

Cluster 1. Achieving Alignment via Strategic and Policy Cooperation and Enhanced National (In-Country) Coordination

Understanding Strategic and Policy Cooperation

Enhancing strategic and policy level cooperation in research and innovation (R&I) across countries, and improving in-country coordination around common priorities for joint programming, are **key prerequisites** to achieve greater alignment amongst national research and innovation strategies, programmes and activities in Europe, as is explained in the ERA-LEARN2020 Report on the Definition and Typology of Alignment.

Strategic and policy cooperation at transnational level can be operationalised via the formulation of a Common Vision for future European research, and the conduct of **joint mapping** and foresight exercises to identify already existing and planned national and European research initiatives, and pinpoint possible research gaps that need to be addressed in order to effectively tackle societal challenges (cf. *Current Approaches to Alignment, Case Study No. 6, FACCE-JPI Joint Mapping Meetings*). More importantly, strategic and policy cooperation is key to develop a **common Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda** (SRIA) that highlights common policy-relevant research priorities and sets the strategic orientations of future transnational research and innovation activities (“joint actions”) amongst participating countries. The SRIA is the **required base** for further alignment at operational and financial levels, via e.g., the launch of joint transnational research programmes, institutional cooperation, researchers’ networks, call for research proposals, shared research infrastructure, etc. (cf. *Current Approaches to Alignment, Draft JPI Climate’s SRIA*).

Likewise, **in-country coordination**¹ amongst all relevant national R&I players is key to achieve a common national position on transnational alignment of research strategies, programmes and activities, and as such strengthen awareness and **commitment** of national actors towards alignment and joint programming (cf. *Novel Approaches to Alignment, Case Study No. 4, Process Towards a Common Position on Alignment in Austria*). In Austria, for example, all relevant R&I actors developed a “common position on alignment”, which helped to establish the necessary in-country framework conditions to facilitate alignment at strategic, operational and financial levels. In addition, an **inter-ministerial and inter-agency Working Group on Alignment** was set up to facilitate regular consultations on joint R&I strategies and activities amongst all relevant national actors.

This summary pertains to 3 case studies conducted under Task 4.2 and 4.3 of ERALEARN2020: (1) **FACCE-JPI mapping exercise**; (2) JPI Climate SRIA (draft version); and (3) the **development of a common position on alignment in Austria**.

Overall strengths

- Implementing a **common mapping methodology** allows identifying relevant national research activities/funding, as well as research gaps, overlaps and complementarities, and identify thematic areas and activities where joint, transnational research and innovation actions could be warranted.
- Developing a **collaborative and interactive approach to mapping and SRIA development** helps strengthen ownership, trust-building and networking between P2P member-countries, facilitates the subsequent development of transnational R&I joint actions, and allows to benefit from insights from external/independent scientists and stakeholders too. Hence, the process in itself facilitates alignment.
- Adopting a **trans-disciplinary approach** to mapping and SRIA development helps reduce research fragmentation and promotes a more **systemic approach** to addressing complex societal challenges (i.e., challenge-oriented strategic research agenda core themes instead of discipline-oriented ones).
- Developing a **collaborative in-country coordination process** is also needed to decide on consolidated national priorities for alignment and joint programming (e.g., national position, framework or strategy), trigger awareness and commitment of all relevant national actors to joint R&I activities in a specific thematic area, and exchange lessons learnt.
- Such national coordination process can also help address the issue of **inter-operability** between national and transnational funding rules and mechanisms, promote subsequent in-country institutional changes, and clearly

¹ More detailed analysis regarding in-country coordination is currently being conducted by the GPC in the context of its Mutual Learning Exercise.

pinpoint which national priorities are best addressed at the EU/multilateral level, and which should be addressed at the national (or sub-regional) level.

Overall Challenges

- **Lack of a common understanding** regarding the exact scope of the mapping exercise, which led to the provision of heterogeneous information across countries regarding ongoing/planned research activities.
- Likewise, lack of common understanding within a country of what “alignment” means and what benefits it brings hinders the development of a consolidated national alignment/joint programming strategy.
- Rapid obsolescence of mapping results (and to a lesser extent the SRIA) implies that **regular updating** is needed to take account of new developments in terms of research and societal challenges.
- As the development of a SRIA is time-consuming and complex, it may be useful to appoint a **small Task Force** made up of selected Governing Board members and some other experts to take the lead in this process.
- Adopting a trans-disciplinary approach to SRIA development may be difficult for countries that have only **discipline-oriented national research strategies and programmes** (or for research fields that have not relied on a transdisciplinary approach up to now).
- Effective alignment takes time, and needs to be supported by **adequate (financial and institutional) means**. Adequate financing needs to be earmarked for joint programming and transnational R&I joint actions within national research budgets.

Key factors of success

1) At strategic level:

- Clearly define the objective and the scientific scope of the mapping exercise and strategic research and innovation agenda (SRIA) development.
- Develop a JPI governance model that can support the effective design and implementation of the SRIA and foster strong involvement and commitment from member-countries, including their national funding organisations.
- Develop criteria that facilitate in-country decision-making regarding joint programming and alignment.
- Clearly link transnational R&I activities (“aligned activities”) to national research objectives and planning processes.

2) At financial level:

- Allocate adequate financing for joint programming, incl. SRIA development and the subsequent set-up of transnational R&I joint actions, by earmarking a specific national budget for transnational coordination, including at strategic/policy levels (i.e., “glue money”).

3) At operational level:

- Implement a participatory and interactive approach to mapping and SRIA development by involving all relevant national R&I actors (Ministries, research funding organisations, research performing organisations) as well as external scientific experts and stakeholders.
- Combine different mapping instruments to get the overall picture of the research landscape.
- Ensure effective uptake of mapping results in the SRIA and associated Implementation Plan (and in national research planning).
- Renew joint mapping activities and update the SRIA as often as necessary.
- Disseminate the SRIA effectively by developing key SRIA messages.

Pre-conditions:

- Promote in-country awareness and political commitment to alignment (one Ministry could take the lead on this). Better explain the benefits of alignment and joint programming for all involved actors.
- Strengthen national coordination processes and groups for joint programming. Allow for a bottom-up and top-down approaches to, and priorities for, alignment and joint programming by involving all relevant national actors (research performers, research funders, line Ministries, JPI representatives).