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Phase 2: Call Implementation

Implementing ERA-Net Cofund
29.09.2016, Berlin

FACCE SURPLUS
SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT AGRICULTURE
FOR FOOD AND NON-FOOD SYSTEMS

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FACCE SURPLUS is an ERA-NET Cofund….

- Dedicated to improve collaboration across the European Research Area in the range of diverse, but integrated, food and non-food biomass production and transformation systems, including biorefining
- between the European Commission and a partnership of 15 countries/regions: Belgium (2 regions), Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, UK (*NZ*)
- Duration of the ERA-NET: 01.03.2015 – 28.02.2020; total EU funding = 5 mio.€
- www: http://faccesurplus.org/
- Runing under the umbrella of FACCE-JPI (Joint Programming Initiative on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change); *FACCE-JPI organised 2011 a joint call with GRA (Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research), incl. Canada: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC)*

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FACCE SURPLUS implemented its first call in 2015….

- 14 projects funded (21% success rate) for a total funding amount of 14,5 mio.€
- Co-funded by EU: 3,8 mio.€
- Research projects were kicked-off (commonly) from 13th to 15th september at the Aarhus University (DK) + additional event
- Monitoring, communication … ongoing

FACCE SURPLUS prepares additional activities (provisional list):

- Next call on the topic "Small Scale Biorefineries" (Jan 2017) + *further? + "joint programme"?*
- Common mid-term & end-term meetings
- Stakeholder event(s)?
- Bioeconomy conference?
- Workshops of research projects?
- Training/Summer school?
- "Knowledge-Hub"-like activity?
- Socio-economic study?

Call Preparation

- Probably the most important phase! Good preparation does not mean that everything will run according to plan; bad preparation is "Fatal error"

- Optimally start the call as soon as possible in the Cofund duration (stick to 5 years for financial reporting) -> prepare before the start of the GA!
- Anyway: co-funded call should be (fairly well) described in proposal/DoA
- Important that all funders are aware and prepare "national calls" on time + promotion
- All funders should also know that 2nd (3rd, balance) pre-financing comes probably after start of projects -> Pay grants in advance; in particular for balance

- Scope: probably "copy/paste" from proposal/DoA
- Changes might be possible in agreement with PO
- Anyway: Call announcement incl. scope must be sent (agreed!) to PO at least 30 days before call opening

- Publish a pre-announcement „as soon as possible" (possibly with the mention „Subject to successfull GA preparation with the EC" or similar)
- Agree on a fairly well established timeline (unexpected can always happen); 2-step call (ineligible proposals must be excluded at step 1 + any national priorities!) mandatory; Must be open for at least 60 days
- Timeline to optimise national budgets (e.g. selection end of year -> budget from 2 years)

Call Preparation

- Make a clear list of eligibility criteria: some are fixed (at least 3 entities from 3 diff. Countries), some might be under discussion
- Collect national rules (projects are funded according to the rules of the funding organisation) and try to make them understandable for the coordinator

- Preparation of the evaluation should start! How to build the eval. Panel? Expertise required? What „sub-criteria"? Which scale of scores (half-scores?)?

- Prepare and test the submission tool

Call Preparation

Definitions (FACCE SURPLUS/this presentation)

- EU funds: the entire EU money planned to be used in the research projects (so without the part covering administration costs in the "Black box" model);
- Top-up (virtual value! Make it clear to the funders!): part of EU funds budgeted for each funder "on top" of their own committed budget

- Gap filling (GF): part of the EU funds used to fill funding gaps in the ranking list (as soon as one funder gets out of money, use of GF to go further in the list)
- Just return (JR): part of EU funds used to pay a % of each

EU Funds = GF+JR

ESSENTIAL to agree at an early step on the management of the EU funds : 100% used as real common pot (GF) or mixed mode (part used as JR)? Which mixed mode?

e.g. 50% EU funds budgeted as top-up; make clear that the final figure depends on the ranking list : the objective will probably be to fund as many good projects as possible

ESSENTIAL that everybody is aware that s/he has no "right" to get EU funds: e.g. not to give EU funds to a funder which has in the end NO project to fund! Or if the % of GF needs to be higher so to fund sufficient projects and reach sufficient grants to be paid so to claim sufficient costs to the EC

Call Announcement

- Scope
- Short and clear description of the call process (2-step, elig. check, evaluation) incl. timeline and deadlines
- Participating funding organisations & budget

The indicative total available budget amounts to XX M€. It is expected that 8 to 13 projects will be funded within the framework of this call. Nonetheless, this does not preclude from selecting a higher number of proposals.

- Role of coordinator
- Which data from the proposals may be published / Confidentiality (use of some data for the EC / ERA-LEARN!)
- Eligibility criteria on scope, consortium composition, duration…!!! Make sure the project is finished early enough before the end of the ERA-NET… + remind about national rules!
- Detailed description of application process (indicate that some data will be fixed at that stage, e.g. consortium composition, ratio proposal becomes ineligible at full prop. stage)
- Detailed and transparent description of the elig. check, evaluation and selection procedures, including criteria, meaning of scores, potential thresholds… and that you will use the ranking list strictly
  - (researchers cannot "complain" about unclear selection procedures as you follow strictly the list provided by independent panel)
  - If you make use of an *oversubscription* factor, indicate that!

- Indicate the process afterwards: negotiation of grant agreements between funders and researchers (national level), consortium agreement (?), monitoring/reporting requirements, dissemination & communication requirements, + potential mandatory meetings, e.g. common kick-off (optimal to know approx. date and place, so this can be budgeted!)
- + Annexes: NCPs, national annexes, template for proposals (?), other templates (?)

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- Potentially rectification phase (short; rectify slight mistakes which might „kill" a potentially very good project; agree exactly WHAT may be rectified; not to communicate to applicants)
- Eligibilit   ɔ step 2)

- Not mar
- Full flex   al evaluation
  or peer-
- This eva   tep
- Getting   an
  „Oversu

Oversubscription… Kezako?
Oversubscription factor: the ratio between the total requested funds from all the applicants from a given country or region, and the amount available for the corresponding funding agency in that call

Funders meet and agree on the proposals that go to step 2
Go top-down the ranking list until a funder has reached the agreed oversubscription; then discuss:
- potential to enhance budget of this funder (and encourage to check for budget increase at full proposal step)?
- Reduce required funding from this funder (slightly! Can be risky for the project…)?
- Redistribute „part" of this funder to other (unsubscribed) funders (also risky)?
- Apply oversubscription with some flexibilitiy?…
Objective might be to reach a total oversusbscription near the agreed factor (factor of 3; 10.000k€ budget -> invite proposals for approx. 30.000k€ -> probably success rate will be near 25-30% in the end).

Go to step 2!

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Inform consortia about outcomes from step 1
- "You are not eligible because…."
- "You are invited for step 2; please take the feedback from the evaluators into account…"
- "Due to the available budget (and the oversubscription), we cannot invite you to…" (low chances)

- Some changes may probably not occur in the full proposal / pre-proposal: e.g. consortium composition (avoid getting a new partner in a consortium which might be ineligible and then jeopardise the entire consortium), requested funding (if you apply an OSF)…
- Some fine-tuning might be necessary (answer to an evaluation comment; reduce required funding of a partner…)
- What data are really required in addition to those from the pre-proposal?
- Might be possible to transfer data from pre-proposal into the full proposals so to spare some work for applicants?

Full proposals are submitted… evaluation!

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Is a "last-minute" elig. check useful before starting the evaluation?

Pass the proposals to the evaluators: Mandatory peer review of the full proposals under supervision of an external observer (appointed by the ERA-NET consortium, at best at a very early stage so the observer can follow up the entire call : call launch!)

- Peer review creates a ranking list of the proposal which is binding!!
- It means that the ranking list must be followed strictly while selecting projects for funding! This can lead to funding gaps (once a funder runs out of money) and in worst case, if this happens at an early stage, to stopping the funding selection early in the ranking list.
- At least 3 independent experts / proposal
- Peer review according to the 3 H2020 eval. Criteria: Excellence, Impact, Implementation
- „Sub-criteria" might be „negotiated" with PO at an early stage (should be included in the Call Announcement for transparency)

- Make sure of confidentiality, impartiality, conflict of interest (declaration of each expert)
- At best: have a „contract" with each evaluator to make sure s/he does the appointed tasks, attends the meeting(s), delivers on time

Rank	Final SCORE	Criteria1: EXCELLENCE	Criteria2: IMPACT	Criteria3: IMPLEMENTATION
1	14,5	5,0	4,5	5,0
2	13,5	4,5	4,5	4,5
2	13,5	4,5	4,5	4,5
2	13,5	5,0	4,5	4,0
5	13,0	4,5	4,5	4,0
5	13,0	4,5	4,0	4,5
7	12,5	4,0	4,0	4,5
7	12,5	4,0	4,0	4,5
9	12,0	4,0	4,0	4,0
9	12,0	4,5	3,5	4,0
11	11,5	4,0	3,5	4,0
11	11,5	3,5	4,0	4,0
11	11,5	4,0	4,0	3,5
14	11,0	3,5	4,0	3,5
14	11,0	4,0	4,0	3,0
16	10,5	3,5	3,5	3,5
17	10,0	3,0	3,0	4,0
17	10,0	3,5	3,5	3,0
17	10,0	3,5	3,0	3,5
17	10,0	3,5	3,0	3,5
17	10,0	3,0	3,5	3,5
22	9,5	3,0	3,5	3,0
23	9,0	3,0	3,0	3,0
24	8,5	3,0	3,0	2,5
24	8,5	3,5	2,5	2,5
26	8,0	2,0	3,0	3,0
26	8,0	2,5	2,5	3,0

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Selection meeting

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To be prepared carefully!!!

- Send as soon as possible the ranking list to the funders
- Use this ranking list to present to the funders the requested funding from each of them "along this list" (e.g. until rank 9, Country A should pay XXX k€)
- Try to prepare scenarios and possibly identify the "bottleneck funders": would they be able to enhance their budget?

- At the meeting: let the Eval. Chair present the list; gaps identified?

- Selection of projects strictly according to the ranking list so the projects are eligible for the EC
- *Still, it is not excluded, once "sufficient" projects have been selected (to claim sufficient costs) to fund other projects (so to "jump" ranks) BUT these projects will not be eligible for the EC (might make sense e.g. if a funder could not get any project ranked high enough)*

Concrete example

- ERA-NET Cofund, 4 countries, with planned costs „grants to research projects" of **3,03** mio.€ (33%=1 mio.€ EU grant): this amount MUST be paid to research projects
- No administration costs to be deducted: 1 mio.€ EU funds for the research projects.
- Mixed-mode with 50% (0,5 mio.€) „Top-up": figure incl. Top-up used in Call Announcement & to calculate the oversubscription
- 500 k€ planned as „Just return" -> 12% (500 / (3.700 + 500))

After the selection, „problems" might come e.g.:

- Granted amount < requiested funding in proposal (granting at national level)
- Often, paid amount < granted amount
- Not to exclude „rather strong" discrepancies between figures from the proposals and amounts **PAID**

- **ALWAYS SELECT PROJECTS FOR REQUESTED FUNDING HIGHER THAN THE NECESSARY**
- Questions is how much „buffer"? 10%?

- In our example we need to pay **3,03** mio.€ -> select for **3,33** mio.€

After the selection

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Communicate outcomes: include ranking (?) and/or scores (?)
Probably wording like: 14 proposals have been selected;
- You ranked 7 out of 30 proposals -> Congratulations!
- You ranked 17 out of 30 -> Sorry!

Ask to contact quickly NCPs to start negotiation of grants
Remind of duties on reporting, on attending meetings, ….

Maybe have an annex for national contracts so to make these "duties" binding for researchers (the contract is between a funder and a research partner! Researchers are "forced" to nothing for the ERA-NET)

Mandatory deliverables
- (a)the ranking list(s) of the projects;
- (b)the observers' report on the evaluation (guidelines from ERA-LEARN);
- (c)the joint selection list of the projects to be funded, and
- *(d)from each consortium partner participating in the joint call, a formal and duly signed commitment on availability of funds for the selected projects (not needed as deliverable – Part. Portal will require this electronically from all Beneficiaries (?) for reporting)*
- + information will be required by ERA-LEARN (?)

Follow up the Granting procedure and the grants paid during the whole project duration (this will anyway be probably needed for the yearly deliverable "Information on cumulative expenditures incurred")

Of course: apply monitoring/reporting, etc… according to DoA

QUESTIONS!

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