was easy to implement thanks to the tremendous flexibility of the instrument.

Proposed instrument: ERA-NET

The ERA-NET instrument, together with its successors ERA-NET Plus and ERA-NET Cofund, has proven to be a strong tool in transnational cooperation in many thematic areas². There is a vast consensus among the community in the bioeconomy networks about the added value of the instrument in this thematic area³. The instrument is also appropriate to address the challenges described above.

The ERA-NET instrument aims to contribute to building the European Research Area by implementing joint activities between the Member States in the field of research and development. Many features of the instrument have contributed to create a cornerstone in transnational R&D&I cooperation at the level of research programs:

- i) an individual ERA-NET concentrates on one clearly defined research field - a feature that allows developing suitable and tailor-made activities in the given area;
- ii) the instrument is flexible in that it allows to address research questions along the entire development and value chain – a property of particular importance for the bioeconomy which by definition concerns entire value chains;
- iii) it provides financial support for administration – an important enabler for smaller partner countries to participate in ERA-NETs.

² For review see *Report of Matrix-Ramboll study for the EC 'Evaluation and impact assessment of the ERA-NET scheme and the related ERA-NET actions under the 6th Framework' (2008)* http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/coordination/docs/fp6-era-net-evaluation-final-report-volume-3-sd16-to-sd24_en.pdf and *JRC Report of NETWATCH Study 'An assessment of the impact of the FP7 ERA-NET scheme on organisations and research systems' (2014)* http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC91595/netwatch_impact_assessment_report_edited_140929final.pdf

³ For review see *PLATFORM Report on the impact of the ERA-NETs to the European Knowledge Based Bioeconomy 'Cost benefit analysis of KBBE ERA-NETs' (2013)* and *PLATFORM report 'Recommendations on interaction and collaboration between ERA-NETs, European research policy platforms and national research and innovation authorities' (2014)* <http://www.era-platform.eu>

Recommendation

1. Use of the ERA-NET instrument (ERA-NET Cofund under Horizon 2020) to coordinate and co-finance international R&D&I efforts of the Member States in the field of the bioeconomy. This is recognised by the community as complementary to the coordination efforts undertaken by other actors as the Standing Committee on Agriculture (SCAR), FACCE-JPI, the JPI HDHL, the EIP AGRI, the JU BBI and the European Bioeconomy Panel.
2. Exploration of the potential for “internationalisation” by all existing ERA-NETs in the bioeconomy with the aim of triggering, strengthen or optimising global cooperation within the thematic field of the individual ERA-NET.
3. Consortia applying for new Cofund actions should include activities with international partners within their proposals (i.e. under “additional activities”).
4. Requirement of “internationalisation” in the topic descriptions of new ERA-NET Cofunds. This can be brought forward by the EC and the Programme Committees responsible of the Work Programmes that include bioeconomy ERA-NET Cofund topics.
5. Assessment of the possibilities for a dedicated ERA-NET Cofund topic “Towards Co-creation of a Global Bioeconomy” for one of the upcoming H2020 Working Programmes by the EC and Programme Committees of Societal Challenge 2 as well as 5 and Industrial Leadership.
6. Concerted actions of PLATFORM and other European initiatives in the context of the bioeconomy (e.g. the PC, SCAR, the JPIs FACCE and HDHL and the active ERA-NET Actions) to support and further develop the idea for such an ERA-NET Cofund-topic.

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Policy Brief No. 2

This policy brief is a result of discussions held at the first PLATFORM Annual Events in the session "Impact and alignment" and the session "Outreach to other geographical regions". The latter was the special topic of this Event, for which many guest speakers were invited. Participants included the PLATFORM project team, some Expert Advisory Group (EAG) members, many representatives from bioeconomy ERA-NETs, JPIs and SCAR WGs, and invited representatives from other coordination and learning projects and relevant European level policy bodies. We thank all speakers and other attendees for sharing information and ideas for the future and their contributions to lively group work and plenary session, and we thank partners and EAG members for valuable suggestions and comments to the draft. The content of the document has been prepared by the leaders of the PLATFORM Project Tasks 2.1 and 2.3 and the Project Coordinator. It reflects the views of the authors and is not an official position of the ERA-NET Community.

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PLATFORM

PLATFORM POLICY BRIEF Series, No. 3

The role of the ERA-NET instrument in fostering inclusiveness



PLATFORM POLICY BRIEF No. 3.

The role of the ERA-NET instrument in fostering inclusiveness

In the spirit of building an inclusive European Research Area, this policy brief provides recommendations for the European Commission (EC), ERA-NET initiatives and the so-called lower performing countries (LPCs) on how LPCs can become an integral and empowered part of the ERA-NET community.

Motivation

Disparities in research and innovation performance continue to exist among Member States, but the LPCs, as defined in the Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation Program of H2020, are not a homogeneous group, this applying also to their performance in ERA-NET initiatives. However, insight beyond general statistics was lacking. This motivated PLATFORM to take a more in-depth look at the participation of LPCs in bioeconomy ERA-NETs. PLATFORM focused on obstacles faced in joining ERA-NETs, the role LPCs have once their participation in an ERA-NET is secured (including the activities they perform and their success in joint transnational calls - JTCs), measures taken by ERA-NETs to increase LPC participation in network activities and in joint transnational calls (JTCs), and positive effects that participation may have for LPCs.

Approach

A statistical overview of LPC participation in bioeconomy ERA-NETs was first made, followed by surveys for ERA-NET coordinators, LPC National Contact Points/Program Committee/Standing Committee on Agricultural Research members, and LPC ERA-NET participants. The results of the surveys provided a comprehensive overview of issues at stake. This served as a basis for the PLATFORM Master Class on Inclusiveness, which aimed to support and empower LPCs to increase their involvement in bioeconomy ERA-NETs. The results of the surveys and the outcomes of the Master Class were further discussed with the whole bioeconomy P2P community and other relevant stakeholders in the 2016 PLATFORM Annual Event. The analysis, conclusions of the workshop, and the event report are available at www.era-platform.eu.

Results

The reasons why LPCs join ERA-NETs include:

- a potential to develop a (stronger) research community;
- an invitation to join;
- good experience in previous ERA-NETs;
- national policy makers propose participation;
- relevance to national Smart Specialization Strategy.

Reasons why LPCs do not join ERA-NETs include:

- lack of national funding, human resources or experience with ERA-NETs;
- administrative burdens and issues deriving from national legislation not being adapted for transnational cooperation;
- missing strategies regarding public-public partnership involvement and resulting lack of a systematic approach, unclear national priorities, and criteria for participation.

LPCs take up task and work package (WP) leadership in only a small number of ERA-NETs. The reasons include:

- experience, knowledge and competence for task;
- encouragement by consortium to take up task;
- funds for personnel needed;
- available human resources.

Reasons for not taking up WP or task leadership include:

- lack of human resources;
- lack of experience, knowledge or competence for task;
- position not offered;
- task already taken when joining the consortium.

LPCs experience several problems when it comes to JTC participation and success rates. These include:

- few project proposals;
- inability to use funds due to lower ranking;
- inability to secure funds;
- lack of flexibility in national rules and procedures;
- minor roles of LPC researchers in selected projects;
- contracting problems.

Table 1 Overview of Member States involved in the bioeconomy relevant ERA-NET Cofunds

	AT	BE	BG	CH	CY	CZ	DE	DK	ES	ET	FI	FR	GR	HU	IE	IT	LT	LV	MT	NL	NO	PO	PT	RO	SE	SK	SI	UK	Other
BiodivERsA3																					x							x	1
Waterworks2014																												x	3
FACCE SURPLUS																												x	
BESTF3																													
ERA-HDHL																													2
ERA4CS																													
SuSan																													1
WaterWorks2015																													7
FACCE ERA-GAS																													2
CORE Organic 4																													1
CoBioTech																													3
LEAP AGRI																													10
HDHL-INTIMIC																													1
SUSFOOD2																													1
marTERA																													4

Legend: ■ Coordinator ■ Participant x Country not participating in the JTC

• LPCs: BG, CY, CZ, ET, HU, LT, LV, MT, PO, RO, SK, SI

• Associate countries CH and NO are also included in the overview

• "Other" include associate and third countries (eligible for EU funding) and other countries. Specified for the ERA-NET Cofunds: BiodivERsA3: TR; Waterworks2014: IL, MD, TR; ERA-HDHL: CA, TR; SuSan: TR; WaterWorks2015: CA, EG, MD, ZA, TN, TR, TW; FACCE ERA-GAS: NZ, TR; CORE Organic 4: TR; CoBioTech: AR, IL, TR; LEAP AGRI: BF, CM, DZ, EG, GH, KE, ZA, SN, TR, UG; HDHL-INTIMIC: IL; SUSFOOD2: TR; marTERA: AR, BY, ZA, TR

• There are two more ERA-NET Cofunds in preparation phase, described in the H2020 Work Programme 2016-2017 as "Sustainable crop production" and "Innovative forest-based bioeconomy", which put great efforts in including LPCs into their consortia.

Recommendations for the EC

ERA-NETs should be recognized and promoted as a WIDENING INSTRUMENT, which allows LPCs and their research communities to become more involved in transnational activities.

THE MESSAGE AND THE WORDING SHOULD CHANGE. Countries that are currently 'low performing' could have untapped potential. Addressing those as (possibly) high potential countries (HPC) is more encouraging and stimulating. More needs to be done to communicate success stories, not just the barriers and problems LPCs face.

SIMPLE STATISTICS DO NOT TELL THE ENTIRE STORY. Content-based analysis needs to look behind the numbers, e.g. in JTCs success should be measured on the one hand by participation in the JTC and on the other by the number of funded projects (and not amount of funds an LPC puts into a JTC).

THE ROLE OF LPC NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS (NCPs) IN PROMOTING ERA-NETs SHOULD INCREASE. NCPs should be educated about the instrument and its benefits to offer guidance and administrative support to program owners/managers for their active involvement in ERA-NETs.

LPC's: a case for joining an ERA-NET

Participation in ERA-NETs means:

- ✓ accessing additional funding with a leverage effect
- ✓ accessing infrastructure, databases, and complementary skills
- ✓ accelerating knowledge-transfer
- ✓ gaining new expertise, capacity building, and unlocking potentials
- ✓ fostering excellence in science
- ✓ increasing impact at local socio-economic level
- ✓ contributing to solving societal challenges
- ✓ internationalizing the research community and increasing its visibility and prominence
- ✓ giving an opportunity to younger researchers
- ✓ gaining valuable experience in transnational

Recommendations for ERA-NETs

FOSTER CONTACT WITH ALL RELEVANT LPC INSTITUTIONS EARLY IN THE PROCESS, promoting potential benefits of participation (with the motivations and obstacles of LPCs to join an ERA-NET in mind). Build on existing networks, use hierarchy (contact high-level officials), increase the intensity and number of direct contacts and face to face meetings, directly address researchers in LPCs to push national funding organizations for (more active) participation.

TREAT LPCs AS EQUAL PARTNERS. Proactively give LPCs an opportunity to lead/actively participate in certain tasks (e.g. through WP/task co-leadership), encourage consortium meetings/ status seminars with side events for a wider research community in LPCs and increasing the number of experts from LPCs involved in the ERA-NET (as Strategic Advisory Board, Scientific Evaluation Board members, attendees of call scoping workshops, etc.).

BE SENSIBLE TOWARDS LPCs' DIFFICULTIES AND PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT WHEN NEEDED. Dedicate a task to mentor new members, including activities such as training and other capacity building activities as well as workshops allowing for the exchange of best practices to overcome barriers of national research and innovation systems.

INVITE FUNDING AGENCIES FROM NON-PARTICIPATING LPCs AS OBSERVERS inviting them to attend meetings with covered costs and allowing them to join the consortium at a later stage (possibly by securing enough funding for their participation).

INFORM NCPs ABOUT ERA-NET ACTIVITIES, including JTCs, and encourage them to promote them in the research community.

INCLUDE MECHANISMS FOR MORE SUCCESSFUL LPC JTC PARTICIPATION such as:

- ensuring JTCs include research topics relevant to LPCs;
- ensuring geographic balance in research consortia (as a specific requirement for consortium composition);
- providing partnering tools to find collaborators;
- adjusting the EC co-funding rate according to country status (more flexibility in budgetary procedures);
- allowing in-kind contributions for LPCs;
- encouraging research consortia to include LPCs (also only in full proposal stage);
- using a wildcard system (invitation of proposals with LPCs to full proposal stage if slightly below threshold);
- giving preference to proposals with LPCs if proposals score equally.

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Policy Brief No. 3

This policy brief is a result of a several PLATFORM activities: a statistical overview of LPC participation in bioeconomy ERA-NETs, surveys for ERA-NET coordinators, LPC NCPs /PC /SCAR members, and LPC ERA-NET participants. The results of the surveys served as a basis for the PLATFORM Master Class on Inclusiveness, which aimed to support and empower LPCs to increase their involvement in bioeconomy ERA-NETs. The results of the surveys and the outcomes of the Master Class were further discussed with the whole bioeconomy P2P community and other relevant stakeholders in the 2016 PLATFORM Annual Event. The analysis, conclusions of the workshop, and the event report are available at www.era-platform.eu. We thank all speakers and other attendees for sharing information and ideas for the future and their contributions to lively group work and plenary sessions. The content of the document has been prepared by the leaders of the PLATFORM Project Tasks 1.3, 2.2 and 4.2 and the Project Coordinator. It reflects the views of the authors and is not an official position of the ERA-NET Community.

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PLATFORM POLICY BRIEF Series, No. 4

Alignment in the Bioeconomy



Policy Brief No. 4 of the Platform of bioeconomy ERA-NET Actions, written for informing national and European programme owners and managers, February 2018.

PLATFORM POLICY BRIEF No. 4.

Alignment in the Bioeconomy

Introduction

Research, development and innovation (R&D&I) are required to realise sustainable welfare and wellbeing in western societies, but one of the major obstruction for continuous and smooth R&D&I is fragmentation, in funding, managing, execution and utilization. Alignment is the concept to fight that fragmentation at all levels, scientific, policy, professional and education, both nationally and internationally. On the level of research programs it is understood as strategic approach to modify national research programmes, priorities and activities to accomplish joint research priorities in order to improve the efficiency of investment in research.

Although valid for all sciences, this concept of alignment holds specific meanings for research in the bioeconomy. The EU put forward its vision of a bioeconomy as a sustainable, bio-based economic concept systematically using renewable resources with the aim to secure the global food supply and simultaneously sufficient raw material for industrial use. This can only be implemented in a joint transnational approach. The bioeconomy strategy was published in 2012 (COM (2012)60¹) and supports better alignment of EU research and innovation funding with established priorities of bioeconomy-related policies. A strategic approach towards the development and implementation of the bioeconomy has been presented by European stakeholders in the European Bioeconomy Stakeholders Manifesto². The global dimension of the societal challenges which the Bioeconomy is addressing requires reinforced cooperation at international level. The Bioeconomy Strategy and Manifesto assist Europe in taking a leading role in promoting the transition towards a global bioeconomy. International cooperation on bioeconomy matters will need to be driven by research and innovation and facilitate exchange of scientific knowledge and sharing of best practices on global issues and policy areas, in particular regarding food security, climate change, environment and resources, capacity building and trade.

Alignment of policies and services to society

Since 2013 the EU is orienting a substantial part of its framework programme “Horizon 2020” on seven Societal Challenges (SC) in order to implement the EU 2020 strategy³. In 2015 the international community has adopted at the G7 Summit in Elmau the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)⁴ as a common goal for the future as well as it has signed in Paris the COP21 Climate agreement to fight global warming. Four out of the seven SCs of the EU and twelve out of the seventeen SDGs are directly related to the bioeconomy. Also, the bioeconomy is strongly influenced by the implications of COP21.

- For bioeconomy tremendous joint and aligned efforts are necessary by all actors to implement the agreed policies. Research actions and programmes should address the Societal Challenges (EU) or Sustainable Development Goals (UN), and each of which needs to be evaluated on the added value to the SCs and/or SDGs.
- Clear and measurable goals, a common language as well as improved communication on the bioeconomy between all stakeholders is necessary to monitor the degree of achievement.
- Alignment on European and international scale should become an integrated component of all national bioeconomy strategies and programmes (see also platform’s policy brief on inclusiveness⁵)

Alignment of national research programmes and strategies

On the level of research programmes alignment is understood as a strategic approach undertaken by Member States to modify their national research programmes, priorities or activities as a consequence of the adoption of joint research priorities in the context of Joint Programming, to improve the efficiency of investment in research⁶.

Member states and the EU have already put in place significant activities to foster alignment of their national programmes. Since 1974 the Standing Committee for

¹ Com (2012)60: http://ec.europa.eu/research/bioeconomy/pdf/official-strategy_en.pdf

² http://ec.europa.eu/research/bioeconomy/pdf/european_bioeconomy_stakeholders_manifesto.pdf

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

⁵ <http://era-platform.eu/publications/policy-briefs/>

⁶ <https://www.era-learn.eu/alignment/definition-typology>

Agricultural Research (SCAR) is coordinating Member States' research in agriculture, termed "primary biomass production" in the bioeconomy. In 2010 the Joint Programming Initiative on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE-JPI) was established and has spent so far well over 100 M€ on research on agriculture, food and the bioeconomy. Further, ERA-NETs contributed significantly to align national programmes in the wide area of the bioeconomy and since 2012 the European Innovation Partnership EIP-AGRI is committed to align R&D&I undertaken under the common agricultural policies.

Analyses by some of us on alignment activities in Coordination Actions of the EU-framework programmes (ERA-NET, ERA-NET Plus and ERA-NET Cofund) have shown that these initiatives are a family of very successful instruments for research programme alignment in bioeconomy (for a list of CAs see also Platforms database⁷). Their particular strength is in alignment of research funding via joint calls and programmes. And yet, compared to the overall catalogue of alignment activities in the Coordination Actions individual initiatives typically use only a comparably small set of well proven alignment measures.

- Existing and in particular new Coordination Actions should carefully explore the full catalogue of established alignment measures in order to deploy the full potential for alignment.
- Additional alignment measures such as Knowledge-Hubs, Joint Workshops and other network activities with regard to stakeholder involvement, market approaches, business models and socio-economy issues might add value to the alignment efforts in research initiatives in bioeconomy and should be tested on a case by case base for their usefulness.
- Alignment and coordination of research by utilisation of existing infrastructures should be improved to enhance efficiency of investments.
- Stakeholder involvement should be enhanced on two levels:
 - on the level of programme design to ensure innovation potential provided by the research conducted and
 - on the level of dissemination of research results to facilitate utilisation and, where possible, enable tech-transfer to products and supply services.

Alignment of national procedures for Transnational Joint Calls in legislation

The majority of the Member States is used to set up joint calls under the ERA-NET scheme since well over a decade. From the very beginning great efforts were necessary to align the ERA-NET procedures with each and every national regulation of the participating Member States. The ERA-NETs have made countries aware of the strictly national focus of these funding procedures and made obvious the need for adjustment, but it became also obvious that this is only possible by endorsement from a high level.

- Continuous and enduring efforts are necessary to convince national and EU authorities of the tremendous impact of a considerable alignment of funding modalities in Europe (MS and EU). An agreement on a high political level is required to align the respective national and EU legislation and discussions on this topic should start.

Outlook to EU-framework programme 9 (FP 9)

The mid-term evaluation from the H2020 programme⁸ pointed out that existing alignment intensity covers the pillars of the programme, but that a necessity for improvement was identified in the need for:

- more countries to catch up, specifically New Member States
- more impact focused, more result oriented and
- more involvement of Civil Society and user driven innovation.

A new approach should be implemented which is mission oriented, impact focused, which addresses global challenges and also better aligns national and EU commitments (LAB –FAB – APP)⁹. This new approach should facilitate maximizing the impact of future EU research and innovation in the bioeconomy domain.

It asks for clear budgets, priorities, high quality education but also markets that are driven by our societal needs. Research becomes demand driven, in co-creation with citizens and industry, opening new more sustainable markets. In this new economy the bioeconomy will play an important role as a sustainable supplier of renewable low carbon resources. FP9 can should enable this improved approach.

⁷ <http://era-platform.eu/p2p-networks/platform-db/>

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/index_en.cfm?pg=h2020evaluation

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/other_reports_studies_and_documents/hlg_2017_report.pdf

Introduction to PLATFORM policy briefs

The Platform of bioeconomy ERA-NET Actions brings together funders and programme managers in European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs) in the fields that make up the bioeconomy: food, agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry, climate, biodiversity and biotechnologies. PLATFORM aims to improve exchange and cooperation and to strengthen the impact of the ERA-NET Actions on the European Research Area and the European bioeconomy.

PLATFORM was supported by FP7 in 2012-2014 (Grant number 288422) and is currently supported by Horizon 2020 (Grant number 652635) for the period 2015-2017. PLATFORM has become a robust forum and offers mutual learning and networking opportunities to the ERA-NET actors, thus enhancing coordination and maximising synergies. The project also engages other public-to-public (P2P) coordination networks, such as Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) and Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Working Groups.

During its current course, PLATFORM published four policy briefs to communicate results of analysis and discussions to decision makers at national and European level. The policy briefs are produced in frame of the Work Package 2 Policy: “Bottom-up recommendations to improve impact”. The intention of policy briefs is to support and inform national programme owners and managers in their endeavours towards better coordination, the need for P2P cooperation and also towards opening up to currently underrepresented Member States that would be interested to join. The actors within the existing ERA-NETs and JPIs have, collectively, a good oversight and expertise and are well-positioned to explore opportunities for collaboration, as well as to give recommendations on new networks needed.

Policy Brief No. 4

This policy brief is a result of discussions held at the PLATFORM Annual Event 2017, 5-6 October, Rome, Italy, in the session “Impact and alignment”. The session was based on the inventory on alignment activities of ERA-NET Cofund Actions in the bioeconomy which was performed as part of Task 2.3. Participants included the PLATFORM project team, many representatives from bioeconomy ERA-NETs, JPIs and SCAR WGs, and invited representatives from other coordination and learning projects and relevant European level policy bodies. We thank all speakers and other attendees for sharing information and ideas for the future and their contributions to lively group work and plenary session, and we thank partners and EAG members for valuable suggestions and comments to the draft. The content of the document has been prepared by the leaders of the PLATFORM Project Tasks 2.1 and 2.3 and the Project Coordinator. It reflects the views of the authors and is not an official position of the bioeconomy P2P Community.

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