Results of the survey of the ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships 2018 supported by ERA-LEARN

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships has developed the concept of a survey, addressed to ERAC members, research funders implementing P2Ps and researchers funded by P2Ps. This has been further developed and implemented with the support of the Commission Services and ERA-LEARN (University of Manchester and OPTIMAT).

The final extraction of results took place in mid-March 2018. The following figures show the full results and conclusions for the questionnaires responses submitted by ERA members, research funders and researchers funded by P2Ps. Responses not fully completed have been included in the analysis.

2. Descriptive statistics

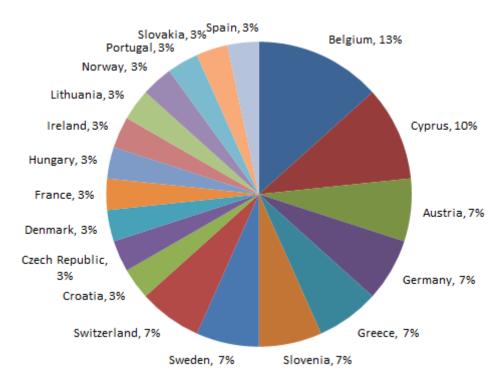


Figure 1: Geographical distribution of respondents from ERA Members

32 responses were received from ERA Members, out of which 23 were complete. The countries with the most replies are: Belgium [4], Cyprus [3], Germany [2], Austria [2], Sweden [2], Greece [2], Slovenia [2] and Switzerland [2].

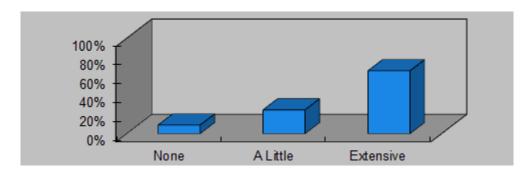


Figure 2: Extent of experience of participation in P2Ps for ERA Members

Two thirds of the respondents from ERAC Members possess extensive experience with P2Ps, while 25% declare they had some level of experience in dealing with P2Ps.

United Kingdom, 2% Austria, 6% Turkey, 3% Belgium, 4% Switzerland, 1% Cyprus, 1% Czech Republic, 1% Sweden, 4% Spain, 5% Denmark, 2% Estonia, 2% Slovenia, 3% Finland, 2% Slovakia, 1% Romania, 1% Portugal, 4% France, 8% Poland, 1% Norway, 4% Netherlands, 8% Germany, 15% Lithuania, 1% Latvia, 1% Jordan, 1% -taly, 6% Hungary, 1%

Figure 3: Geographical distribution of respondents from funding organisations

213 responses were received from funding organisations, out of which 153 were complete. The majority of them come from Germany, France, Netherlands, Italy and Austria, representing 43%.

Ireland, 4%

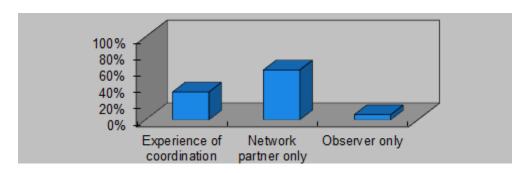
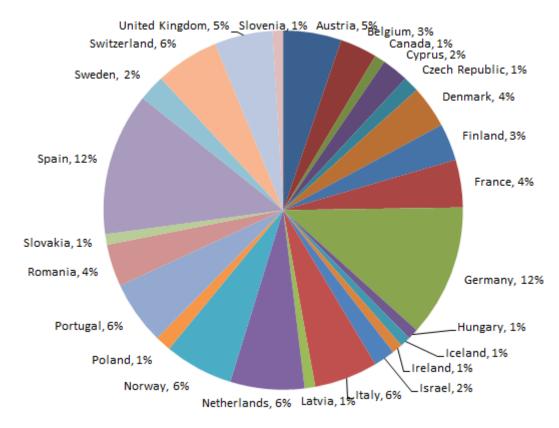


Figure 4: Type of participation in P2P networks for respondents from funding organisations

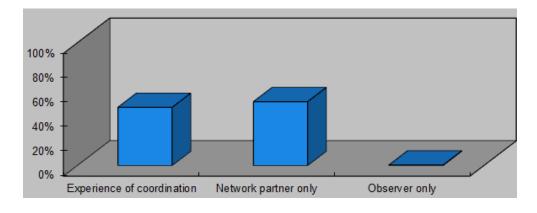
Over a third (34%) of respondents from funding organisations had coordination experience in P2P networks, while 60% participated only as a network partner, thus validating the relevance of the survey results.

Figure 5: Geographical distribution of respondents from beneficiaries of research projects



216 responses were received from funding organisations, out of which 182 were complete. The majority of respondents are found in Germany, Spain, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland, representing 48% of replies.

Figure 6: Type of participation in P2P networks for beneficiaries of research projects



Almost half of the respondents from beneficiaries (47%) possess coordination experience in research projects, whereas the other half (53%) participate in the P2P networks only in the capacity of a partner.

3. Main findings of the survey

The results of the survey to ERAC members (32 replies) and research funders (213 replies) lead to the following conclusions:

- 1. Securing commitment and funding continue to be the main challenges for successful participation in P2P activities;
- 2. Further centralisation of activities related to implementation of joint calls are considered key in increasing the efficiency of their implementation, but there is significantly less support for centralising the management of funds;
- 3. A centralised management of data on proposals, projects including financial data, and their results, outcomes and impacts under CORDIS / eCORDA or ERA-LEARN is strongly supported;
- 4. Policy makers are in general in favour of centralised implementation structures, whereas the research funders are more reluctant to transfer part of their activities to centralised structures;
- 5. Relevance and impact of P2P depend highly on an increased political commitment at national level and stronger links with national policy priorities and end-users in the R&I community.

The main findings from the survey responses of researchers funded by P2Ps can be summarised as follows:

- The overall experience with the different stages from proposal submission to funding is very positive;
- Negative experiences relate to the submission of applications to both national and central platforms, double evaluations and getting through the red tape
- Standardisation is very much requested, beneficiaries considering it very useful to have common rules (funding, reporting, etc) and timelines among funding agencies, with a single platform and single management like Horizon 2020 standard projects
- The following issues are considered major or moderate challenges from the applicants point of view:
 - Different rules for research funding between participating countries resulting in complex management of grants (80%);
 - Different timing in securing all national funding contributions for selected projects resulting in delays/cancellation of project start (74%);
 - Different grant management and reporting procedures resulting in double reporting (59%)
 - o Different proposal submission or evaluation procedures resulting in double submission and/or evaluation (57%).

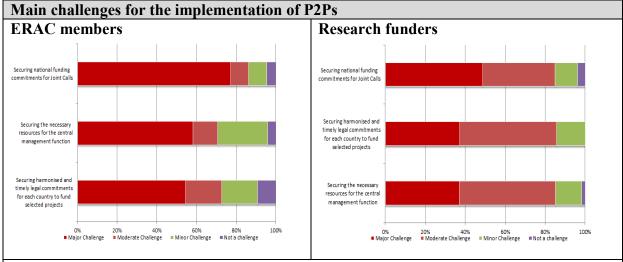
These findings clearly support further centralisation in terms of harmonisation and synchronisation of the joint call preparation and implementation as main element to substantially improve the efficiency of implementation.

The results of the ERA-LEARN survey underlined among all (public) core stakeholders the willingness to establish a central information hub for the collection and analysis of project/activity related data stemming from R&I partnerships.

4. Full survey results

4.1 Challenges for implementation of P2Ps

Figure 7: Main challenges for the implementation of P2Ps



Survey results

The chart shows that the three main challenges for the implementation of P2P identified by the ERAC members and the research funders are the same, with a certain variation in order and absolute values:

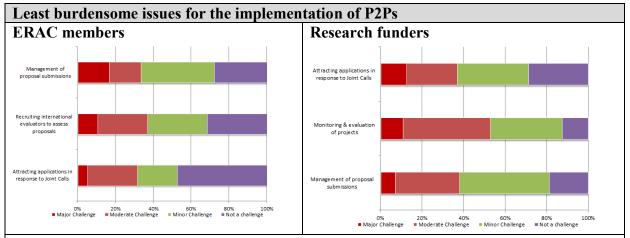
- Securing national funding commitments for Joint Calls;
- Securing the necessary resources for the central management function;
- Securing harmonised and timely legal commitments for each country to fund selected projects.

Other noteworthy challenges include developing consensus on priorities for Joint Calls for R&I projects and organising the management and distribution of funding for each beneficiary

Conclusions

From a national perspective the main issues for a successful participation on P2P activities remain to be the financial commitments to the joint calls and resulting projects, as well as providing resources for participation in networks and activities.

Figure 8: Least burdensome issues for the implementation of P2Ps



The chart shows the three least burdensome issues for the implementation of P2P identified by the ERAC members and the research funders are almost the same, with various fluctuations:

- Management of proposal submissions
- Attracting applications in response to Joint Calls
- Recruiting international evaluators to assess proposals
- Monitoring & evaluation of projects

Among other issues which do not pose major challenges, the contractual reporting of project progress and deliverables and developing other joint activities are noteworthy.

Conclusions

Member States do not seem to encounter major issues for a successful participation on P2P activities with respect to attracting applications and managing their submission and follow-up

Main challenges for the participants/beneficiaries in transnational research projects Different timing in securing all national funding contributions for selected projects resulting in delays/cancellation of project start Different rules for research funding between participating countries resulting in complex management of grants Different proposal submission or evaluation procedures resulting in double submission and/or evaluation Different grant management and reporting procedures resulting in double reporting 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100% ■ Major Challenge ■ Moderate Challenge Minor Challenge ■ Not a challenge

Figure 9: Main challenges for the participants/beneficiaries in transnational research projects

Differences in timeline, in rules for participation, in procedures for proposal submission and evaluation and in grant management and reporting procedures are regarded as the main challenges for beneficiaries in transnational research projects. The biggest challenges are constituted by delays and cancellations of project start due to different timing in securing all national funding contributions and by complex management grants due to different rules for research funding between participating countries.

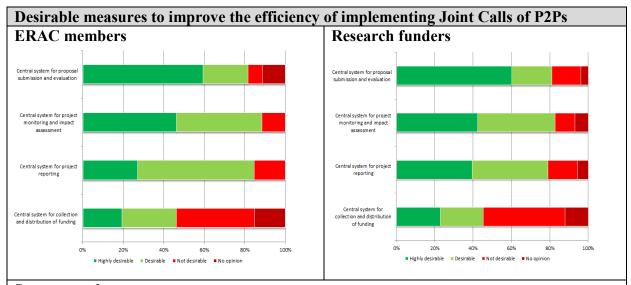
Additionally, beneficiaries of transnational research project were asked to offer comments concerning other challenges encountered as well as ways to improve the selection and/or management procedures for transnational research projects. The most relevant concerns are found in the following conclusion section.

Conclusions

- Participants consider the burdensome administrative procedures as an extreme challenge
- Standardization is seen as a necessary measure to avoid duplication of efforts
- Beneficiaries consider it very useful to have common rules (funding, reporting, etc) and timelines among funding agencies
- Notwithstanding whether the project is funded nationally or not, participants consider
 it should be submitted in a unique platform and managed as a single project, instead of
 several partner-national funding projects, where each partner has its own management
 and different ways to report and to validate the investment
- A single platform and single management like Horizon 2020 standard projects are thus highly recommended

4.2 Improving efficiency of implementation for P2Ps

Figure 10: Desirable measures to improve the efficiency of implementing Joint Calls of P2Ps



Survey results

The chart shows that both ERAC Members and research funders are in favour of more centralisation in order to improve the efficiency of implementing Joint Calls. Strong support for centralisation is manifested by both parties with close to 80% or more of respondents from both groups considering highly desirable or desirable central systems for proposal submission and evaluation, project reporting and project monitoring and impact assessment. Only a minority of respondents from both groups consider a central system for collection and distribution of funding desirable.

Conclusions

Further centralisation of activities related to joint calls are considered highly desirable, but there is significantly less support for centralising the management of funds.

Central implementation structures ERAC members Research funders Central implementation Central implementation structure(s) for other P2P structure(s) for other P2P Joint Calls that involve EU Joint Calls that involve EU cofunding Central implementation A single Dedicated structure(s) for other P2P Implementation Structure Joint Calls without EU co-(DIS) for future Article 185 funding initiatives A single Dedicated Implementation Structure structure(s) for other P2P (DIS) for future Article 185 Joint Calls without EU coinitiatives funding 50% 10% 20% 30% 40% 60% 70%

Figure 11: Central implementation structures

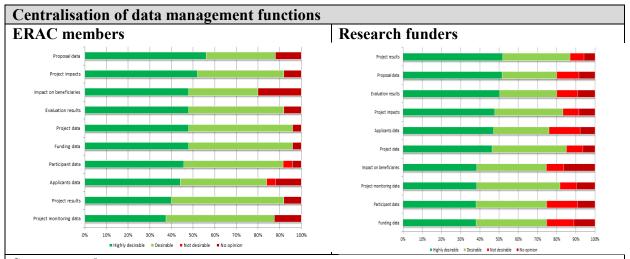
ERAC respondents favour central implementation structures, with close to 80% considering a central implementation structure for other P2P Joint Calls with EU cofunding as desirable or highly desirable in comparison, and still 70% positive concerning a single Dedicated Implementation Structure (DIS) for future Article 185 initiatives. The research funders show in general less support for centralised structures, with those supporting Joint Calls with EU cofunding receiving the strongest support.

Conclusions

Policy makers are in general in favour of centralised implementation structures, whereas the research funders are more reluctant to transfer part of their activities to centralised structures.

4.3 Data management

Figure 12: Centralisation of data management functions (ERA-LEARN Survey)



Survey results

The chart shows both groups consider central management of data for the entire lifecycle from proposal submission to impacts as desirable or highly desirable (min.75% for all elements). Funding organisations place more emphasis on the centralisation of project results, while respondents from ERAC view the centralisation of funding data as the most desirable centralised data management system.

For the technical realisation very strong support is expressed for eCORDA and Cordis, still very high well as for ERA-LEARN and considerable support for a combination. A new, customised data management system developed by Member States receives little support only.

Conclusions

A centralised data management is considered key in improving the efficiency of implementation for P2P calls and resulting projects. There is strong support for full centralisation of all proposal and project related data. For the technical realisation a number of options are considered valid, which will need to be further analysed in terms of feasibility.

Combination of above

Customised system developed by Member States

Customised system developed by Member States

When the process of the states in the state in

Figure 13: Options for data management platforms

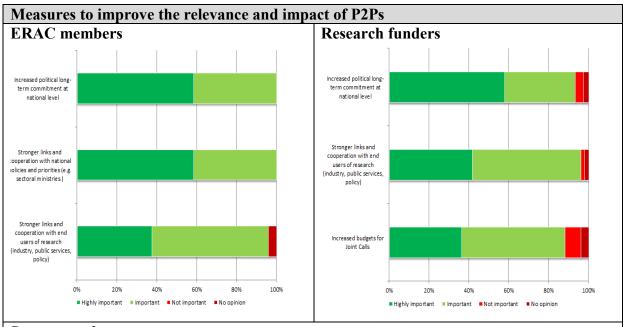
The chart shows strong homogenous support for using both the eCORDA and Cordis databases and ERA-LEARN as the main data management platforms for the implementation of European Partnership Initiatives. The former platform has a slightly higher support than ERA-LEARN but considerable support is expressed for a combination of the two as well. This is in stark contrast to a customised data management system developed by Member States, where less than 30% of respondents consider such a system developed by Member States as desirable or highly desirable.

Conclusions

A centralised data management platform to improve the efficiency of implementation for European Partnership Initiatives is considered highly desirable by the majority of participants

4.4 Improving the relevance and impact of P2Ps

Figure 14: Measures to improve the relevance and impact of P2Ps (ERA-LEARN Survey)



Survey results

Increased political long-term commitment at national level, increased budgets for Joint Calls and establishing stronger links and cooperation with end users of research (industry, public services, policy) and with national policies and priorities (e.g. sectoral ministries) are regarded as the top measures for improving the relevance and impact of P2Ps. Increased political long-term commitment at national level stands out as the most highly desirable measure across all stakeholders. Training & mobility activities, public procurement and financial instruments are considered the least important.

Conclusions

The main areas of improvement clearly identified are linked to the national R&I system and its positioning towards P2P participation.

Arnold WEISZENBACHER, Joint Programming Sector, DG RTD, 5/4/2018