

Joint Programming and Its Instruments: Focusing on the Future

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Introduction

Joint Programming (JP) has been a conspicuous component of research and technological development policy formulation and implementation in Europe over the course of this millennium. Through joint actions, the European Union (EU) and Member States have attempted to reap the benefits of a more coordinated approach to the provision of public support for research and innovation-related activities.

In hindsight, much has been achieved, but evidence is accumulating that more needs to be done if the full potential of joint actions is to be realised.

In November 2016, informal discussions between the EU and Member States on the future of the Joint Programming process and Public-to-Public Partnerships (P2Ps) were initiated during the course of two workshops held in Brussels. The first of these, held on 9 November 2016, aimed at:

- Stimulating debate about the ways in which the potential rewards of the Joint Programming approach could be fully grasped;
- Reaching agreement on the main areas to be tackled and the issues to be addressed when contemplating the future of Joint Programming.

The second workshop, held on 22 November 2016 in the margins of the annual Joint Programming conference in Brussels, was aimed at:

- Gathering suggestions concerning the different routes that could be followed if the performance of the Joint Programming process is to be improved.

As background for the discussions in these workshops, an issues paper was circulated (see Appendix 1). This hypothesised that:

- There is a clear need for mutually agreed aims and objectives if performance is to be improved;
- A greater focus on the scope of initiatives is needed to make the best use of resources and avoid obvious barriers, traps and pitfalls;
- Clear leadership, lines of responsibility and rules of procedure are essential to sound governance;
- Better mechanisms are needed to ensure more stable, longer-term financial arrangements.

During the course of the two workshops, there was general agreement that these four topics, namely **Aims and Objectives**, **Scope and Focus**, **Governance** and **Finance**, should feature prominently in further policy discussions concerning the future of joint programming. In addition, two other topics were also considered of vital importance. The first of these was **Impact** – especially the need to demonstrate impact in order to clarify the actual and potential benefits (and costs) associated with P2Ps. The final topic – and arguably the most important – was the need to provide a clear **Rationale** for Joint Programming in order to justify political commitment to its future.

This paper presents highlights from both workshops and is intended as input to the development of an ex ante impact assessment of future policy measures supporting the Joint Programming process.

Rationale

The continued existence of Joint Programming depends on the articulation and acceptance at the highest levels of convincing arguments in its favour.

The case for Joint Programming was established in the last decade and financial support for initiatives to be undertaken in this manner has grown appreciably since then. Nevertheless, it still accounts for only 3% of the Framework Programme budget and for an even smaller percentage of national expenditure on R&D. It suffers, therefore, from a lack of visibility when overarching strategies for research and innovation at national and EU contexts are discussed at the highest policy levels.

Participants at the workshops were convinced that arguments elaborated in the early days of Joint Programming¹ were still valid, but that they needed to be revisited and reiterated, with the criteria for establishing P2Ps clearly articulated and widely discussed in policy circles.

Aims and Objectives

There is a clear need for mutually agreed aims and objectives if performance is to be improved.

The issues paper (see Appendix 1) noted that there had been mixed success to date in terms of ensuring that the wishes of all partners are respected when formulating the aims and objectives of individual Public-to-Public Partnerships (P2Ps), and that this situation needed to be remedied in future. Workshop participants agreed with both the diagnosis and the prognosis.

Critically, however, they also concurred that there was an even greater need for clarity concerning the specific aims and objectives of the Joint Programming

¹ See, for example, 'Towards Joint Programming in Research', SEC(2008)2282, Brussels, 17.07.2008 at <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2011935%202008%20ADD%202>

process as whole and the role of Joint Programming within national and EU contexts. Even when individual initiatives have SMART² objectives and sound implementation plans, they coexist within a universe of multiple other initiatives at EU and national levels, with all the attendant potential for negative interactions and unrealised synergies in the absence of an overview of how everything fits together.

Participants emphasised the need for the development of a helicopter view that would facilitate development of the strategies needed to tackle major issues over the next 10-20 years, differentiating between those that could be tackled by individual Member Countries and those that should preferably be undertaken on a collaborative basis, either via P2Ps or Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). Countries would then be able participate selectively in variable geometry configurations. They also stressed that the aims of collaborative ventures should be ambitious but realisable, with sound mechanisms in place to track progress.

A key task for the future, therefore, is to seek ways in which the aims and objectives of the Joint Programming process and related activities can be articulated within the context of both EU and national research and innovation strategies.

Scope and Focus

A greater focus on the scope of initiatives is needed to make the best use of resources and avoid obvious barriers, traps and pitfalls.

Looking across all P2Ps, there is a tension, on the one hand, between the flexibility and multiplicity of choice offered by a wide range of joint initiatives with diverse foci and, on the other hand, the competing need to concentrate on a narrower range of initiatives and topics in order to make the best use of scarce resources. This tension was highlighted in the issues paper and echoed in the workshop discussions.

Retention of the range of P2P instruments currently in existence (ERA-NETs, Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) and Article 185 initiatives) was envisaged by some participants as one way of preserving flexibility, since their different modalities allow participants to select 'horses for courses'.

Commenting on different types of initiative, participants noted that the scope of individual JPIs and Article 185 initiatives is much broader than that of individual ERA-NETs, but that this is not necessarily a problem if initiatives with a broad scope have a sound intervention logic and implementation plan.

They also made a distinction between the scope of individual initiatives and the scope of P2Ps as a whole, arguing that while the flexibility for different P2Ps to pursue new targets should be retained, pragmatism dictated a greater focus on a

² SMART is a mnemonic acronym that is used to describe objectives that are specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-related, though other variations are possible (e.g. strategic, motivating, achievable, relevant and time-bound).

smaller number of areas. In particular, although there was support for retaining a focus on societal challenges, there was also support for a more pronounced emphasis on a smaller number of prioritised challenges in order to increase impact and make the best use of limited resources. One interesting suggestion also called for a closer link between Joint Programming activities and smart specialisation strategies.

The issue of EU support and the notion that a new balance may need to be struck between support for network activities and the co-funding of projects was also discussed, with participants noting that co-development had been successful in some areas and is feasible in others, but only if demand is high.

Concerning joint initiatives driven solely or primarily by Member States (e.g. JPIs), flexibility in terms of choice of topics was seen as important, though preferably undertaken within the context of a shared overview and vision of the future evolution of joint programming.

Finding ways of ensuring that strategic choices can be implemented in flexible ways is thus another key task for the future.

Governance

Clear leadership, lines of responsibility and rules of procedure are essential to sound governance.

The background issues paper highlighted the very different governance structures and processes that exist within current P2Ps. It also recommended the adoption of simple governance structures and procedures and, as far as initiatives involving the EU are concerned, their alignment with the arrangements governing the Framework Programme.

During the workshops, participants were in general agreement with the view that the structures and procedures governing individual initiatives should be kept as simple as possible. They were not unduly concerned, however, with current arrangements at the level of individual initiatives. There was more concern about governance arrangements for P2Ps as a whole, and especially for the relative roles played by, for example, Framework Programme Committees and the governing bodies of JPIs in the formulation and implementation of research and innovation-related agendas in Europe. Current arrangements make it difficult for the P2P governance community to influence or be influenced by the FP governance community.

Participants noted that the administrative burden associated with the higher transaction costs of P2Ps was a particular problem that needed to be resolved. One interesting observation was that more time was needed for countries to evolve mature architectures that effectively embed the management of cross-border activities into the fabric of existing administrative structures and processes. Others also pointed to the continued existence of regulatory and legislative barriers to the full integration of joint activities.

The need was also expressed for more effective arrangements governing communication between the public actors involved in the formulation and implementation of different P2Ps. This was needed to improve coordination, collaboration and coherence. Particular concern was expressed about the need for different ministries and directorates at national and EU levels to understand the varying (and sometimes competing) demands and expectations that they have concerning Joint Programming.

Ensuring that the collective voice of the P2P community is heard in the development of future policy will not be easy. There was certainly no consensus on how this might be achieved during the workshops. It remains, however, an important item to be tackled in the future.

Finance

Better mechanisms are needed to ensure more stable, longer-term financial arrangements.

There was no disagreement in the workshops with the view expressed in the background paper that better mechanisms are needed to secure longer-term financing for P2Ps. Neither was there disagreement with the view that this would be difficult.

Various ways forward were suggested, although no consensus emerged. Some called for EU funding to underpin all JPIs, dispensing with the initial distinction between EU and non-EU initiatives. Others suggested that EU funds should be used to support both networks and project costs, though perhaps with a new balance between them, and that the greater use of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) should be explored, even though these were currently difficult to mobilise. All agreed, however, that there was scope for efficiency gains in terms of the management of P2Ps and that this was a priority, especially in terms of reducing the administrative burden experienced by some of the smaller countries involved in P2Ps.

Securing long-term financing while respecting the budgetary constraints and policy cycles of Member States undoubtedly remains an essential task for the future.

Impact

The need to demonstrate the impact of P2Ps is vital if they are to realise their full potential within European research and innovation-related policy portfolios.

Although not discussed in the background issues paper, there was widespread agreement in the workshops with the need to realise the potential of Joint Programming by ensuring the attainment of expected impacts. In particular, the need to strengthen the links between research and innovation was emphasised.

The importance of determining the impact of P2Ps was also stressed. Demonstrating impact is important if the value of P2Ps is to be recognised at ministerial levels and taken into account when formulating future strategies at

both national and EU levels. Participants in existing and future P2Ps were thus urged to implement the impact assessment strategies and protocols currently being evolved as part of the ERALEARN 2020 initiative.

It should always be borne in mind, however, that many of the problems being tackled via Joint Programming will take decades to be resolved and immediate impacts are likely to be small and incremental rather than large and radical. Renewed efforts will be needed, therefore, to ensure that expectations are carefully managed at the highest policy levels.

Next Steps

Overall, the workshops held on 9 and 22 November confirmed that future planning should focus on six key areas concerning:

- The articulation and communication of a convincing rationale for the continued existence of Joint Programming;
- The aims and objectives of P2Ps and the Joint Programming process as a whole within the context of national and EU strategies;
- The scope and focus of P2Ps and the Joint Programming process;
- The governance of P2Ps and the role of P2Ps within the structures and processes governing the development and implementation of R&D and innovation-related policies in Europe;
- The financing of P2Ps;
- The actual and potential impact of P2Ps.

The next task, therefore, will be for the European Commission to work with Member States to evolve a proposal for future Joint Programming that can be subjected to an ex ante impact assessment prior to the implementation of the next Framework Programme.

Appendix 1

Joint Programming and Its Instruments: Issues For Discussion

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Introduction

Joint Programming (JP) has been a conspicuous component of research and technological development policy formulation and implementation in Europe over the course of this millennium. Through joint actions, the European Union (EU) and Member States have attempted to reap the benefits of a more coordinated approach to the provision of public support for research and innovation-related activities. In hindsight, much has been achieved in this relatively short period, but evidence is accumulating that more needs to be done if the full potential of joint actions is to be realised.

The aim of this short paper is to stimulate debate about the ways in which the potential rewards of coordination can be fully grasped and reach agreement on the main areas to be tackled and issues to be addressed. After a brief overview of Joint Programming instruments and activities in the EU, aspects concerning the overall success and performance of the Joint Programming approach are reviewed and strengths and weaknesses assessed. This is followed by the presentation of four key areas in which performance could be improved.

Joint Programming in the EU

The EU and Member States are separately responsible for the formulation and implementation of their own research and innovation-related policies. However, Article 181 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)³ calls for the EU and Member States to coordinate their research and technological development activities and invites the Commission, in close collaboration with Member States, to take any useful initiatives to promote this coordination. Moreover, the Lund Declaration of 200⁴ calls upon Member States and European institutions to focus research on the grand challenges of our times by moving beyond rigid thematic approaches and aligning European and national strategies and instruments.

As a consequence, the current Framework Programme, Horizon 2020 (H2020), specifically aims to establish synergies with national programmes and Joint

³ See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=EN>

⁴ See <http://www.vr.se/download/18.7dac901212646d84fd38000336/>

Programming Initiatives (JPIs)⁵ and to provide support to Public-to Public (P2P) initiatives⁶. These are now increasingly used to support the coordination of national programmes requiring collaboration on common challenges and currently form an integral part of the H2020 strategy, in particular the element addressing societal challenges. Current joint programming instruments include:

- ERA-NETs: The Work Programme for 2014-17 includes some 60 actions. These involve a contribution from the EU of 500 M€ for joint calls and other joint activities and are expected to leverage 3-5 times as much from national funding sources;
- Article 185 initiatives: These are multi-annual joint initiatives between Member States and the EU. There are currently four supported within the context of H2020, involving a contribution of almost 1,500 m€ from the EU and at least 2,000 m€ from participating countries. A further Article 185 (PRIMA) is due to launch shortly;
- Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs): Ten initiatives focused on societal challenges were established by Council between 2009 and 2011. These involve cross-border collaboration and the alignment of national, publicly-funded programmes, with significant support from both participating countries and the EU via ERA-NET Co-fund actions and Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs).

Joint Programming and its instruments – which support a wide range of activities, including research, coordination and networking, capacity-building and demonstration and dissemination activities – are now core components of the European Research Area (ERA) Roadmap and national ERA action plans.

Overall, EU support for P2Ps rose from 380 m€ in FP6 (2.1% of the budget) to approximately 2,500 m€ in Horizon 2020 (around 3.1% of the budget). In parallel, the EU contribution in FP6 mobilised around 1,250 m€ of national funding, whereas the EU contribution in H2020 is expected to mobilise 6,000-8,000 m€ of national funding.

Performance to Date

A number of evaluations have been scheduled to provide an overview of P2P performance. The report of the Expert Group evaluating Joint Programming has already been published⁷ and the evaluation of the ERA-NET Cofund instrument is

⁵ Article 13 of the EU Regulation (1291/2013) establishing Horizon 2020. See

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0104:0173:EN:PDF>

⁶ Article 26 of the EU Regulation (1291/2013) establishing Horizon 2020. See

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0104:0173:EN:PDF>

⁷ EU (2016), 'Evaluation of Joint Programming to Address Grand Societal Challenges: Final Report of the Expert Group', Directorate General for Research and Innovation, Brussels. See

<https://www.era-learn.eu/publications/ec-publications/evaluation-of-joint-programming-to-address-grand-societal-challenges-final-report-of-the-expert-group>

to be published shortly. An evaluation of Article 185s is in the pipeline and there is a legal requirement to prepare a Commission Staff Working Document that will cover the interim and final evaluations carried out by independent experts and conduct a meta-evaluation. In addition, by the middle of 2017, the results of a Mutual Learning Exercise on ‘The Alignment and Interoperability of Research Programmes’ will have been completed, as will a report on the impacts of P2Ps being conducted under the auspices of the ERA-LEAN 2020 initiative⁸.

Based on evidence that has accumulated to date, the strengths and weaknesses of Joint Programming and its instruments can be assessed as follows:

Strengths

- There is the potential for high European Added Value (EAV) and National Added Value (NAV) due to the more efficient and effective use of public resources;
- There has been a clear contribution to the better design and implementation of sectoral policies aligned towards societal challenges;
- Participating countries invest significant amounts in P2Ps and consider that they offer effective ways of supporting cross-border collaboration;
- There have been significant streamlining, leverage and alignment effects as a consequence of the exchange of good practice, notably in terms of mobilising and aligning national resources with initiatives with similar objectives in other countries and with EU level objectives;
- The potential for cooperation with international partners both within and outside of Europe has been enhanced.

Weaknesses

- Despite their potential benefits, the long-term commitment of national funds to P2Ps is limited by budgetary and legal constraints;
- Although there have been alignment effects, the strategic positioning of P2Ps between national initiatives and EU initiatives is not always clear;
- The focus of P2Ps to date has been on competitive funding, which is in short supply in many countries, and the potential for aligning and integrating institutional support mechanisms remains relatively untapped (apart from the Article 185 on metrology);
- Many potential national partners in Joint Programming P2Ps lack the institutional, organisational and strategic management capacities to participate effectively;
- Weak interactions in some countries between national research communities and other actors located within national innovation systems (e.g. public authorities, industry and other end users) limit the potential for downstream impacts.

Statements extracted from two recent documents summarise the challenges that lie ahead both for Joint Programming and for efforts to tackle societal challenges:

⁸ The ERA-LEARN 2020 initiative is a CSA funded under H2020 as a support platform for P2Ps. See www.era-learn.eu.

- The Expert Group evaluating Joint Programming⁹ came to the conclusion that:

“...the Joint Programming Process does not yet have sufficient Commitment from national stakeholders to achieve its potential. Whilst the short-term recommendations should improve the situation, it seems unlikely that all of the current JPIs will be able to secure sufficient national commitment to becoming truly joint programmes. Since there is not yet any procedure or milestone to change this situation then there is a long term risk to the JPI portfolio_beyond the current Framework Programme”.

- The 2015 Lund Declaration¹⁰ stated that:

“Despite an ever-greater need for efficiency and effectiveness, resources across Europe aimed at societal challenges are still spent sub-optimally. This makes it difficult to bring together a truly critical mass of resources for the societal challenges we are addressing today”.

- It further concluded that:

“Europe needs clear political commitment to step-up efforts to align strategies, instruments, resources.”

Improving Performance

Whether or not initiatives realise their policy objectives is the acid test of success or failure. Performance improvement is thus a question of improving the probability of initiatives achieving their goals. This can be done in four main ways. One way is to ensure that goals are clearly articulated and agreed by all parties. Another is to ensure that resources are focused on clearly articulated and attainable goals. Simple governance arrangements that enhance the prospects for coordination during both planning and implementation phases are also desirable, as too are financial arrangements that minimise volatility and guarantee continuity.

Performance improvements in these four key areas are discussed further below.

Aims of Initiatives

In any form of joint venture it is important that there is mutual agreement on the aims of an initiative if they are to be realised in a way that is beneficial to all. In the context of the EU, joint initiatives include those that are (a) specifically aimed at stimulating joint activities between the EU and Member States; and (b) those

⁹ EU (2017), ‘Evaluation of Joint Programming to Address Grand Societal Challenges: Final Report of the Expert Group’, Directorate General for Research and Innovation, Brussels.

¹⁰ The Lund Declaration 2015. See <http://www.vr.se/download/18.43a2830b15168a067b9dac74/1454326776513/The+Lund+Declaration+2015.pdf>.

that are primarily aimed at promoting joint activities between Member States alone. In the former case, it is important for the aims of Member States to be in broad agreement with EU policy objectives, e.g. the current EU policy focus on societal challenges, whereas in the latter case it is more important for the aims of participant Member States to be in line with those of each other.

- Article 185 initiatives are specifically designed to promote joint activities between the EU and Member States that reflect mutually agreed aims and objectives. They are joint actions that involve contributions from individual Member States and a significant financial contribution from the EU. Indeed, the size of the EU contribution can make this instrument very attractive to Member States, and practice to date suggests that collective decisions by Member States to apply for an Article 185 are often taken prior to the articulation of mutually agreed ambitions and goals. Ideally, these aims should reflect both those of the EU as a whole and those of Member States, but in reality, although Article 185s to date have various foci and orientations¹¹ that mirror the aspirations of the Member States involved, they do not always adequately reflect H2020 objectives despite the fact that: (a) their establishment involves a Commission proposal, an ex-ante impact assessment and the use of individual co-decision procedures; and (b) their funding stems from EU R&D Framework Programmes (FP7 and H2020 to date);
- Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) were initially intended primarily to tackle societal challenges via support for joint activities between Member States, not joint activities between Member States and the EU. As such there was no need for the goals of these initiatives to be fully aligned with the societal challenge objectives of H2020. In practice, however, implementation of the ten existing JPIs is partially dependent on Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs) and ERA-NETs funded out of Framework Programme budgets (FP7 and H2020). The end result is that EU funding is being used to support activities that are sometimes only partially aligned with the H2020 objectives and there is the ever-present danger of overlap, duplication and even conflict;
- ERA-NETs are specifically intended to support activities that are in line with both EU and Member State ambitions in specific areas. In this they are by and large successful. They originate as EU initiatives that are conceived within the framework of FP ambitions, though Member States are critically involved in their design and set-up (at an operational if not an overtly policy level) and their successful implementation involves financial contributions from both the EU and Member States.

Experience with Joint Programming to date suggests that there is a tendency for JP partners to take decisions concerning the choice of an instrument prior to mutual agreement concerning the aims of the initiative. This can lead to a number of problems when these aims are eventually articulated, including a mismatch between the aims of different partners and even the realisation that

¹¹ E.g. thematic [EMPIR/AAL]; regional/thematic [EDCTP, BONUS, PRIMA]; and target-group driven [EUROSTARS].

the instruments selected are incapable of realising the aims of all or individual partners. The intention, therefore, should be to encourage ‘ambition-based’ planning rather than ‘instrument-based’ planning.

More broadly, the mixed success of initiatives to date in terms of ensuring that the aims of all involved partners are respected calls for a rethink of how this can be achieved. One major problem is the lack of a clear, shared perception of the purpose of joint activities and their strategic positioning within the policy portfolios of both the EU and Member States. In particular, a clear and concise articulation of the contribution that joint activities are expected to make to the realisation of EU goals would help Member States to better position joint activities within their own policy portfolios.

Scope of Initiatives

There is little doubt that the scope of Joint Programming and its main instruments (Article 185s; Joint Programming Initiatives; and ERA-NETs) is very broad. The networks supported by these instruments can be variously described as basic-, applied- or technology-driven; sector- or regionally-focused; or thematic or problem-oriented in nature, including those oriented towards societal challenges. As such they target a diverse set of target groups and potential impact areas, generating knowledge impacts, innovation impacts, organisational impacts, structural impacts and policy impacts.

From the perspective of the EU policy focus on tackling societal challenges, there is a need to reconsider the wisdom of supporting such breadth.

At one level, there is a case for limiting EU support only to those initiatives where there is a clear link between the aims of initiatives and the overarching societal challenge-oriented goals of the EU. While it is undoubtedly true that many, if not all, major societal challenges will have to be tackled on a multitude of fronts if they are to be resolved, including support for work on topics or areas that appear at first sight to have few overt links with societal challenges, this has to be balanced against the threat of spreading resources too thinly rather than focusing on critical areas.

It should be noted, however, that adopting such an approach would still facilitate support for a diverse set of network types, target groups and impact areas, e.g. initiatives with a specific sectoral focus. It would imply, however, that all such initiatives would have to demonstrate clearly how they could contribute to the resolution of societal problems.

Governance Structures

The governance structures associated with initiatives launched as a result of the Joint Programming process are highly varied and often complex, with the EU playing different roles in different initiatives:

- Within the governance structures of individual Article 185s, Member States are the primary decision-makers, with the EU acting as an observer. The EU is responsible, however, for approving annual work programmes and ratifying the financial contributions of the EU, though this takes place outside the ambit of the Programme Committees of the Framework

Programme since the framework for funding decisions is specified in the basic act establishing Article 185s;

- Joint Programming Initiatives are solely governed and managed by Member States, with responsibility for these roles often delegated from a policy level to an implementation level, e.g. to a research funding agency or other form of public research organisation. When JPIs apply for EU funding via H2020, however, funding decisions become the responsibility of the relevant Programme Committees;
- The governance structure of ERA-NETS is entirely in the hands of consortium members, even though their ambitions are generally in line with overall Framework Programme objectives;
- Within all joint initiatives, the governance structures in place are likely to differ considerably from those in place in many Member States given the extremely heterogeneous nature of research and innovation governance structures across nations.

Although it can be argued that different types of initiatives can merit different governance arrangements, and that the governance arrangements for initiatives aimed solely or primarily at joint activities between Member States – with minimal EU involvement – should be shaped by Member States, when the EU is involved there is much to be said for the elaboration of a simple framework at the EU level that aligns the governance structures of Joint Programming activities with the governance arrangements for the Framework Programme. All Member States are familiar with these and a better articulation between JP and FP governance would provide a greater opportunity for synergy between the interests of the EU and the Member States. From the point of view of Member States, it would also strengthen their position in the overall governance of European research and innovation policy.

Financial Arrangements

Realising the high ambitions set for Joint Programming will not be easy. Tackling societal challenges successfully will involve the sustained commitment of substantial resources and effort over long periods of time. It will also involve extensive planning and coordination between a vast array of stakeholders in multiple locations.

The evolution of successful strategies to combat societal challenges via Joint Programming is hindered by the plethora of arrangements in place in different contexts to commit finances and the lack of readily identifiable mechanisms capable of adequately ensuring long-term commitments:

- Article 185s are long-term in nature and levels of expected financial commitment are specified in the basic act defining the initiative, but only the EU contribution is secured for the duration of the initiative. The commitments from individual Member States are only secured on an annual basis;
- The financial arrangements for JPIs vary from one initiative to another and data concerning financial commitments and expenditure are not publicly available, apart from data concerning joint calls supported by the EU via ERA-NETs and Community Support Actions;

- ERA-NETs are comparatively short-term measures financed out of national programmes and complemented by EU top-up funding. Levels of commitment to joint calls vary considerably both across countries and across the different stages of projects, from proposal preparation to implementation.

The current Framework Programme has a seven-year budget cycle, whereas most Member States have annual or bi-annual budget cycles. This makes it incredibly difficult to plan and orchestrate medium- and long-term commitments to the funds needed to support Joint Programming activities.

A solution is needed that expedites long-term planning but respects the budgetary cycles of Member States; one that seeks the stability that legally-binding financial commitments would bring but recognises that the finances available for competitive research and innovation programmes are typically volatile in many national settings. There can be little, doubt, however, that this is a key area of concern that has to be addressed.

Next Steps

This paper has considered various ways in which the formulation, implementation and ultimate impact of Joint Programming activities can be improved. It has been drafted as a background document for a workshop to be held in Brussels on 9 November 2016. Participants in this workshop are invited to discuss this document and reach agreement on the main areas and issues deserving attention if performance is to be enhanced. These concern:

- Clearer aims for joint initiatives;
- Greater focus concerning the scope of initiatives;
- Simpler governance structures;
- More stable, longer-term financial arrangements.

The ways in which these areas and issues should be tackled will then be the focus of future meetings, including a workshop that will be held in Brussels during the Annual Joint Programming Conference 2016 on 22-23 November 2016.