



Managing calls efficiently and effectively in bioeconomy ERA-NETs

Call officers of European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs) on bioeconomy relevant themes met at a two-day master class in Brussels. They shared knowledge and experiences and collectively provided recommendations for future ERA-NET calls. Through such mutual learning activities the European PLATFORM initiative aims to improve the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of call management.

The main outcome of the discussions at the master class confirmed the key result of a broad survey performed among the ERA-NETs: sufficient flexibility and pragmatism in the evaluation and selection process are of key importance for transnational calls. This would foster a larger impact of the investment provided through national funds and EC top-up funding on building the ERA.



Specific recommendations were given concerning call organisation, support tools, proposal evaluation and ranking, project selection and negotiation, funding and joint project monitoring. They include:

Call, evaluation and ranking of applications

- Transparent communication of national regulations regarding eligibility is required for applicants.
- Clear communication and transparency by national funding organisations about funding ceilings and the type of project costs they expect to fund are important.
- There is absolute need for a clear Code of Conduct on Conflicts of Interest regarding scientific experts.
- There is absolute need for clear instructions to external reviewers and review panel on the selection criteria and about scoring.
- A rebuttal step, after review of full proposals and before the review panel meeting, adds value to the quality of assessment and transparency.
- The possibility of access to the expert database of the EU Commission Services for ERA-NETs should become better known.



Selection of recommended applications and funding decision

- Ranking in barrels instead of a prescriptive ranking list should be considered for transnational calls with distributed pots as it allows optimising the use of available funding and it avoids the artificial hierarchy among proposals of similar quality.

Project negotiation

- Avoidance of any cut-back of project budget during funding negotiations is considered best practice, as long as the funding requests are appropriate and considered necessary.
- Any revised proposal should be re-evaluated by (part of) the review panel.

Joint project monitoring

- Project progress monitoring at the transnational level is beneficial as it is an indicator for the performance of the consortium as a whole.
- The development of a database with key project information for all projects granted within the calls of all ERA-NETs is recommended.

Read more in the full report 'Best practices and recommendations for effective and cost-efficient call management in bioeconomy related ERA-NETs'.

This paper constitutes Deliverable 3.1 of PLATFORM and is part of the work package Mutual Learning. The main objective of this work package is to create an open learning environment that facilitates sharing good practice and experience between bioeconomy ERA-NET actors, as well as relevant JPIs and SCAR Working Groups. The results address important items for the success of the activities of ERA-NETs individually and their compiled impact on the bioeconomy. All reports can be found on the website:

www.era-platform.eu

About the European Bioeconomy and ERA-NETs

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Performance of joint calls and other impact indicators of bioeconomy ERA-NETs

Cost-benefit indicators are considered valuable for orientation and decision making at all levels, since they report achievements and allow future planning. In a study the PLATFORM project has measured up the activities of bioeconomy related European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs) of FP6 and FP7 with regards to the associated efforts and outcomes of call implementation and implicit networking activities.

The benefits are clear. 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.



These impressive figures stand for the global picture, but of course there are differential call balances and individual developments within and across single ERA-NETs within this ten year period.

But what were the costs? A PLATFORM study reveals that it is always important to consider the scope and research field of an individual network, but some general conclusions apply:

- The bioeconomy ERA-NETs managed to mobilise on average € 12 million for a call, but the funding varies notably: from a small pilot of just € 1 million, up to large calls with volumes between € 30 and 40 million.
- On average, the implementation of a call required a joint effort of approximately 50 person months.
- Additional costs necessary to generate a project can be benchmarked with € 33 k per project.
- National funding contributions leverage the EU funding of ERA-NETs by a factor 5 to 40, with an implicit positive trend towards higher values as long as the networks remain active.
- Cost-benefit indicators are considered valuable for orientation and decision making at all levels, since they report achievements and allow future planning.



The outcome of this study is interesting for all ERA-NET stakeholders and also other entities that perform joint calls, because it provides figures on the costs and outcomes of implemented joint calls. It can serve for orientation on transfer costs associated with the implementation of joint calls and provide benchmarks for the cost planning of transnational funding instruments. It will equally well inform policy makers engaged in the bioeconomy and build a basis for decision making.

Read more in the full report 'Cost benefit analysis of KBBE ERA-NETs'. This paper constitutes Deliverable 3.2 of PLATFORM and is part of the work package Mutual Learning. The main objective of this work package is to create an open learning environment that facilitates sharing good practice and experience between bioeconomy ERA-NET actors, as well as relevant JPIs and SCAR Working Groups. The results address important items for the success of the activities of ERA-NETs individually and their compiled impact on the bioeconomy. All reports can be found on the website:

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Increasing collaborations between bioeconomy ERA-NETs for future benefits

A study from the PLATFORM project has mapped out opportunities for collaborations among existing bioeconomy European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs) and with JPIs. Through inter-network collaborations the efficiency and effectiveness of research can be improved and cross-cutting or overlapping areas can be addressed. The identified opportunities are good starting points for integrated joint programming, and dissemination, and for new ERA-NET Cofund actions in Horizon 2020 and other activities such as fully member state funded multi-disciplinary calls, joint networking, training and dissemination.

The initiatives included in the study span ERA-NETs, ERA-NET Plus actions, and Joint Programme Initiatives (JPIs) in the bioeconomy sectors. Through an exploratory inventory areas were identified where inter-network cooperation on overlapping or neighbouring topics could have a clear added value. General recommendations from the network coordinators include:

- In a changing environment, and with changing projects, research agendas and political framework, a continuous search for collaboration possibilities between existing and new initiatives and networks is a necessity. This concerns all actors.
- Joint calls, which are an established mechanism to implement collaboration between countries, can be employed for inter-network collaboration as well. This widens the opportunities for researchers, businesses and programme and policy makers.
- Bioeconomy topics that require collaboration among countries and that are in the focus of the Horizon

2020 areas should be boosted by the ERA-NET Cofund instrument.





- Further workshops should be organised for funding authorities and other ERA-NET actors to investigate common interests, to formulate bottom-up needs for new collaborations and to develop joint activities.

Collaborations at different levels

The results clearly show that the collaborations can take place at different levels, e.g., joint workshops and joint calls. The inventory, which included questionnaires, a desk study, and a match-making session at a PLATFORM annual event yielded concrete recommendations for 11 joint workshops to disseminate research findings, 19 interests for exploring joint calls on overlapping or cross-cutting topics between two or more networks, and 17 expressions of interest for other kinds of collaboration.

Read more in the full report ‘Collaboration among public-public research coordination networks in the bioeconomy’. This paper constitutes Deliverable 4.1 of PLATFORM and is part of the work package Common Vision and Strategy. The main objective of this work package is to define the strategic position and dimension of ERA-NETs within the European Research Area and to provide recommendations for high impact cooperation and collaboration of ERA-NETs with other actors in the knowledge based bioeconomy. All reports can be found on the website:

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Increasing collaboration and cooperation between ERA-NETs and JPIs

The PLATFORM project explored how to increase the synergy between the bioeconomy European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs) and the Joint Programme Initiatives (JPIs), with the aim to contribute to building the European Research Area. The JPI on Food Security, Agriculture and Climate Change- FACCE-JPI, the JPI Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans, the JPI Climate, the Water JPI, and the JPI A Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life; all joint programmes in the bioeconomy domain, were looked into.

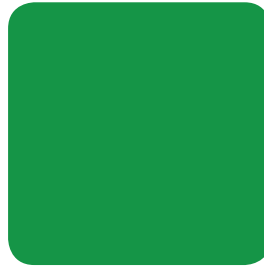
The responses to the questionnaire put to the JPIs showed:

- JPIs can learn from ERA-NETs; among others, from their previous experiences and well-established structures.
- Mapping exercises performed by ERA-NETs are useful for JPIs; they provide thematic overviews of the research landscape and often also an overview of institutes, funding organisations, research infrastructures and national existing and future programmes.
- Collaboration with an existing ERA-NET is a potential tool for implementing short-term research priorities of the JPI Strategic Research Agendas (SRA).
- The new ERA-NET Cofund instrument can be used to implement topics from the SRA, provided there is sufficient national financial commitment and critical mass.

Also, an important role was indicated for PLATFORM, in being a linking communicator and forum provider for programming authorities and network actors in the ERA-

NETs and JPIs on bioeconomy relevant topics as well as SCAR Working Groups.





Among information to be exchanged are the following:

- Best practices
- Tools
- Early information on upcoming calls
- Outcomes of mapping and scoping exercises
- Strategic Research (and Innovation) Agendas

The next PLATFORM project can also work together with ERA-NETs and JPIs to catalyse cooperation, exchange, and synergy. Also the experiences with the new Cofund instrument can be gathered and evaluated for its suitability to fulfil objectives of the networks.

Read more in the full report 'Collaboration and cooperation between ERA-NETs and JPIs'. This paper constitutes Deliverable 4.2 of PLATFORM and is part of the work package Common Vision and Strategy. The main objective of this work package is to define the strategic position and dimension of ERA-NETs within the European Research Area and to provide recommendations for high impact cooperation and collaboration of ERA-NETs with other actors in the knowledge based bioeconomy. All reports can be found on the website:

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Getting ahead: recommendations for ERA-NETs and industry in the bioeconomy

The European PLATFORM initiative has presented recommendations for better exchange and coordination between European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs) and industry-driven initiatives in the bioeconomy. Improving the existing collaborations and setting up new ones helps to realise the potential of research and innovation to produce ‘more and better quality’ in a sustainable way.

From interviews and questionnaires with European Technology Platforms (ETPs) and Public Private Partnerships, the programme managers in the PLATFORM initiative conclude that ERA-NETs are well known in all industry-driven initiatives questioned. Most are already actively cooperating or trying to set up links with ERA-NETs in their field. There is clear value in networking, as vital interests are shared by all relevant stakeholders.

Based on the inventory and analysis, recommendations to further improve on these networks and collaborations were compiled in a PLATFORM report. A small pick from the various pieces of advice for ERA-NETs, industry initiatives, and the European Commission:

- Explore ways to improve communication: personal contact and enthusiasm for exchange are key to successful collaboration.
- Organise joint activities, such as workshops to define priority areas.
- Create an environment in which collaboration can blossom.

The surveys clearly highlighted the practical results of the collaborations between ERA-NETs and industry-driven initiatives, the most important one being the use of the ETPs’ Strategic Research Agendas in the planning and preparation of joint calls for R&D proposals. Joint events such as conferences, workshops, and





programming sessions were also mentioned repeatedly. Both ERA-NETs and ETPs agreed that close collaboration on such strategic issues holds the largest benefit for both sides.

Read more in the full report 'Interaction of ERA-NETs and industry-driven networks in the bioeconomy'. This paper constitutes Deliverable 4.3 of PLATFORM and is part of the work package Common Vision and Strategy. The main objective of this work package is to define the strategic position and dimension of ERA-NETs within the European Research Area and to provide recommendations for high impact cooperation and collaboration of ERA-NETs with other actors in the knowledge based bioeconomy. All reports can be found on the website:

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Benefiting the bioeconomy through global cooperation

Cooperation between the European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs) and organisations in global research can benefit the bioeconomy. The PLATFORM project has explored the experiences and (potential) interest and published the findings on global collaborations in its series of recommendation papers.

The results show opportunities for ERA-NETs that address research areas with a clear global dimension (such as agricultural research for development, climate action, land use, and statutory plant health), or where combined expertise can speed up knowledge creation and innovation (such as plant sciences, animal production, or biodiversity). Benefits lay in combining research budgets- so more budget is available and budget effi-

ciency is increased-, access to research infrastructures, and critical mass of researchers.

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. The programme managers recommend starting up small pilots in specialised research fields, involving partners from third countries in joint calls that have already bilateral collaboration, and working together preferably from the start on.

A survey among bioeconomy ERA-NET coordinators was conducted in this study. The motivations were investigated as well as the benefits and barriers encountered in working with funding organisations outside the EU and with global partnerships. The overview of relevant global research alliances and intergovernmental organisations, including some with which there is no collaboration yet, was further elaborated by an internet search. The same set-up was used for insight into participation of funding partners from third countries. A call on social media (LinkedIn) and sourcing literature and reports gave complementary information on current practice and global collaboration potential, and on the rationale and experiences.





Read more in the full report 'Global partnerships of bioeconomy ERA-NETs and JPIs'. This paper constitutes Deliverable 4.4 of PLATFORM and is part of the work package Common Vision and Strategy. The main objective of this work package is to define the strategic position and dimension of ERA-NETs within the European Research Area and to provide recommendations for high impact cooperation and collaboration of ERA-NETs with other actors in the knowledge based bioeconomy. All reports can be found on the website:

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Fostering partnerships and national embedding for ERA-NET actions with impact

The European PLATFORM initiative calls for increased interaction and collaboration between European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs), other European research policy platforms and national research and innovation authorities to tackle issues facing bioeconomy research today and tomorrow. Recommendations are aimed at maximising synergies, operational interactions, and high-impacting contributions to coordinate and collaborate across country and institutional borders.

The context for European research and research programming has changed considerably in the last decade. The launch of Horizon 2020 has added to the dynamics of the environment as experienced by national programme managers and their European networks. We have the new ERA-NET Cofund instrument. There are less funds in many countries, and stronger push towards working across sectors and disciplines, along value chains, and with stakeholders. As such, these are all driving forces behind increasing the interactions and collaborations. Also, these developments cause a shift for the ERA-NETs from strategic, analytical and networking activities towards a focus on call implementation.

Efficiency, synergy, and inclusiveness

Both on a national and European level, reduction of administrative burdens, and costs, as well as an overall rationalisation of funding are seen already. Sharper choices on participation in networks and calls are expected in the coming years. ERA-NETs can synergise their calls for cost-efficiency and better service to the scien-

tific community. In PLATFORM the networks can pursue this collectively. PLATFORM also fosters explorations





towards aligning research from different nations e.g. by collaborative programmes between ERA-NETs involving more countries, funders, disciplines and/or sectors. Also commitment from new member states is important. Opportunities for increasing their participation in the ERA-NETs should be investigated more.

Policy and programming partnerships

Recommendations to increase interaction and collaboration include strengthening the connections between bioeconomy ERA-NETs and various European policy platforms. These are the Horizon 2020 Programme Committees, the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR), the Bioeconomy Panel, the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC), and, for those with overlapping focus, the European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD), the European Innovation Partnership initiatives (EIPs), and the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). As a result the ERA-NETs can contribute more to strategy and policy, and the mentioned policy platforms can contribute more to coordination among national programmes including call implementation.

Read more in the full report ‘Recommendations on interaction and collaboration between ERA-NETs, European research policy platforms and national research and innovation authorities’. This paper constitutes Deliverable 4.5 of PLATFORM and is part of work package 4 Common Vision and Strategy. The main objective of this work package is to define the strategic position and dimension of ERA-NETs within the European Research Area and to provide recommendations for high impact cooperation and collaboration of ERA-NETs with other actors in the knowledge based bioeconomy. All reports can be found on the website:

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