

WORKSHOP for the Participation of Non-EU Black Sea and EaP Countries in Thematic COFUND ERANETs & JPIs

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BLACK SEA
HORIZON

Bi-regional STI Dialogue



CONCLUSIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

The “*Workshop for the Participation of Non-EU Black Sea and Eastern Partnership Countries in Thematic COFUND ERANETs & JPIs*” took place on 13-14 October 2016, in Baku, Azerbaijan. The meeting was organized by the Centre for Regional & International STI Studies & Support – CeRISS (www.ceriss.eu) and the Science Development Foundation under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (www.sdf.gov.az). The event occurred at the framework of a Feasibility Study for ERANETs & JPIs conducted by the EU-funded Projects **Black Sea Horizon** and **IncoNet EaP**.

The workshop functioned both as an informative meeting for ERANET/JPI schemes, as well as a networking event between the EU Member States and Black Sea/EaP funding agencies in view of increasing the participation of Black Sea/EaP Countries in ongoing or forthcoming ERANET/JPI co-funding schemes or calls.

Active participation in COFUND ERANETs & Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) constitutes an important element of the **Association of Black Sea and EaP countries to Horizon 2020**, the EU’s Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. In particular, ERANETs are an ideal instrument for participation providing the following assets:

- **Success rate within ERANET calls is much higher** than within the normal H2020 Calls where competition has become too high (10-15% success);
- **Co-funding from national authorities does not necessarily need an additional budget:** already existent budgets can be re-allocated to co-fund relevant ERANET schemes;
- In practice, the **budget for ERANET COFUNDs returns back** to the national researchers participating in the ERANET calls;
- Participation in ERANET contributes to the **improving of administration performance at the national level** by adopting good practices and **harmonizing STI systems** within the European Research Area.



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During the workshop the following **ERANET/JPI schemes and EU funding agencies** were represented: the ERA-LEARN 2020 and M-ERA.NET, FFG, Austria; the JPI Urban Europe, NWO, Netherlands; the Platform of Bioeconomy ERANET Actions, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, forestry, environment and water management of Austria; the JPI Cultural Heritage, Italian Ministry of Culture; the JPI MYBL & J-AGE II, VDI/VDE-IT, Germany; the JPI Climate Central Secretariat, Belgium; and the JPI Water.

The following **Black Sea and EaP funding agencies** participated: the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (NASB); the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus; the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia; the Academy of Sciences of Moldova – Centre of International Projects; the Agency for Innovation and Technology Transfer of Moldova; Organizatia Pentru Dezvoltarea Sectorului ÎMM (ODIMM); the Russian Foundation for Basic Research; the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine; and the Science Development Foundation under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Representatives of ERANETs and JPIs shared their experience with funding agencies from the Black Sea and EaP countries and discussed on modalities for participation; stages in the development of an ERANET/JPI in which a country can be involved; necessary commitments for participation; assessment of perspectives for participation, etc.

The workshop was attended by 40 participants, including representatives of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, representatives of the Committee of Science and Education of the Parliament of Azerbaijan, representatives of the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan, the Vice-President of the Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences, Deans of Universities, the Ambassadors of Austria and Greece in Baku, and representatives from the EU Delegation in Baku. During the workshop Mr. Vasilis Maragos, Head of Unit, Regional Programmes, DG NEAR, European Commission, addressed the participants presenting the new opportunities on synergetic activities with the DG Research & Innovation ("EU4Innovation Initiative").

2. INTERNATIONALISATION OF PUBLIC-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS BEYOND EUROPE

EU cooperation with partners from outside Europe becomes increasingly important –in RTD in general, and also for establishing Public to Public (P2P) networks, in particular. Third countries can be full members in P2Ps and/or participate in their joint activities. "Enlargement and neighbourhood countries" and "developing countries" are fully eligible for H2020 funding.

In H2020, for the period 2014-2016, 35 international partner countries participate in 83 cases of P2P initiatives and JPIs (including 2 from Belarus, 1 from Moldova, and 2 from Russia). A Consortium of P2P initiatives may reach even 12 (e.g. LEAP-AGRI) or 13 (EDCTP2) international partners.

The following issues are the most pressing, when talking about international P2P experience (including participation in ERANETs and JPIs) so far:

- It is not always easy to identify **suitable cooperation partners**;
- **Trust building** is demanding but also necessary to establish effective collaboration;
- Different **expectations & levels of commitment**;
- **Difficulties** in aligning strategies, priorities and funding programmes;
- The EU programmes may seem **complex for third countries** and partners;

- There are already a number of P2P networks with some experience in international participation which can serve as **practical examples**;
- It is important to engage **industry and policy makers** in P2Ps;
- **A-la-carte participation** open to any funding organisations should be followed;
- **Mutual learning** activities across different initiatives should be promoted.

3. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPATION IN ERANETS/JPIs

Pointing to the **Overall Assessment** of the participation in ERANET, ERANET Cofund and JPI activities, the following key issues were identified and grouped during the workshop:

I. Determinants for Participation

Determinants for participation as voluntary participation in the broad variety of activities are amongst others the available budget for call participation and also the requested funding in calls;

II. Top-up by the EC

Potential top-up by EC in an ERANET Cofund call might be convincing but is not automatically received given the number of potential asymmetric constellations (applications including a particular country, changes in ranking and funding list based on available budgets of other countries, etc.);

III. Ranking Lists

Challenging integration of ranking lists in case more call topics are covered within one call;

IV. Active Funding Networks & Variable Geometry

Some networks have developed their multilateral funding beyond the ERANET and have issued consecutive calls including new (up-to date) topics, have established a periodicity for the calls which allows to observe current processes and to contribute in a variable geometry to specific calls. Such active networks develop a certain maturity level which allow also learning for the own national funding system;

V. Strategic Agendas Reflecting Trends

The joint activities discussed include a couple of interesting elements beyond joint calls, especially multiannual strategic research agendas are vital starting points for discussion on national level as they at best reflect the cutting edge research developments. This reflects scientific trends and most current developments, certainly discussions which can be also taken “home” to the own research priority setting;

VI. “Equality”

A key challenge that was mentioned several times was the “equality” in the partnership with regard to the strength and presence of the own research community or the availability of funding, the position of a partner in its own STI policy making or the delivery system;

VII. Multidisciplinary JPIs

A certain element of transversally or multidisciplinary was observed for the JPIs also due to its mid and long term planning and the dedicated coordination activities. The focus in JPIs on Socio-economic Impact, or other impact dimensions like exemplary “combating the cultural heritage trafficking” shows the broadly diverse approach of the initiatives. Within JPIs also the outreach to users of results was emphasised.

4. BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

Pointing to the **Benefits of Participation** in the JPIs or ERANET Cofund activities, the following conclusions can be made:

- Participation is a **learning opportunity** for the own countries’ STI policy making and its policy delivery system;
- The participation can contribute to a better insight in **latest developments in a (sub) field of research** and can help to develop a certain strategic intelligence on national level. This allows following of international trends, also contributes to the alignment of own country priorities with international developments. Certainly, also, the input to national strategy or priority setting is possible;
- Experiences with the **central evaluation processes** can be beneficial to reflect or improve own review procedures. A learning opportunity exists with regard to the methodologies used for the assessment of results or impact of funded activities;
- A certain signal to the EC and EU MS and **increasing visibility in the ERA** can result from active participation, also when mappings are prepared that outline own capacities;
- **Visibility of the research teams and capacities** can be increased;
- Participation can help to fill **bilateral STI cooperation agreements** with life;
- **Bridging with other research communities** can be stimulated depending on the level of involvement;
- When feasible, also the **access to Research infrastructures** can be improved i.e. with successful call participation or along other support measures agreed in the networks;
- Depending on the activities also **trainings for young researchers or the research management** or support units at research organisations might be offered that enable RTOs to participate easier in future cooperation activities.

5. CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES OF PARTICIPATION

Identified **Challenges and Obstacles of Participation** prominently include:

- Priorities
Unclear/missing country priorities or lengthy lists of priorities affect the “freedom of choice” for -necessarily- to be specified topics in multilateral calls;
- Culture of Co-funding
Culture of co-funding for some organisation types might be an obstacle for participation;

- Availability of funding
Funding available/non-available that can be committed;
- Human resources
Staff capabilities and knowledge of the processes within the funding agencies;
- Alignments within the country
Alignment in the country among different funding agencies can be complicated;
- Smaller budget for bilateral cooperation
Strictly limited budgets and strong commitments in multilateral calls could lead to **smaller budgets for bilateral cooperation** (which might be more productive in terms of output and results for the moment);
- Funding rules & processes
Differing national funding rules can challenge the involvement in calls. In addition, inflexible processes and administrative burdens;
- Legal issues
Legal basis and current internal legislative procedures;
- Eligibility
Differing eligible **types of organisations** in calls can have unexpected results;
- Expectations of Researchers
Different **expectations of researchers** with regard to the call topics, the percentage of funding, etc.

6. SPECIFIC ADVICE TO BLACK SEA / EaP COUNTRIES

Specific **Advice** for successful involvement of Black Sea / EaP countries is summarized as follows:

- To start participation with an **observer role** is highly recommended;
- A clear **overview of existing research capacities** in a country is necessary to expect “realistic” call involvements;
- **A Strategy for the involvement in P2Ps** and long-term commitment need to be carefully defined, including definition of who can act as funding partner;
- A clear and synergetic **internal country agreement** between relevant organisations and the STI policy making can be beneficial (governance structures);
- **Own criteria for participation** need to be carefully defined;
- Output additionality compared to “pure” national funding can be identified to argue for **specific call involvement** or other coordination and support measures offered by networks;
- The **assessment of own participation** with regard to expected/non expected results, i.e. in calls, needs to be carefully defined prior to involvement;
- Even a **small number of call participations is a success** as they create a certain learning opportunity;
- Most of the developing ERANET Cofunds and also the JPI partners have a **huge experience and knowledge** that can be at least partly accessible or shared.

7. NEXT STEPS

As next steps from the meeting, the following would enable easier participation of Black Sea and EaP countries in ERANETs and JPIs:

A. *Main target group for de-briefing about the meeting:*

- STI Decision makers and policy makers like state or parliamentary science committees;
- STI ministries ;
- Sectoral ministries;
- STI policy delivery agencies;
- Sectoral delivery agencies also involved in research;
- Key research organisations or excellent researchers.

B. *Messages to highlight:*

- Benefits of participation, including funding rates and trustable review procedures (adding to national practice);
- “Juste Retour” principle is not affecting overall STI funding budget available;
- A la carte participation;
- Expected change of RTO behaviours with regard to international cooperation;
- Widening of funding portfolio;
- Success stories i.e. from bilateral funding can be shown.

C. *Support measures that could strengthen participation in ERANETs and JPIs:*

- Complementary funding from DG NEAR would be a stimulus to get involved;
- Invitations directed to the countries from the ERANET COFUNDS, JPIs, Platforms of ERANETs etc., or relevant EC DG RTD level events would be highly appreciated;
- Learning through Peer support from policy delivery organisations would be highly welcome, and possibly TAIEX could support such support;
- Instruments/methodologies to identify the current research capacities could be eye-opening for the STI stakeholders to facilitate further involvement;
- “Institutionalizing” learning opportunities (such as the present event) seems to be a precondition for the overall stronger involvement of the EaP/ BSH countries.



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