

“Supporting the preparation of future European Partnerships”

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1. Introduction

The workshop on “Supporting the preparation of future European Partnership” was organised by ERA-LEARN in collaboration with the European Commission and took place 9-10 March 2020 in Brussels.

More than 150 representatives of candidate Partnerships, national ministries, major national/regional funding agencies and Commission services involved in the preparation of the new European Partnerships were brought together in order to:

- support the preparation of future European Partnerships with Member States,
- identify critical issues and bottlenecks related to governance, commitments, coherence, synergies, development of Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas, management of data on calls, projects and other activities; and
- support the development of common approaches across partnerships, ensuring mutual learning and exchange of good practice to ensure the delivery of impacts.

The structure of the workshop consisted of plenary presentations and parallel sessions where discussions were guided by a set of questions. Results were reported back to plenary on the second day of the workshop. This report summarises the key messages that were drawn from both the parallel and plenary sessions.

Detailed documentation including the agenda of the event as well as outlines of the parallel sessions together with presentations, video recordings and conclusions are available on the ERA-LEARN website, <https://www.era-learn.eu/news-events/events/workshop-supporting-the-preparation-of-future-european-partnerships>.

2. Setting the scene

2.1. Times are crucial for making a case for European R&I Partnerships

In the first plenary session that was chaired by Manuel Aleixo¹, the Director-General of DG Research & Innovation, [Jean- Eric Paquet](#) gave the keynote speech highlighting that “*we’re moving into crunch time*”, when we are finalising the available resources for the partnerships amidst all the EU programmes and initiatives in the MFF negotiations. There is a clear need to continue to argue for the value of investing in R&I as budgets are under pressure and resources are reduced compared to previous years. Jean-Eric Paquet urged the audience to make a case for investing in science and innovation vis-à-vis their finance ministers and national leaders. There is a need to show impact and added value (of investing in science and innovation) to “*provide solutions or Europe to deal with its transformations (ecological, climate, environmental, or social).*”

Times are crucial also for a second reason. While the European Partnerships are being revisited, the message is clear that the Member States want them to be “*fewer, more impactful and more modernised*”. The EC is committed to deliver on those expectations. Future partnerships need to be impactful and at the ambition level of the key EU policies such as the Green Deal, which is indeed an important challenge but also an opportunity for partnerships to show their potential. They need to be much more imaginative in their structures and activities and reflect high ambitions and commitments, including financial, of Member States. As Jean-Eric Paquet stressed “*the Commission wants these 49 partnerships but does not need any of these partnerships, if it does not have the impact it needs to have.*”

The third key message relates to the need to better connect partnerships with each other at both the strategy level as well as the projects’ level. It is also meaningful to create links between partnerships and other European programmes (Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, Space, etc.), as the partnerships are co-created among a number of EC services.

¹ Manuel Aleixo, DG Research and Innovation, Mission and Partnerships, Head of Unit (acting)

2.2. *The role of ERA-LEARN*

[Roland Brandenburg \(FFG\)](#) presented the services provided by ERA-LEARN consortium to the partnerships' community. ERA-LEARN started more than 10 years ago and has been expanding the efforts dedicated to supporting public European Partnerships from 38 person-months in 2009 to 250 in 2018. ERA-LEARN has evolved into the central information hub for public European Partnerships providing a variety of services including:

- the ERA-LEARN databases (networks, countries, organisations, joint calls, funded projects)
- thematic information and activities beyond joint calls
- guidance material & toolkits (supporting implementation of Co-fund actions and monitoring and evaluation of partnerships—RIPE toolkit)
- identification and spreading of good practices for specific common challenges (e.g. widening and inclusiveness, internationalisation)

ERA-LEARN has facilitated interaction with the partnerships' community through the annual events, training workshops on specific issues, publishing news alerts, country reports and annual reports on partnerships. The goals of ERA-LEARN during the current period (2018-2022) include:

- support to the transition of partnerships from Horizon 2020 to Horizon Europe,
- to interact closely with the partnerships' community and facilitate a dialogue among stakeholders and
- support to the partnerships' community with evidence in view of Horizon Europe.

The ERA-LEARN website hosts a special space with information about the new approach for [European R&I Partnerships under Horizon 2020](#), including the main 'provisions in a nutshell', overview of key features, as well as guidance and support.

2.3. *The new phase of European R&I Partnerships*

[Joerg Niehoff](#)², presented the new phase that European R&I Partnerships are entering under Horizon Europe and explained the reasons why a new approach is needed for European R&I Partnerships. A complex and overpopulated landscape has been created over the years. This needed to be streamlined and the time of the preparation of Horizon Europe was the right one to revise the policy approach and the partnership landscape in examining the level to which they

² Joerg Niehoff, DG Research and Innovation, Partnerships, Head of Sector

have managed to fulfil their missions. This was a belief shared by both the Commission as well as the Member States and the partnerships themselves.

The new approach to European Partnerships is reflected in a new definition. European Partnerships are defined as *“initiatives where the EU, together with private and/or public partners commit to jointly support the development and implementation of a programme of research and innovation activities. The partners can represent industry, universities, research organisations, bodies with a public service remit at local, regional, national or international level or civil society organisations including foundations and NGOs.”* Three different types of implementation are defined with a common set of criteria for selection, implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as phasing out. The main differences are in the legal form and ways of implementation.

Figure 1: The new approach to European Partnerships



Source: Joerg Niehoff, <https://www.era-learn.eu/news-events/events/workshop-supporting-the-preparation-of-future-european-partnerships/plenary1-jn.pdf>

Partnerships should deliver under specific timeframes and link to the strategic orientation of Horizon Europe, as well as to the key policies of the EU and the Member States. Joerg Niehoff noted in his speech³ that the Co-programmed Partnerships’ calls will be implemented through Horizon Europe, although the partnerships’ members will still be welcome to design and perform other types of activities with their own funds. The Co-funded Partnerships will be bound by a Grant Agreement with the Commission and the respective research areas/priorities to be

³ Joerg Niehoff’s presentation is available at <https://www.era-learn.eu/news-events/events/workshop-supporting-the-preparation-of-future-european-partnerships/plenary1-jn.pdf>

addressed will be removed from the Horizon Europe work-programmes. Although there is not much willingness to place all Co-funded Partnerships under central administration in terms of call launching and proposal evaluation, there is the need to collect data on calls, proposals and projects for all partnerships and bring them together in the common IT tools of Horizon Europe. Based on previous experience it is well understood that calls can either bring together funding agencies to support research projects or research performing organisations to carry out the research themselves. Whatever the case, they need to be anchored in a national/regional funding instrument/programme.

For the Institutionalised Partnerships the centralised implementation structure is to be retained following Horizon Europe rules. Yet, there will be a higher entrance threshold, meaning that a case needs to be built about why this particular form would be better in achieving the expected impacts than the other two partnership types. The Institutionalised Partnerships are the one case where financial contributions from partners other than the Union are required for setting up the partnership, while for Article 185 initiatives it is mandatory that at least 40% of the Member States are on board.

Joerg Niehoff concluded that we are in a learning curve as the proposals for the 30 (out of the 49) candidate partnerships are being prepared. Before the Commission can launch proposals for the new partnerships it is important that they are supported by Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas/roadmaps and an ex-ante demonstration of the partners' long-term commitments. In terms of timeline, September is when the earliest possible adoption of proposals for Article 185/7 initiatives can take place, subject to the progress of the MFF negotiations where the budget for Horizon Europe and the other EU programmes are being finalised. Finally, Joerg Niehoff clarified the commitments and contributions that need to be ensured both by the Commission as well as the Member States and addressed the issue of connecting partnerships under structured collaboration with each other, as well as with other EU instruments/initiatives such as EIT-KICs.

In the discussion that followed, participants stressed the importance of clarifying the role of State Aid rules and the exemption foreseen to ease implementation of partnerships at the national level. In addition, they noted the need to make contributions from industry visible in view of transparency and retain the variable geometry principle in participation.

2.4. Practical advice in addressing the partnerships' criteria

Following on his presentation on the partnerships on the second day of the workshop, [Joerg Niehoff presented](#) some practical advice on how to address the partnership's criteria.

Specifically, Horizon Europe Regulation specifies in Annex III detailed criteria for the selection, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, phasing-out and renewal of the partnerships. This is supported by a draft Criteria Framework that has been endorsed by the ERAC and aims to

explain these criteria and how they need to be addressed along the lifecycle of a partnership. In short, partnerships need to reflect a clear intervention logic and SMART⁴ objectives. They should adequately be characterised by directionality and additionality to prove their necessity, as well as openness and transparency in relation to implementation and governance. Ensuring long-term commitments of the parties involved remains key and the overall approach in design and implementation should be underlined by a systemic approach, involving a broad range of complementary activities also addressing the uptake of results. Last, but not least, an exit strategy should be designed including specific measures for the phasing-out of the partnership from the Framework Programme funding. This document will be revisited and possibly split into three documents (one for each partnership type) on the basis of the experience collected in the preparation of the first wave of European Partnerships (2021).

In the short discussion that followed, Joerg Niehoff specified that flexibility is possible to a certain extent regarding the national commitments that can be made in a 7-year period. Whereas the difficulty in safeguarding the required funds each year is acknowledged, efforts should be towards securing a fixed budget.

2.5. Overall coherence of the Partnerships' landscape and relevance for the political priorities of the New Commission

[Angus Hunter \(Optimat\)](#) presented some of the results of the study carried out by Technopolis on the ex-ante impact assessment of the first 13 candidate Institutionalised Partnerships under Horizon Europe. The study included some horizontal analysis of efficiency and coherence in implementation.

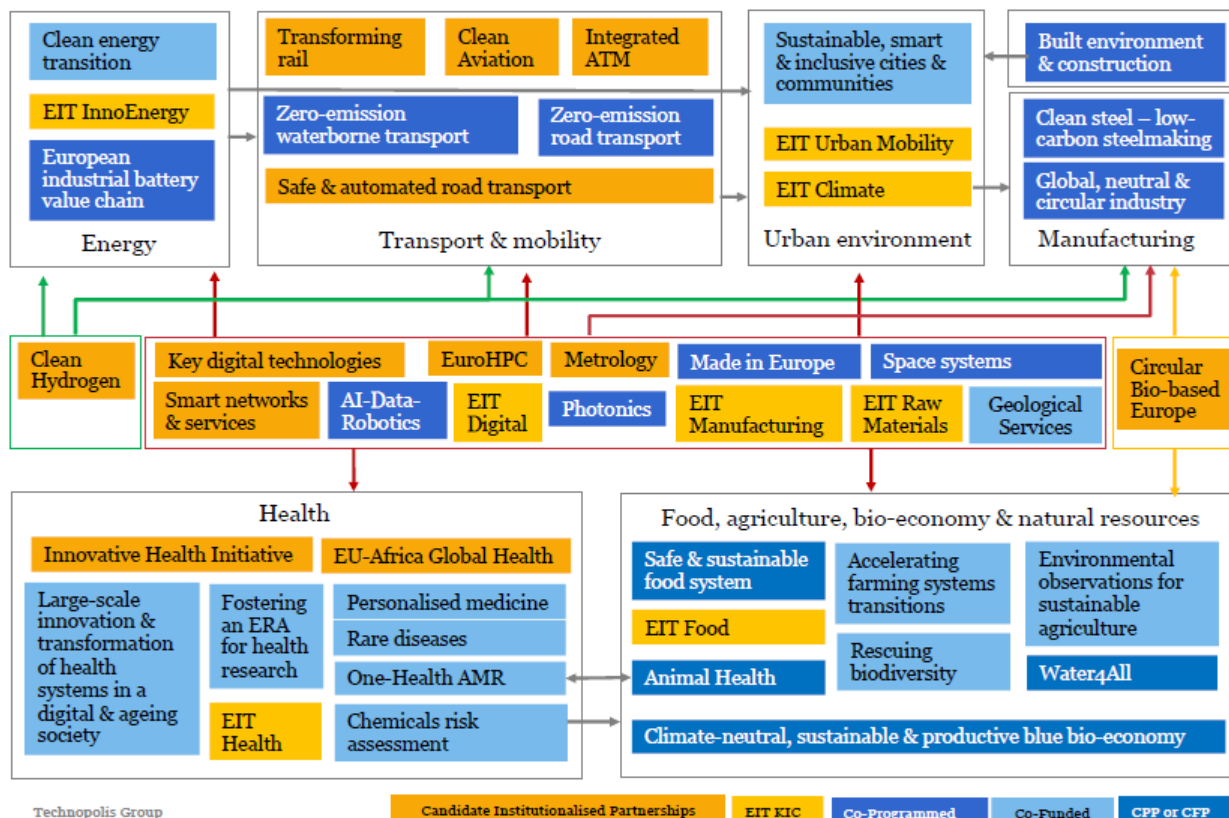
Angus Hunter presented the total landscape (first wave of candidate and total planned Partnerships along with EIT-KICs), CPPs and CFPs). These can be grouped into:

- industry-orientated, 'vertical' partnerships (i.e. those in the areas of energy, transport and mobility, urban environment and manufacturing)
- 'horizontal' partnerships (Clean Hydrogen, Key Digital technologies, Smart Networks and Services, AI-Data-Robotics, EuroHPC, EIT-Digital, Metrology, Photonics, Made in Europe, EIT-manufacturing, EIT-Raw Materials, Space Systems, Geological Services and Circular Bio-based Europe)⁵
- and 'vertical' partnerships in the societal application areas (namely those related to the areas of health and the food, agriculture, bio-economy & natural resources)

⁴ (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and, timely or time-bound)

⁵ Representatives of the proposed European Science Cloud Partnership (a cross cluster Partnership) indicated that it should be included in the list of 'horizontal' partnerships. This has since been communicated to Technopolis.

Figure 2: The landscape of European R&I Partnerships in Horizon Europe



Source: Angus Hunter, <https://www.era-learn.eu/news-events/events/workshop-supporting-the-preparation-of-future-european-partnerships/plenary2-ah.pdf>

The overview of partnerships in the cluster areas of Horizon Europe was also presented. For instance in the case of Digital, Space and Industry, there are 14 candidate partnerships, whereas most of the partnerships are A187s or Co-programmed. The study concludes that the new partnerships address the EU policy priorities of the European Green Deal, a people-centred economy, the fit for the Digital Age and a stronger Europe in the world. In addition, they are in a unique position to address transformational and directionality failures through the joint development of SRIAs and shared visions on the goal and direction that the required system transformation should take, while, at the same time, they too address systemic failures by targeting to tackle fragmentation. There are multiple potential interconnections and synergies between the candidate European Partnerships within the clusters, but only a few potential interconnections across the clusters. In other words, clusters still act as silos. The Commission services can play a crucial role in enhancing collaboration and bridging the gaps between them.

The audience raised the issue of the great challenge they have to prioritise the partnerships they should join in such an interconnected and at the same time, highly diverse landscape. Joerg Niehoff pointed out that this is only the starting point rather than the end; it is very much also up to national policy-makers which partnerships will go ahead and how a structured collaboration among them can be created.

3. Capitalising on collective knowledge and experience

Preparing the new partnerships should benefit from the knowledge and experience already gained over the years. In order to identify critical issues and bottlenecks related to various components of the partnerships' design, implementation and monitoring, several parallel sessions were organised that addressed governance, commitments, coherence, synergies, development of Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas, management of data on calls, projects and other activities. The discussions that took place enabled mutual learning and exchange of good practices, while the results will be instrumental to formulate the way forward.

The parallel sessions were structured in two rounds spreading across the two days of the workshop. The key results of each session are briefly presented in the sections below. These are followed by the main messages of the final plenary workshop that was dedicated to the monitoring of European Partnerships and specifically the integration of data about proposals, projects and results of calls.

3.1. A: Governance of and coherence among European Partnerships

Moderator: Joerg Niehoff (EC) – Rapporteur: Effie Amanatidou (ERA-LEARN)

The parallel session on 'Governance and Coherence' envisaged producing guidance for good governance principles, in order to develop governance models to support European Partnerships delivering on their expectations, especially within the new context, where different governance arrangements are needed both for individual partnerships as well as among them.

Experience, thus far, shows that partnerships need to perform better in terms of delivering wider policy impacts, as well as in creating the necessary synergies with the Framework Programme and other EU programmes. Thus, a strengthened role of governance is required in programming and monitoring in order to improve the overall performance of the partnerships.

Specific elements that were discussed included the role of the Commission and the internal arrangements among the partners, along with the engagement of stakeholders, access to scientific advice, uptake of results and links to other partnerships. It was further stated that it is important for Member States to identify the relevant national representatives so that the respective partnerships are well embedded in the national policies and priorities.

Five cases were presented including [Metrology, One Health, Key Digital Technologies, Biodiversity and the European Open Science Cloud](#). They shared valuable lessons learnt and new elements that they proposed for the new partnerships.

The discussion that followed showed that there are some good cases we can learn from. There is good experience to spread around about engaging scientific advisory boards as well as users and stakeholders. Yet, more work needs to be done in relation to linking partnerships with each other. Identifying good practice and spreading advice is highly needed in this area.

The role of the Commission and how this is reflected in the governance model is particularly important in the case of the Co-funded Partnerships, whereas this is more straightforward in the Institutionalised ones. For the Co-funded Partnerships it is also important to understand how to link with national and EU policies at the strategic level and how to reflect these links in the governance structure. As efforts also need to concentrate on the valorisation of results, it is crucial to pinpoint who to engage in the governance, how and for what purpose. Some shared principles were also identified including openness, transparency and fair reflection of roles and responsibilities in the governance of the partnerships.

As follow-up steps, it was made clear that exchange of good practices and discussions of this sort need to be continued. We need to establish shared terminology and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Commission, the Member State and industry to say the least. We need to organise specific activities to better understand the pros and cons of each governance model suggested and for drafting concrete models for collaboration among partnerships.

3.2. B: Developing Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas

Moderator: Michael Dinges (AIT / ERA-LEARN) – Rapporteur: Dimitri Gagliardi (UNIMAN / ERA-LEARN)

As all future partnerships will be implemented on the basis of Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas that need to be agreed with the Commission services, this parallel session aimed at exchanging views on existing experiences and achieving a common understanding on the key requirements and means to develop SRIAs of Co-funded Partnerships.

The sessions included [six presentations](#), critically reflecting upon SRIA development in relation to stakeholders' involvement, general guidelines and prioritisation, synergies with Horizon Europe and processes translating the SRIA into roadmaps or annual work plans. The presentations highlighted the diversity of approaches evidencing different conceptual underpinnings to their SRIAs effort. Yet, they all followed structured processes characterised by a broad range of underpinning justifications, namely:

- 1) Mapping of their relevant domains for provision of inputs into their forward-looking strategy: The partnerships usually rely on drawing maps of their respective relevant domains to provide insights and inputs into their forward-looking strategy. Of course, experience is particularly relevant for long running partnerships.
- 2) Broad use of organisational structures such as advisory boards, governing boards and key stakeholders. Moreover, the majority of the partnerships referred to open consultations for subsequent phases of SRIA development.
- 3) Stakeholder involvement through various forms of open and targeted consultations or co-creation approaches: stakeholders' consultations are undertaken with researchers, universities, national hubs, and local stakeholders (in some cases organised in the form of for a). The same actors are in some cases called in for co-creation activities (rather than consultations). These activities, together with specific research and innovation sessions, provide substantiation to high-level consultations.
- 4) SRIAs refer to policy priorities although tangible economic and social problems and research needs which are eventually matched by policy priorities are at the core of SRIAS;
- 5) Policy co-ordination for identification of topics that are relevant from both the EU-Member State perspective and the EU-Framework Programme perspective.

The principles of directionality and additionality are at the core of the process of developing SRIAs in the new partnerships. SRIAs were developed with a main pathway to impact in mind and more practical action plans are set out accordingly, including for instance bridging different academic and research domains, responding to policy needs and focusing their activities towards producing specific impact streams. Issues of prioritisation emerged clearly from the majority of partnerships. Identifying a gap and providing a pathway to bridge the gap is a motive much explored by partnerships. Important to this approach is to evaluate and benchmark the partnership objectives against the state of the art. Prioritisation strategies were not always clear and they were often changed according to pressures and emerging demands of the partnerships' R&I operations against high-level policy objectives (nationally and EU).

From the presentations and most prominently from the discussions, it emerged that substantial effort should be put into providing guidance on SRIAs and the principle of directionality. The need concerns mostly the link between the EU priorities and how/to what extent these may be backed up by partnerships and eventually delivered. In other words, early political agreement on priorities and funding are necessary to activate valuable dialogue and activate synergies.

The main challenge in the translation of the mission and vision in a forward-looking operational model, be that a road map or an annual plan, is how to tackle the great uncertainties related to future funding and policy coordination. How can a partnership design a roadmap, draw a long period plan or focus on the details necessary to achieve impact, when there is uncertainty concerning resources and policy processes? These activities would logically be planned according to the resources available and not vice versa.

What is critical in the next steps is that importance should be put on the 'Pathway to Impact' as a constant reminder of "where is impact coming from?" and to reflect this approach in the

development of the SRIAs. It is important to translate the mission into a strategic approach and then the strategic approach to concrete action plan under an open and transparent collective process. This would also facilitate self-evaluation of progress and achievements.

3.3. C: Implementation of joint calls for transnational R&I projects

Moderator: Jan-Arne Eilertsen (RCN/ERA-LEARN) – Rapporteur: Hannele Lahtinen (AKA/ ERA-LEARN)

For the future European Partnerships the preparation and implementation of joint calls should be organised in a way that is easily accessible for applicants, efficient to be implemented across all research funders and able to support the long-term commitments of all involved parties. In predecessor networks a great deal of effort was undertaken to identify ways to align the execution of joint calls. This parallel session aimed to explore existing experiences and to identify a minimal set of standards, which should help avoid needless efforts and reinventing the wheel.

The session started with a brief [introduction by the moderator, followed by a number of short presentations by the Commission, funding agencies and ministries](#) (RCN, DLR, Spanish Ministry for Science and Innovation) along with existing partnerships, all of which are Art. 185 initiatives (EMPIR, PRIMA, EUROSTARS), who shared their experiences and expectations about the implementation of joint calls in the 'old' and the forthcoming partnerships.

Certain minimum requirements were identified that diverged from one stakeholder to another.

For the European Commission it is clear that the new partnerships need to be more impactful, more ambitious and supported by long-term national commitments. They also need to be more open and transparent and the co-funded calls will have to be implemented on the basis of clearly defined criteria (more or less the same criteria as under previous FPs).

For the funding agencies, the continuation of the H2020 rules is anticipated. Yet, more flexibility for the ranking list is desired, while the usefulness of the observers is questioned. As later clarified in the plenary by Joerg Niehoff, the EC rules are clear about the evaluation and selection of positively evaluated proposals based on shared evaluation criteria that abide by the principles of research excellence. These need to be respected, although it is up to the partnerships and the participating Member States to decide to fund more high-quality proposals, by using a proportion of the EU top-up funding or with own contributions.

The two-stage evaluation is very useful, especially from the point of view of companies that do not have many resources available to prepare a single-stage proposal that might be unsuccessful in the end. From the Ministry point of view, it is crucial to set up a homogenous system for all partnerships, comparable to the H2020 calls, with a common management

structure and low number of additional activities. From the partnerships' point of view, however, flexibility was hoped for since different partnerships will have different objectives and their role or expected impact will thus vary.

Last but not least, the view of the Art. 185 initiatives represented in the audience was that a common framework based on EC rules is preferred, but to achieve the chosen objectives, certain flexibility and adjustments and step wise improvements are still needed. In addition, the option of a virtual common pot is preferred as national funders are free to commit budgets or add more as required.

Participants also pointed out certain challenges that lie ahead in the implementation of joint calls. While openness is a shared principle that should be followed, we need to clarify what 'open calls' mean. At the same time, the challenge of safeguarding the necessary resources for the management of the partnerships still remains and needs to be accommodated. In this respect, participants noted that there are already quite experienced call secretariats. These have 'tested' procedures for call management and implementation, which offer good practices to follow up and build upon in the future. ERA-LEARN has contributed to the standardisation of joint call implementation by collecting best practises and providing learning possibilities in the form of web-based tools and training workshops.

The expectations from the Commission regarding the level of national commitments might prove too high, so the question whether it will be possible for countries to join partnerships with lower budgets is pertinent. The timeline and the transparency in the preparation process of the new partnership is also important for Member States that need as much information as possible about the plans of the new partnerships, in order to be able to make commitment decisions.

3.4. D: Activities and contributions beyond joint calls

Moderator: Christiane Wehle (DLR / ERA-LEARN) – Rapporteur: Ursula Bodisch (FFG / ERA-LEARN), Effie Amanatidou (ERA-LEARN)

In order to achieve their ambitious objectives and impacts, future partnerships should deploy the necessary broad range of activities including calls for R&I proposals, from concept to demonstration and validation, as well as joint activities beyond joint calls. Partnerships should take into account relevant standardisation, regulation and certification issues to maximise the impact of their actions and ensure market, regulatory or policy uptake. The specific parallel session aimed to help all future partnerships with Member States to design an adequate portfolio of activities to achieve their objectives.

Current networks under H2020 have implemented a broad range of joint activities beyond joint calls such as the elaboration of Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas, the monitoring of the projects, special activities as needed in the fields addressed (e.g. clinical practices) or

activities towards widening participation in the European context. Other tasks have included, networking and ways to increase mobility and knowledge transfer, support to early career researchers, activities for valorisation of research results, capacity building activities, or mapping of national R&I funding capacities or infrastructures.⁶

Yet, as Jean- Eric Paquet stressed in his opening speech and as echoed in the presentations of Andrei Lintu and Maria Reinfeldt in the session, future partnerships need to ‘think out of the box’, in order to create the expected impact ,both in terms of how they are structured as well as the kind of activities they design. There have been valuable activities in the past but partnerships also need to create tools for the uptake of their results, which has been less successful to date.

In setting the basis for the discussion [presentations from funding agencies \(AKA\) and several partnerships were hosted \(Large-scale innovation and transformation of health system, Sustainable, Smart and Inclusive Cities and Communities, Biodiversity, Driving Urban Transitions, European partnership for chemicals risk assessment\)](#). These presentations addressed the experiences the networks had in organising additional activities in past partnerships, as well as the planned activities that new partnerships have thought about.

During the discussion, due to the increased emphasis on delivering impacts for the new partnerships, participants highlighted that it is important for each partnership to define the desired impacts and how they can be measured. As for next steps, it is important to learn from existing experiences/ examples that worked well, such as fast track projects or research infrastructure. When designing their activities, new partnerships should consider the criteria for partnerships that have been set in Horizon Europe – these have to be well-understood at national level to achieve the new, higher ambitions. We need the resources to generate the demanded impact from the additional activities and at national level it is not as easy to ring-fence money for the additional activities as it is for the calls. As additional activities call for specific participants we also need to involve the relevant partners (for example from the private sector) and to design the governance structures that will be able to implement the activities.

3.5. E: Financial management of co-funded European Partnerships

Moderator: Ursula Bodisch (FFG/ERA-LEARN) – Rapporteur: Anja Wiesbrock (RCN/ERA-LEARN)

The predecessors of the future Co-funded European Partnerships are the current Horizon 2020 ERA-NET Cofunds and European Joint Programme Cofunds. These partnerships gained a lot of experience and lessons learned which will be valuable inputs for the future. The activities of

⁶ Examples of Joint Activities available on ERA-LEARN, <https://www.era-learn.eu/support-for-p2ps/joint-activities>

future partnerships will go beyond calls and will be based on financial and/or in-kind contributions. As in the predecessor networks, the use of the EC contribution will be up to the consortium (black box). These aspects will create a huge complexity on the one hand but also offer substantial opportunities. In addition, at some point, some of the future Co-funded European Partnerships will deal with a situation where Research Funders (RFO) and Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) are both part of the co-fund consortium.

This parallel session was the starting point for guiding future partnerships and avoiding common mistakes. [Presentations were hosted to set the basis for the discussion \(EC, European partnership for chemicals risk assessment, One Health EJP, Rare Diseases, ERA-LEARN\)](#)

In the discussion that followed, the complexity in managing and reporting for the new, larger partnerships was noted by the audience, along with the need for sound financial management allowing for some degree of flexibility to react on emerging issues. In such large consortia some members will still find it difficult to understand the 'black box' (allocation of resources inside the consortium) even though on the Commission side the financial rules will be simple. Another challenge is to the commitment of national funds for long-time periods.

All cases presented highlighted the important role of the coordinator and the need to ensure the required resources (human and financial) in creating a well-staffed coordination team, which is even more important due to the larger size of the new partnerships. The fact that the Co-funded Partnerships will allow participation of RFOs as well as RPOs may create additional challenges as some RFOs clearly prefer open calls, as they might not be able to fund calls inviting only certain RPOs to respond. At the same time, other RFOs would welcome flexibility in targeting certain research organisations depending on the research topic addressed.

As next steps the discussants stressed, it is important to define what can be included as in-kind contributions and develop models suggesting ways for simplified financial management and reporting. The situation of countries should also be addressed with limited financial resources at national level possibly in combination with the use of ESIF.

On the special case of consortia including both RFOs and RPOs in one partnership the Commission explained the approach that can be used. First of all, if RPOs apply to calls of RFOs, consortia have to take measures that avoid any perception of conflict of interest and establish a firewall between RFOs that prepare calls and evaluations and RPOs. In relation to the funding of the resulting projects and the costs reporting there are different possibilities. RFOs can use national funding only, and would thus not report costs of funding ("as financial support to third parties") under the Co-fund Grant Agreement. Alternatively, RPOs declare their costs for implementing the project as direct costs under the Co-fund Grant Agreement. The two possibilities can even be combined, as long as total funding does not exceed total costs.

3.6. F: Creating synergies between different funding sources at regional, national and European level

Moderator: Maria Reinfeldt (EC) – Rapporteur: Michele Guerrini (CNR / ERA-LEARN)

Future European Partnerships will be one of the key tools to develop synergies. Synergies, notably with European structural and investment funds (ESIF) have been implemented to some extent under Horizon 2020. Horizon Europe takes a step further in enabling and establishing synergies by overcoming regulatory, organisational and attitudinal barriers. While the respective provisions are under negotiations, the political ambition is to allow financial contributions stemming from Cohesion Policy funds, EMFF and EAFRD as a national contribution of the participating Member State under European Partnerships. Accordingly, the objective of the parallel session was to raise awareness and stimulate a debate about the implementation of synergies with other Programmes and Funds for maximising the impact of future European Partnerships at national and regional level

Based on the [presentations \(ERA-LEARN, Smart and Inclusive Cities and Communities, BBI JU, JPI More Years, Better Lives, MOBILITAS +, DG AGRI on “Accelerating farming systems transition: agro-ecology living labs & research infrastructures”^{7\)}](#) and the discussion held, a key message was that there are a lot of parallel activities, and we need to converge to achieve more impact. H2020 has largely been a missed opportunity in creating synergies, but there are some good practices from which we can learn, also in collaboration with European countries and regions. It was also underlined that the scope for discussing synergies should encompass all other relevant programmes at EU, national and regional level (hence, not only Cohesion Funds). Getting technicalities (e.g. legal provisions) right is important but it is only one element of developing synergies. The attitudinal aspects are equally (sometimes even more) important – i.e. to be more focused and proactive on what it is that we want to achieve with synergies (it should not be about top-up). Here, the planning and programming of synergies becomes crucial – to develop national/ regional priorities and programmes in such a way that they anticipate linkages with future European Partnerships.

An important barrier for developing synergies is the information gap across stakeholders and a coordination problem at national level – entities engaged in partnerships are not in communication with those involved in managing other relevant programmes and funds. It was also highlighted that achieving synergies need a lot of work and effort from all sides concerned (partnership level, national, regional, European level) – here the secretariat or ‘back-office’ of future partnerships can play an important role in interacting with interested stakeholders and facilitating synergies.

⁷ This was an oral presentation.

Besides finalising and clarifying provisions for synergies (such as for transferring funds), some key actions were defined for different parties.

Countries and regions should take advantage of the improved strategic planning and take into account Horizon Europe priorities (including those of the partnership candidates) when developing their national/ operational programmes and S3 priorities and forecast possibilities for alignment and complementary activities/funding. Countries could also take steps to improve national coordination and bring all players, including regional and thematic funders, to same table. The NCPs could play an active role to consult on synergies in Horizon Europe.

The Commission should incentivise actions for establishing synergies (including dissemination of information about possibilities via S3 thematic platforms, and providing more guidance on how to translate legal provisions into practice (including via country desks). It should also facilitate programming of synergies among future partnerships by mapping those that target the same programmes/objectives, and bring them together to discuss with one another.

Partnerships should think of ambitious and novel ways on how to programme synergies (action plans, living labs, pilots, impact plans) and provide for the resources needed to achieve it.

Once the negotiation of related provisions is finalised, ERA-LEARN will finalise and disseminate its work on Tools for Synergies in the context of European Partnerships.

3.7. Monitoring of European Partnerships: how to ensure complete data on proposals, projects and results for all calls under European Partnerships?

Moderator: Joerg Niehoff (EC) – Rapporteur: Effie Amanatidou (ERA-LEARN)

The provisions in the common understanding on Horizon Europe (Article 8, Annex III) call for all European Partnerships to set up a monitoring system that can track progress towards objectives, impacts and key performance indicators. In order to simplify and standardise this at the level of the individual projects funded by the partnerships, the data on proposals, selected projects, their outcomes and results will need to be integrated in the central IT tools (eGRANTS Data Warehouse, dashboard). Thus, a last session was organised in a plenary with the representatives of the partnerships that are currently being prepared. The objective was to understand the overall approach and involve users in early stages of the process.

Introducing the overall framework for data collection and integration, [Effie Amanatidou \(ERA-LEARN\)](#) presented the main features of building a monitoring and evaluation system. Monitoring and evaluation depend on each other. It is important to set 'who', does 'what', 'when' and 'how' in setting up a monitoring and evaluation system. The crucial thing is to understand 'why' we are doing this. Ultimately, we monitor and evaluate to draw useful lessons on how to improve. Thus, we not only need to estimate 'what' is being achieved but also to understand 'why' and

'how'. Valuable work has been done in defining key impact pathway indicators for Horizon Europe and in providing guidance on what data to collect, when and how to measure these. However, partnerships will still need to check the appropriateness of what is proposed and also need to consider the specificities of the partnerships in the sense that results span different levels (project level & network level, national, trans-national and European level). In this regard, the [RIPE toolkit](#) may prove a useful complement of what is already proposed for Horizon Europe.⁸

Setting the state-of-play, Joerg Niehoff reported on the level of success of three pilot exercises in integrating data (ERA-LEARN, PRIMA and EMPIR). While a subset of ERA-LEARN data has been imported into CORDA, the main issues are data quality and completeness and difficulties in attributing unique identifiers, although it has been possible to attribute a PIC to around 2/3 of the beneficiaries. Complementing the ERA-LEARN experience, [Hayley Welsh \(Optimat/ERA-LEARN\)](#) shared valuable insights in collecting, using and storing data on calls and projects provided by the existing partnerships. There are several difficulties in data collection that span from inconvenient timing to different required formats, to low quality and completeness of the data or distrust and frustration towards ERA-LEARN who request the data. The efforts required to check all data before uploading it to the secure system and to chase the partnerships should not be underestimated.

The PRIMA pilot that included access to the EC's IT tools for proposals submission and evaluation has not been successful. In a further pilot with the Article 185 initiative on Metrology, EMPIR, data quality issues have been largely resolved, by adjusting the data structure in the IT tools of the EMPIR's implementing structure to the exacting standard of the EC's data requirements. As [Duncan Jarvis \(EMPIR\)](#) later reported, the use of common PICs is crucial in integrating and linking partial data to each other that refer to the same entry. It also helps overcome cases where certain piece of information such as addresses, for instance, were recorded in different ways across the two sources. A common system for validating data is also essential.

Before opening the discussion, [Joerg Niehoff listed the next steps and a provisional timeline](#). The key milestone is for all systems to be in place and tested before the launch of first calls by European Partnerships that include participation of Member States. Going forward in the next few weeks, the Commission will engage in identifying ongoing partnerships that could act as additional pilot cases for data integration.

The importance of data integration was well understood by the participants, who noted that it is important that Member States have access to the main central storage system. Participants also acknowledged the importance of gathering data in order to document outputs, outcomes and impacts especially for making a case for European Partnerships at EU and Member State's

⁸ See Annex III of the [Regulation of Horizon Europe \(COM \(2018\) 435 Final\)](#) and the [Expert Group Report on Monitoring the Impact of EU Framework Programmes \(2018\)](#).

level. The challenge of tracing long-term impacts was shared within the audience, alongside the importance of establishing a system to monitor projects even after they finish. The need to combine quantitative and qualitative data collection methods was clearly understood to move beyond statistics and derive meaningful impact story lines.

Certain technical matters also surfaced in the discussion that are worthy of exploring further. This included for instance the use of AI methods in text mining of large datasets and/or numerous reports - there are H2020 projects that can be useful here. The overall message was that we need to move fast to carry out further pilots in order for the system to be ready before the first new partnerships launch their calls under Horizon Europe.

Joerg Niehoff closed the workshop by reminding the audience that proposals for the first wave of the new partnerships (that will be reflected under the work-programme 21/22) should be further elaborated and agreed by April/May. The Commission will keep on organising actions for shared knowledge exchange; for instance, a webinar is planned for April/May to address the topic of governance and much more will be accordingly set based on the lessons from this workshop. As he characteristically noted “*significant work is needed to bring the partnerships to the next level; this is an important challenge for all*”.

4. Conclusions

Certain clear messages derived from the discussions during the workshop on “Supporting the preparation of future European Partnership”. First, European Partnerships have to be more impactful and ambitious than in the past. There is a continuous need to make a case for investing in science and innovation amidst the shrinking public budgets and great uncertainties of our times. In order to have added value and deliver on societal goals, future European Partnerships need to have a vision (directionality), resources and long-term commitment (additionality) from partners. In addition, to justify a partnership approach, future initiatives need to be much more innovative in their structures and activities (going beyond what can be achieved by traditional R&I projects).

On implementation and governance, future European Partnerships should be characterised by openness and transparency. A more inclusive and engaging approach allows to link R&I more closely to societal needs (co-creation, living labs etc.). In order to play a transformative role, their design and implementation should be underlined by a systemic approach, involving a broad range of complementary activities, as well as structured collaboration with other related R&I initiatives and partnerships. The need for greater collaboration and directionality particularly calls for a rethinking of the governance arrangements, both at the level of partnership as well as partners (e.g. the involvement of sectoral ministries, regulators and other relevant partnerships). As a new element, all future partnerships need to develop an exit strategy from the outset, including specific measures for the phasing-out of the Framework Programme funding.

As the proposals for the 30 (out of the 49) candidate partnerships are currently being prepared, we are in a steep learning curve that requires great efforts by all stakeholders (European Commission, Ministries, funding agencies, etc.) to bring European Partnerships to the next level. From the current preparation process, as well as past experience, valuable lessons have been gained that should be widely spread to achieve the progress envisaged. The European Commission, with the help of ERA-LEARN, is committed to respond in the coming months to the identified learning needs by facilitating the exchange of experiences, spreading good practices, producing advice, guidance and training in the areas that were addressed during the different workshop sessions.



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