



PLATFORM

ANNUAL EVENT 2016

**The bigger picture: P2Ps for Inclusiveness and
Innovation**

**October 6th – 7th 2016
Neboticnik Skyscraper, Ljubljana, Slovenia**

FINAL REPORT



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

October 6th 2016

“Dobrodošli!” (Welcome!) is what **TOMAŽ BOH**, Secretary of State at Ministry of Education, Science and Sport MIZŠ in Slovenia said, and this is what he meant. Two days the Platform Annual Event was warmly hosted by MIZŠ in the city that received the European “Green capital award 2016”. Group works were carried out, contacts were renewed, best practises were shared and, most of all, “Inclusiveness” was discussed.

PETRA ŽAGAR (MIZŠ, SI) and **INO OSTENDORF** (MinEA, NL) chaired the meeting of around 60 participants from 20 countries who represented various networks that were not only limited to Bioeconomy related ERA-NETs. Delegates from ministries and funding agencies could be found next to researchers or representatives from European institutions.

The background to the Horizon 2020 PLATFORM project and the annual events was given by **CHRISTINE BUNTHOF** (WUR, NL), PLATFORM Coordinator. Christine highlighted the specific outcomes PLATFORM engages in, including networking events, policy briefs and a brand-new Platform database, which offers insight into over 1.000 funded research projects in the Bioeconomy field.

“Inclusiveness” was the big keyword of this annual event, and local organiser **KIM TURK** (MIZŠ, SI), expressed her content with Slovenia already being a well-established partner in the PLATFORM project and in many other ERA-NET actions – which makes clear the term “low performing country” (LPC) should (if at all) be used very precisely and sector-specificly (see box below). Kim pointed out, that the aim of inclusiveness should not only be to get LPCs “behind the table” but get them to participate in discussions – and this is exactly what happened in the following two networking days in Ljubljana.

BLOCK I - IMPACT AND ALIGNMENT

BARNA KOVACS (EC RTD.F.1 and SCAR Secretariat), project officer for the PLATFORM project, started the session on “Impact and Alignment” by introducing the “EC Bioeconomy state of play – political context, policies and stakeholders”.

According to him, one important reason for “low performing activities” is the lack of national strategies, illustrating this with an image of the current state of Member states having adopted national Bioeconomy Strategies. Barna said that on EU level the EU Bioeconomy Strategy review is one of four immediate priorities which will have an impact on future ERA-NETs and programming initiatives. ERA-NETs and JPIs will be consulted for this review.



Picture 1 Bioeconomy strategies in Europe (BARNA KOVACS)

Barna further explained that there will be changes in the joint programming rules subsequently to an internal evaluation of all joint programming. Although the final results have not yet been published, the discussions are going into the direction of *new criteria for better impact*, e.g. on (1) justification of EU intervention, (2) expected impacts on EU and national level and (3) budgetary issues and leverage effects. The latter results from a high underspending rate of P2Ps, so consequences could include funding a smaller number of ERA-NETs which do bigger calls. In order to influence the discussions, Barna is asking for *two examples for the best impact driven ERA-NETs* (just half a page). The criteria will be openly discussed on 22-23 November 2016 at Annual Joint Programming Conference – thus Barna invited all participants to join.

TAKE ACTION!

There were questions from the audience, whether even more rules could indeed encourage more countries to engage in ERA-NETs. Barna explained that it is difficult for the EC to see the impact of the ERA-NETs at national level, so the current idea is to merge, to combine calls, possibly not invest less money, but have a smaller number of networks funded. Another comment to Barna was that the ERA-NET instrument in the work programme is not open enough and is too narrow, and that the member states should get the possibility to enlarge it. Barna answered that the calls have to be channelled based on several challenges but that often in the end they end up narrow. The dialogue ended with giving emphasis to the three Os of the vision for Europe: *“Open science, open innovation, open to the world...”*

After the keynote presentation, the results of the analysis of ERA-NET CoFund actions under H2020 were presented by **IOANA ISPAS** from the ERA-NET CoFund Expert Group. The group that was set up in 11/2015, examined the preparation and implementation of 27 ERA-NET Cofund actions via interviews, online surveys and workshops. An interesting fact is, that the average budget per cofunded call amounts to 21.6M€ - with another surprising finding: not so many consortia know of ERA-LEARN. Ioana presented various implementation problems, e.g. shrinking national research budgets, limited long-term commitment and also – responding to “widening” or “inclusiveness” - positively emphasizing work package leads by EU13 countries. She agreed with Barna that a major factor limiting participation are missing/unclear strategies, but also explained other reasons such as the lack of budget, awareness and experience or complicated national administrative procedures. Lack of management costs coverage is also a drawback, but past ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus actions have already paved the conditions for producing solid ties of mutual trust among the countries as a significant pre-condition. The final ERA-NET COFUND report will be available from November 2016.

Replying to a question regarding economic value as an added value of ERA-NET COFUNDs Ioana explained that economic value will not be expressed in the report as it is difficult to define. Factors influencing economic value are however addressed. Another question addressed the issue of coordinating CSAs and Cofunds in the same field (e.g. in health), which requires significant additional efforts. Ioana clarified that it is the role of CSAs to explore if there’s an interest in a Cofund.

INCLUSIVENESS – WIDENING – LOW PERFORMANCE COUNTRY – LPC - HIGH POTENTIAL COUNTRY

The term “low performing” (members states or regions) is explained in the Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation Programme of H2020. A member state ranked below 70% of the EU27 average of the “composite indicator on Research Excellence” is considered “low performing”. According to this, the “Low RDI Performing” or “Widening” Countries include the following countries:

- Member states: BG, HR, CY, CZ, ES, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, PL, PT, RO, SK, SL
- Associated countries: AL, BA, FO, MK, MD, ME, RS, TK, UA

During the PLATFORM Annual Event on “Inclusiveness and Innovation” it became evident that the term “low performance country” is too broad and cannot be used overall, as research excellence as well as participation in P2Ps is very science-sector specific in every country. Further “performance” cannot only be limited to statistical numbers but should be seen from many aspects that vary from country to country. The Master class on inclusiveness (05/2016 Vienna) underlined that the term LPC *“is a NO GO”* suggesting the term “high potential countries” as more suitable.

BARNA KOVACS (PLATFORM project officer) stated that, as far as he noticed, the EC rather uses the terms “cohesion” or “Eastern European” countries, generally talking of excellence in science rather than of country performances.

As the Bioeconomy strategy is of high relevance, the Bioeconomy Stakeholder Conference BEU in Utrecht came at the right time. **CHRISTINE BUNTHOF** drew a picture of this event, where 300 (!) stakeholders participated in various workshops, side visits and interactive tables, the outcomes of which fed into the “EU stakeholders manifesto - Building blocks for Bioeconomy”. One of the guiding principles underlying the manifesto is “**connectivity is the new productivity**” and Christine further highlighted the tremendous importance of public dialogue as, for example, “A biorefinery is not what people want in their backyard...” (...due to noises and smells). According to the stakeholder manifesto, direct actions of the Member States and the EC should include “greener” public procurement, a CAP reform, better access to finance/more investment, innovation deals, a level playing field between applications of different sectors, more investments and more space for frontrunners (asked for by SMEs). Answering the question “what do P2Ps do for the Bioeconomy?” Christine pointed out P2Ps play an important role in the research pillar and in interaction with other stakeholders. In the group work of session 1, two groups discussed further on the Manifesto building blocks most relevant to MS collaborations in research programming and funding were discussed, and a scheme (figure 2) was drawn. The discussion outcomes will be brought into the Manifesto editing group.

[Link to video!](#)



Picture 2 Group work on Bioeconomy Manifesto

ANGUS HUNTER (ERA-LEARN) presented the “Centralised impact assessment of projects from ERA-NET Cofunds” as executed by ERA-LEARN. The framework for this still has to be agreed upon, but a focus on outcomes, direct and indirect impacts is envisioned. Next steps include the preparation of surveys and a debate at the Annual Joint Programming Conference in November in Brussels, with a possibility to still further develop the methodology. Angus invited everyone to join the efforts – **VOLUNTEERS are welcome** to contact him.

TAKE ACTION!

The audience was very interested in the results the assessment can offer, as in Kim’s words “the tree grows” - being connected and having initialised ERA-NET participation results in even more participations. However, it is unfortunate that usually post-project outcomes are not well-known, as funding is limited to the project duration. Apparently, EUREKA uses questionnaires after 6 months and again after 3 years after project end asking for further outputs from the projects. **CASPER ZULIM DE SWARTE** added that “...people have different expectations; success is defined differently... depending on the reason of participation you need to assess this in different ways...”.

Group work in Session 1 on practical experiences in ERA-NET participations brought lively discussions. The outcomes will also feed into the writing of the PLATFORM Policy Brief on Impact and Alignment.

GROUP WORK 1 - IMPACT AND ALIGNMENT

1a. What are the main obstacles to your participation in ERA-NETs...

- BUDGET UNCERTAINTIES (*official budget vs black box; limited funding; uncertainty of budgets until the very end of financial reporting; national budgetary issues (in kind / in cash); coordination resources*)
- COMPLEXITY OF RULES (*more discussions at partner level; administration at national level; not sufficient time frame of 5 years and necessary call planning before start of the Cofund*)
- LIMITED RESSOURCES (*limited funding & human resources (no reimbursement, short staffed)*)
- DIVERSITY OF PARTNERS (*difference in rules and engagement between MS/other countries; diverse funders landscape; big differences in budget commitments by countries vs the scientific community pressure (beyond EU); administration at national level may not support such kind of funding*)
- SPECIFIC ISSUES with “open to the world” (*administrative burden / complexity; language; training needed*)

1b. ...and what should be changed to make the instrument more attractive and interesting?

- fixed management cost, separate from funding
- management rules by EC should get simplified, harmonised, more flexible, clear and fixed
- roles in consortium to be better defined (it is beneficial if every partner has an active role)
- better tools for managing funds (*excellence criteria, innovation criteria, inclusion of whole alignment chain*)
- Rules between countries and research funders should be harmonised

2. What should be the role of ERA-NET Cofund in supporting the alignment of national R&I policies? What are the main activities other than joint calls that need to be supported?

- mapping, coordination of national calls
- development of a common research agenda (that will lead all activities of an ERA-Net and also go beyond the ERA-Net)
- SRA may help set priorities for national R&I agendas
- alignment of funded projects under uneven funding mechanisms
- knowledge hubs
- ERA-NETs should give input in terms of recommendations for national policies
- mutual learning is also relevant and could be promoted better
→ Question: is it the role of CoFunds or rather the role of JPIs to support alignment?

3. How can ERA-NETs be better integrated into national policy portfolios?

- give feedback to national policy makers
- improve cooperation / coordination of different R&D players at national or regional level
- collaborate among countries and/or regions with the language
- inclusiveness - access of researchers to excellent institutions
- willingness of partners to do so

4. How can coordination among different ERA-NET Cofund Actions in similar areas & between ERA-NET Cofund Actions and other instruments/initiatives supporting public-public or public-private partnerships in R&I be improved?

- Common platforms of thematically close P2Ps (e.g. JPIs, CSA, ERA-LEARN or PLATFORM projects in different sectors)
- Joint events; Workshops and training on common issues
- Improve interaction between ERA-Nets and other coordination actions like JPIs, EIPs, EIT/KICs, ETPs etc. e.g. specific MoUs with KICs and P2Ps/JTIs
- Set up own work programme
- Cofund with large content / several calls

BLOCK II - INCLUSIVENESS

META DOBNIKAR, the former Slovenian NCP for Widening (succeeded by Kim Turk from October 2016) opened the Inclusiveness session by introducing the aim and state of play of measures for widening participation in Horizon 2020. She thanked the RTD Directorate ‘Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation’ (RTD B5) for their interest in PLATFORM and contacts over the last weeks and for providing slides. Under the “Teaming” instrument Centres of Excellence can be created through a partnership of an “advanced” research organisation from other countries (EU28 or AC; very often Germany) and a coordinator from a “widening” country (with so far most interest from RO, PL, RS, CY...). The “ERA-Chairs” instrument offers the possibility for a research organisation in a widening country to welcome high quality researchers from another country to work with them, with costs such as salary, trainings, publications, meetings are covered. Most interest for this so far came from Portugal. The “Twinning” instrument brings together research organisations from one widening and at least two other countries and offers support for staff exchanges, expert visits, trainings, workshops and other dissemination activities. Here again Portugal was the country with the highest number of successful proposals. In addition to Teaming, Twinning and ERA-Chairs instruments, measures including a network of National Contact Points (NCP Wide), Policy support facilities and COST actions help “spread excellences and widen participation” in H2020.

After hearing about several support measures, it was very interesting to have a look behind the scenes of the “low performance countries” with a focus on ERA-NET participation. Via surveys, **KIM TURK** (MIZS) as task leader of PLATFORM’s Fostering inclusiveness task, measured the performance of LPCs in Bioeconomy ERA-NETs. Findings include main reasons for LPCs to join ERA-NETs - developing the research community as the most important reason, and the second reason – very simply – invitation to join! Kim expressed that still more info is missing on performance of low performing countries in ERA-NETs and other P2Ps. Most analysis and comparisons focus on absolute numbers (number of P2Ps participating in / amount of funding), but fail to take into account funding levels differ between countries. Money has different value in different countries so to say, and the number of funded projects is important, not only the number of budget contributions to the call. Kim raised the question: “What does it mean to participate in 10 ERA-NETs – does it mean active participation in all? Performance or the **picture behind these numbers** is what tells the real story”. As it is very difficult to measure “performance”, it might be more effective to identify good performers and use them as positive examples. In order to directly get the low performing countries involved, Kim summarized, that LPC organisations should be invited very early to consortia, and if possible, formally by targeting high level officials. Proactively WP or task leadership should be given to new partners. Many more concrete suggestions are available in the “Perspective Document on Inclusiveness”.

PLATFORM’s next step to foster inclusiveness was to provide programme funders and managers from LPCs with training and guidance on how to get actively involved in bioeconomy-related collaboration actions. **MARTIN GREIMEL** (BMLFUW) introduced PLATFORM’s Masterclass on inclusiveness, held in 05/2016 in Vienna. An important outcome of the Masterclass was that communication of success stories is a much better way than talking of the challenges and that indeed “statistics only tell part of story – but “soft measures” are equally important”. Martin emphasized, that there still is a need for better coordination between many initiatives that support inclusiveness!

Answering a question from the audience, regarding many high performing countries having the same problems as LPCs but still performing better, Kim emphasised LPCs have a different starting level and thus the extent of the problems they face is different (e.g. human resources). Barna Kovacs added that the difference is also in the lack of national strategies in many LPCs and thus lower interest in engaging in these fields.

Latvia has a strategy – the knowledge based bioeconomy is one of the areas of Smart specialisation in Latvia. **DACE TIRZITE** (Latvian Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences LAAFS), who had prepared a presentation together with **BAIBA RIVZA** (Latvian University of Agriculture, former minister of Education and Sciences), shared Latvia’s experiences in P2P participation. At the start of FP7 Latvia had no ERA-NET contacts but it ended with 28 running research projects funded via several P2Ps and a current Latvian involvement in 13 ERA-NET CoFunds. Dace explained that due to the limited number of researchers in Latvia participation in P2Ps is essential to unlock the full potential in the bioeconomy. Positive experience with ERA-NET participation includes collaboration with innovation-oriented enterprises, the democratic approach and non-bureaucratic style of administration. The – inevitable - obstacles include issues with consortium agreement signing (timetables differ in participating countries; the Latvian Academy of Sciences is only able to transfer the first payments after the consortium agreement is signed), with further benefits seen in giving more emphasis to mobility activities. On the overarching question of the 2016 PLATFORM event regarding promotion of participation of LPCs in ERA-NET CoFunds?” Dace clearly stated that COST actions, partnering tools, networking events, participation in successful ERA-NETs and increasing visibility of research institutions (with possibly excellent research but poor publicity/e.g. website) from LPCs are key to this question, with a further challenge for Latvia still being becoming a member in JPIs (e.g. FACCE or HDHL).

“Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success”

Henry Ford

The view from Czech Republic was given by **NADA KONICKOVA** (NCP for SC2) who had prepared the presentation together with **MILAN PODSEDNICEK** (Ministry of Agriculture, CZ). So far CZ participated in 7 KBBE ERA-NETs, but has not yet participated in a CoFund Action. Some of the benefits of participation include access to new technologies, knowledge and samples and more opportunities for collaboration in bigger teams for continuation of research and presentation of results at an international level. From a researchers point of view Milan pointed to the challenges including the uncertainty of funding even in case the project is recommended for funding and difficulties of parallel reporting (national/transnational). Further challenges and barriers at national level include limited financial capacities or missing instruments for financing participation (difficult to allocate money for joint calls). In the discussion it became clear that under- or overspending cannot be seen as country specific but rather sector-specific.

The WoodWisdom-Net network has been actively integrating “other” EU member and associated states to its activities since 2004. **MIKA KALLIO** (TEKES) explained various networking activities that lead to successful cooperation of currently 12 countries (including LV, SI, SK) in four joint calls resulting in 85 Mio € funding for 62 research projects. A “non-partner workshop” in 2008 raised interest in potential new partners and new doors were opened during a conference of the Forest Technology Platform (FTP), which included a WoodWisdom-Net seminar with a special focus on involvement of new partner countries. Mika concluded that **getting to know each other - trust – respect and friendship** are key to successful cooperation. He referred to Latvia’s participation in WoodWisdomNets’ third Joint Call where Latvia’s investment was 270 K EUR with an access to projects of total value of 3.8 M EUR! This greatly shows the possibility for making a real impact not only on local/regional but also on EU/global scale.

IVANA TRKULJA (ICROFS) presented the experience and lessons learned of “CORE Organic”. With no LPC participation under CORE Organic, seven “LPC”s joined CORE Organic II. The reason was a letter sent by the Danish Minister of Food and Agriculture to all her EU colleagues actively encouraging them to join CORE Organic. For CORE Organic underspending resulting from the insufficient number of applicants was a major challenge. Ivana shared a measure applied: *During the selection of pre-proposals - if a funding body risks not spending the available national funds, they are invited to choose the most relevant among the selected consortia. These consortia are then invited to involve a partner from the LPC country (if the project as a whole can gain from their participation).*

This success story spurred another idea in the audience – to collect and share practical mechanisms in call management, which would be of benefit to all P2Ps! It was recalled that the report of the Master class that PLATFORM organised in 2015 on the Cofund mechanism is a valuable source that can be used in the Master class next year and by ERA-LEARN. Also it was recalled that much information is readily available on ERA-LEARN and PLATFORM websites.

TAKE ACTION!

PAUL WILEY (BBSRC), coordinator of the ERA-CAPS network shared other ways of including LPCs. (1) ERA-CAPS developed a specific WP for new partners (information exchange & strategic workshop) and (2) Paul visited the country and met key people to actively encourage participation in the network and/or calls. Paul agreed to the challenge of budget insecurities (over-/underspending and in correlation with other partners) and the sometimes low numbers of applicants, so that in the end many LPCs participate in a call but come away with no projects funded at all. Paul said that despite ERA-CAPS had provided a partnering tool there was a low level of use. He recommended being strategic in the choice of partners – as there has to be a relevant community who will apply to calls in each partner country.

PETRA ZAGAR (MIZŠ) informed that within JPI Climate currently there are three associated members from LPCs (Estonia, Romania, Slovenia) and added that in the ERA-NET Cofund proposed by JPI Climate, the ERA for Climate Services (ERA4CS) Czech Republic, Slovakia and Greece are included as partners. A promising action is the planned proposal for a CSA on “Widening international cooperation activities on climate adaptation and mitigation” with possible participation of Estonia and Slovenia and all other JPI Climate member states. The deadline for the proposal is March 2017.

GET INVOLVED!

Equipped with many new ideas and questions, the participants divided into several break-out groups to further discuss questions of inclusiveness. The results of this work will feed into the PLATFORM Policy Brief on Inclusiveness. Furthermore, Kim, Christine and Ioana are invited to meet for a debrief meeting with Magda de Carli, Telemachos Telemachou, and Pia Laurili of RTD B5.

GROUP WORK 2 – INCLUSIVENESS

1. Why should an LPC participate in an ERA-NET?

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|---|---|
| <p>a. ACCESS TO FUNDING (<i>leverage effect; added value for money; work more efficiently...</i>)</p> | <p><i>resource management); comprehensive approach to address societal challenges...</i></p> |
| <p>b. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER (<i>on scientist & funder level; co-creation of knowledge; access to larger research community with other expertise; capacity building; foster excellence in research; networking...</i>)</p> | <p>e. increasing scientific IMPACT AND VISIBILITY (<i>internationalisation of research and scientific community (citation & publication)</i>)</p> |
| <p>c. ACCESS (<i>to research infrastructures, info-databases, to other scientific niches, to complementary skills...</i>)</p> | <p>f. ADDED VALUE for enhanced networks (<i>e.g. learn from ERA-NET projects to ease joining other big H2020 projects; increased impacts at local socio-economic level...</i>)</p> |
| <p>d. POLITICAL STRATEGY (<i>on the transition to “high performing country”; have a voice in Europe (bring knowledge for developing national strategies); facilitating private sector innovation and internationalisation; integration into the ERA to “unlock the potential of the country” (Human</i></p> | <p>g. SUPERIOR REASONS (<i>build inclusive EU</i>)</p> <p>➔ But many of the reasons interlink with each other and the reasons are individual for each country, sector and ERA-NET</p> |

2. How to encourage active LPC participation in ERA-NET activities?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>a. increase number of MEETINGS IN LPCs</p> | <p><i>MS also through institutional mechanisms ...)</i></p> |
| <p>b. actively address LPCs to TAKE OVER WP/TASK LEADS (<i>be flexible, share tasks</i>)</p> | <p>d. create an atmosphere of TRUST; <i>build a good decision structure</i></p> |

- c. COMMUNICATION (*facilitate high level interaction (get real support) from “boss to boss” + technical level (content & finance); pick up the phone!; use existing network (sectorial) for creating synergies; roadshows, personal contacts; share practical examples and show impact/success stories of ERA-NET actions; explain benefits of active participation (influence, knowledge); mutual learning within the network (trainings?); engaging effectively with other*
- e. Build CRITICAL MASS in research community (*bottom up initiatives are key mechanisms (researchers - ministries); Connect with influential researchers (already connected); capacity building workshops on specific themes; exploratory workshops - identify gaps in research agendas; have evaluators/experts/advisory board from LPCs*)
- f. Invite to NETWORKING workshops and meeting

3. How to support researchers in Joint Transnational Calls?

- a. INFORMATION (*generally more promotion of the calls (involve NCPs) & need for hotspot for ALL calls which are linked to MS websites; connect information and announcements both at transnational and national level (info day, web); global database (search by fields/countries) with link to research gate...*)
 - wherever possible (*reduce administrative burdens at call level & reporting; create common templates (reporting) by national funding bodies...*)
- b. provide help in PARTNERING (*national/transnational; website, partnering/networking tool, national platforms, brokerage event, info day*)
- d. non-call-related NETWORKING (*invitation of experts to events (scoping WS; kick off meetings) or as evaluators for calls or advisory board members*)
- c. SIMPLIFY PROCEDURES and harmonize processes
 - e. build TRUST (*share good practices and options for issues such as IPR, contingency plans, timeline*)
 - f. BEFORE & AFTER: *support activities for proposal preparation and after the project life*

PANEL DISCUSSION

At the end of an exciting day with lots of new input, a panel was interviewed by **CASPER ZULIM DE ZWARTE** (MinEZ) on the inclusiveness challenges and on achievements so far in Bioeconomy public-public partnerships.

- **ANDREJA KUTNAR** (*InnoRenew CoE Teaming coordinator, University of Primorska*)
- **JANA KOLAR** (*CERIC-ERIC Executive director*)
- **IOANA ISPAS** (*ANCSI*)
- **META DOBNIKAR** (*Head of Science Division, MIZS*)
- **BARNA KOVACS** (*EC SCAR secretary*)

“Is willingness a major limiting factor?” According to IOANA, willingness is not the problem and JANA added that rather money is the limiting factor, but that it is difficult to generalise over the EU13 group. BARNA agreed that willingness is present and (sometimes) there is budget but unfortunately, often there are no national strategies on where to spend the budget.

A comment from the audience that possibly first the terminology/definition should be clear before policy tools to help it are devised was addressed by BARNA, who answered that WHY some kind of research should be conducted and what policy the research should back up is a national decision.

Would measurements work without national strategies? JANA replied “yes, as the number of networks increases and ERA-NETs work on policy related actions this can help define national strategies; this is an excellent way to progress”. ANDREJA emphasized, that e.g. Slovenia, which is a country only 25 years old, does not have a national research strategy (yet). CASPER remarked that The Netherlands don’t have a national research strategy either, despite being 200 years old.

BAIBA brought back the discussion to how more high level players could be “activated” to engage in ERA-NETs and underlined that more benefits and best practises need to be communicated .

BARNA suggested it would be beneficial for LPCs to sit together more often and gather common topics and needs for P2Ps (e.g. the Danube or Black sea region; a Baltic question...). According to Barna, there is lack of discussion among these countries and a cross-sectoral discussion is missing as well. LPCs should decide on strategic aims and then have the higher hierarchy, those with the budget mandates, to sit together and discuss participation.

BLOCK III – INNOVATION AND EXPLOITATION STRATEGIES

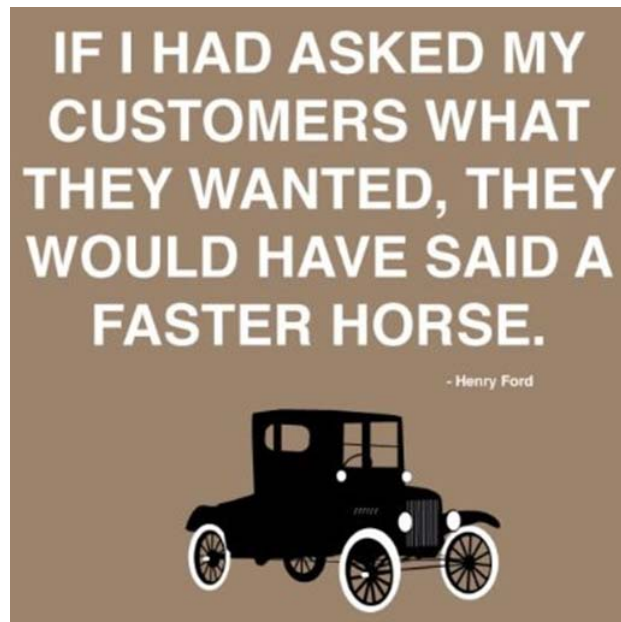
October 7th 2016

After a delicious dinner in the beautiful castle of Ljubljana the night before, the Platform community gathered again in the Nebotičnik skyscraper to start the new day with an interesting outlook to other funding options and other EC programs supporting innovation.

JANA KOLAR, the Executive director of CERIC-ERIC and a Governing board member of the European Institute of innovation and technology, stressed that innovation management should be incorporated in all agencies’ activities and that we need to add to and exploit existing infrastructure and avoid duplicating efforts. She explained the concept of KICs (Knowledge Innovation Communities), which are very strong in education and accelerating start-ups. With SME support activities they help establish and grow a company on EU level. KICs are industry driven and compete with each other. The total budget for the EIT scheme is 2 billion EUR! Jana highlighted P2Ps could connect with KICs, possibly by inviting KICs to workshops to explain how to manage innovation!

Good idea!

Another European funding option for researchers was introduced by **JOAO SANTOS SILVA**, president of the EUREKA EuroAgri Food Chain Umbrella. The results of many EUREKA funded projects are publicly well-known, such as the Dolly sheep or xenon lights in cars. Projects supported by EUREKA do not have to fit with a specific thematic focus, but have to be innovative, market-oriented, transnational and bottom-up. EUREKA tries to administer not only grants, but give fiscal benefits and help exploit an open market.



Joao stressed the necessity of “thinking innovation” differently:

“What gets us into trouble is not what we don’t know; it’s what we know for sure that just ain’t so” Mark Twain

“You can’t just ask customers what they want and then try to give that to them. By the time you get it build they want something new” Steve Jobs

This spurred questions among the audience – “Wouldn’t bottom-up mean asking about customers’ needs before producing and creating demand?” Joao clarified that for him “bottom-up” means free of focus and open. On the question how to get smart entrepreneurs from EUREKA to ha look at ideas in over 1000 ERA-NET supported research projects from the Platform database Joao simply smiled and answered:

“Let’s start to talk!”

BERNHARD WOLFSLEHNER (European Forest Institute) started his presentation by showing the different niches where innovation can and should take place. The most prominent place for innovation in the forest-based sector is probably in the processes-part – the nexus of research, policy support and funding. One example is the difficult task to mobilise passive forest owners to utilise their forests. Creation of added-value or cross sectoral clusters / regional markets to foster cooperation between producers and processors / retailers could be key (e.g. new markets for non-timber forest products). A need for interfaces between science and policy and dedicated stakeholder involvement is needed to achieve this. Linking public-public and public-private partnerships is beneficial, as “real knowledge has to be brought to policy, whose focus is often too narrow”.

A new ERA-NET COFUND to start in December 2016 was introduced by **PETRA SCHULTE** (Project management Juelich). CoBioTech – the ERA-Net COFUND on Biotechnologies - was proposed by three former ERA-NETs: ERA-IB-2, ERA-SysApp and ERA-SynBio – and does not only plan to launch Joint Calls but also to carry out communication/dissemination training for scientists and funders. This and the idea to gather the European biotechnology community (industry, academia, policy) in a “European BioTech Hub” to network, exchange experiences and discuss strategic matters will help “bridge the gap to innovation”.

Professional support for the uptake of Bioeconomy R&D results towards the market was presented by **ILARIA BONETTI** from the ProBio project. The group screened 411 FP7 research projects from the field of Bioeconomy and identified 60 projects, which now receive specific coaching for market exploitation including contacts to new industrial partners for future R/I. As ProBio will end in 2017 and has not yet planned for a new proposal a valuable idea to **include in PLATFORM policy recommendations** was introduced - a proposal for the ProBio team to continue in a CSA supporting Bioeconomy ERA-NETs in market uptake of the funded projects’ results, as using existing professional support would be very beneficial.

**TAKE
ACTION!**

ANDREJA KUTNAR from the University of Primorska showed various possibilities that arise from ERA-NET participation, such as new options for exploitation and value creation as well as boosting innovation potential. Slovenia has been a partner in the WoodWisdom Network for many years and evolved from partner level to task leader to taking over a work package lead. The yearly conference of all Slovenian researchers funded via WoodWisdom “Forest and value chain in the European research Area is a great additional outcome from the WoodWisdom-Net participation, as is long term collaboration with the Fraunhofer Institute for Wood Research Wilhelm-Klauditz-Institut (DE), resulting the creation of the InnoRenew CoE (“Renewable Materials and Healthy Environments Research and Innovation Centre of Excellence”) Teaming project. An important project is the “Living Laboratory Innovative Renewable Material Uses” LLInnoRenew – bringing together 62 interdisciplinary partners from 22 countries who discuss new ideas in wood science (“user-inspired basic research”). Andreja explained, that social media is used and well received to spread knowledge and expand networking.

Another example of collaboration was shared by **KEES KWANT** (RVO, NL) and **DEJAN SAMUK** (SPOVANO) through the “CHEMBEET” project case. Following-up research projects (the “Valley of Death”) and scaling-up is a serious problem for SME’s. Slovenian SME SPOVANO is actively searching research projects that can be used as a starting point for further exploitation. SPOVANO stumbled upon the Dutch/Polish consortium working on “Biofuels and green chemicals from sugar beet through direct processing” or in short CHEMBEET - a project funded via ERA-NET Bioenergy. Dejan and Kees highlighted that “sugar beet is the ideal biobased crop” - offering many chances for exploitation such as chemicals or food ingredients. Based on the results of the project, potential commercial spin offs exist, e.g. Slovenian sugar beet farmers reintroducing sugar beet cultivation; options in the Netherlands in combination with ethane production) or investment by Polski Cukier (PL), investing in direct processing due to distance to (existing) sugar factory.

Back to WoodWisdom, **IZTOK SUSTERSIC**, from Slovenian SME Contemporary Building Design, CBD, with experience in 3 WoodWisdom projects, introduced the experience of the HCLTP project, which

collaborates with parallel WoodWisdom projects supported through the same call. **“Networking cannot be overstressed”** he rightly quoted and showed the various connections his company now has with 15 universities, 10 institutes and 30 companies as *“exchanging, gaining knowledge and new skills is always of mutual benefit for all”*.

With involvement in 8 research projects all together, the company has already applied for four Slovenian and 2 EU patents, which really shows that they are taking the results seriously as the cost for one EU patent is 50.000€ each! One spin-off company was created in connection to one of the patents too. Further they had many publications e.g. over 25 peer reviews articles and 30 general publications.

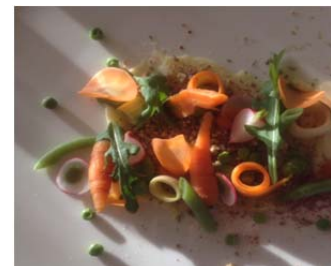
Iztok mentioned some of the challenges that consortia may encounter, including different project starting dates in partner countries, big company desires, overworked key people or understaffed institutes, but pointed out that there are far more advantages of taking part in ERA-NET supported projects.

There really are many dimensions of innovation, exploitation and outreach, as also the last presentation of the block illustrated. **WIEGER WAMELINK** presented the [Food from Mars and Moon](#) work. Many



doubting faces were entertained by the presentation that showed that he takes innovation seriously as his research group at Wageningen University and Research (1) bought moon and Mars soil simulant from NASA for 2000€/100kg, (2) experimented with growing 14 plant species on the soil and (3) invited the Wageningen community to have a “Marsian dinner”. Now, that wasn’t all that easy, as the soil is very low in nutrients, contains very many heavy metals and is extremely hydrophobic. Providing the soil gets enriched with organic matter and anticipating that earth conditions (temperature, gravitation and radiation) can be set up on Mars, the trial proved that a food supply on Mars is possible (even though there are currently legal issues prohibiting to live on Mars unfortunately). The team used innovative approaches to funding; this year the financial resources were brought in by crowdfunding. The experiments in space

agriculture attracted many science journalists and documentary makers to the greenhouses in Wageningen who wanted to see and taste the food for themselves. Interviews in national newspapers and popular scientific journals raised the attention of (inter)national radio and TV, as well as the interest of schools. Education outreach included presentations at primary schools, supervising projects of high school students, and advising on experiments students could do themselves in biology class. In addition, there is research collaboration with a company on the topic of remediation of heavy metals in soil.



WRAP UP AND OUTLOOK TO NEXT EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

In the concluding session, the yield of the **“BRING AND TAKE”** by which participants were encouraged and supported to share planned events or calls in order to possibly find collaborations and avoid duplication of efforts, was summarized.

BRENDA KUZNIAR further explained the PLATFORM database where currently you can find over 1.000 research projects from 64 countries - a source of never before collected data that will surely help create interesting meta-data.

KEES KWANT highlighted the efforts that were taken to prepare the 2017 Policy Brief on impact and alignment and the Policy Brief on Inclusiveness. He also encouraged the participants to pick up the two policy briefs prepared by PLATFORM in the last year and forward it to policy makers and other interested colleagues.

In 2017 PLATFORM will organise in a **MASTER CLASS ON COFUND MANAGEMENT**, back-to-back with a **WORKSHOP ON MONITORING, EVALUTION, AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT**, on 7-9 June in Copenhagen. The lead organisers **IVANA TRKULJA** (ICROFS) and **PER MOGENSEN** (IFD) are asking for input, including topics the P2P bioeconomy community would like to see on the agenda.

TAKE
ACTION!

ANNAMARIA MARZETTI (MIPAAF) announced next year's Annual Event, which will be held on 5-6 October 2017 in Rome. The organisers welcome inspirational ideas for the program.

SAVE THE
DATE!

The PLATFORM Annual event ended with **CHRISTINE BUNTHOF** summarising the various outcomes and steps forward of the productive 2-day-meeting. The outputs of the group work will be used by the expert group around Ioana Ispas and help finalize the Bioeconomy Manifesto. Participants learned about several options to widen their networks and specific actions will be taken by Kim, Christine and Ioana to debrief with DG RTD B5 of "Spreading excellence and widening participation". The innovation session provided an opportunity for participants to widen their views on other research funding options putting more emphasis on the need for good communication as "*bridging the gap to innovation is more than to encourage industry participation*".

Report by: Carina Lemke (FNR) & Kim Turk (MIZS), November 2016