



Current Approaches to Alignment: Towards a Typology

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What is ERA-LEARN2020?

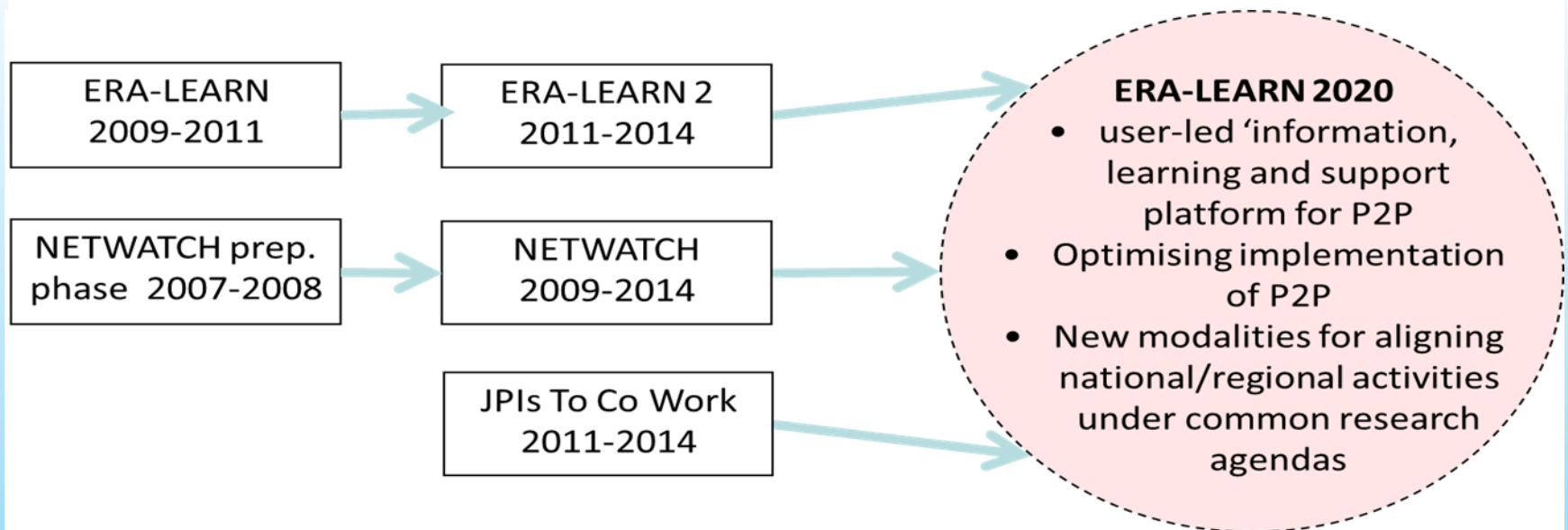
Project: Coordination and Support Action under Horizon 2020

Main objective: Learning and support platform for public-to-public partnerships

Timeframe: 2015-2017

Coordinator: Austrian Research Promotion Agency

Website: <http://www.era-learn.eu>



What is ERA-LEARN2020? (cont.)

Work Package 4	Analysis of existing and potential modalities for aligning national/regional activities under common research agendas	MIUR (Italy)
Task 4.1	Definition and typology of alignment	INRA (France)
Task 4.2	Assessment of current modalities for alignment	INRA (France)
Task 4.3	Exploration and assessment of novel alignment modalities	AIT (Austria)
Task 4.4	Investigation of alignment modalities at trans-regional level	MIUR (Italy)
Task 4.5	Comparative SWOT analysis of alignment modalities	UNIMAN (UK)

Objectives of ERA-LEARN 2020 Task 4.1

- Develop a **common understanding** of what alignment means and how it can be implemented in practice
- **Map and categorise** actions/ instruments that facilitate alignment, including *across* P2P initiatives
- Identify **strengths and weaknesses** of selected alignment actions/ instruments (cf. also *Next steps*)



**Build on the work of the “Groupe de Programmation Conjointe”
to provide practical advice for research practitioners**

The GPC definition of alignment

*“Alignment is the strategic approach taken 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, with a view to improving the efficiency of investment in research at the level of Member-States and the European Research Area”.*

Main goals:

- ✓ Optimally using existing national research funds
- ✓ Addressing societal challenges more effectively
- ✓ Structuring & strengthening the European Research Area



European
Research Area

Typology: Overview

- Identifies **30 modalities** currently in use by public-to-public partnerships that facilitate alignment
- Lists alignment actions and instruments according to the **research programming stage** in which they usually occur
- Is constructed using an excel sheet with **12 different categories** (*gives the possibility to filter actions*)
- Is a “**living document**” that will be further improved
- Is available on www.era-learn.eu

Typology: Covers the entire research programming cycle

1

- **Planning** (e.g., conduct of joint foresight; joint mapping)

2

- **Strategy** (e.g., adoption of common strategic research priorities/SRA)

3

- **Funding** (e.g., synchronisation of national calls; organisation of joint calls for research proposals)

4

- **Implementation** (e.g., establishment of an integrated research program, research alliance, researchers' network, etc.)

5

- **Evaluation and reporting** (e.g., alignment of evaluation frameworks)

6

- **Training and capacity building of researchers** (conduct of joint training)

7

- **Research infrastructure and data** (e.g., sharing the use of existing infrastructure facilities or setting up a joint facility)

8

- **Dissemination and uptake** (e.g., conduct of joint outreach towards industry and policymakers)



Typology: An example: Establishment of a research alliance



- *Description:* Cooperation amongst research performing organisations that align in-kind and project-based funding to spur effective utilisation of existing (national) resources
- *Approach:* Operational
- *Actors:* Research performing organisations
- *Cooperation mode:* Institutional cooperation
- *Instruments:* Memorandum of understanding, joint programme of work (no dedicated EC instrument)
- *Financing:* Member-States (in-kind)

Typology: An example: Establishment of a research alliance

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes greater synergies across countries' national research activities; allows for smart specialisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverging inputs by various national institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the visibility of participating institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverging institutional structures/ procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributes to networking and capacity building amongst researchers and to cross-fertilisation of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different political priorities across participating countries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complements financial alignment 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates joint participation in H2020 calls for proposals 	

Typology: Preliminary lessons learnt

ERA-LEARN2020 Alignment Workshop, 29 September 2015

- Alignment is **not only** about organising joint calls for research. Can be achieved via various joint actions and instruments !
- Different actions are often **complementary** to each other. Some can be conducted **in parallel** (e.g., launch of joint calls + establishment of researchers' network)
- Yet: need to **be realistic** and avoid launching too many alignment actions at the same time



A lot is happening already! But there is room for further mutual learning

Typology: Preliminary lessons learnt

- Many actions bring benefits **on several fronts**:
 - ✓ *Researchers' network*: allows for networking but also enables to coordinate research methods, co-publish scientific papers and gain greater visibility internationally (e.g., MACSUR knowledge hub)
 - ✓ *Sharing of research infrastructure*: allows to share operating costs but also facilitates data-sharing and standardisation, and the launch of joint research projects (e.g., JPI Oceans' shared research vessel)



Long-term benefits outweigh the (immediate) costs

FOR DISCUSSION: Main challenges to alignment

- Lack of common understanding and **awareness** of what alignment is and what benefits it brings
- Weak **inter-operability** between national rules and procedures for funding and executing research
- Very **diverse national research landscapes** (in terms of available funding, institutions, political context, etc.)
- Weak **in-country coordination** and dialogue on strategic research priorities => weak national commitment
- Often: **lack of « glue money »** in national funding organisations to finance transnational coordination

FOR DISCUSSION: **Key factors for success**

- A combination of actions undertaken “**bottom-up**” (by researchers, research performing organisations) & “**top-down**” (by Ministries, research funding organisations)
- Strong **political commitment** (e.g., NordForsk’s “common pot without fair return”)
- **Mutual trust and consensus-building** at all levels (thanks to dialogue, consultations)
- Effective inter-agency and inter-ministerial **coordination**

Next Steps

Assessment of existing alignment modalities

- 10 case studies + synthesis report (June 2016)
- Strengths and weaknesses of this action for alignment in a P2P context
- Difficulties encountered during implementation
- Approx. time and resources needed to set up and implement it
- Key factors of success
- Suitability (when can this action or instrument be best used)



Thank you for your attention!

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