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Mutual Learning Exercise (MLE) of the PKH, 2025

Impact of European Partnerships on national R&I Systems

Final Report

June 2025

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1. Executive summary

The MLE exercise on "Impact of European Partnerships on national R&I Systems" was part of the PKH work plan for 2024 as a key element for mutual learning and sharing of practices within the PKH. PKH members were invited to express or confirm their interest in actively participating to the MLE. Based on a survey and a consultation meeting of the PKH, four main topics were pre-selected to be discussed within the exercise including the challenges in national coordination, misalignment in rules and regulations at the trans-national level and associated capacity building needs, and the measure of the impact of partnerships at the national level.

These were addressed through two MLE workshops that took place in Brussels (11-12 March 2025) and Vienna (21-22 May 2025). The workshops were organised along with impulses on the above topics, provided by representatives from participating states and partnerships in plenary sessions and group discussions based on the world café format.

Here is a summarised list of the prioritised action points for the different parties drawing on the more detailed synthesis of the discussion results that follow.

Suggested action points for the Member States/ Associated Countries

- Next to creating coordination mechanisms at the national level drawing on the many good examples that exist today with clear responsibilities and expectations and leveraging existing structures, countries should be integrating national strategies into the Partnerships by demonstrating how partnerships can solve national challenges.
- Field trips / staff exchanges/ learning/ feedback loops among countries (ministries, agencies) would be useful to exchange about practices on national strategies and to highlight the tangible value and success of partnerships, drawing on concrete activities to build up success stories.
- A rule book and national guidelines on how to participate in partnerships are always useful for 'newcomers' including other ministries.
- Internal capacity building by drawing on the already gained expertise and knowledge in the funding agencies and ministries, securing the needed resources.
- On-boarding activities to new partners, promoting the value of partnerships nationally and raising awareness and training of the national research community.
- Possible changes to rules and regulations for increased harmonisation and attractiveness of partnerships to potential beneficiaries.
- Build capacity internally for monitoring allowing learning/ feedback loops. Coordinate with data units. Collect qualitative insights. Carry out periodic meetings of all people in partnerships. Onboarding activities for 'new' staff.

Suggested action points for the Partnerships

- The engagement of stakeholders for the dissemination of results should be intensified at the partnership level through common dissemination actions/ events by partnerships to support national/ regional uptake of results. Related to this the need to address the lack of dedicated resources for maintaining engagement should be addressed. Attention should also be paid at the engagement of stakeholders during strategic discussions and SRIA development.
- Call-specific webinars on partnerships basics when call opens about partnerships/call specifics.
- Co-funded partnership knowledge hubs to scale sharing of results across countries.
- Provide information on methods/ processes to other partnerships for mutual learning

Suggested action points for the European Commission

- More promotion of partnerships tailored to target audiences about added value to attract new members/stakeholders - Specialised promotion for MS/ AC needs.

- Official communication channel providing guidance and advice on rules interpretation and implementation, and specific clarifications where still needed, further promoting the value of the partnerships and experimenting with implementing a partnership with harmonised procedures.
- Use of one centralized system mandatory for data of funded projects by all European Partnerships aligned to the F+T portal and CORDA. Coherence of data for all formats. Clear definition of what data is needed. A partnership dashboard allowing comparison of partnerships/ countries.
- Assistance to the partnerships to set up the monitoring system through a contractor (EU tender)
- Align reporting with monitoring requirements and make space for qualitative insights on impact.

Suggested action points for ERA-LEARN

- Mapping of differences and challenges and further working towards the development of standard processes and harmonised rules that could then be experimented by the EC.
- Producing FAQs, handbooks, etc. to help implementation of partnerships.

Suggested action points for the Commission and/ or ERA-LEARN

- Information activities, guidelines and training that can be organised centrally.
- Dedicated workshops centrally (ERA-LEARN) about different impacts, long-term impacts.
- Ensure clarity on terms (monitoring, assessment, long-term impact, etc.).

Below follows a synthesis of the main messages and prioritized suggested actions for each of the topics addressed (national coordination, misalignment of trans-national contexts and capacity building and measuring the impact at national level) based on the discussions at the two workshops.

1.1. National coordination including engagement of stakeholders

The topic of national coordination was addressed through various aspects, i.e. the role of working groups, engagement of stakeholders, resources challenges and high administrative burden, timing issues and financial/ budgetary restrictions.

The implementation of transnational calls in European Partnerships is significantly complicated by the diversity and complexity of national funding rules, especially given the broader scope and higher ambition of new partnership concepts, which also increases risks for less experienced participants. Key challenges include the misalignment of eligible activities and applicant criteria across countries, regions, or even agencies within a single country. Further complicating factors are the misalignment of national schedules, as exemplified by lengthy justification procedures in some legal systems that can hinder participation.

While good practice examples of national coordination processes and structures are increasingly emerging, the issue of resource constraints, including limited budgets and a severe shortage of human resources at the ministerial level, is still pertaining and makes it difficult to manage numerous diverse partnerships. Timing is another hurdle, as securing national commitments can be problematic, especially during government transitions. Additionally, national conditions, such as funding caps for transnational projects or restrictive rules for funding agencies, impede flexibility and successful participation.

Working groups (such as National Hubs, Mirror Groups, Coordinating Groups, and Advisory/Expert Groups) are important structures/ tools for monitoring, consultation, and coordination of European Partnerships. However, the issue of resource scarcity (time, funding, personnel) is also relevant here as are difficulties in defining clear mandates and roles, and issues in identifying and motivating experts, particularly regarding reimbursement and recognition. There is no "one-size-fits-all" model, as effectiveness varies with country size, existing structures, and the number of partnerships in a thematic area. It was agreed that creating groups merely for the sake of establishing them has to be avoided. Instead, existing national structures and networks should be leveraged to enhance efficiency and ensure better alignment with national structures and programmes.

The suggested actions in relation to enhancing transnational alignment, national coordination and engaging stakeholders are summarised as follows.

Suggested actions - Sharing of practices about national strategies	***Voting***
Integrating National Strategies into the Partnerships by demonstrating how partnerships can solve national challenges, often initiated via mirror groups.	11
Field trips for sharing practices about national strategies as well as highlighting the tangible value and success of partnerships.	5
Success stories – show how their strategies differ.	2
Bottom-up approach – show that stakeholders work consistently with national strategy.	
National rule book on process to join; national guidelines on how to participate, guide other ministries.	3
Suggested actions – creating working groups for national coordination and engagement of stakeholders	***Voting***
Clear Mandates and Roles: Defining responsibilities and expectations from the outset, ensuring follow-up actions lead to tangible outcomes beyond mere networking.	
Leveraging Existing Structures: Avoiding the creation of new groups purely for their own sake and instead utilizing existing national structures and networks	
Careful Member Selection and Incentives: Selecting knowledgeable and active individuals and offering incentives (e.g., opportunities to contribute to strategic directions) to ensure commitment. Mirror groups are noted to be most effective in areas with a substantial number of partnerships.	
Suggested actions - engagement of stakeholders	***Voting***
Engagement of stakeholders for the dissemination of results through common dissemination actions/ events by partnerships to support national/ regional uptake of results. This necessitates to identify the type of engagement, the relevant stakeholders and the other actors that need to be involved.	11
Need to address the lack of dedicated resources for maintaining engagement.	7

Engagement of stakeholders at the strategic level through structures like those implemented by DK, the so-called reference groups, accompanied by feedback loops and onboarding activities.	3
As potential beneficiaries through info days on calls from a variety of funding opportunities (involving the NCP network) or through events like the Partnership Day that will be carried out in Slovenia in October 2025.	1

1.2. Misalignment of national and trans-national rules and contexts and capacity building needs

It was made evident during the workshop discussions that addressing the challenges of misalignment of national and trans-national rules and contexts is closely related to building capacity in all terms (skills, fora and structures, means like workshops, guidance, etc. and resources) and vice versa.

The attendants prioritised suggestions that would require action on the level of the EC and others that are better undertaken by the MS/ AC or the partnership level. Actions that need to be carried out centrally involve information activities, guidelines and training, as well as mapping of difference and developing standard templates and harmonised rules. Activities that should be taken up at the national level regard improving internal capacities by drawing on the already gained expertise and knowledge in the funding agencies and ministries, securing the needed resources, as well as making changes to rules and regulations for increased harmonisation and attractiveness of partnerships to potential beneficiaries.

Of the above suggestions some are more related to capacity building than others. These were further discussed and complemented by other related activities, along with the key actors that should take the lead in implementing them. Combining all three challenge areas, their prioritisation is as shown below. It is evident that the most pressing activities (mostly in terms of urgency rather than importance as highlighted during the workshop) are those activities related to the EC and activities that need to be done centrally, e.g. by ERA-LEARN.

It is suggested that the EC establishes an official communication channel providing guidance and advice on rules interpretation and implementation, and specific clarifications where still needed, further promoting the value of the partnerships and experimenting with implementing a partnership with harmonised procedures.

ERA-LEARN also has an important role to play, as discussed in the workshop, in relation to mapping differences and challenges and further working towards the development of standard processes and harmonised rules that could then be experimented by the EC. ERA-LEARN can further work in producing FAQs, handbooks, etc. to help implementation.

It is worth noting here that the material already developed by ERA-LEARN, for instance, in relation to call implementation and the workshops that addressed some topics (e.g. additional activities, administrative burden, stakeholder engagement, internationalisation, cohesion development, etc.) may need to be further/ regularly disseminated to increase the awareness of the partnership community.

Although the actions that are best considered for the national (MS/ AC) level were not prioritised as the others, it is of vital importance to be taken up soon as they mainly refer to building internal capacities, on-boarding activities to new partners, promoting the value of partnerships nationally and raising awareness and training of the national research community.

Suggested actions for capacity building	***Voting***	***Who is responsible***	***Who to involve***
Development of standard processes to be implemented by all partnerships	10	ERA-LEARN	Partnerships, EC
Official communication channel to the EC to ask guidance on the rules	9	EC	
Update of EC on in-kind contributions (what counts, what types)	7	EC	Partnerships
Collect templates in a toolbox, reference models - templates (good) - Ranking list - Proposal Planner - internal reporting tool	5	ERA-LEARN	Partnerships
FAQs for partnerships basics, reporting & in-kind contributions	4	ERA-LEARN	Partnerships
Staff exchange between funding agencies Work shadowing - for instance on impact assessment - Data collection from projects Grants to do that - schemes	3	Partnerships MS/AC	

More promotion of partnerships tailored to target audiences about added value to attract new members/stakeholders Specialised promotion for MS/ AC needs	3	EC	MS/AC PR experts
Pilot/sandbox to identify areas worth implementing a partnership with harmonised procedures	2	EC	Partnerships
Call-specific webinars on partnerships basics when call opens about partnerships/call specifics.	2	Call secretariat	all agencies, NCPs involved
Mapping of differences/ challenges	1	ERA-LEARN	
Staff exchange also within same country when relevant needed	1	Agencies	
Partnerships-tailored handbook on stakeholder engagement (diverse actors)	1	ERA-LEARN	Partnerships
Training of researchers on how to communicate collaborate with policy/industry	1	MS/AC	
On boarding (use guidelines) → useful for: new partners all levels		MS/AC	ERA-LEARN
Different interpretation of same rules (HE)			
Bring experienced with less experienced staff together. Drafting internal manuals. Who needs to take care of what Map internal bureaucracy		Internally in agencies	
ERA-LEARN targeted exchanges on specific skills /topics.		ERA-LEARN	Partnerships

Coordinators offering support to encourage new organizations to take more responsibility.		Partnerships and agencies	

1.3. *Measuring the impact of European Partnerships*

The topic was addressed in three aspects including the status of national monitoring systems, capacity building needs to support monitoring and the need to build a single facility for data collection and storage for partnerships.

National monitoring of European Partnerships currently faces significant limitations, with few comprehensive examples at the national level, often conducted by agencies with narrow interests rather than covering all national participation. Many member states lack fully operational monitoring systems, leading to heavy reliance on data from the partnerships themselves and broader EU sources, with effectiveness varying based on national governance structures.

The multifaceted objectives for national monitoring systems include measuring performance and impact, providing data for decision-making, and attracting broader ministerial engagement. To improve these efforts, it is crucial to define clear monitoring goals, prioritize performance tracking before broader impact analysis, and optimize existing resources to avoid duplication.

A major challenge is the poor accessibility of relevant data, particularly within eCORDA, which lacks user-friendliness, consistent updates, and comprehensive information from various partnership types like KICs, hindering data flow, integration and analysis. Moreover, limited consistency with other European Commission systems like CIRCABC hinders data linking and comprehensive analysis.

Given the multiple drawbacks of the existing structure, (eCORDA), the highest-ranked suggestions was a new partnership dashboard that offers easily accessible, comprehensive data, allowing users to identify and compare partnership information, while also including membership details and ensuring data consistency. However, it was also noted that a new centralised system may also be hampered by the complexity of the reality and the data that needs to be accommodated. At the same time, a more flexible eCORDA data structure is requested to allow for the inclusion of partnership-specific data, balancing it with common data and avoiding double reporting.

Monitoring the national impact of European Partnerships faces significant hurdles due to limited resources, the diverse nature of impacts requiring varied expertise, and potentially disproportionate assessment costs compared to national funds. Political commitment is crucial to allocate dedicated resources for skilled personnel and IT tools, while recognizing that national evaluation remits and contexts is also relevant. To enhance monitoring, reporting conditions must be clearly defined to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights. There is a vital need to build internal capacity, utilize external evaluators, when necessary, conduct independent evaluations, and proactively link monitoring processes with KPIs. Fostering a shared understanding of assessment terminology is also essential. Additionally, knowledge hubs are key for sharing results, and user-friendly data collection systems with short surveys can aid in data gathering.

Suggested actions for national monitoring systems	***Voting***
Use of one centralized system mandatory for data of funded projects by all European Partnerships aligned to the F+T portal and CORDA.	14
Coherence of data for all formats should be envisaged. Common process will enable a comparison between partnerships.	6
MS/ AC, EC and Partnerships need to be clear and define what data is needed to reach which goal in order to prevent from collecting masses of data that is not used. It is important to divide between basic (call data) and complex data (performance/ impact of partnership). The centralized system cannot meet all individual needs.	3
Suggested actions for a single facility	***Voting***
Partnership Dashboard: - Possibilities to compare partnerships/ countries - Improve visuals	13
Assistance to partnerships to set up the system: - **EU tender**	5
IKAA from Institutional & Co-programmed into eCORDA.	2
Partnership-specific data to be included in eCORDA → flexible setup.	1
Balance between common data and partnership-specific data.	1
eCORDA forum - Countries request better partnership data.	
Suggested actions for capacity building for monitoring	***Voting***
Align reporting with monitoring requirements & qualitative insights on impact.	7

Dedicated workshop centrally (ERA-LEARN) → different impacts, long-term.	6
Clarity on terms (monitoring, assessment, long-term impact).	4
Responsibility of organization to build capacity internally: Learning/feedback loops. Coordinate with data units. Collect qualitative insights. Periodic meetings of all people in partnerships. Onboarding of 'new' staff.	2
Co-funded partnership knowledge hubs to scale sharing of results across countries.	2
MLEs across countries.	

To conclude, efforts are made with regards to enhancing coordination at the national level and improving the engagement of stakeholders with several good practices that are worthy to explore further and transfer across countries. Yet, the challenges in terms of the misalignment across national rules and schedules persist, leading to high administrative burdens, and are exacerbated by the resource scarcity issue - both human and financial.

Secondly, the current data management and monitoring landscape is inadequate for robust monitoring and evaluation of partnerships. Systems like eCORDA are largely inflexible, difficult to navigate, and suffer from incomplete or outdated data, preventing comprehensive analysis of partnership performance and contributions, particularly at the national level. The absence of a unified, user-friendly data facility, leveraging what is already present further exacerbates these issues.

The prioritized actions emphasize strategic alignment, systemic data improvements, and enhanced capacity building. In essence, unlocking the full potential of European Partnerships necessitates a concerted and continuous effort across all levels—from the European Commission to individual Member States/ Associated Countries and participating entities. The list of actions agreed among the participants, as summarized above, can provide the basis for steps in the right direction.

2. Introduction

The MLE exercise on “Impact of European Partnerships on national R&I Systems” was part of the PKH work plan for 2024 as a key element of mutual learning and sharing of practices within the PKH. PKH members were invited to express or confirm their interest in actively participating to the MLE. The following 13 countries were expected to contribute: Austria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey. Furthermore, the following partnerships shared their experiences through the impulses’ sessions of the workshops: Clean Hydrogen, EIT Food, Biodiversa+, Clean Energy Transition Partnership, M-ERA.NET and ERDERA.

Based on a survey and a consultation meeting of the PKH, four main topics were pre-selected to be discussed within the exercise, which were addressed through two MLE workshops that took place in Brussels (11-12 March 2025) and Vienna (21-22 May 2025).

The first workshop of the MLE focused on the following topics:

A. **Aligning the different funding mechanisms and harmonizing rules, regulations and procedures** to tackle

- misalignment of national rules with transnational calls,
- incompatibilities in timing of programme/funding circles,
- financial/budgetary restrictions,
- high administrative burden.

B. **Capacity building needs** to help more members take up leading roles, enhance involvement of less engaged countries and enhance performance and participation of potential project beneficiaries. It comprises the following activities:

- Skills needed for transnational coordination,
- Communication, guidance and tools (for which issue? By whom? For whom? Etc.),
- Fora, structures and infrastructures (at which level, i.e. national, EU, other?),
- Resources needed (time/human/financial, for which issue? For what activity? By whom?).

The second workshop focused on:

C. Sharing of practices about national strategies

- Coordination at the national level: Partnership Forum in AT
  - international dimension in the national policies and context
  - systematic process for deciding which partnerships to join
- Working groups (National Hub, Mirror Group, or similar) in member states to enhance the impact of the partnership at national and European level.

- Involvement of stakeholders from different branches of government, as well as from funding agencies, academia and business.
- Use of ESIF for funding participation of research teams to partnership projects has not really taken up.
- Coordination with national R&I priories and policy priorities.

D. Measuring the impact of European Partnerships.

- Developing national monitoring systems (basics, learning from the more advanced/ experienced).
- Towards a single facility for data collection and storage (eCorda) for partnership and their projects' related data.
- Capacity building needs to support monitoring of European Partnerships (guidance, trainings, tools, etc.), including also knowledge valorisation.

The workshops were organised along with impulses on the above topics, provided by representatives from participating states and partnerships in plenary sessions and group discussions based on the world café format. The MLE Final Report includes summary points regarding the cases presented and of the group discussions. These are followed by a synthesis of the results into key actions that are suggested to be undertaken by the EC, the MS/ACs, ERA-LEARN and the partnerships themselves. The workshop agendas are also annexed for further reference.

3. Summary of impulses

3.1. Sharing of practices about national strategies

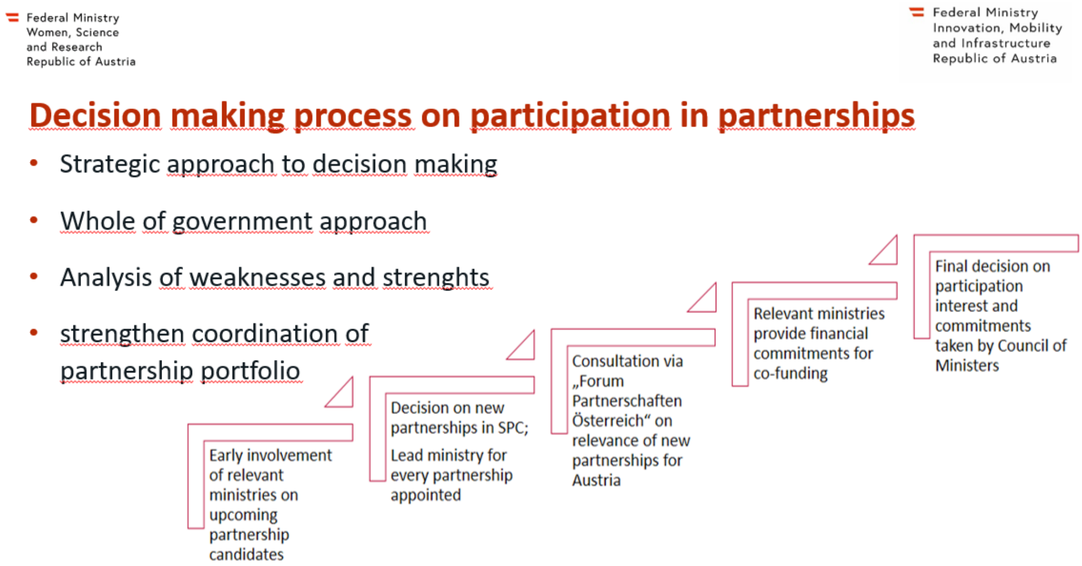
The **Austrian** delegate, Ingeborg Schachner-Nedherer, shared the experience in the coordination of participation in European Partnerships at the national level. Austria participates in 25 out of the 28 partnerships relevant for country participation, coordinating two of them, and has committed around € 370 million (in cash and in-kind). Three Austrian ministries are major R&I funders including the Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET), the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility and Infrastructure (BMIMI), and the Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF).

A national coordination mechanism was established in 2021, including the "Forum Partnerschaften Österreich", which coordinates partnership matters, prepares strategic decisions, supports implementation, and aims to increase visibility of partnerships. It is co-led by the BMFWF and BMIMI, and includes relevant ministries, funding agencies, and supporting organizations providing advice and strategic intelligence. The Forum includes the Austrian delegates in the SPC and the PKH.

There are also networking platforms that bring together certain RTI communities to increase alignment with European initiatives and programmes such as in the areas of climate change, personalised medicine, and sustainable water systems. The ERA Portal Austria plays an important role in supporting communication activities.

Austria employs a "whole-of-government approach" for deciding on partnership participation, which involves early involvement of relevant ministries, appointing a lead ministry, consultations, financial commitments from ministries, and a final decision by the Council of Ministers. Criteria for relevance include contribution to economic, societal, or ecological challenges, alignment with Austrian RTI Strategy, areas of national strength, Sustainable Development Goals, civil society involvement, and innovation ecosystem – valorisation aspects.

Figure 1: national decision making process in Austria



Source: Ingeborg Schachner-Nedherer, Vienna workshop slides.

The Austrian experience was complemented by the presentation of the national coordination of European Partnerships in the health sector. Hemma Bauer talked about the National Hubs, which are relevant for partnerships with integrative activities (like PARC and Pandemic Preparedness) and the experience of national mirror platforms, as well as advisory boards in the area of health.

National hubs are key structures for coordination. They are created by key national research institutions that form networks through Memoranda of Understanding, with one institution acting as the coordinating national hub (partnering with affiliated partners in EU projects). The hubs have funds and contribute in-kind to the respective partnerships. While this approach offers a well-structured national network, it creates an administrative burden for the national hub.

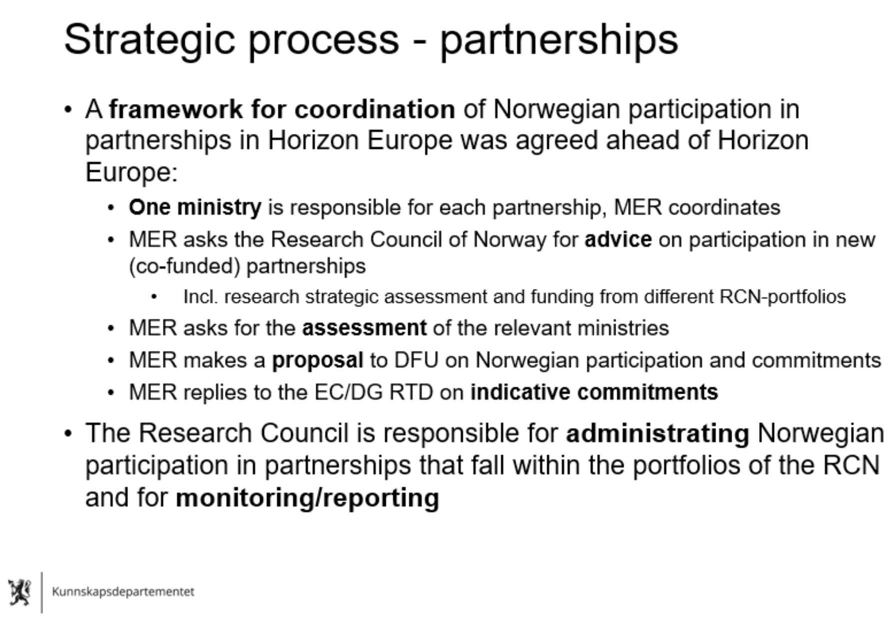
Next to this, there are national mirror platforms in specific fields, such as the Austrian Platform for Personalised Medicine (ÖPPM) for EP PerMed, that aim to bring national stakeholders together in interdisciplinary research fields. ÖPPM evolved from a loose network into a national scientific association. These platforms receive small national funding for secretariat and networking activities, and while they serve as a one-stop contact for specific stakeholder communities, they are highly dependent on in-kind contributions.

As the next examples, the national Advisory Boards for Rare Diseases and Antimicrobial Resistance, and the National Mirror Platform for THCS are interdisciplinary boards were briefly discussed comprising members from health and research ministries, funding agencies, clinicians, researchers, patient organizations, and industry, with the aim to improve healthcare. Their main activity is developing and implementing national action plans, often with cross-reference to European measures, but with a primary focus on healthcare rather than R&I. They offer a single point of contact for specific stakeholder communities, but partnerships are not their focus, except for THCS.

To conclude, health research is a broad field requiring tailored national coordination approaches, as a "one-fits-all" model is not effective. Different partnership structures necessitate varied national strategies and coordination. The bodies and structures presented existed already and were used for disseminating information on partnerships. The current coordination and networking mechanisms and activities emphasize networking, research collaboration, and information dissemination, rather than enhancing impact and monitoring. The lack of human resources across all levels (policy, administration, stakeholders) is a major challenge.

The **Norwegian** experience, shared by Erik Yssen and Tor Ivar Eikaas, outlined the national strategic process for participating in European Partnerships. Norway's research system operates on a sectoral principle, where each ministry is responsible for funding R&D within its domain. The Ministry of Education and Research (MER) plays a coordinating role in national research policy and international cooperation, supported by an interministerial committee on research (DFU). The national process for coordination the Norwegian participation in European Partnerships involves a framework that was agreed ahead of Horizon Europe.

Figure 2: The strategic process for partnerships in Norway



Source: Erik Yssen and Tor Ivar Eikaas, Vienna workshop slides.

The NCP network plays a key role in the collection and dissemination of information on partnerships. It is dispersed across the thematic units/ agencies, and it is often the case that the same person is both the NCP and a Programme Committee member. As noted by the Norwegian delegates, national coordination is a matter of informal networking and close collaboration, rather than creating formal structures across departments, ministries, or agencies.

RCN plays both an advisory and administrative role in relation to partnerships. The RCN strategy is based on 11 portfolio boards – the past program boards were changed to portfolio boards embracing a wider, multi-disciplinary approach, that provide advice on partnership participation and indicative commitments, considering RCN's overall investments and other national/international R&D funding. This advice forms the basis for RCN's recommendations to

MER, with informal dialogue also occurring with relevant sectoral ministries. The portfolio boards have investment responsibility, including yearly allocations for partnership calls, aiming to achieve a strategic balance between national and partnership calls. The criteria for assessing partnerships include their added value for Norwegian research/industry, quality and impact within the overall portfolio, cost/benefit, alignment with national objectives, and potential for reinforcing national programs. Other considerations include the focus of the partnership (e.g. research vs. market activities, value chain, technology maturity, and societal maturity), involvement of non-EU priority countries and the positioning of Norwegian actors for success.

The presentation from **Poland**, given by Maria Śmietanka from the NCBR/ NCP focused on the involvement of stakeholders from different branches of government, as well as from funding agencies, academia and business in the context of European Partnerships. Consistent meetings (approximately quarterly) are held between relevant ministries, funding agencies, and the NCP network. They typically involve 50-60 attendees and are crucial for updating information, discussing pressing issues, and helping to create unified national positions, papers, or opinions. National events are organized related to various partnerships, that are open to diverse stakeholders and serve as platforms for knowledge exchange, stakeholder mobilization, sharing success stories, and fostering inter-sectoral networking. The specific case also highlighted the role of the NCPs in the partnership eco-system and offered the concept of “Industry Contact Points”, financed by the Ministry of Science. Seven of those were created two years ago in different research institutions. They are actively involved in partnerships benefiting from the knowledge gained and trying to mobilise the policy eco-system and activate other institutes and businesses to collaborate and get involved in partnerships.

The presentation from **Estonia**, by Margit Suuroja from the Estonian Research Council (ETAG), details the use of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funds as a national contribution to European Partnerships. ETAG started using ERDF for funding ERA-NETs, building competence over the years. In the previous period, this was only possible for calls without European Commission co-funding. In the current period, only partnerships aligning with the defined Smart Specialization areas can be funded by ERDF (digital solutions, health technologies, valorisation of local resources, smart and sustainable energy solutions). For partnerships outside of these areas, the state budget is used. In terms of financial administration, a trilateral grant agreement is signed between ETAG, the institution, and the Principal Investigator (PI). Institutions receiving funds must have liquid assets and the funding rate is 100%. Payment requests are submitted by institutions four times a year, with ETAG performing an initial eligibility check and the state support services centre conducting the final check.

Although the use of additional funding sources has certain benefits, it also presents challenges. The Smart Specialization areas may not cover all areas addressed by partnerships, and the fixed duration of the ERDF period does not always align with the Framework Programme (FP) duration, meaning that only projects fully fitting within the ERDF eligibility period can be funded. In addition, ERDF rules are not always suitable for research activities, potentially leading to additional administrative burdens, requirements, or restrictions. Thus, it is important to have an additional funding source beyond the ERDF budget for exceptional cases (e.g. those not fitting smart specialization areas) or when the ERDF period ends.

3.2. Transnational coordination challenges and potential solutions

Based on the experience of **Slovenia**, several changes were made to facilitate participation in European Partnerships in a number of areas following the MLE on Alignment and Interoperability that was carried out in 2017. For instance, a change in the relevant law is now enabling R&I activities to be funded by multiple ministries. Standard funding of institutions now considers the track record of both HE and Partnership projects. Procedural documents for deciding which partnerships to join, referred to as an internal rulebook, have been developed.

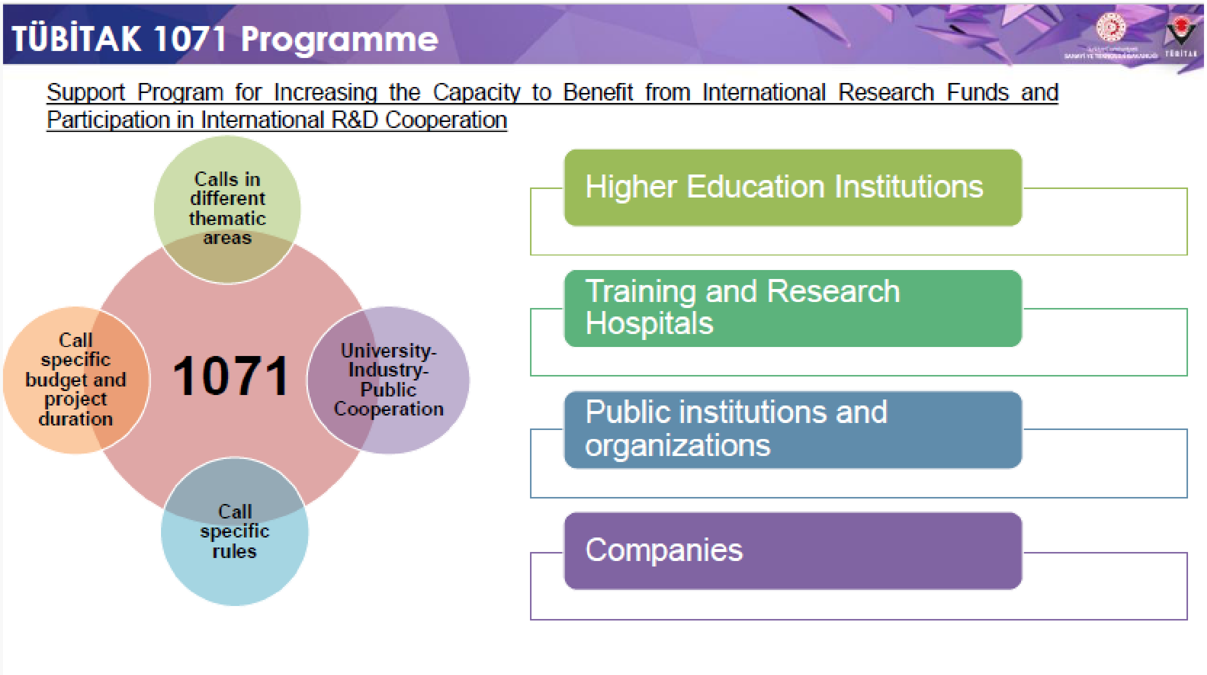
Figure 3: Areas where changes were made in Slovenia to facilitate participation in European Partnerships

Source: Petra Žagar, Brussels workshop slides.

Despite these advancements, there are ongoing challenges with advance payments and administrative capacity. Coordination with other ministries presents challenges and causes anxiety, while communicating impact of partnerships to sectoral ministries needs increased efforts.

Türkiye (TÜBİTAK) also made changes in their legislation and programmes following the MLE exercise in 2017. In the past there were two programmes, each one with its own rules and procedures and funding different types of stakeholders (public and private). Now, the TÜBİTAK 1071 Programme is utilised for partnership calls that necessitate national contributions and can support all types of stakeholders (except NGOs). Its popularity in partnership calls, like the co-funded partnerships and KDT/ Chips JU as well as PRIMA stems from its ability to effectively coordinate collaboration among academia, industry, and public organizations at the national level. A second programme is a new national support programme, TÜBİTAK 1709-EUREKA EUROSTARS that enables national industry academy cooperation in EUROSTARS III.

Figure 4: TÜBİTAK 1071 Programme



Source: Serhat Melik, Brussels workshop slides.

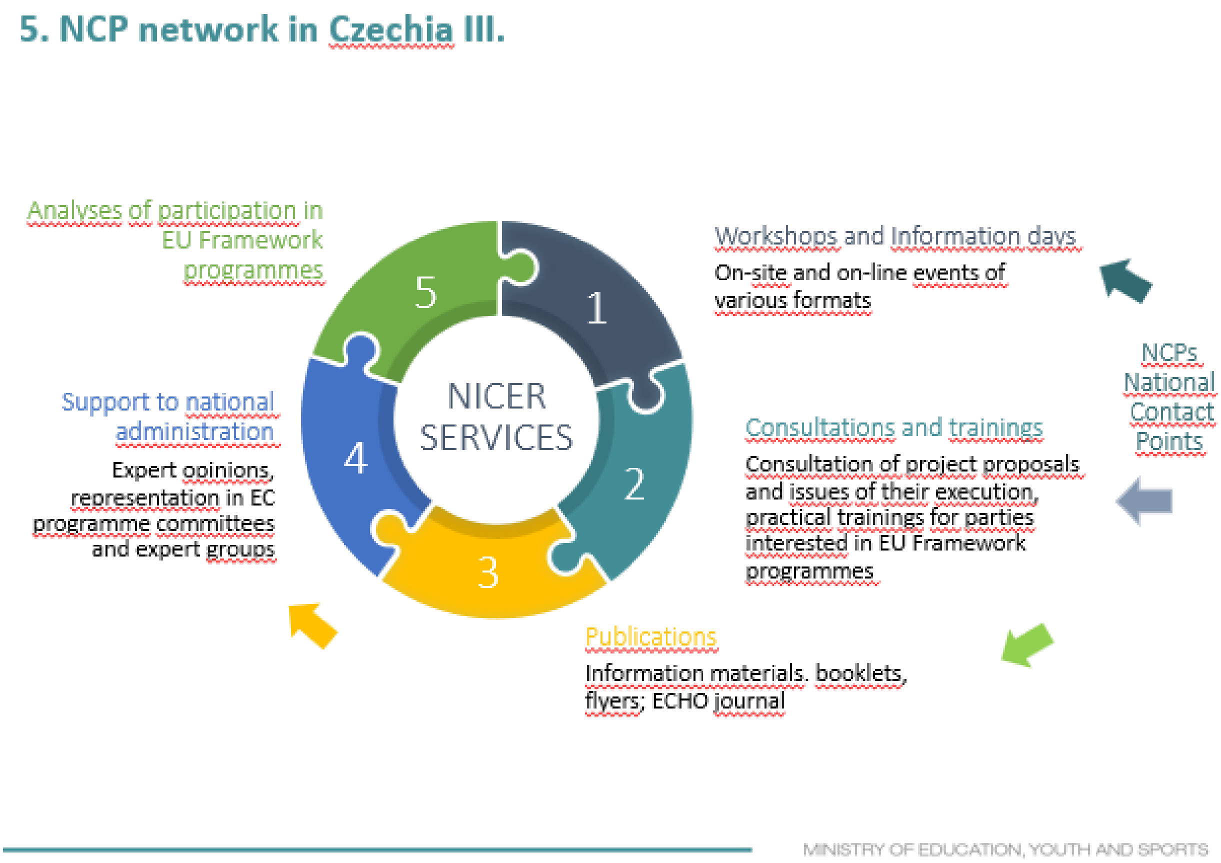
At the same time, there are challenges such as budget cut concerns from stakeholders, while it is still not possible to fund certain types of organisations such as NGOs. The participation in capacity and strategy development activities need further efforts as does the development of the monitoring and impact assessment system.

The experience of the **Czech Republic**, focused on the work of the NCP network and the alignment of eligibility costs/ rules between the national and Horizon Europe funding. This alignment avoids the need for national beneficiaries to submit documents for an eligibility check. The Technology Centre Prague is the National Information Centre for European Research and provides consultation and training on issues, including legal, financial and administrative, of EU Framework Programmes, including partnerships and missions. The main objective is to provide the Czech R&I stakeholders a portfolio of analytical, information, consultation and advisory services necessary for their involvement into the international research collaboration.

The Czech experience also addressed the misalignment of rules among the different funding actors in the country (ministries, Technology Agency, Czech Science Foundation, Czech Academy of Sciences) and between national and European funding rules. The solution applied is to align fully the roles for eligibility with those of Horizon Europe. This results in avoiding the need to submit several extra documents, while no national screening of eligibility takes place before the project start. This means no additional requirements at the national level. However, there is still double reporting given the national and the EU separate funding streams, together with the unharmonized reporting periods (project vs. calendar years).

The experience of aligning national and European funding rules is different in the case of the co-funded partnerships. The different partnerships have different rules and allow different level of flexibility, and, on top of that, there are the different rules in the participating states (also across different funders within the same country). In addition, it is burdensome to administer the EC top-up contribution at the funding provider level - it is not aligned with the timing of the project lifecycle administration.

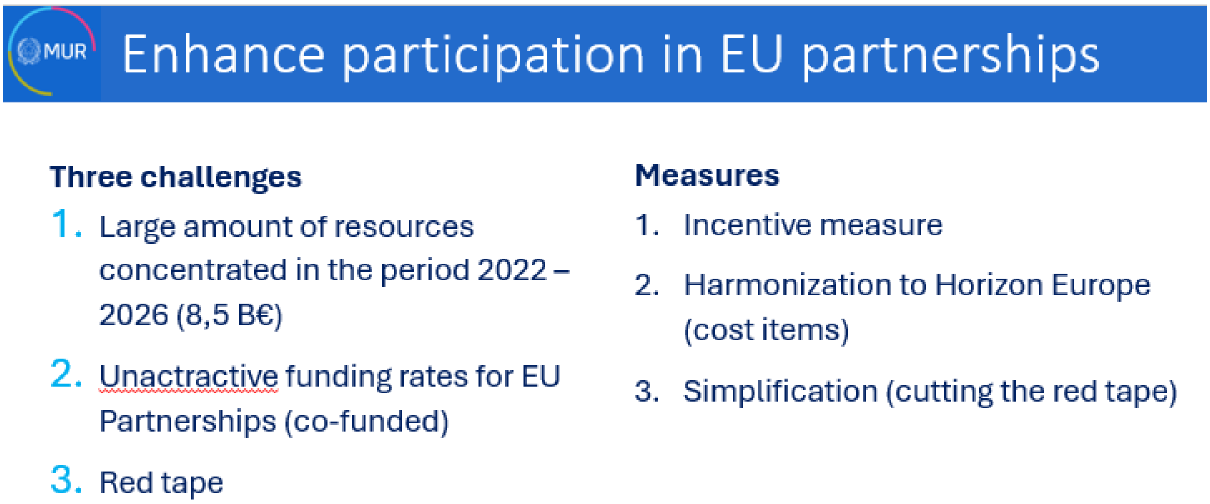
Figure 5: the NCP network in Czechia



Source: Michal Vávra, Brussels workshop slides.

Italy highlighted that setting up operational contacts and informal communication might work better than setting up committees interacting at programmatic level and shared their experience in relation to creating an incentive measure for participation in partnerships, harmonising the eligibility (cost items) to Horizon Europe and cutting the red tape. The creation of the incentive measure was enabled due to the €8.55 billion allocated to the Ministry of Universities and Research for R&I for the period 2022-2026 in the context of the Next Generation EU program of the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan. This also meant that challenges had to be overcome to enable the absorption of the funds, which had to do with unattractive funding rates for European Partnerships (co-funded) and the excessive red tape.

Figure 6: the challenges addressed in Italy



Source: Rachele Nocera, Brussels workshop slides.

The incentive measure was created through the Ministerial decree 737/2021. The funds made available (e.g. € 50 million for 2023) were entirely reserved as an incentive for participation — resulting in the awarding of a "grant" in the European Partnerships ("co-funded" and institutionalised") under the Horizon Europe Framework programme. This reserve was granted to recipients of "grants" within the partnerships, provided that the successful outcome (ranking list) occurred between January 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. The allocation methods for the reserve were established proportionally to the amount of the grant obtained and included an incentive percentage based on the project costs borne by the participating universities or research institutions.

Regarding the harmonisation of the eligibility rules, Italy changed the GBER Article 25c, where now it is stated that:

"3. The categories, maximum amounts and methods of calculation of eligible costs shall be those defined as eligible under the Horizon 2020 or the Horizon Europe programme rules.

4. The total public funding provided shall not exceed the funding rate established for the research and development project or feasibility study following the selection, ranking and evaluation under the Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe programme rules.

5. The funding provided by the Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe programme shall cover at least 30% of the total eligible costs of a research and innovation action or an innovation action as defined under the Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe programme."

Aligning the eligibility of the costs with the Horizon Europe rules enabled to single out travel costs and communication/ dissemination as eligible, and to simplify the calculation of the overheads (25% flat rate).

In Italy, thanks to the new regulatory framework on State Aid allowing for synergies and alignment, funding rates have been harmonized for type of research activities and categories of beneficiaries, i.e.: 70%, for basic and industrial/applied research, and 25% for experimental development, across all partnership types. MUR is further working on simplifying the application stage with no additional documents/declarations necessary at stage 2 of the evaluation, while the involvement of other ministries like the Ministry of Industry is facilitated by undertaking higher TRL levels.

The **experience from DUT** shed light on several issues including the involvement of new players, aligning national budgets as well as measures to increase the budget spending across countries. DUT applies a broad stakeholder approach including diverse actors and uses mechanisms like city panels and AGORA to actively engage them. DUT emphasises that understanding and connecting to the local/ national context is vital for impact creation/up-take. This is translated to connecting with local community initiatives (Urban Doers) through a simple process of inviting expressions of interest and dedicated actions to cooperate with Urban Doers, although funding municipalities can still be a challenge for some countries. This has affected many agencies in different countries to open their rules to support cities and other types of organisations besides the 'usual' stakeholders

DUT developed certain measures to improve participation of certain countries and address the issue of over-subscription to calls. The mandatory budget tool also helps agencies achieve improved predictability about the level of over-subscription and, thus, of the amounts of funds that will be needed to decrease the cases of high-quality projects not getting funded for financial reasons. The just return rate also balances the distribution of benefits among the partnership members.

Figure 7: Improvement measures in the DUT partnership

DUT Driving Urban Transitions

Summary of Improvement Measures for Call Implementation

Measure	Description	Implementation
Inclusion Procedure	Allows consortia of invited Pre-Proposals to include additional applicants during Stage 2 (of Agencies with low OS)	Implemented since DUT Call 2022
Fallback Procedure	Allows the CSC to remove specific applicants (of highly oversubscribed Agencies) from a pre-proposal before inviting it to Stage 2	Implemented for DUT Call 2024 and onwards
OS limit of 4 at the end of Stage 1	Raises the limit of allowed OS at the end of Stage 1 to 4 (2022&2023: 3)	Implemented for DUT Call 2024 and onwards
Mandatory Budget Tool	Mandatory predicted OS of below 5 (4 for AP) in the Budget Tool (2024 version)	Implemented for DUT Call 2024 (pilot version)
Just Return rate below 10%	Exception (only possible for 2023) allowing for a Just Return rate of ~4% - normally Agencies were allowed to veto this but they all abstained instead, bringing the possible proposals from 35 to 42	Not applicable for Call 2024 – exception for DUT Call 2023

Source: Margit Noll, Brussels workshop slides.
OS: over-subscription; CSC: Call Steering Committee

3.3. Capacity building experiences

The presentation by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research, BMBF (**Germany)** focused on the importance of national coordination and existing capacity building activities for transnational coordination. Germany puts significant emphasis on national coordination with the National Partnership Stakeholder Platform that holds regular virtual exchanges for actors involved in European Partnerships and an annual in-person stakeholder event. These interactions, covering all types of partnerships, aim to identify common challenges, exchange good practices and possible solutions and facilitate networking and synergy building. Workshops and events are also organised to support capacity building.

Further capacity building measures include the support to national hubs (with a pilot action to support PARC), strategic networking and distribution of results to the relevant communities. Establishing a central point for information and exchange is another important activity. This central point, located at DLR, enhances networking with relevant share- and stakeholders of the partnerships to create synergies/ coherence and to exchange on general needs and good practices. It also ensures mutual learning, raises awareness concerning the needs of stakeholders, provides guidance, and supports national actors on matters of implementation (e.g. legal requirements, reporting, commitments etc.). It co-organises or participates in thematic events following the Horizon Europe Clusters and collaborates closely with the NCP network. The central point of contact for partnership is also in close cooperation with the NCP EIT network and a partner in ERA-LEARN.

Figure 8: national coordination process in Germany

Source: Jürgen Kroseberg, Brussels workshop slides.

Capacity building is one of the three core areas of the **EIT-KICs** community (education, research and innovation, the so-called 'knowledge triangle'). Special focus is also placed in building capacities within the EIT-KIC community with regards to cross-cutting skills like partnership management and wider shareholder management. As exemplified by the EIT Food, besides the activities related to education, innovation and entrepreneurship, the partnership

— designs activities to engage people so that they can become agents of change in the food system,

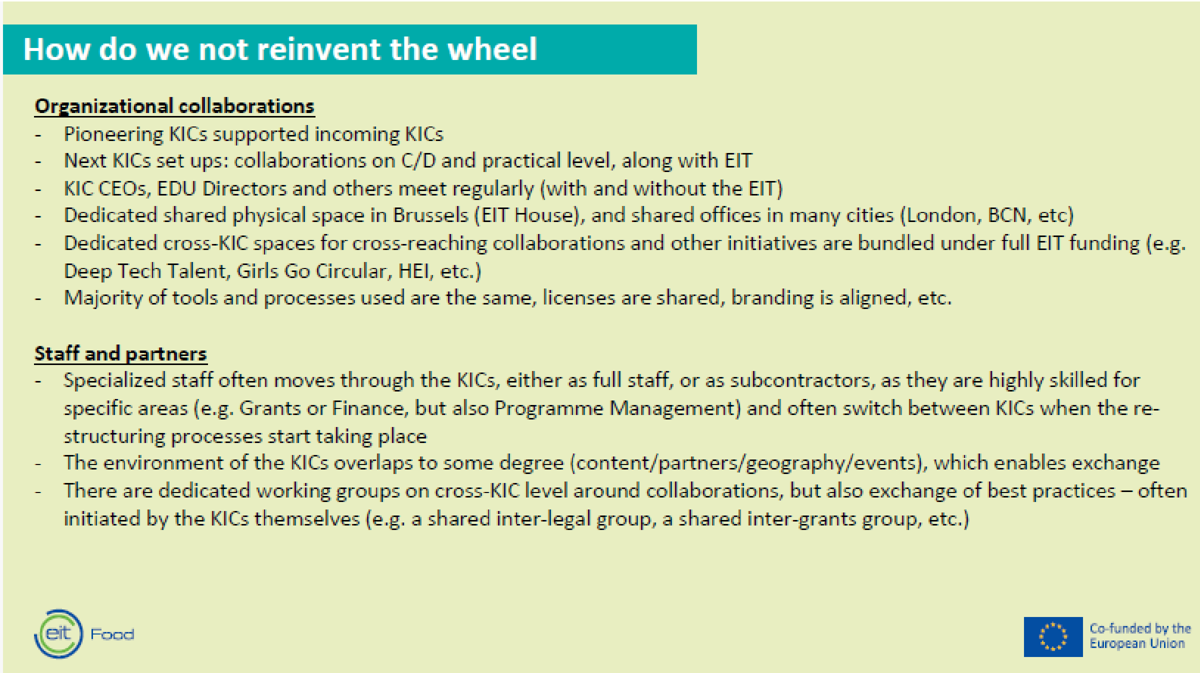
— supports the agrifood sector on the ground across Europe, and

— builds institutional relationships and lead relevant policy discussions to drive the agrifood innovation agenda in Europe.

In doing this, dedicated teams are needed with local and international knowledge of their specific area (office management, finance/ grants, HR, IT, legal), as well as teams for other focus areas like impact, public engagement, communication/ branding. International knowledge in these areas is important along with language and networking skills. These needs to be backed up by strong intercultural communication skills, skills in project, programme and people management, as well as skills in relation to problem solving/ critical thinking/ risk management, leadership abilities and flexibility and adaptation.

There are also several processes and dedicated spaces that support regular exchanges and facilitate interactions among the KICs, as well as between the more and less experienced ones. Most tools and processes applied are the same. Specialised staff mobility across the KICs is another measure that helps building knowledge and experience along with various groups that have been created across the KICs to deal with cross-cutting issues like legal issues or grants.

Figure 9: Measures enhancing regular exchanges interactions in EIT Food



Source: Cornelia Schwenk, [Brussels workshop slides](#).

In addition, the KICs have valuable experience in engaging partners. This differs between the first years of the KIC when the focus was on funding, and less on starting to turn EIT Food into a sustainable company. In this first phase, partners were engaged through the EIT Food staff they worked with through personal connections, master contacts and other staff that met regularly at industry and education events, as well as through programmes and word-of-mouth. In the second phase, i.e. after the first 7 years, when the purpose shifts heavily towards ensuring the sustainability of the KIC, Key Account Managers and a Partnership Team were established, who exclusively took care of the different categories of partners, as well as the acquisition of new partners in line with the EIT Food strategy. This means that strong Unique Selling Points need to be identified along with clear opportunities for potential partners. In this phase, a Customer Relationship Manager is needed and dedicated touchpoints (master contacts, finance contacts, etc.). The EIT-KICs also have a specific measure to strengthen the participation of less-engaged countries, the Regional Innovation Scheme, that is oriented towards building innovation capacity across Europe by connecting innovators and reducing regional disparities.

The experience of **Denmark** was illuminating in relation to how different structures, fora and committees are connected for improved coordination at the national level. The NCP, the Programme Committee and the partnerships in the same cluster share the same team/ people, while it is also the same people joining and PKH and the Strategic Programme Committee. There are also Danish reference groups (including representatives of universities, sectoral ministries, research organisations, etc.) at the strategic level and the cluster level, in addition to mirror groups that exist for some partnerships. The aim of the particular structuring and connections is to be surrounded by people with knowledge of the entire eco-system in the specific thematic area. The people participating in the different fora and structures have the 'burden' to disseminate the wealth of information in their organisations, with the benefit of staying abreast of evolutions and co-shaping decisions. The Danish experience also referred to the participation in the State Representatives Group of Clean Hydrogen. Participating in the SRGs of JUs needs resources and thus prioritisation is needed – some SRGs may be followed closer than others.

Figure 10: national coordination in Denmark

Source: Jonas Toft Ludvigsen, Brussels workshop slides.

The case of **Biodiversa+** shed light on the key competences that are needed for the partnership for engaging new actors and putting stronger emphasis on policy. It is important to have a team from different organizations, offering a transversal view and diverse competences in solving administrative and financial problems and engaging stakeholders. Large stakeholder board events are also important. Policy skills, such as those related to preparing policy briefs, knowledge hubs, and success stories, are key, and it is also crucial to keep those involved regularly informed about when they need to contribute. Essential skills include listening, resilience, mapping national-level activities, understanding problems and finding solutions in rigid and changing contexts, and multi-tasking and prioritization.

The management team should include different agencies with varied competencies to complement each other in the different areas such as follow-up of projects, impact, data management, or biodiversity monitoring. Sometimes there is a lack of legal advice, so launching a call to all partners to help with lacking competence and create task forces is necessary.

On-boarding activities for new partners are essential and include engaging new partners for calls or monitoring activities. An on-boarding folder with key information, including the Consortium Agreement (CA) and Grant Agreement (GA), and meetings to explain how the team works, are useful tools. Staff exchanges with national mirror groups to present their national experiences are also beneficial. On-boarding is important, and efforts need to be focused. Yet, there is also the issue of information fatigue, while team and partner turnover and risk management are also concerns.

3.4. Measuring the impact of European Partnerships

Experience shows that European Partnerships provide added value through building sustained collaboration, creating "behavioural additionality", filling gaps in research domains, providing a necessary "middle" step and more flexible multi-disciplinary settings, and contributing qualitative impacts often not captured by quantitative indicators. Assessing the impacts of partnership is important in many respects and at various levels (national, trans-national, European). At the same time, the transversal systemic consideration should not be missed. This is relevant when assessing the position of the partnerships in the overall instrument landscape, where a division seems with certain thematic areas being addressed only by partnerships and thus excluded by other instruments as in Cluster 5.

Whereas some countries have centralised monitoring systems, which helps in the data collection and availability, examples of measuring impact at the national level are limited, often focusing on specific fields or stakeholder groups rather than comprehensive coverage. ERA-LEARN plays a pivotal role in supporting monitoring efforts through its database of partnership data, annual reports, country reports, and the R²IPE toolkit, which assists partnerships in their monitoring and evaluation efforts, including requirements for the Biennial Monitoring Report (BMR).

The upcoming BMR exercise (BMR 2026) will try to address the issue of missing data while maintaining a tailored approach for the reviewing the progress made by European Partnerships. the main block of the BMR will remain the same, i.e. Contribution of partnerships (Additionality, directionality, transparency & openness, synergies, contribution to EU policy priorities), Country fiches, and Partnership fiches. There will be a review of the Common Indicator Framework to improve robustness and reliability while retaining comparability, and a greater focus on the Horizon Europe Key Impact Pathways (KIPs). The transversal focus for the 2026 edition will be the topic of ‘competitiveness’. The next BMR is anticipated for publication towards the end of 2026.

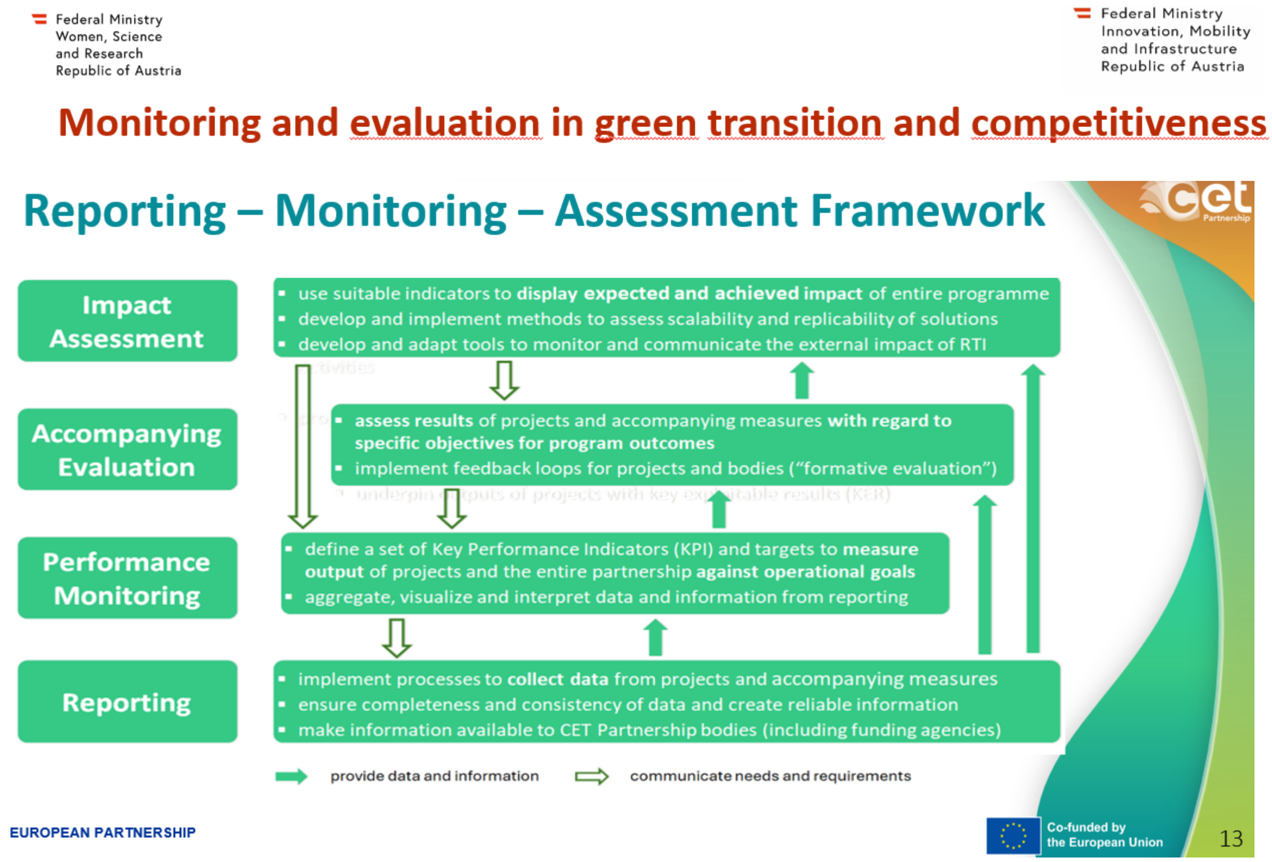
The presentation from **Austria**, by Ingeborg Schachner-Nedherer from the Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF), addressed the challenges and gaps in developing national monitoring systems for European Partnerships. The primary objectives of national monitoring are to:

- assess the impact of partnerships on the national system, demonstrating the success of investments and their contribution to Austrian key priorities, and

- analyse the Austrian performance in partnerships, including projects, participants, budgets, and top-up funding, and compare it with other countries and other Horizon Europe (HE) programs.

Strategic intelligence on partnerships comes from the Biennial Monitoring Reports (BMR 2022, 2024), expert group reports and recommendations, ERA-LEARN Country Reports, national R&I programme evaluations, eCORDA, and the Austria's own Horizon Europe Performance Monitoring. Several challenges exist in evaluating the performance in partnerships including how to monitor in-kind activities and the substantial data gaps and inconsistencies in eCORDA, which hinder comprehensive analysis. The Austrian case also showed how evaluation can be applied in a policy are as in green transition and competitiveness.

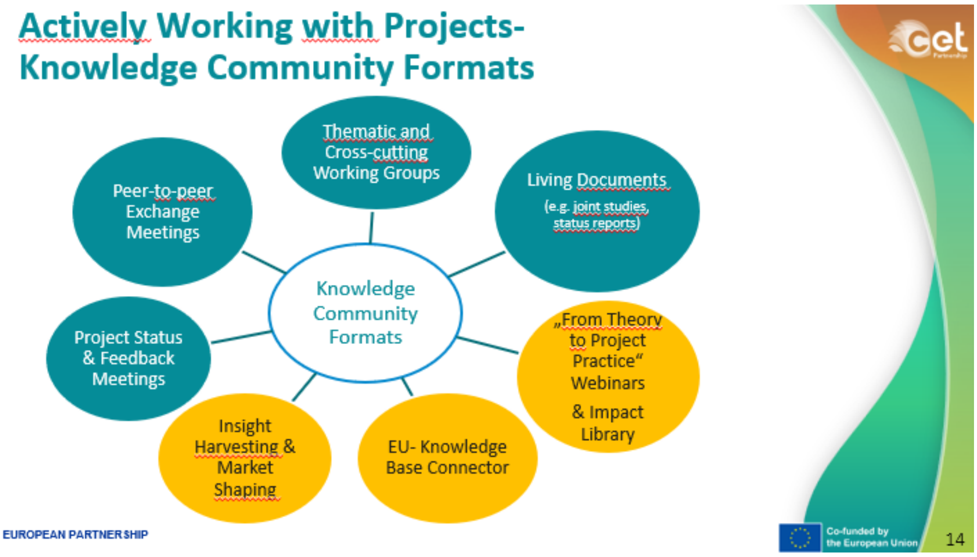
Figure 11: the monitoring and evaluation framework in green transition in Austria



Source: Ingeborg Schachner-Nedherer, [Vienna workshop slides](#).

The presentation of the **Clean Energy Transition Partnership**, given by the Coordinator, Michael Hübner, focused on the concept of 'impact pathways' that the partnership applies as well as the tripartite framework linking knowledge, monitoring and impact generation, and the valorisation of results. The CETPartnership actively works with the projects by creating knowledge communities. The activities vary from project status meetings and peer-to-peer exchanges to webinars dedicated to developing proposals or to the impact library, an important resource for anyone looking for methodologies and guide about how to work successfully with various stakeholders. All these are supported by the Digital Collaboration Platform (DISCCO) that provides the necessary space for the projects, reporting tools, experts repository, a library of the projects results in the form of status documents and policy briefs, as well as a workspace for thematic and cross-cutting working groups. As Hübner noted monitoring, knowledge and impact creation need to work with each other for knowledge valorisation.

Figure 12: the Knowledge Community formats in the CETPartnership

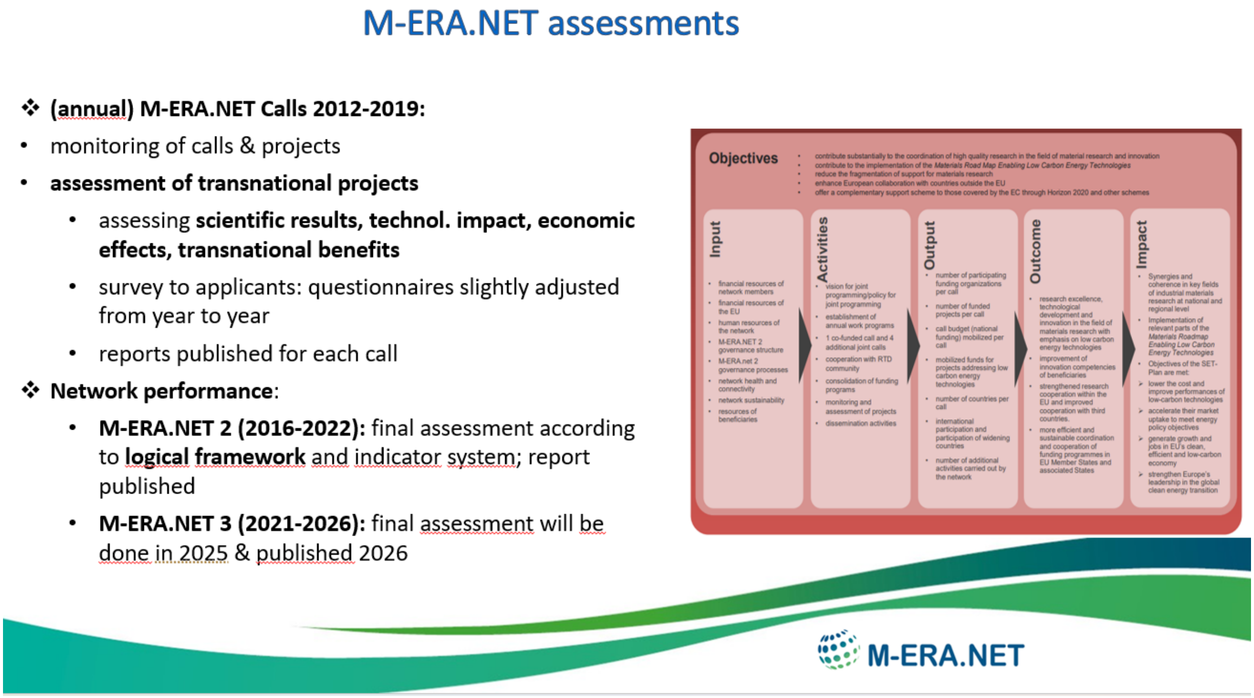


Source: Michael Hübner, Vienna workshop slides.

The case of **M-ERA.NET**, a well-established ERA-NET Co-fund in materials and battery technologies, Roland Brandenburg highlighted the network's continuous assessment exercises. Since its launch in 2012, M-ERA.NET evolved from 37 national/ regional funding organizations from 25 countries to 50 national/regional funding organizations from 36 countries, including 25 EU Member States (with 11 EU regions), 5 Associated Countries, and 6 non-European countries. It is described as the largest ERA-NET Co-fund network on advanced materials, attracting in its current phase (M-ERA.NET 3) more than 1900 submitted proposals and mobilizing around €190 million from national and regional budgets. M-ERA.NET implements continuous monitoring and assessment of R&I projects and the overall performance of its network.

The assessments provide evidence for benefits and impact at various levels, contributing to the understanding of advanced materials' role in driving sustainable development and addressing global challenges. Surveys to beneficiaries address impacts on the institution/ company (e.g. access to new know-how or new international partners, or new business opportunities, etc.), different types of impacts ranging from social, technological to health and environmental, as well as on the ERA. In addition, the network maintains an online database called "Materipedia" with over 420 funded projects and highlights success stories.

Figure 13: the M-ERA.NET assessment framework



Source: Roland Brandenburg, Vienna workshop slides.

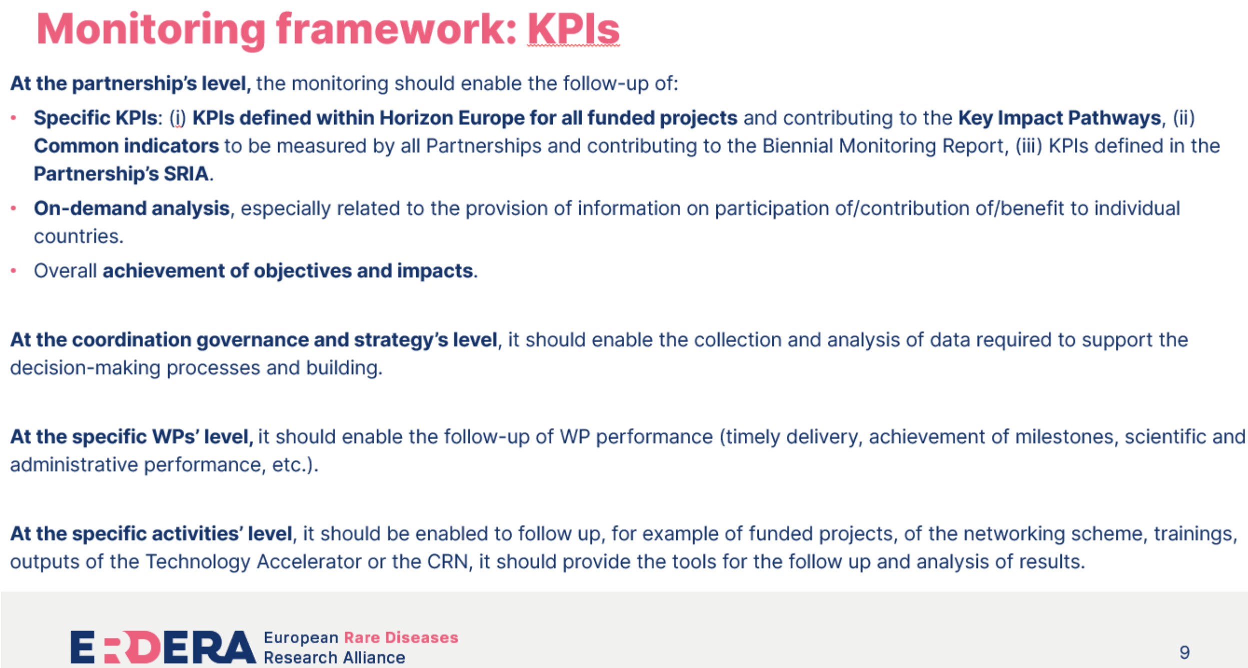
Daria Julkowska, the **ERDERA** (European Partnership on Rare Diseases) Coordinator, started with the question about how the partnership monitoring or solutions deployed at partnership level can help the monitoring and evaluation of partnerships at the national level. Drawing on the ERDERA monitoring system, several items are relevant:

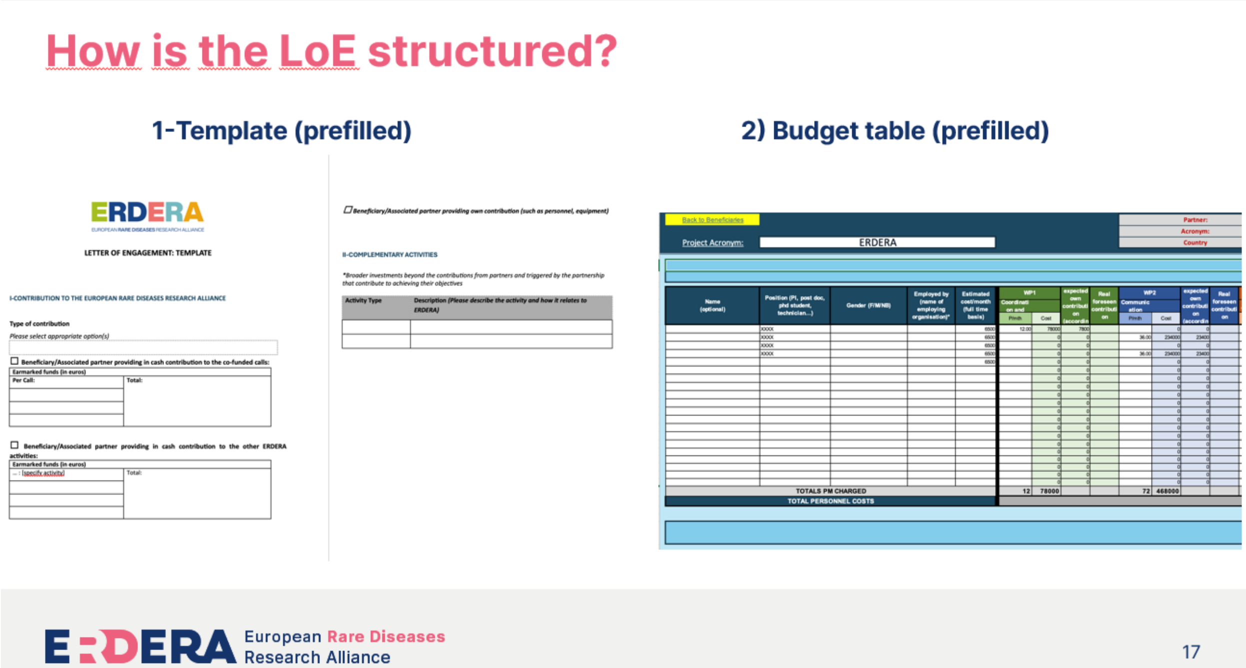
- Key Performance Indicators aligned with Partnerships' common indicators and KIPs
- Letter of Engagement & annual financial monitoring
- Call management system
- Prioritisation matrix & record of collaborations
- Institution & researcher level record
- Centralised monitoring & dashboard

Regarding KPIs the monitoring framework of ERDERA addresses four levels (the partnership, the coordination governance and strategy, the specific work-packages and the activities levels) and foresees the need for provision of information to individual countries. The monitoring framework is built around general, operational and specific objectives. Each of those is supported by specifications in relation to the measure of success, the unit of measurement, the responsibility for data collection, the relevant data sources and fields, advice on how to capture the data automatically, as well as the main anticipated challenges and practical solutions.

ERDERA also asks its members for a letter of engagement that helps to ensure smooth financial and technical monitoring, enhance risk assessment and support the implementation of mitigation measures and provide better visibility on commitments and their yearly progress. In relation to the annual monitoring, each partner has access to a dedicated online smartsheet that includes their budget, their Letter of Engagement and the reporting tool. This enables periodic and consolidated reporting, as well as real-time visibility and tracking for both partners and the coordination team.

Figure 14: The monitoring framework of ERDERA





Source: Daria Julkowska, [Vienna workshop slides](#).

The monitoring system of ERDERA also addresses the collaboration and synergies created through a template and scoring matrix, while the call management, that is also linked to the monitoring framework, is fully aligned and interoperable with the EC system and elements captured as part of the evaluation and monitoring of funded projects.

To conclude, the ERERA experience shows that aligning a partnership's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with the BMR Common Indicators allows for structured data capture. Similarly, ensuring the interoperability of a partnership's call management system with EC requirements enables smooth data integration and extraction per country. A Letter of Engagement is crucial for capturing complex data and detailing progress, thereby helping to track national investments and their alignment with national/regional strategies. Standardized data elements, consistent terminology, and standardized surveys/forms facilitate more comprehensive and semi-automated data collection.

A centralized national monitoring system, powered by existing tools, and open data, would streamline this process. However, if a single facility is not feasible, adhering to FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) principles is critical to ensure federated monitoring, data collection, and analysis for each country. Both the European Commission and individual countries must ensure data interoperability and quality, with countries also facilitating access to their data to complement existing open data sources. At the same time, establishing central hubs at the national level is imperative for strategic alignment, information, and knowledge sharing, as their absence leads to fragmented information and data.

4. Results of group discussions

4.1. Coordination at the national level

Key messages/ challenges

A significant challenge identified in the discussion is the widespread lack of a dedicated national strategy for participation in European Partnerships across most countries. While overarching internationalization or sectoral strategies may exist, clear, systematic processes for deciding to join a European Partnership are notably scarce. Decisions are often driven by the engagement of individual ministries, and although existing national or thematic strategies might inform participation, there remains an unresolved question of how well these national frameworks integrate with the broader partnership strategies.

Resource constraints pose the biggest hurdle. Budgets are limited, and securing financial commitment, particularly from finance ministries, proves difficult. This is compounded by a severe shortage of human resources; in some countries, very few individuals at the ministerial level are tasked with managing a large number of diverse partnerships, each operating with distinct approaches.

Timing presents another significant challenge. Securing national commitments and contributions to partnerships in a timely manner can be problematic, especially during government transitions. Furthermore, the level of engagement varies considerably at the national level, with 'horizontal' ministries often being more active than their sectoral counterparts. Persuading sectoral ministries to participate and allocate resources is frequently a considerable task.

National conditions also act as a hindering factor. Some countries impose caps on the funding that can be allocated to transnational projects, and even where specific targets exist (e.g., a 5% allocation), their realization can be difficult. Crucially, national rules for funding agencies can impede cooperation; for instance, some agencies are restricted to funding only research organizations. Such limitations reduce flexibility and, consequently, the success of partnership participation. There is a clear need for clarification with finance ministries on these issues, and countries would appreciate increased pressure from the European Commission in this regard.

Good practices/ suggested actions

To address these challenges, several solutions based on practical experiences were suggested. Demonstrating the tangible impact and value of a particular partnership is crucial for securing buy-in. This can be achieved through specific field trips to research organizations or by compiling compelling written success stories. It is vital to convey that partnerships address genuine needs within the research community and that the projects deliver impactful and useful results. One agency highlighted a successful bottom-up approach involving collecting letters of support from stakeholders to illustrate existing needs. Linking policymakers directly with the research community can also be highly effective when seeking commitments.

Facilitating participation in partnerships is significantly aided by the development and use of clear guidelines or guides on national rules. Some countries have developed sophisticated approaches in this area, sharing best practices and educating other ministries.

A core suggestion, highly valued by the discussants, was the idea of "putting the national strategies into the partnership." This approach emphasizes demonstrating how a European Partnership can actively contribute to solving national challenges. This process can effectively begin through the establishment and utilization of mirror groups.

The above resulted in the following actions and prioritisation:

Suggested actions	***Voting***
Putting the national strategies into the Partnerships.	11
Field trip(s)!	5
Success stories – show how their strategies differ.	2
Bottom-up approach – show that stakeholders work consistently with national strategy.	
National rule book on process to join; national guidelines on how to participate, guide other ministries.	3

4.2. Misalignment of national rules with transnational calls

Key messages/ challenges

The complexity and diversity of national funding rules cause problems for the implementation of transnational calls. The complexity and risks are increased by the broader scope and higher ambition of the new partnership concept. Complexity is further increased in the case of participation of organisations or countries less experienced in implementing partnerships. This requires more knowledge for all the involved actors at the different levels – MS/ AC, funding agencies and researchers.

The following aspects were identified as challenges for the implementation of the transnational calls in European Partnerships:

- Misalignment/ different basis for eligibility of activities in participating countries, regions or even agencies within one country (e.g. dissemination might not be funded in some national programmes).
- Misalignment of eligibility criteria for applicants (researchers, NGOs etc.) – the very heterogeneous landscape of applicants increases complexity and the need for common rules.
- Misalignment of use of terminology for processes, stakeholders and activities (e.g. milestones or widening countries).
- Misalignment of national schedules. For instance, the Spanish legal system is a guarantor for the beneficiary. This means that the final justification procedure can take up to almost a year. Therefore, the AEI has problems in the final justification of the ERA-NET Cofunds and has decided not to participate in the last calls linked to ERDF program.

Good practices/ suggested actions

- At the European level action could be taken in harmonising rules and giving clear guidelines about how to implement them.
- At the Partnership level, there is a need for comprehensive, transparent, coordinated communication to all partners and applicants, e.g. regarding eligibility of applicants/ consortia/ types of organisations/ TRLs.
- MS/ ACs are responsible to adopt national rules according to lower administrative burden for the involved actors. Every participant has to be clear/ aware about own rules and whether they fit to the overarching system.
- Overall, information on the conditions is key to prevent problems. Understanding the real limits is a solution for a realistic management of expectations.

The groups discussed whether (full) alignment and a single set of rules for every partnership is needed. Even though a common set of rules with clear definition will help avoiding waste of resources, participants argued that there is added value in a not fully harmonised system. The coordination of national funders is a value in itself that should be made more visible and there is a need for the European Commission and the respective executive agencies to build trust and flexibility to the established group of national funders.

For MS/ AC and the respective agencies a change of mind-set is needed for what is wanted and what is possible to harmonise. This would also increase ambition of national strategies and willingness to change processes in agencies.

Good practices and suggested capacity building actions

In the final discussion the development of standard processes with workshops and guidelines was prioritised. Trainings for new partners (on-boarding) might be a tool that supports the activity. Communication about available data is necessary to avoid the duplication of activities (e.g. information about national programmes is available in partnership calls).

The above is summarised in the following table:

Suggested actions for capacity building	***Voting***	***Who is responsible***	***Who to involve***
Development of standard processes to be implemented by all partnerships.	10	ERA-LEARN	Partnerships, EC
Pilot/sandbox o identify area worth implementing a partnership with harmonised procedures.	2	EC	Partnerships
Mapping of differences/ challenges.	1	ERA-LEARN	
Reveal and try to harmonise different interpretation of same rules (HE).			
On-boarding (use guidelines) → useful for: new partners all levels.		National authorities	ERA-LEARN

4.3. High administrative burden

Key messages/ challenges

With the partnership administration becoming increasingly complex, there is an added administrative burden on organizations to take an active part in the co-funded partnerships. Partnerships — although based on the same funding instrument, such as a co-funded partnership — use different governance structures, financial reporting frameworks, and coordination mechanisms. Due to these differences, personnel at implementing organizations must learn and comply with widely varying requirements and operational tasks, which are handled differently by partnership coordinators. This adds extra complexity and proves a challenge for an agency administering several partnerships, which has to adapt to various different templates for internal reporting, working on the ranking list, budget planning and highlights the need for a standardized management model for partnerships of the same type.

With staff restrictions or even cut backs there is decreasing (availability of) human resources for Partnership administration. Few agencies now have the resources and experience to coordinate the partnerships. There is a risk that potential participating organisations will not be interested in taking leading roles (such as partnership coordinators, work package or task leaders), in preparing and coordinating partnerships. This has already been observed and could result in a decrease in the overall interest in participating in partnerships.

There is a need to build experience internally in the respective agencies to share the load and look for ways to simplify the national processes. It is vital to make the case for partnerships (showcasing their added value and impact) to enable securing extra resources (both human and financial).

Good practices and suggested capacity building actions

To reduce the national administration connected to transnational calls the group discussed ways to avoid duplicating processes and have as few and light national processes as possible. Some good examples were presented:

— Reduce national forms for applicants in calls (e.g. require national forms only at the full proposal level)

— Stop requiring monitoring reports from partners in funded projects at national level. Where extra information is needed, drawing on available data from databases is privileged over asking beneficiaries, in line with the “only ask it once” principle.

— Apply standard criteria from Horizon Europe as national eligibility requirements to lighten the administrative burden for applicants, as in one transnational project each national consortium must comply with different national eligibility requirements.

— Accept slightly different start dates within a certain timeframe for national consortia in a transnational project as the timeline for the standard granting procedure differs across funders.

The discussion built upon the need to increase experience internally in the agencies at national level. The need to bring experienced and less experienced staff together across funding agencies to learn from each other and build capacity in less experienced agencies was suggested. The following suggestions, provided by workshop participants, can be considered by all actors, including implementing organizations, the EC, and ERA-LEARN:

— Use the EC submission and evaluation system for all partnership calls to avoid the extra burden related to transferring data to the EC.

— Organize workshops supporting the exchange of topics and issues relevant to all partnerships, e.g., impact assessment, data management, and AI use in the preparation of documentation.

— Provide standard forms for partnership operational documents and supporting documents and guidelines, e.g., Consortium Agreement, internal financial reports in partnerships, ethics forms, etc.

— Define work packages required for all partnerships of the same type.

- Raise awareness about the complexity of partnerships among all actors, including ministries, to ensure appropriate resources (including staff) are allocated to prepare and implement the partnerships. Organize dedicated meetings and training workshops.
- Support the exchange of information and instructions between partnership coordinators, EC policy officers, and partnership project officers (mostly based at REA) to ensure smooth implementation of the partnership and support the process of reporting to the EC.

To support training for newcomers joining the partnerships, the following actions were proposed:

- Onboarding courses for new personnel joining the partnerships, including training on financial reporting, call implementation, etc., such courses were provided by the Biodiversa+ coordinators.
- Organise study visits or job shadowing for newcomers in organisations coordinating the partnerships or in those with experience in implementing partnerships; it was suggested for the EC to develop a dedicated scheme funding study visits.
- Consider using the EEA & Norway Grants – available for Widening countries – to support the training of staff implementing the partnerships at the national level.

To enhance the exchange of information and experiences regarding partnership coordination and implementation within an organization:

- Organize internal forums to exchange knowledge.
- Create teams or positions specialized in specific aspects of partnerships (financial management, administrative coordination, call implementation) that can support more than one partnership.
- Develop internal manuals with instructions on the partnership preparation and implementation process.

The above resulted to the following actions and prioritisation:

Suggested actions for capacity building	*Voting*	*Who is responsible*	*Who to involve*
Official communication channel to the EC to ask guidance on the rules.	9	EC	
Collect templates in a tool box reference models -templates (good) - Ranking list - Proposal Planner - internal reporting tool.	5	ERA-LEARN	Partnerships
Grants to do that – schemes.	3	Partnerships and agencies	
Staff exchange also within same country when relevant needed.	1	Agencies	
Staff exchange between funding agencies.			
Work shadowing - for instance on impact assessment - Data collection from projects.			
Bring experienced with less experienced staff together.			

4.4. Timing inconsistences across national programme/ funding cycles and financial/ budgetary restrictions

Key messages/ challenges

The discussion started with understanding the challenges caused by the differences in timing of funding/programme cycles and of the financial and budgetary restrictions that the funders have to deal with. These can be summarised as follows:

— Different timelines of funding can cause severe delays in the start and end point of projects or even withdrawal of project partners.

— Different reporting times (annually at national level and mid-term and final reporting at project level) causes extra burden for beneficiaries.

— National policy cycles do not allow for funds commitment more than the current year and the next ones.

— The duration of eligibility checks varies across countries.

— There is confusion in the beneficiaries due to European nature of projects and national rules.

Good practice and suggested capacity building actions

The discussants mentioned various solutions that they apply. For instance, Biodiversa+ is flexible about the project start/ end. There is a specification that the funded projects as a whole should not last longer than 60 months. This allows some room for (not excessive) delays in the start and end of the project. In Malta the consortium agreement can be signed within 6 months after the grant agreement giving thus time to safeguard the start of the project in all funding agencies involved. Slovenia changed the law to enable the project funding to start as soon as the consortium agreement is signed. In Italy the project partners can start with their own funding in the first year (30% of total funding) and private companies can leverage their bank guarantees. Costs are recognised as eligible since the official start of the project. Spain suggested to consider a funding system for co-funded calls based on the commitment of RFOs to fund at least a percentage of their top ranked projects instead of committing a budget per call (WEAVE system).

Regarding restrictions, the issue of limited capacity was discussed in terms of human resources. There is a need to ensure adequate human resources to avoid the risk of a decreasing interest in partnerships as staff is decreasing, while the partnerships are getting bigger in terms of partners and activities. Related to this is prioritisation and determining which partnerships to join, a good approach being the portfolio approach considering not only national but the total of EU activities/ programmes.

The discussants emphasized the need for multiple information flows in relation to

— clearly explaining to researchers, the European nature of the partnerships/projects and the national funding context and who to ask for related questions considering that there are two levels, i.e. the national level implementation and the partnership/Horizon Europe level,

— being open about why there is a need for (double) reporting, without stopping efforts for simplification, and persuading them about the added value of the partnerships,

— rethinking information flows to reduce redundancies and information fatigue,

— sharing the experience of the funding agencies with the potential beneficiaries about how best to build their consortia,

— making information easily traceable and accessible.

The above resulted in the following actions and prioritisation:

Suggested actions for capacity building	***Voting***	***Who is responsible***	***Who to involve***
Update of EC on in-kind contributions (what counts, what types).	7	EC	Partnerships
FAQs for partnership basics, reporting & in-kind contributions.	4	ERA-LEARN	Partnerships
More promotion of partnerships tailored to target audiences about added value to attract new members/stakeholders. Specialised promotion for MS/AC needs.	3	EC	MS/AC PR experts
Call-specific webinars on partnership basics when call opens about partnership/call specifics.	2	Call secretariat	all agencies, NCPs involved
Partnerships-tailored handbook on stakeholders' engagement (diverse actors).	1	ERA-LEARN	Partnerships
Training of researchers on how to communicate collaborate with policy/industry.	1		

4.5. Working groups

Key messages/ challenges

The BMR 2024 suggests encouraging and supporting MS/ AC to establish working groups at the national level for monitoring European Partnerships, to facilitate the sharing of good practices and improve national monitoring systems. Several MS/ AC have already established or are planning to establish such working groups (National Hubs, Mirror Group, or similar) to enhance the impact of the partnership at national and European level.

These working groups are meant to serve as platforms for consultation, coordination, and engagement, involving national stakeholders such as RPOs, research funders, policymakers, sectoral organizations and agencies. They should ensure that national priorities, strategies, strengths and needs are considered when selecting and implementing partnership activities and designing workplans of partnerships. These working groups could also support the improvement of the monitoring and evaluation practices for partnerships at the national level, thus also addressing the measuring of the partnership impacts.

These groups serve different objectives, such as reflecting national priorities, coordinating sectoral efforts, or providing expert advice. Participants of this MLE argued that understanding the particularities of each group type, along with the challenges they face, is essential for designing effective structures and processes.

The national hubs implemented by partnerships are central nodes responsible for executing specific activities aligned with a partnership's objectives. In the discussion, participants suggested that establishing and managing hubs falls within the partnership's expected scope of work, requiring dedicated resources and clear mandates.

Mirror groups are designed to reflect or align national priorities with the partnership's goals. They facilitate communication and coordination between the partnership and national stakeholders, ensuring that initiatives are relevant and aligned. Their effectiveness depends on the existence of a substantial number of partnerships within their cluster/ topic and active national engagement. In areas with few partnerships, establishing meaningful mirror groups can be less impactful.

Coordinating groups bring together representatives from different ministries/ sectors to address specific topics or challenges. They are crucial for fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and national alignment but often face difficulties due to diverse backgrounds, responsibilities, and interests. Due to varying national structures, country sizes, and resource availability, there is no one-size-fits-all model for these groups. Smaller countries or those with limited resources may struggle to participate fully, affecting the group's overall functioning.

Advisory/ expert groups comprise specialists and knowledgeable stakeholders, these groups provide strategic advice on policies, strategies, or work programmes. A common challenge here is identifying the right experts and motivating their participation, often complicated by issues such as reimbursement and recognition. Finding the right balance of expertise and active participation is often difficult. Reimbursement and incentives are frequently discussed, as experts need motivation to contribute effectively.

Across all groups it was acknowledged that factors such as the size of a country and/ or community, as well as the number of partnerships in a thematic area play a critical role. At the same time, a common overarching challenge across all group types is the lack of sufficient resources - be it time, funding, or personnel - which hampers the establishment, operation, and sustainability of these groups.

Good practices/suggested actions

It was agreed that creating groups merely for the sake of it has to be avoided. Instead, existing national structures and networks should be leveraged to enhance efficiency and ensure better alignment with national structures and programmes. There is no one-size-fits-all model for the creation of such groups; each country's individual structures and resources need to be considered to design effective and sustainable groups.

It is essential to define clear mandates and roles from the outset, providing guidance on their responsibilities and expectations. Networking and dissemination activities alone are not sufficient; follow-up actions are essential to translate discussions into tangible outcomes and real impact. When forming groups, careful selection of members is crucial - knowledgeable and active individuals who can contribute meaningfully.

To motivate experts and ensure commitment and active participation, offering incentives such as opportunities to contribute to work programmes or strategic directions can be highly effective. Overall, a thoughtful approach that considers existing structures, clear roles, and motivation strategies is key to the success of these groups.

Especially for mirror groups, it was argued that they are most effective in clusters/ topics with a significant number of partnerships, ensuring meaningful reflection and alignment.

4.6. Involvement of stakeholders

Key messages/ challenges

Effective stakeholder engagement in European Partnerships is crucial, and its approach must adapt to the partnership's phase (e.g., preparation versus mature) and type (institutionalised, co-programmed or co-funded).

While it is relatively easier to conduct info days, involving the National Contact Point (NCP) network, about various funding opportunities (e.g., in the health cluster), engaging stakeholders in strategic discussions, such as updating Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas (SRIAs), proves more challenging. It is important, but also difficult, to ensure that stakeholder groups, such as those involved in technology platforms or expert groups, can meaningfully influence the formulation of the partnership, not just participate at later stages.

Denmark uses the so-called reference groups (a strategic reference group followed by reference groupsfor HE clusters 1, 4, 5 and 6, and sub-groups related to specific co-funded partnerships. These groups address broader policy issues, disseminating information to a wide array of organizations. Around 50-60 people may take part in the interactions, although experience suggests that smaller, more focused groups are generally more effective. In a similar vein, Czechia uses expert advisory groups. Maintaining such stakeholder groups, however, takes time and resources, which are often scarce.

Annual strategic events can encourage stakeholder participation, but it is critical to bring together diverse representatives, including large and small companies, to maximize the benefits of partnership participation. Yet, reaching diverse communities remains a hurdle, while balancing the interests of various stakeholders, including ministries, agencies, universities, research organizations, and companies, is key. Onboarding activities are important for 'new' members and for establishing a common language and level of understanding among the group members. At the same time, having a process that ensures feedback loops at strategy building stage is important.

Significant focus is usually placed on involving potential beneficiaries in developing calls and encouraging applications. However, what happens with actual projects (e.g., dissemination of results) is often overlooked. Some countries, like Czechia, monitor project results through reviews and inquire about the long-term impact from beneficiaries.

Engaging stakeholders is key not only at the strategy level but also at the results dissemination or valorisation level. However, this should be the responsibility of the partnership rather than of the funding agencies. Other national actors that are linked to the sectoral levels (like ministries) need to come in to support the national uptake of research results.

Good practices/ suggested actions

The above resulted in the following actions and prioritisation:

Suggested actions	***Voting***
Engagement for the dissemination of results through common dissemination actions/ events by partnerships to support national/ regional uptake of results. This necessitates to identify the type of engagement, the relevant stakeholders and the other actors that need to be involved.	11
Need to address the lack of dedicated resources for maintaining engagement.	7
Engagement at the strategic level through structures like those implemented by DK, the so-called reference groups, accompanied by feedback loops and onboarding activities.	3
As potential beneficiaries though info days on calls from a variety of funding opportunities (involving the NCP network) or though events like the Partnership Day that will be carried out in Slovenia in October 2025.	1

4.7. National monitoring systems

Key messages/challenges

Currently, there are limited examples of measuring the impact of partnerships at the national level. These are typically conducted by agencies with specific interests in a particular field and do not cover all partnerships in which a country participates, highlighting the importance of coordination at the national level.

In the discussion on the development of national monitoring systems for European Partnerships the participants aimed to learn from more advanced or experienced national systems, identify best practices, and explore ways to establish or optimize national structures.

Participants highlighted that the objectives of national monitoring systems are multifaceted:

- Measuring Performance: Tracking progress and outputs to ensure that activities are on course and resources are used effectively.
- Measuring Impact: Assessing the long-term effects and contributions of partnerships to policy goals and societal benefits.
- Providing a Basis for Decisions: Supplying reliable data and insights to inform policy adjustments, resource allocation, and strategic planning.
- Attracting Other Ministries: Demonstrating the value and effectiveness of partnerships to motivate broader participation across government sectors.

Many MS/AC currently lack fully operational national monitoring systems for European Partnerships, leading to a heavy reliance on data from the partnerships themselves and broader EU sources. the situation also depends on the national landscape of ministries and funding agencies, which could be more centralized or decentralized.

To improve monitoring efforts, it is essential to define clear goals for monitoring efforts to determine what information is truly necessary and what data is needed. Precise objectives will help focus data collection, analysis efforts and usability of results. It could be efficient to focus on establishing a performance monitoring system first before attempting a much wider analysis of impact.

Furthermore, optimizing and aligning existing structures and resources is crucial to monitor performance and assess impact effectively, thereby avoiding duplication of effort. Model Structures already in place could serve as models for other partnerships, promoting cost-effective monitoring practices.

While impressive systems have been developed by individual partnerships, there is a need to avoid duplication of efforts as much as possible and therefore enquire about which parts of a monitoring system need to be developed from scratch. Resources should be allocated sensibly, avoiding overextension.

A significant challenge remains the accessibility of relevant data, such as information from Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), which is frequently hidden or not readily available. Improving information flow and integration is also vital, especially for co-programmed partnerships, which often appear detached from member states. To enhance transparency, crucial information, such as lists of Strategic Research Group (SRG) members provided by the European Commission, should be made readily accessible.

Good practices/ suggested actions

Overall, the group highlighted the importance of developing robust national monitoring activities that are aligned with existing Commission and European Partnership data sources. Emphasizing the need for clear objectives and resource-efficient structures, participants agreed that leveraging existing models and improving data transparency are crucial steps forward. By doing so, member states can better monitor impact, enhance performance measurement, and foster engagement from national ministries.

The above resulted in the following actions and prioritisation:

Suggested actions	***Voting***
Use of one centralized system mandatory for data of funded projects by all European Partnerships aligned to the F+T portal and CORDA.	14
Coherence of data for all formats should be envisaged. Common process will enable a comparison between partnerships.	6
MS/ AC, EC and partnerships need to be clear and define what data is needed to reach which goal in order to prevent from collecting masses of data that is not used. It is important to divide between basic (call data) and complex data (performance/ impact of partnerships). The centralized system cannot meet all individual needs.	3

4.8. Towards a single facility for data collection and storage

Key messages/challenges

Finding partnership data on eCORDA is a major challenge. There is no indication as to which specific partnership the data belongs to. Those that are working on analysing partnership data need to know about the structure of Horizon Europe to find the right data. For identifying project data belonging to a co-programmed partnership the search needs to be done with the correct call identifier. Currently there is no easy filtering function to retrieve data related to partnerships. It is a hurdle that eCORDA cannot be understood without specific knowledge about the framework programme.

Another challenge is the fact that the data are in some cases not updated or not available. There is no data on the network level of co-programmed and institutionalised partnerships. The members of the Joint Undertakings (JUs) or the associations managing the co-programmed partnerships are not visible.

Combining national data and partnership related data is also a challenge. Some countries build their own systems which rely on a stable structure of eCORDA. Changing the structure in eCORDA would result in cost-intensive adaptation needs to translate data for the national systems. Yet, the structure is not flexible enough to insert data besides that about beneficiaries and costs, such as those provided by the KICs that are not visible in the eCORDA system.

In addition, partnerships need to report their IKAA (In-Kind Contributions to Additional Activities) in specific templates. There is a huge amount of reports available on additional activities and this information should be accessible in an easy and structured way. There is a need for more accurate information on what is going on in partnerships besides the handling of calls.

Another problem is the limited consistency between eCORDA and other Commission systems e.g. with CIRCABC (Communication and Information Resource Centre for Administrations, Businesses and Citizens). It would be helpful to use a single structure in all systems. This would allow linking other databases to eCORDA and would increase the potential for analyses.

Good practices/ suggested actions

The suggested solution with the highest ranking was a new partnership dashboard. This dashboard should provide all data related to partnership in an easily accessible way. The user should be able to identify partnership-related data without detailed knowledge on the framework programmes, codes or call identifiers. The dashboard should provide the option to compare partnerships and countries to see quickly how successful participation is and provide better visuals. Information on memberships of JUs or co-programmed partnerships need to be included and the consistency with other data needs to be ensured.

A concrete suggestion is an EU tender for giving assistance to partnerships to set up their data system to transfer the data to eCORDA as XML. Through the tender, a group of experts should be identified who help the partnerships with their data problems. This tender would reduce the resources spent in this respect by the partnerships and would facilitate data collection. The current situation of limited data of co-funded partnerships available on eCORDA could be solved in this way.

A further thought to consider was linking the request for better partnership data with the eCORDA Forum. In this forum, the country representatives meet on a regular basis. Aligning the PKH requests with this group might also lead to better results.

Concerning the structure of eCORDA a more flexible data set up is requested. The flexibility shall allow partnership specific data to be included in eCORDA. Common data and partnership-specific data needs to be balanced, and efforts should be oriented towards avoiding double reporting.

Another suggested solution is related to data on additional activities. As the data on IKAA (In-Kind Contributions to Additional Activities) are reported already now in eCORDA, making this available in an accessible way should not be a problem. A more condensed overview of additional activities would also be nice to have.

The above resulted in the following actions and prioritisation:

Suggested actions	***Voting***
Partnership Dashboard: - Possibilities to compare partnerships/countries - Improve visuals	13
Assistance to partnerships to set up the system: - EU tender	5
eCORDA forum - Countries request better partnership data.	
IKAA from institutionalised & co-programmed into eCORDA.	2
Partnership-specific data to be included in eCORDA → flexible setup.	1
Balance between common data and partnership-specific.	1

4.9. Capacity building needs to support monitoring

Key messages/ challenges

Monitoring the impact of European Partnerships at the national level presents significant challenges, primarily due to limited resources and the diverse nature of impacts, which often require specific areas of expertise and skills that may vary across countries. A crucial need exists for political commitment to allocate dedicated resources for skilled personnel and IT tools. However, the resources needed for assessment the impact of partnerships at the national level may be disproportionate compared to the national funds spent per year (e.g. around €2 million/ per partnership for MUR – IT). Assessing the broader, overall impact of the entire partnership landscape may be a more relevant approach at country level. Moreover, the national context plays a role, as the evaluation of national programmes may fall under the remit of independent agencies rather than ministries or funding agencies.

To facilitate monitoring, reporting conditions should be clearly set and aligned with monitoring objectives, ensuring that reporting requirements capture both quantitative and important qualitative insights, which are often missing. Many countries face a lack of internal capacity and, in some cases, a need for external programme evaluators with specialized knowledge in R&I evaluations, as existing expertise might be geared towards ESF (European Social Fund). Building this internal capacity is therefore essential. Ministries responsible for evidence-based policy-making bear the responsibility of building their employees' capacity in monitoring and evaluation.

Independent evaluations, whether internal or external, are critical for objective assessment. Furthermore, there's a need to be more proactive in linking monitoring and evaluation processes, including assisting partnerships with their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). A shared understanding of terms (e.g. assessment, performance, monitoring) are vital for ensuring clarity of expectations, so that all actors are aware of the scope and indicators, and can provide necessary inputs, including important qualitative insights. Understanding how long-term impact can be achieved and how projects can be supported in this regard is also of significant interest.

Knowledge hubs play a vital role in extracting and sharing project results, and there is potential to scale this function beyond national levels. Besides regular reporting, dedicated studies for specific questions can provide deeper insights into impact. Challenges in data collection persist even within the same organization, highlighting the need for user-friendly systems, short surveys and preparatory info sessions. However, the learning from evaluation and assessment activities is often limited when it is not a required mandate but rather based on personal interest.

Good practices/ suggested actions

The above resulted in the following actions and prioritisation:

Suggested actions	***Voting***
Align reporting with monitoring requirements & qualitative insights on impact.	7
Dedicated WS centrally (ERA-LEARN) → different impacts, long-term.	6
Clarity on terms (monitoring, assessment, long-term impact).	4
Responsibility of organization to build capacity internally: • Learning/feedback loops. • Coordinate with data units. • Collect qualitative insights. • Periodic meetings of all people in partnerships. • Onboarding of 'new' staff.	2
MLEs across countries.	
Co-funded partnership knowledge hubs to scale sharing of results across countries.	2

5. Conclusions

Efforts are underway to enhance national coordination and stakeholder engagement in European Partnerships, with valuable practices emerging. However, significant challenges persist, notably the misalignment of national rules and schedules, leading to high administrative burdens, and severe resource scarcity in terms of both human and financial capital. Furthermore, the current data management and monitoring systems are largely inadequate for robust evaluation, and suffer from incomplete or outdated data, hindering comprehensive analysis and lacking a unified, user-friendly facility.

To address these issues, prioritized actions emphasize strategic alignment, systemic data improvements, and enhanced capacity building. Key recommendations include actively integrating national strategies into partnerships, streamlining data management through a new, user-friendly dashboard and a more flexible eCORDA structure, and strengthening national monitoring by defining clear objectives and allocating dedicated resources for capacity building.

Fostering collaboration by leveraging existing national structures for working groups and prioritizing results dissemination are also crucial. Ultimately, unlocking the full potential of European Partnerships requires a continuous and concerted effort across the European Commission, MS/AC, and participating entities, focusing on robust data ecosystems, clear communication, and strengthened internal capacities.

6. Annex – workshop agendas

Day 1 – 11.03.2025/ / CDMA BUILDING (RUE DU CHAMP DE MARS 21, 1050 - IXELLES

Timing	Topic	Speaker(s)
12:00	Welcome lunch	
13:00	**Transnational coordination mechanisms** Introduction and Goals of MLE Setting the scene: Developing transnational coordination mechanisms to facilitate management and implementation of Partnerships activities – needs tailored to MS/AC/PS	**Fabienne Gautier**, DG RTD, G.4 **Petra Žagar**, Slovenia <u>Moderation:</u> **Lucas Van Hattem**, DG RTD, G.4
13:30	Background and outcomes: Previous exercises on transnational coordination and capacity building including MLEs and ERA-LEARN experience	**Effie Amanatidou**, ERA-LEARN
13:45	Impulses (on challenges/possible solutions) Experiences from existing transnational coordination efforts in e.g. JPIs, Art. 185 Initiatives, and PPPs. Examples for coordinated funding procedures across the countries participating in a partnership (development of the SRIA files etc.)	**Serhat Melik**, TR (national support programme simplifying participation in P.) **Michal Vávra**, CZ (alignment of rules between national and European funding/ the work of the NCP network) **Rachele Nocera**, IT (Establishment of an incentive fund for Universities and public research organizations.) **Margit Noll,** DUT (agencies that adapted their funding conditions to allow a wider set of stakeholders to engage and participate in funded projects)
14:45	Prioritisation of the suggested topics (max 3 topics to discuss, 25' each)	**Inga Elizabeth Bruskeland**, ERA-LEARN
15:00	Coffee break	
15:30	Group work (2-3 parallel groups on selected topics – world cafe set up) - Misalignment of national rules with transnational calls - incompatibilities in timing of programme/funding circles - financial/budgetary restrictions - high admin burden - … (other if and as suggested by participants) …	
17:00 – 18:00	• Presentation and discussion of results • Prioritization of the solutions	Groups rapporteurs (volunteers from group members) **Inga Elizabeth Bruskeland**, ERA-LEARN
18:00	Networking cocktail	

Day 2 – 12.03.2025/ / CDMA BUILDING (RUE DU CHAMP DE MARS 21, 1050 – IXELLES

Timing	Topic capacity building for transnational coordination	Speaker(s)
09:00	• Detailed presentation of results and priorities of the first day • Discussion on which of those are relevant to capacity building – formulation of capacity building topics to take up in group discussions	**Inga Elizabeth Bruskeland**, ERA-LEARN Moderation: **Lucas Van Hattem**, DG RTD, G.4
09:30	Impulses: Experiences from existing capacity building activities addressing - Governance models - Actors involved - Resources needed - Supporting systems in place (MS/ COM/ organization level)	**Jürgen Kroseberg**, DE (Communication/ national process/ events) **Jonas Toft Ludvigsen** SRG Clean Hydrogen **Cornelia Schwenk**, EIT Food **Sophie Germann**, Biodiversa+
10:30	Coffee break	
11:00	Group work (2-3 parallel groups – world cafe set up) Each of the capacity building solutions identified in the first slot will be addressed in terms of: - skills (e.g. relations management, stakeholders' mobilisation, foresight, etc.) - Communication, guidance and tools (for which issue? By whom? For whom? Etc.) - Fora, structures and infrastructures (at which level, i.e. national, EU, other?) - Resources needed (time/human/financial, for which issue? For what type of activity? By whom?)	
12:30	• Presentation and discussion of results • Prioritization of the solutions	Groups rapporteurs (volunteers from group members) **Inga Elizabeth Bruskeland**, ERA-LEARN
13:15	Next steps and closing of the workshop	**Fabienne Gautier**, DG RTD, G.4
13:30 – 14:30	Farewell lunch	

Day 1 – 21.05.2025

Address: Federal Ministry of Innovation, Mobility and Infrastructure (BMIMI); Radetzkystraße 2,1030 Vienna

Timing	Topic: Sharing of practices about national strategies	Speaker(s)
12:00	Welcome lunch	
13:00	Welcome Introduction and Goals of MLE Setting the scene: Sharing of practices about national strategies/ coordination structures/ implementation mechanisms that optimise national participation to European Partnerships/ maximise possible funding synergies	Brigitte Weiß, Ingeborg Schachner-Nedherer Kathrin Kapfinger, Team leader European Partnerships, DG RTD, G.4 Brigitte Weiß Ingeborg Schachner-Nedherer Moderation Lucas Van Hattem, DG RTD, G.4

13:30	Impulses (on challenges/ possible solutions)
	
	• Coordination at the national level:
	  ○ international dimension in the national policies and context
	  ○ systematic process for deciding which partnerships to join
	
	• Working groups (National Hub, Mirror Group, or similar) in member states to enhance the impact of the partnership at national and European level
	
	• Involvement of stakeholders from different branches of government, as well as from funding agencies, academia and business
	
	Use of ESIF for funding participation of research teams to partnership projects has not really taken up
		
		Erik Yssen and Tor Ivar Eikaas, NO (National strategic process- Partnership participation)
		
		Hemma Bauer, AT (example national coordination of PS in the health area)
		
		Maria Smietanka, PL (Process involving all stakeholders)
		
		Margit Suuraja, EE (use of ERDF funds as a contribution in European Partnerships)

14:45	Background knowledge on practices of national strategies Results of the 1st workshop on transnational coordination mechanisms and capacity building	Effie Amanatidou, ERA-LEARN
15:00	Coffee break	
15:30	Group work (parallel groups – world cafe set up) • Coordination at the national level • Working groups • involvement of stakeholders	
17:00 – 18:00	• Presentation and discussion of results • Prioritization of the solutions (short term, medium term, long term)	Group rapporteurs (volunteers from group members)
19:30	Dinner (https://mottoamfluss.at/en/welcome/)	

Day 2 – 22.05.2025

Address: Federal Ministry of Innovation, Mobility and Infrastructure (BMIMI); Radetzkystraße 2,1030 Vienna

Timing	Topic: Measuring the impact of European Partnerships	Speaker(s)
09:00	Setting the scene: Background knowledge on national monitoring systems and measuring the impact of European Partnerships	Effie Amanatidou, member of the BMR expert group, ERA-LEARN Moderation Lucas Van Hattem, DG RTD, G.4
09:25	Outlook on the next BMR	Kathrin Kapfinger, Team leader European Partnerships, DG RTD, G.4
09:30	Impulses: • Developing national monitoring systems (basics, learning from the more advanced/ experienced) • Capacity building needs to support monitoring of European Partnerships (guidance, trainings, tools, etc.), knowledge valorization • Towards a single facility for data collection and storage (building on existing ones) for partnership and their projects' related data	Ingeborg Schachner-Nedherer, AT (challenges in developing on national monitoring; status and open gaps) Michael Hübner, CETP (Impact Pathways; knowledge valorization example) Roland Brandenburg, M-ERA-NET, ERA-LEARN (continuous assessment exercises of M-ERA.NET) Daria Julkowska, chair of previous BMR (covering all 3 bullet points)
10:30	Coffee break	
11:00	Group work (2-3 parallel groups– world cafe set up) • national monitoring systems • Capacity building needs to support monitoring • Towards a single facility for data collection and storage	
12:30	• Presentation and discussion of results • Prioritization of the solutions (short term, medium term, long term)	Groups rapporteurs (volunteers from group members)
13:15	Next steps and closing of the workshop	Kathrin Kapfinger, Team leader European Partnerships, DG RTD, G.4 Ingeborg Schachner-Nedherer
13:30 – 14:30	Farewell lunch	

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