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REPORT ON JOINT PROGRAMMING – PRAISE, CRITIQUE AND VISION

The Expert Group issued its final report *Evaluation of Joint Programming to Address Grand Societal Challenges* in March 2016. The exercise looked at 14 joint programming projects, comprising 10 Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) and another four Public-to-Public networks.

It pinpointed a range of issues that are impeding progress and did not shirk from criticisms or robust recommendations. We tried to provide an overarching picture, explains Expert Group chair Juan Tomas Hernani. “We did not mix our opinions with the facts, but we were expected also to provide some vision.”

Experience in both the public and private sector, Hernani has an academic background as

an industrial energy engineer and economist. He spent four years as Secretary General for Innovation within Spain's ministry of science and innovation, was General Secretary for the European Spallation Source, which involved an infrastructure investment of €1.8bn; he worked in IT for eight years, helping set up a Spanish start-up on digital imaging technology. Today, he is CEO of Satlantis, a space micro-satellite company. He does not mince his words.

“We did not mix our opinions with the facts, but we were expected also to provide some vision.”



The Joint Programming Process was set in motion to help construct the European Research Area (ERA) when launched in 2008. Joint programming would be a vehicle to drive research policies closer in Member States, especially in the case of grand societal challenges shared by Member States such as sustainable agriculture, ocean science and urban development.

JPIs were selected because of their importance and shared interests of member states, yet the overall ambition to support them is disappointing, the evaluation found. Also, most countries seem unwilling or unable to co-invest in central executive resources that are needed to effectively implement JPI strategic agendas.

"JPIs have been a fantastic achievement in terms of the policy agreements for European countries, and we shouldn't neglect the positives. We have a golden asset here," says Hernani. On the other hand, the money being devoted to joint actions illustrates a lack of commitment.

"Countries should pay more attention to the challenge that they have opted to overcome together," adds Hernani. It is concerning that countries do not forecast significant increases in research funding in this area in the next few years. "The operation of JPIs is not going to improve if we do nothing about it," Hernani predicts.

With some exceptions, most countries are not adapting their national research activities towards the SRA/SRIAs nor the activities of the JPIs. Also, too much executive resources are draining away to secure financial support from the Commission, support the GPC and deal with national delegates who do not have sufficient decision making authority.

All JPIs were scored by the group (zero to five) according to eight criteria: societal challenge; positioning; international leadership; driving innovation; variety of instruments; investment in joint R&I; share of national investment; degree of national alignment; and self-sustainability.

"This was a relative exercise in terms of markings. It highlights that some networks are doing better, but its not an absolute measure," Hernani explains. Spotlighting the best JPIs under various criteria should light the way to improvements.

Greater standardization in order to lift the burden from individual programming initiatives is also needed, says Hernani. "Management capacity is limited and there is a drive to be leaner, to devote most money on impact," he says, yet there is needless repetition. "We should not let each of the networks decide how to operate; we need a standard so that there is an accepted way to connect and get organised."

All major stakeholders were consulted – JPI chairs, the Commission, the High Level Group on Joint Programming, as well as Member States and Associated Countries. Fourteen specific recommendations were made. "Our group is not proposing just to continue as is. The Commission, JPIs and Countries should get together in a forum to reflect and decide where to go in the next three years and see what they can offer in terms of impact, budget commitments and results expected," says Hernani.

The evaluation itself is not about judging individuals, he adds: "It is an opportunity to look at what is working, to compare your work with others, and to see what ways to improve your network. I only see opportunities."

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SPOTLIGHTING THE WAY FORWARD - ANNUAL JOINT PROGRAMMING CONFERENCE

We can often learn more from failures and mistakes than successes. The 2015 Annual Joint Programming Conference that was held in Brussels on January 14-15, 2016, attracted over 300 participants and identified some of the weaknesses and challenges faced by public-to-public (P2P) networks.

A report summarising proceedings of the conference led by the ERA-LEARN 2020 members at the University of Manchester has been drawn up. It highlights the promising partnership approaches such as H2020 ERA-NET Cofund actions that are addressing societal challenges in the EU. But it also noted hindrances to effective implementation. The level of investment in P2P networks may seem remarkable, but the share of this investment in the total national competitive funding for example is much less impressive.

"Notwithstanding the progress made thus far, much more needs to be done if P2Ps in research and innovation are to realize their full potential," the report notes. Stronger commitment by Member States and open up to the world are two routes to this potential. Obstacles include incompatible national legislation or a shortage of national programmes addressing similar societal thematic challenges or a lack of human and financial resources to support participation in P2Ps.

The key messages from the presentations and discussions during the conference refer to

the importance of mutual learning among stakeholders, researchers, and policy makers. "There is the need to move from consultation to creating partnership and enabling co-production," the report notes. "There is not "one-size-fits-all" approach for stakeholder involvement; different formats and different stakeholder groups (and subsets) are required during the different stages of a P2P research initiative."

Taking onboard experiences so far and building on known good practice examples are crucial steps in the right direction. Aiding this in a structured way was the overall aim of the 2015 Annual Joint Programming Conference.

The report concludes by observing that there has been a shift by the P2P community away from more technical issues such as simplification, harmonisation and interoperability in the past years. Now bigger strategic issues are coming into view: widening participation, international dimension, engaging stakeholders etc. This may indicate changes in the mindsets of policy makers, "reflecting acknowledgement of joint programming as valuable means to deal with global societal challenges," the report concludes.

CYPRIOI CHAIRMAN TO LEAD HIGH LEVEL GROUP FORWARD

The GPC was established to identify suitable joint programming areas and develop guidelines on framework conditions for joint programming. The GPC [GPC from the French "Groupe de Programmation Conjointe"] consists of high level nominees from Members States and the Commission; the group is welcoming a new chair this Spring, with Leonidas Antoniou chairing his first GPC meeting on April 29.

Antoniou is responsible for designing research and innovation funding programmes in Cyprus as director of the country's Research Promotion Foundation, is a member of the cabinet boards of four JPIs and has been a member of the High Level Group from the beginning. The GPC helped in the setting up of the ten JPIs addressing big societal questions like climate change, healthy diet and antimicrobial resistance; it has since shifted focus to work on monitoring and improving existing JPIs.

However in February the GPC discussed the option of setting up a new initiative on Research on Migration and Integration. "Countries such as some Scandinavian countries, France, Italy, Greece and Austria are willing to have a discussion about a new initiative on migration," says Antoniou.

The most recent meeting in February of the GPC approved a new mandate, which will be adopted by the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) and the Council of Ministers. "Since we are not working so much anymore on the selection of new themes [for JPIs], the idea is to move on to a supporting role for the implementation of JPIs. We will focus our efforts on promoting alignment, both at a national and a regional level, on enhancing the countries' commitment and on monitoring and assessing whether the JPI initiatives are maintaining their mission" Antoniou explains.

With his new chairman hat on, he has already opened a consultation process with other GPC members looking for thoughts, reflection and innovative ideas regarding JPI priorities for the next three years. "What should their priorities be and how to implement them? Should we choose new JPIs? How can we in-

crease the active participation and the commitment of member states and associate countries? What happens regarding alignment is also a huge issue, and there needs to be discussion between the GPC, the European Commission and the JPIs on how to exploit the opportunities arising from the H2020 and the next Framework Programme," says Antoniou.

The Cypriot chair also participated in the Expert Group set up to evaluate Joint Programming Process; the Report is now published and was based on documentary information, stakeholder consultations, workshops, analyses and validation activities. "The Expert Group has done excellent work, which will help the GPC in its evaluation of JPIs and also in dealing with a number of other issues too," Antoniou says. Also, he points out that there is an issue with participation of countries and a need for wider participation in JPIs. But Antoniou is at pains to stress that the purpose of the evaluation was not to categorise JPIs into good or bad examples.

"The main purpose was to identify what the bottlenecks are and what each of the JPIs can do to improve its position," he adds. "You can find some JPIs which score well for international cooperation, but perhaps score low when it comes to attracting funds. This evaluation will allow the GPC, the 10 JPIs, the EC and the MS and AC to introduce improvements in future for the whole joint programming process." He has ideas on how to improve the GPC too. "What we can improve is the way that the GPC collaborates with the JPIs, the EC and other colleagues such as the ERA-LEARN 2020 in order to have a more open discussion and also to have more professional support from experts."

The Group has four meetings a year, with perhaps 35 to 40 people there, but in between time, people work on a volunteer basis and most of the hard graft is done within working groups. The Group could be better supported with professionals attached to it, such as the ERA-LEARN 2020 colleagues. "I would like to see in future a way for the GPC to cooperate with a group such as ERA-LEARN 2020 or an equivalent project or system," he adds.

PEPPING INNOVATION IN EUROPEAN MANUFACTURING

Making and exporting goods remains a keystone of the European economy. The stats are there to attest to that: manufacturing accounts for 70% employment, turnover of €6,930 billion and around two-thirds of exports from the EU.

Since 2006, MANUNET has been hammering away at co-funding manufacturing research in SMEs, which comprises 99% of the business population in the sector. There have been two iterations and about 112 million euros of R&D expenditure has been mobilized by the activities of this ERA-NET. The objective is to encourage competitiveness via high-risk R&D projects. This year say a proposal for MANUNET III.

"The idea is to support small companies to participate in R&D projects, which are halfway between regional or national projects and European projects," says MANUNET coordinator Cristina Ugarte at the Basque Innovation Agency, Spain. Two SMEs from 2 countries must participate in a call; the last call had 17 regions involved, most of which see manufacturing as a strategic priority. In total, an impressive list of 548 SMEs or so and 208 projects have been funded so far.

"If companies wish to internationalise their R&D, then this is a very good tool to start with. They get to collaborate with companies from other European countries, as well as research centres and universities," says Ugarte, who points to an attractive 45 per cent success rate among applicants. "It also opens the possibility of having more knowledge of R&D in your area and new markets, because you get to know other companies and could cooperate with them later."

For funding agencies, it stimulates cooperation across regional and national boundaries and offers a window into other's policies and priorities and can assist them to design new programmes, adopt best practice and implement a common research strategy. The third proposed phase of MANUNET, submitted at the end of January, would see the consortium increase, attracting new regional agencies, in-

cluding 3 from the Netherlands, and also more international partners, such as Russia, as well as associate member Norway.

Previously funded projects included improving ultra-precise positioning in 3D-motion robots (ROBOBUILD), involving Romanian and Italian partners; design and processing of medical products for soft tissue regeneration (MES-STAR), involving Italian and Turkish partners; and welding with lightweight alloys (SPOT-LIGHT), involving Spanish and Italian partners. Projects must be close to market and score well in terms of innovation and scientific and technical risk.

Some of the most active participants are from Piedmont in Italy, the Basque country of Spain and Romania. Calls do not define any specific topics. They could be in engineering, information and communication technologies for manufacturing; new materials for manufacturing; or improved processes, components or systems.

The European Commission will release its evaluation of the new proposed ERA-NET in April; if successful it will be an ERA-NET Co-fund action, which sees an EU contribution to total public funding of a joint call, a stable reimbursement rate of 33% and additional contributes from the EU towards additional coordination activities. "For us, it will also mean the introduction of external, independent evaluators, which we haven't used before," notes Ugarte. "We will need a new database of evaluators to look at proposals in advanced manufacturing in the second evaluation phase. In a sense, we will also have a new partner in the form of the Commission, which will change the way the ERA-NET is managed too."

The full list of regions/countries participating in MANUNET calls for this year: Asturias (Spain), Basque Country (Spain), Castilla y León (Spain), Catalonia (Spain), Germany, Iceland, Israel, Lower Austria, Navarra (Spain), Piedmont (Italy), Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Turkey, Wallonia (Belgium) and Western Greece.

FUTURE OF MEDICINE IS NANOMED

The human cornea if damaged does not regenerate itself; donor transplants have therefore been used to treat vision loss, but these are in short supply and can sometimes trigger inflammation. Step forward a project called I-CARE, which has generated an implant to promote regeneration of tissues and nerves in patients.

The project drew together a consortium of industry, academic and healthcare partners, with funding from EuroNanoMed (2009-2011), an ERA-NET that seeks to create and fund teams that can convert research in nanotechnology into practical gains in medicine. I-CARE began in 2009 under the first phase of EuroNanoMed; a range of projects were subsequently pursued, including in ear tissue regeneration, targeting of cancer stem cells, allergy vaccination and treatment of spinal cord and nerve injuries.

"Nanomedicine is nanotechnology applied for healthcare or for medicine. It has been identified as a key enabling technology by the high level group in the European Commission," says Ignacio Baanante at the National Institute of Health Carlos III in Madrid, Spain, and coordinator of the ERA-NET. "It could be useful for diagnostics, for targeting tumours with chemotherapy more precisely or for building tissue or organ scaffolds."

The second phase EuroNanoMed II began in November 2012, attracting 20 partners from 17 countries/regions, and continues until the end of October 2016. From 2009 to 2015, we funded 51 trans-national projects, each involving at least 3 partners from at least 3 different countries, says Baanante. "The total amount we have spent is 45 million euros in this period, with six calls [one each year]." Last year more than 60 projects were submitted and in the 2016 call should see a similar number.

EuroNanoMed 3 is now under evaluation by the European Commission, with an answer expected by June. This would be cofunded, with Commission involvement in funding, and could potentially boast a war chest of 15 million or so euros for 2017. Participation by category has stood at 62% from academia, 23% from companies, and 15% from clinical or public health organisations. "The majority of groups have been from academia and

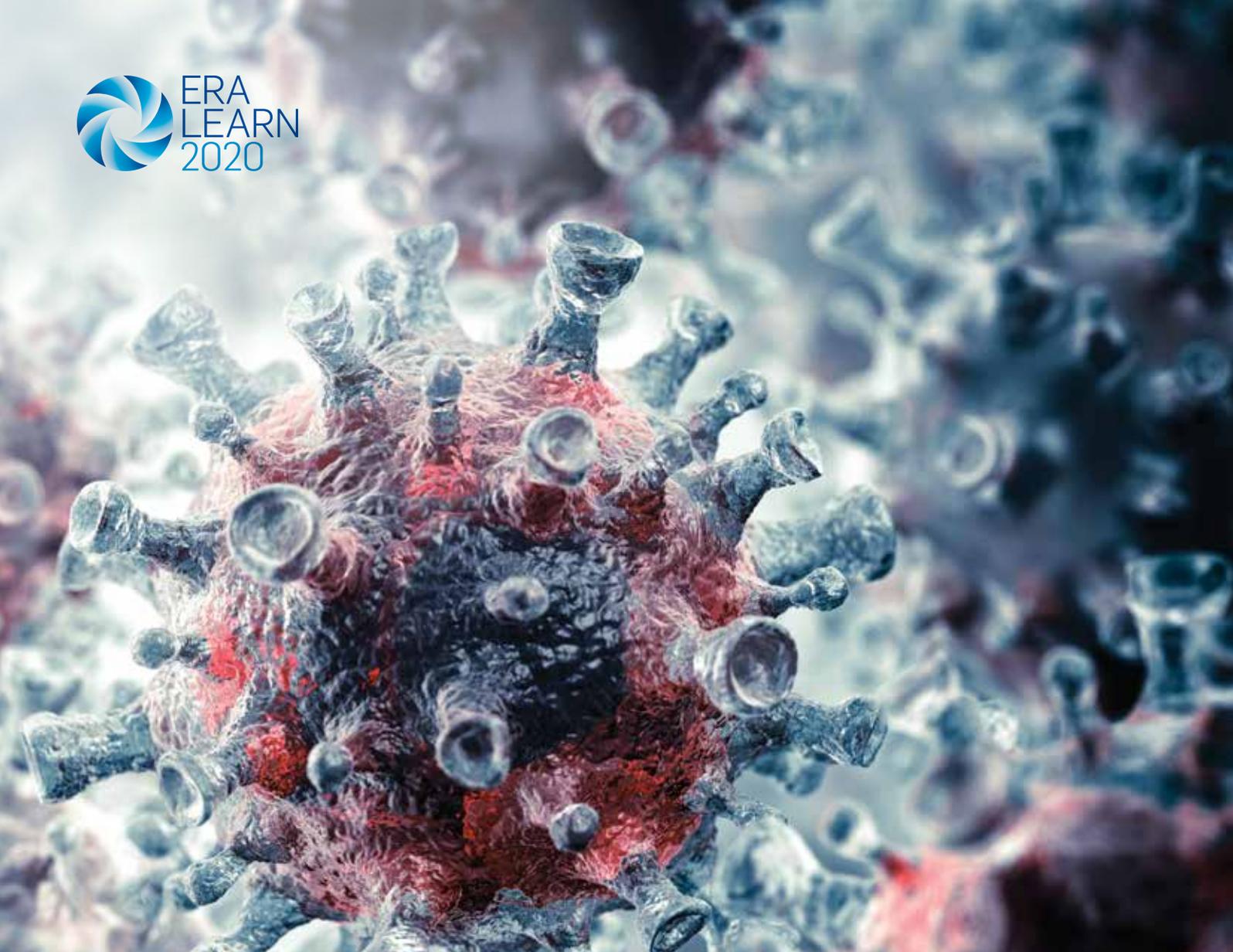
this is a challenge for the next phase," says Baanante. "We want more industry involvement, to help bring research results to clinical applications or closer or even to the market."

Upping industry participation is a challenge. "We could make the involvement of an industry partner mandatory, for example.," he explains. For the proposed EuroNanoMed 3, new funding partners that fund only industry have been sought. And Baanante has been encouraged that new innovation and industry funding partners put forward for the third phase include Science Foundation Ireland, which can fund industry; the Technology Foundation STW from The Netherlands; Center for the Development of Industrial Technology (CDTI,) a new innovation funder from Spain; TUBITAK from Turkey; and the German Ministry BMBF through an agency which only funds industry.

In terms of successfully funded projects, Portugal, Spain and France have stood out up to now, with Israel also prominent in many calls. Norway is to step up its involvement if a third phase goes ahead. The new phase would now also welcome Quebec, Canada; and Taiwan.

EuroNanoMed 2 also sought collaborations and teamed up with the European Technology Platform for Nanomedicine (ETPN) to craft a strategy document that will provide direction for the long term: the Nanomedicine Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda. The platform's Translational Advisory Board could help evaluate projects for the ERA-NET and spotlight those with greatest potential impact or real-world application.

A veterinarian by training, Baanante began managing European programmes, mainly ERA-NETS, in 2008 and indeed was involved in the preparation of EuroNanoMed back in 2008. His department at the National Institute of Health Carlos III, the main public research funding of biomedical and clinical research in Spain, looks after international programmes.



ERA-NET COFUND FOR BIOTECH PROPOSED

Biotech thrives on innovation and research and is big business for Europe now and in the future. A proposed new ERA-NET Cofund on Biotechnologies “CoBioTech,” will serve as glue for deeper and broader collaboration between players in the biotech sector in the Member States and beyond.

The newly proposed ERA-NET Cofund would place under one canopy the activities previously split between ERA-IB2, ERASysAPP and ERASynBio. The ERA-Net Cofund will zero in on application-oriented research; significant

involvement of industry is expected to exploit results. Bundling the three predecessors in the area of biotech will significantly increase public funding calls – around €30m per call – and kindle further collaboration across relevant sectors and countries.

“We know from different sources, such as the European competitiveness report and the High Level Group on Key Enabling Technologies (KET) that Europe is leading in biotechnology, for example in terms of patent applications, yet industrial production is declining in the field of KETs,” explains Petra E. Schulte at Project Management Jülich, coordinator of the proposed CoBioTech on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany. “What’s missing is a bridge between lab and market, and our consortium believes we can support this bridge through systems biology and synthetic biology as methods and general approaches to many industrial biotech problems.”

Systems biology brings together “wet lab” scientist who carry out lab experiments and those who work in “dry labs” using modeling and computer power. It is a scientific approach in modern life sciences aimed at understanding the quantitative behaviour of biological systems. Systems biologists strive to develop biological models that can predict experiments and how for example metabolic pathways, cells, tissues and organs work or react to say drug treatments.

“Synthetic biology is the engineering of biology. It is the deliberate redesign and construction of novel biological and biologically based parts, devices and systems using principles elucidated from biology and engineering,” Schulte explains. “Synthetic biology allows to modify organisms in a way that they survive under conditions used in industry and to produce those products you desire.”

The total European bioeconomy has been estimated at €2.1tn turnover in 2013, with total employment at 18 plus million employees. Biotechnology is an important constituent of this bioeconomy and one Europe needs to stay competitive in.

CoBioTech is currently under evaluation at the European Commission, with results expected before the end of June 2016. Many national funders would encourage SMEs to get involved in this initiative, but larger companies might also jump in. And this ERA-NET Cofund will also create a European Biotechnology Hub in order to reach out to key actors and stakeholders from multiple biotech-related areas. The objective: to align different European strategic instruments with the goals of the KET biotechnology programme under Horizon 2020 and increase awareness of biotech for industrial use. “We wish to develop a common vision in how best to realize the potential of biotechnology,” explains Schulte.

It will provide stakeholders with tailor-made support regarding information, communication, networking and funding. “Communication is a central element in order to improve the visibility of the benefits of biotechnology. The public perception of biotechnology is too often negative. We want to help researchers to better communicate about their research, and highlight the positive aspects,” says Schulte.

Schulte initially performed research as a neurobiologist in the field of systems biology and specifically modelling of wind perception in insects. Today she works mainly in project management at the Ministry of Education and Research in Germany.

“We know from different sources, such as the European competitiveness report and the High Level Group on Key Enabling Technologies (KET) that Europe is leading in biotechnology, for example in terms of patent application, yet industrial production is declining in the field of KETs”

Petra E. Schulte at Project Management Jülich

Workshop on Stakeholder Involvement in Joint Programming Initiatives

In order to achieve enough critical mass to address major societal challenges by pooling resources from different countries, involvement of a wide range of actors, such as national research funding organisations, relevant research communities from academia and industry as well as user communities need to be integrated in European Public-Public-Partnerships (P2Ps). All JPIs have launched measures for reaching out to their stakeholder communities, at different stages of development of their joint planning processes and in June 2015 representatives of JPIs gathered together in a meeting hosted by JPI More Years Better Lives (JPI MYBL) in order to exchange views on means and approaches of engaging stakeholders in the governance structures of the JPIs. In this workshop participating JPIs agreed that there is potential for joint actions across JPIs.

Against this background, back to back with the Annual Joint Programming Conference 2015, ERA-LEARN 2020 and JPI Climate hosted a follow-up workshop, which should contribute to a learning process how stakeholder involvement and public engagement in JPIs could be improved and further developed. The workshop hosted more than 20 representatives from the JPIs (secretariats and management boards), JPI experts responsible for stakeholder involvement, members of the stakeholder boards and members of the GPC.

Using a World-Café format the workshop discussed 1) the relevance of stakeholder involvement, 2) processes to identify and select stakeholders for JPIs, 3) implementation of stakeholder involvement, and 4) pathways for future cooperation between JPIs on the topic of Stakeholder Engagement (SHE).

The workshop participants highlighted the relevance of stakeholder involvement not only for defining valid strategic research and innovation agendas and communication of ideas, but also highlighted the challenging need of stakeholder engagement for speeding up the exploitation of research results by many different stakeholders.

In order to identify and select the right stakeholders, workshop participants highlighted that engaging stakeholders requires a structured system or framework, but it was also made clear that there is not a "one-size-fits-all" methodology. First of all, it was pointed out that keep in mind that stakeholder engagement processes require financial and human resources depending on the level and method of engagement. Therefore, the participants agreed that it is important to identify the required level of engagement (information, consultation, collaboration, etc.) expected from stakeholder groups before starting this process. Then, approaches

of stakeholder engagements were discussed. The use of open online platforms to engage stakeholders was seen as a means which would allow for active participation of all stakeholders, but also concerns about relevance, prioritization and bias in stakeholders' participation of this model were raised. In order to achieve an equilibrium between openness and relevance, a need to balance between bottom-up approaches and a direct approach from the JPIs, inviting relevant stakeholders that are not represented in these platforms, was expressed.

The discussion on implementation of stakeholder involvement focused on success factors and barriers/limitations of stakeholder involvement and disclosed some recommendations for SH engagement in JPIs in JPI governance structures. Participants emphasized the necessity to clearly specify the role and expectations of various advisory boards of JPIs (e.g. scientific and societal advisory boards). Moreover, the group encouraged that board members should be engaged in the definition of their own role and tasks and their interests should be matched with the demands/task of the JPIs regarding stakeholder engagement. To foster co-operation between stakeholder advisory boards and scientific advisory board, it was seen as favourable to have combined meetings of both boards when there is a need to do so and/or tasks and interests of both boards are overlapping or could lead to conflict of interest.

Concerning pathways for future cooperation between JPIs, there was a general agreement that cooperation between JPIs should continue, as there are important issues to clarify, exchange and learn from each other. The discussions centered on the need to adapt engagement of stakeholders to the challenge addressed by each JPI. A helpful focus for the development within each JPI as well as for the cooperation between JPIs was seen in the concept of a Societal Interaction Plan. To the extent that each JPI makes its own strategies of involving stakeholders more explicit and formulates them in a plan (similar to the formulation of other plans for funding, implementation or dissemination) the discussion within JPIs with their stakeholders and between JPIs learning from other's experiences would become more structured and transparent. Annual meetings in conjunction with the annual Joint Program conference, comprising clear objectives and identifying the "added value" for participation, were seen to support the exchange of experiences between JPIs in this regard.

The following link comprises some impressions from the workshop: <https://goo.gl/photos/8WpykKb4QotP8Wj26>

What's New

What's new in ERA-LEARN 2020?

Take a look at our **NEW** mapping of P2Ps at: <https://www.era-learn.eu/network-information/countries>



ERA-LEARN Portal is being expanded to include a database of the P2P funded projects

The ERA-LEARN 2020 consortium has started the process of gathering data on transnational projects that have been funded by P2P networks implemented under FP7, Horizon 2020 and/or the Joint Programming Initiative; this includes ERA-NETs, ERA-NET Plus, ERA-NET Cofunds, JPIs and Article 185s. Some high level information can already be viewed on the website, with more being added as it becomes available. The data being collected from P2P networks will be analysed for the second annual report, due to be published in advance of the conference in November 2016. Increasingly detailed analysis will be presented in future reports and it is hoped that this will be of benefit to all of those operating within the P2P community as we improve functionality and enable networks to access benchmarking information. Network coordinators (active networks) will be contacted in the coming months to request information on funded projects but if you would like to submit this data for your network now, the template can be requested by contacting Hayley Welsh at office@era-learn.eu.

Advisory Board endorse progress and direction of the ERA-LEARN 2020 project at their meeting with the consortium members on 27 April in Brussels.



Learning

MUTUAL LEARNING EXERCISES

The newly established Policy Support Facility (PSF) of the Commission supports Member States in the design and implementation of ERA-related policy measures by means of Mutual Learning Exercises (MLE's). On 11 February, back to back with the last GPC meeting, a group of 16 Member States discussed the set-up of a new MLE concerning alignment and interoperability. The discussion identified three main blocks of issues that might be addressed through the MLE, notably effective and efficient national governance structures for JPP/JPI, good practices in national/regional activities in the implementation of JPP/JPI and finally resources for an effective and efficient participation in JPP/JPI. The latter block should also support the EU-13 and other, so far marginal, participants in JPP/JPI in identifying novel and innovative opportunities for their participation in JPP/JPI.

Article 185

Evaluation of Article 185

As foreseen in the legal basis, a number of evaluations concerning Art. 185 initiatives are currently under preparation. Besides the final evaluations of EMPR and BONUS, all of the four Art. 185 initiatives under Horizon 2020, notably AAL2, EDCTP2, EMPIR and EUROSTARS2 will be subject of their interim-evaluation. The evaluations will be implemented with individual expert groups and final reports are foreseen for Summer 2017.

About

The ERA-LEARN 2020 project facilitates learning among national and regional funding organisations in order to optimise their transnational activities, including P2P performance.

The ERA-LEARN 2020 Toolbox is available at <http://www.era.learn.eu>

To register for the news-letter see www.era-learn.eu

Events

Save the date: 22-23 Nov, 2016

The annual Public-Public Partnerships and Joint Programming Conference will take place at the Management Centre Europe (MCE) in Brussels on 22-23 November 2016. Further details and programme to follow.