

EXCELLENT RESPONSE TO THE ERA-LEARN SURVEY OF USER NEEDS

The recent ERA-LEARN Stakeholder Consultation on the successor to the NETWATCH/ERA-LEARN Platform for Horizon 2020 led to 75 responses from a variety of potential users. These suggest that the community of stakeholders has a strong interest in a future central platform that can provide information, learning and technical support to those that are active in joint R&D calls and programming.

One of the key actions under the current ERA-LEARN project is an 'Analysis of Options for Future Platforms' to support the community of national stakeholders that have a strong interest in transnational R&D collaboration in Europe. The current contracts for the NETWATCH Information Platform and associated Learning Platform will finish in 2013/14. It is therefore timely to consider if a web-based central support platform will be needed for Horizon 2020 and, if so, what should it include and how should it be implemented. Options could

range from evolutionary development of the current NETWATCH portal to a more radical approach involving commercial providers.

The identification of potential users and their emerging needs for Horizon 2020 will be fundamental to the design of any future central platform. For this reason a series of activities have been carried out over the past few months aimed at identifying user needs. This included a survey of relative interest in a menu of 26 specific options for information, learning and central ICT services.

CONTENTS

Excellent Response to the ERA-LEARN Survey of User Needs	1
A Baltic Sea Bonus	3
Netwatch News	5
The ERA Framework	5
List of newly funded ERA-NETs	5
Latest Statistics on ERA-NET calls	6
Access to the Commission's database of experts for research activities	6
Analysing Call-related Cost/Benefit	7
Announcement of Irish EU Presidency Conference on Joint Programming	8
ERA-NETs under Horizon 2020	9
WoodWisdom-Net Plus	10
ERASysBio Plus	12
Results from June workshop on the future of ERA-NET instruments in Horizon 2020	14

The ERA-LEARN project facilitates learning among national and regional funding organisations in order to optimise the performance of their ERA-NET activities. The ERA-LEARN Toolbox is available at <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/lp/learning-platform/toolbox>

In each case, the respondents were asked to indicate their relative interest using a five-point Likert Scale from 'no interest' to 'very high interest'.

In total, 75 stakeholders participated in the user survey including network participants, R&D policymakers and research performers. The main headlines from the analysis of responses include:

- Strong interest for continuation of the information databases that are included in the current NETWATCH Platform
- Strong interest in a broader range of 'Guidance' related to joint calls
- Strong interest in central ICT-based services to help networks implement joint calls
- Relatively low interest in the use of a central platform to provide information on the impact of funded R&D projects and enable inter-network benchmarking (highest response from policy makers, lowest response from network participants)
- Very low interest in the use of an online forum and multimedia to enable mutual learning

In spite of the apparent low interest in virtual networking we would like to invite interested stakeholders to engage in a more qualitative debate on the recently launched NETWATCH Online Forum where we will be reflecting on the key issues in the survey analysis.

For example, can we deliver 'Guidance' through a web portal if there is limited interest in modern online communication? Are stakeholders simply seeking more prescriptive 'how-to' guidance documents or is there a demand for training workshops? Why is there mixed messages on the demand for central services related to socio-economic impact of funded R&D project?

To access the forum:

- 1 Visit <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/forum>
- 2 Select 'Sign In' from the top right hand menu
- 3 Log in using your existing ECAS account or register for one by following the 'Sign Up' option from the top right hand menu

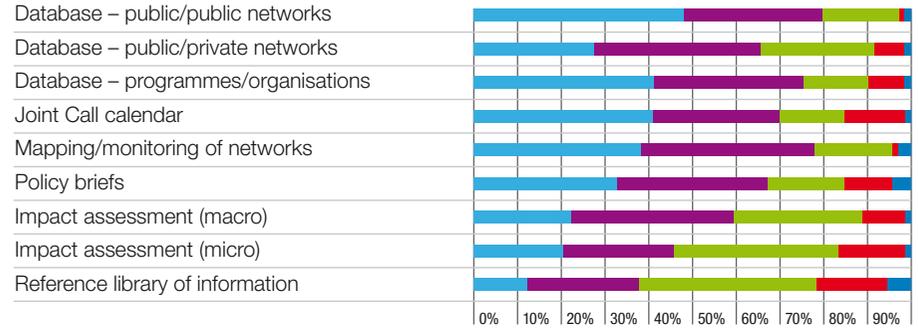
To participate in the forum:

- 1 Select 'Forum' from the central menu bar
- 2 Enter the 'Learning Platform' category
- 3 You are now ready to participate and contribute to the discussion!

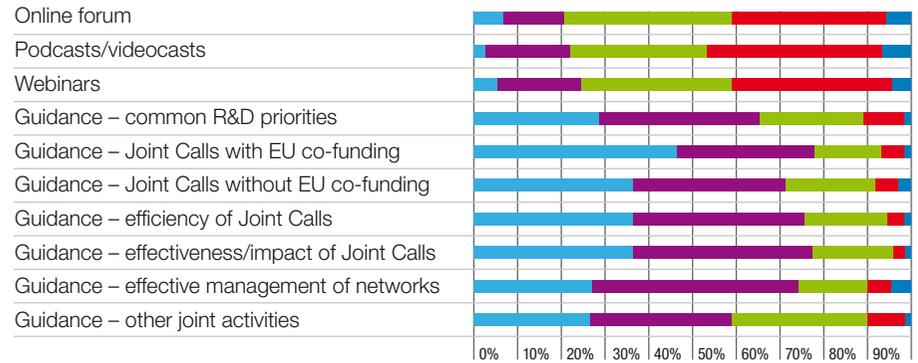
We would like to express our sincere thanks to all those who responded to the survey especially during the summer period.



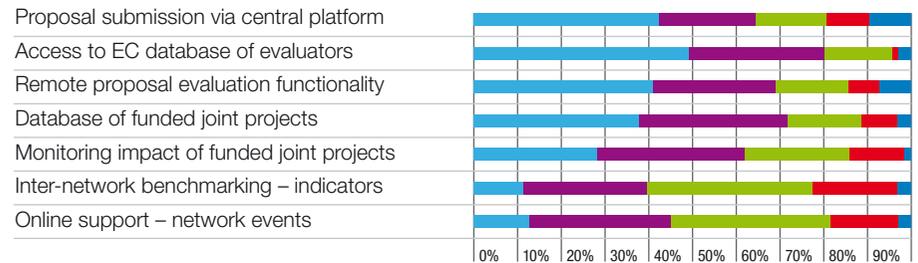
INFORMATION



LEARNING MATERIALS/FUNCTIONALITY



CENTRAL ICT SERVICES





Featured ERA-NETs

BONUS research started as an ERA-NET Plus in 2009 with 16 projects and 22 million euro, following a successful ERA-NET. Then, in June 2010 the European Parliament voted with 97% support for a new R&D programme to protect the Baltic Sea which is backed up by 100 million euro in funding. The call will be launched shortly, but BONUS is already operating as one of very few multinational programmes in line with the FP7 rules.

Dr Kaisa Kononen, the Executive Director of the BONUS Secretariat, located in Helsinki, Finland, calls the vote a high point in her long association with BONUS. She is modest about her own role in the tremendous success of the project. "I think it was good timing," she says of the vote. "During the last few years the concern about the marine environment has really increased. An important milestone was the launching of the European Maritime Policy by the European Union."

Oxygen-free areas expanded with higher temperatures in the past, a study in the journal *Nature Climate Change* revealed. Consequently, continued climate change risks expanding dead-zones in the Baltic Sea. This scientific paper is just one output which has flowed from BONUS, a massive research programme funded by the Seventh Framework Programme and national funding institutions of eight EU Baltic Sea states (<http://www.bonusportal.org>).



Kononen dipped her toes into the waters of marine biology as a young researcher in the Finnish Institute of Marine Research. “When I was a young scientist I was mostly interested in looking down the microscope at the beautiful phytoplankton cells, and I can now honestly say that my biologist’s view was very narrow,” she recalls. Ironically toxic blooms of phytoplankton – caused by nutrient inflows – were among the issues which pushed Baltic Sea countries together to collaborate in environmental protection.

Scientists still look down microscopes but now consider broader contexts, Kononen says, and BONUS is a policy-driven programme. “More and more we understand that the state of the sea depends on human activities on land. And these are driven by economical needs. That is why we really need to involve socio-economics in this research.” BONUS seeks to find solutions so that the Baltic Sea can continue to generate coastal and marine goods and services, but with environmentally benign, sustainable strategies.

Projects have embraced topics such as genetic biodiversity, the pressures of human activity and climate change on coastal ecosystems, effects of pollutants on fisheries and how to make shipping safe. For the 2012-2017 programme, BONUS will be even more targeted in addressing research needs thrown up by policy. BONUS already cooperates closely with the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) by plugging knowledge gaps with outstanding science.

The inflow of excess nutrients from fertilisers remains a problem in the Baltic Sea. “One of the main sources of eutrophication is agriculture and different countries around the Baltic have different levels of agriculture. For example, Poland is an agricultural country with a high population and therefore loading from Poland is higher,” says Kononen. “It is a political issue to negotiate how countries can come to an agreement on how to share the costs for nutrient loading in the Baltic Sea.” But science can help. RECOGA is a project which develops and applies modelling tools to work out the distribution of nutrient reductions needed per country based on new targets. These targets are themselves updated within HELCOM’s Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Kononen sees the change generated by the ERA-NET instruments in the European research landscape as “amazing,” leaving tremendous added value in their wake. “It creates so much good, not only in material terms but also in spiritual terms to collaborate with other Europeans. It can help your life professionally and it is also fun; you can become friends with people working with similar issues and challenges such as yourself.”

BONUS member states include Finland, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Sweden. Russian research institutes and universities can also join in projects through a special agreement. The vision is an economically and ecologically prosperous Baltic Sea region where long-term management sits on a bed rock of sound knowledge.

Featured ERA-NETs

Dr Kaisa Kononen



The NETWATCH website has been redesigned and a number of new features added. While the new design is consistent with other European Commission research and innovation orientated websites, the core content of the new portal remains the same, including the Learning Platform, Strategic Analysis and Network Information. An important new feature is the Forum which registered users can access. The portal can be accessed at <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu>

NETWATCH has recently produced a new Policy Brief entitled "Challenges in transnational research programming: the role of NETWATCH". This brief explores the current use and future potential of NETWATCH in guiding and monitoring transnational R&I programming towards increased societal impact. The brief is available on the NETWATCH portal at [http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/10180/0/Challenges in transnational research programming - the role of NETWATCH](http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/10180/0/Challenges_in_transnational_research_programming_-_the_role_of_NETWATCH)

Finally, NETWATCH has recently undertaken an information update to ensure that the information on networks kept by NETWATCH is as accurate and up to date as possible. This exercise helps to improve the accuracy and relevance of the analysis undertaken.

In July, the European Commission sought to place the vision of a European Research Area into concrete actions for member states, stakeholders and the Commission. It published "A Reinforced European Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth," which identified five key priorities where progress needs to be made (http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/era-communication_en.pdf).

Each priority and its actions will be monitored annually and first progress will be measured in September 2013 in an ERA progress report. This will inform plans by the Commissioner to propose to her successor whether legislation on ERA after 2014 should be introduced or not.

The key priorities were:

- increased effectiveness of national research systems;
- improved trans-national cooperation and competition including establishing and effectively operating key research infrastructures;
- a more open labour market for researchers;
- gender equality and mainstreaming; and
- optimal circulation and transfer of scientific information, including more rapid access to scientific publications and data.

For the purpose of a monitoring exercise, the Commission has to establish a baseline for the year 2012 and will launch a survey and study to this end for funding agencies. The study will mainly address relevant ministries whereas the survey will focus on stakeholders and will be carried out on an annual basis. A set of questions will concern funding agencies regarding cross-border activities. A questionnaire will be sent out in September.

NEWLY FUNDED ERA-NETs

WoodWisdom-Net Plus: Pacing Innovation in the Forest-Based Sector <http://www.woodwisdom.net>

ERANID: European Research Area Network on Illicit Drugs - Towards integrated European research in illicit drugs: cause and nature of drug problems; interventions and policies

ERASysAPP: ERASysAPP - Systems Biology Applications

Infect-ERA: Coordination of European funding for infectious diseases research

COFASP: Strengthening cooperation in European research on sustainable exploitation of marine resources in the seafood chains - ERANET

EuroNanoMed II: EUROpean network for transnational collaborative RTD projects in the field of NANOMEDicine

SOLAR-ERA.NET: ERA-NET on Solar Electricity for the Implementation of the Solar Europe Industry Initiative

BESTF BioEnergy Sustaining the Future: Joint Strategic Planning and Programming to Enable the Implementation of Bioenergy Demonstrations.

ENTIII: ERA NET TRANSPORT III

The total public funding of research implemented by ERA-NETs and ERA-NET Plus, 2004 to 2011, is more than 1.7 billion euro. And for 2012 to 2014 calls worth close to 750 million euro are planned. These are just some of the figures from the report “Statistics on ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus actions and their Joint Calls” which is available [here](#).



In total, 229 calls were implemented from 2004-2011 and more than 50 are currently under preparation for 2012 to 2014. Almost all ERA-NETs have implemented calls, and the public funding element has been growing quite steadily since the first calls in 2004 and adds up to currently €290 million per year.

Seventy-one ERA-NETs were funded under FP6, with 83 different ERA-NETs and 26 ERA-NET Plus actions expected to be funded until the end of FP7. Altogether, 122 different ERA-NET topics were funded under FP6 and FP7.

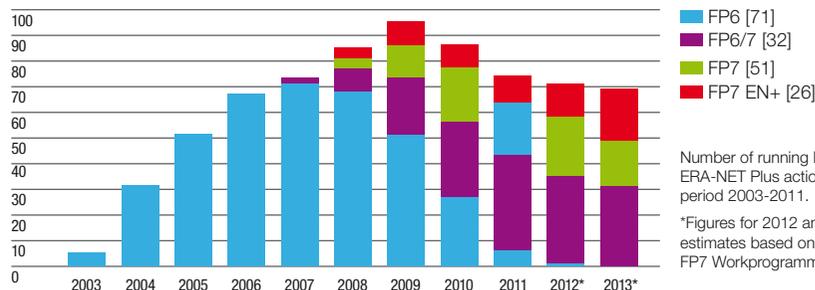
On average 9 countries participate in a call (compared to 12 countries per ERA-NET). The average size of projects funded by ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus actions is €780.000, and an estimated 2200 to 2500 projects were funded by ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus actions from 2004 to 2011.

The leverage effect of the Framework Programme funding is substantial. It stands at 5.6 for FP6 (1 euro in Framework Programme funding results in 5.6 euro funding implemented by ERA-NETs), 13.2 for those that continue under FP7, 3.8 for the new FP7 topics and 2.0 for ERA-NET Plus. More than 15 of the initial FP6 ERA-NETs have achieved a leverage effect of 10, with some exceeding 25.

The most frequently used funding mode is the virtual common pot with

almost 75% of all call budgets. ERA-NET Plus actions rely on either the mixed mode (20% of all call budgets, 87 of all ERA-NET Plus calls) or the real common pot (3% and 13% respectively). These funding models are scarcely seen in ERA-NET calls, comprising less than 1%. The full report is available at http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=7766a0ec-4647-4e79-9e0f-2d1451ee64c7&groupId=10412

NUMBER OF RUNNING ERA-NET AND ERA-NET PLUS ACTIONS



Number of running ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus actions over the period 2003-2011.

*Figures for 2012 and 2013 are estimates based on the respective FP7 Workprogrammes.

ACCESS TO THE COMMISSION'S DATABASE OF EXPERTS FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

ERA-NETs increasingly use internal peer review for proposal evaluation. This is highly appreciated, as peer review is at the heart of any excellence-based research policy and practice for the decisions on which projects to fund. Access to a large pool of qualified experts is the key to ensuring a high level of expertise and an appropriate range of competencies within a balanced panel of experts.

Research funders participating in ERA-NETs have the possibility to request, under certain conditions, access to the Commission's database of experts for research activities and can use this pool of more than 90.000 qualified experts for future evaluations.

How to request access? Access has to be requested from DG Research & Innovation, and the procedure is explained in the ERA-LEARN toolbox.

The ERA-LEARN Toolbox is available at <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/lp/learning-platform/toolbox>



The ERA-LEARN consortium is currently working on a tool for analysing call-related efforts and costs, outputs/outcomes/impacts and their relation to each other. This shall support practitioners of transnational coordination to manage their call related activities and to benchmark their results in comparison to ERA-NETs of similar kind. Finally it shall give interested parties indications on how much effort to provide for joint calls, and how beneficial the implementation of joint calls / ERA-NETs can be.

Benchmarking joint calls is no easy feat and sometimes feels like comparing apples and oranges. Effort can be difficult to separate out, and cause-result relations are not always obvious. Last, but not least, effort and outcome can be largely influenced by the type, design and scope of the calls and by the size and experience of the consortium.

One of the major problems lies in the fact that different ERA-NETs follow different objectives: While most thematic ERA-NETs focus on joint calls and generating coordination projects within the ERA, indicators to that regard seem appropriate. For example international ERA-NETs might be primarily directed at bringing people closer together and enhancing future closer cooperation. Therefore, additional indicators that account for complementary outcomes are being developed.

Keeping in mind the above, indicators on outcome, effort and efficiency have been developed in two workshops and data were collated for joint calls of various ERA-NETs. Results of an exemplary cost-effort relation of three thematic ERA-NETs (two on “applied research”, one on “basic science”) are reported here. Typically these ERA-NETs started in FP6, continuously published calls, grew over time, and exist in a similar form today.

A comparison from the first and a recent call shows that efforts occurring to start up the networks and for the initial implementation of call functionality were quite high, partly due to non-call-related activities of the ERA-NET in its

early stage. It is, however, remarkable that the “basic science” network used considerably less effort for the start-up, apparently due to the fact that actors in the basic science have a longer tradition of cooperation. Meanwhile, though, the ERA-NET instrument has created experienced actors throughout the ERA.

Not unexpectedly - but for the first time based on solid data - ERA-NETs have over time demonstrated considerable improvements: Total effort per partner and call (in units of workforce) went down from roughly four to one person month, and transnational coordination cost (effort in money units as percentage of realized funding) is down to 2,8% – 4,5% from approximately 9% before. The latter figures on the effectiveness of “mature calls” are quite representative also for other advanced ERA-NETs, for which data of the first call were not assessed.

These results are promising enough to employ the tool at a larger scale (i.e. the ERA-NET community) in order to facilitate this self-assessment and to collect further data that are quintessential for a meaningful and context-related interpretation.





A conference on Joint Programming and Joint Research Programmes will take place next spring under the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union and in collaboration with the European Commission. The Joint Programming Conference will be hosted by Science Foundation Ireland.

The aim will be to facilitate strategic discussions among the key stakeholders involved in Joint Programming in Europe with a view to mapping out future progress. The conference is expected to play a crucial role in the integration of the results and experience coming from Joint Programming activities to date.

“Given that Ireland is holding the EU presidency next year, it will be an opportune time to debate these issues and discuss the findings of the report coming out in September. It is expected to bring together all the main stakeholders, policy makers, NGOs

and industry representatives,” says Helen O’Connor of Science Foundation Ireland. A major strand to the conference will be a discussion of where Joint Programming fits within Horizon 2020 and the ERA-NETs and all the other European initiatives, she adds.

The following are some of the questions to be addressed by the conference:

- The context, rationale and positioning of Joint Programming in the wider policy framework
- The role of JPI’s in meeting the needs of citizens and society
- The place of JPI’s within the innovation cycle and the involvement of industry
- The capacities of countries and regions to participate in JPI’s
- The place of JPI’s in the global context.
- How to ensure effective alignment between Joint Programming Initiatives and Horizon 2020
- What lessons are learned from the experience to date of developing Strategic Research Agendas and the first calls initiated by JPI’s
- What has the experience been to date regarding the application of the Guidelines for Framework Conditions and how can they be improved
- How can JPI’s be monitored and benchmarked?

The conference will take place on the 28th February and 1st March, 2013. ERA-LEARN is supporting this conference with associated workshops.



The Commission proposal for Horizon 2020 foresees two possibilities to support public-public partnerships: an ERA-NET instrument or the Union participation in programmes undertaken by several Member States in accordance with Article 185 TFEU.



The ERA-NET instrument combines the former ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus into one instrument with the central and compulsory element of implementing one substantial call with top-up funding from the Commission. This shifts focus from the funding of networks to the top-up funding of individual joint calls for transnational research and innovation in selected areas. These must have high added value and relevance for Horizon 2020. The push is on to substantially expand the share of funding that Member States dedicate jointly to research and innovation.

A vast range of networking and other joint activities that contribute significantly to the impact of the ERA-NET scheme should be sustained. In the future each consortium should be able to choose between:

- Only implementation and follow-up of the single call/action that receives top-up funding or,
- In addition, implementation of networking and other activities and joint actions including additional calls without top-up funding they wish to implement as a network.

Future ERA-NETs will be implemented by using the programme co-fund actions, a new type of action that has been introduced with the Horizon 2020 proposal. The details for the future ERA-NET instrument and its future implementation will be developed until the launch of the first calls under Horizon 2020 (foreseen for the end of 2013).



The idea that wood is an environmentally friendly building material seems common sense. But where is the hard evidence? A new research project is delving into the carbon footprint of wood in houses from cradle to grave. We are aiming to find out how buildings can be used for carbon storage and how such calculations can be built into the decision-making process, Dr Ilmari Absetz explains. In this way the research can be applied to the global issue of climate change.

Absetz heads up WoodWisdom-Net, which is currently negotiating a new ERA-NET Plus Action with the European Commission. WoodWisdom started in 2004 with 12 partners from 5 countries, but then experienced a growth spurt. WoodWisdom-Net2 (2009-12) then took in 12 countries and 19 partners.

The third branch now expects to launch a call for research proposals in spring 2013. New countries joining include Switzerland, Serbia and Slovakia, as well as new organisations from Germany and France.

The European Commission funding is 8 million euro, which adds to the 19.2 million euro which has been committed from national funders. "For many countries there is a leverage effect in joining to ERA-NET. You get more national funding because there is this Commission top-funding in the background," says Absetz.

The growth of WoodWisdom-Net has bolstered European forest-based industry from resource-intensive to a value added knowledge-intensive industry. For this transnational programme, it is not about growing reams of trees; the end product sought is an innovative, globally competitive industry with sustainable practices.

Among the projects Absetz is most proud of is TES-Energy Façade. This uses timber to improve the energy efficiency of buildings and offers a unique route to tackling climate change. "This is one project that might have a very big impact in the future as European building stocks are being renovated in the coming decades," Absetz explains. The typical concrete apartment buildings which sprung up in the 1960s and 70s could be refurbished by enveloping them in wood-based elements.





A WoodWisdom-Net 2 ERA-NET Steering Committee meeting in Bordeaux in October, 2009.

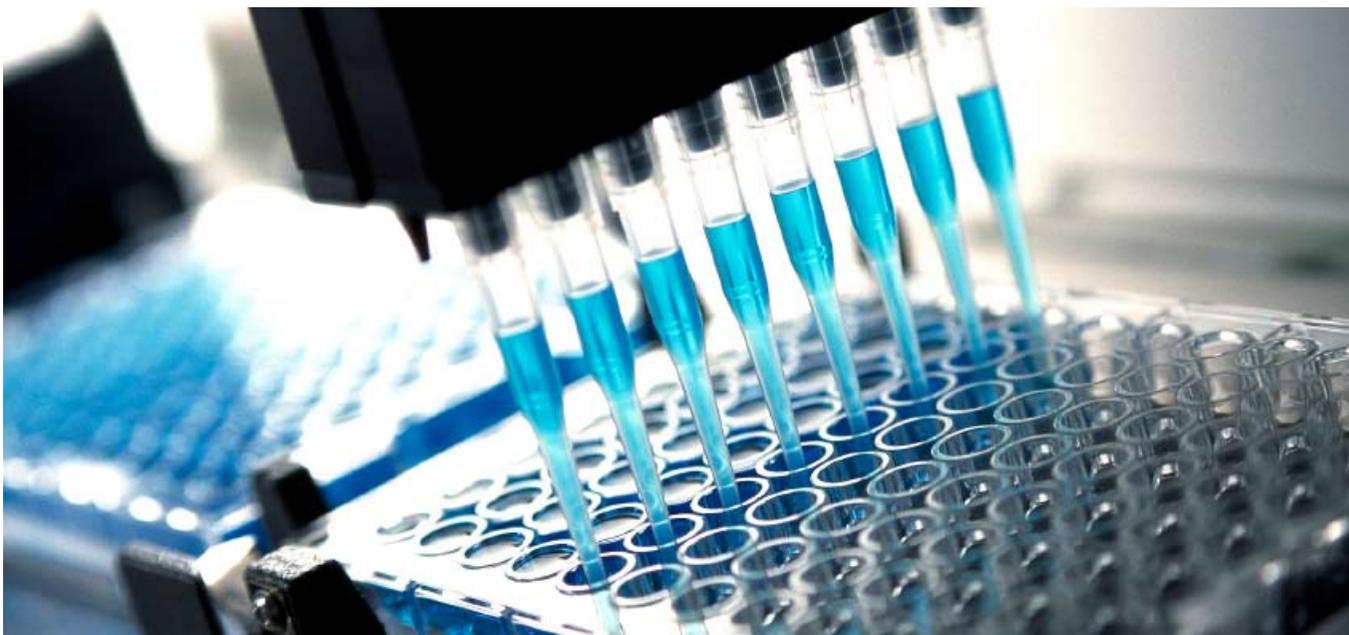
A pilot study has been carried out in a technical college in Risør, a coastal town in Norway. The college suffered huge energy loss due to poorly insulated walls and large window area, but new more efficient timber walls have been installed.

Other WoodWisdom projects include refining wood derivatives for high-value medical products, designing new cellulose-base nanostructures for potential high-tech applications like intelligent surfaces and making more durable window frames through fancy chemistry treatments. Absetz himself qualified in civil engineering and has a research background focused on moisture behaviour of wood and wood-based products.

As WoodWisdom enters its third life phase, Absetz offers some insights into why the programme has proved so successful. "Having a good unofficial working atmosphere together with well-prepared meetings with open discussions has been important," he says. "And make a realistic schedule of the different milestones of call preparation and call launching and evaluation." He notes that ERA-NET actors are busy professionals, involved part-time in the network, so it is important not to lose sight of that fact and to motivate everyone to pull together.

Mistakes have been made, but lessons have also been learnt. National decision making schedules can sometimes catch you off guard, but you certainly need to be aware of such schedules. Also, the economic downturn has seen partners withdraw due to a lack of resources. "We have now nominated deputy work package leaders, because in all organisations, people do change position or leave and get another job. So there can be a discontinuation when a personal resource is withdrawn.

WoodWisdom-Net Plus aims for a kick-off meeting in November, but is not sitting back. An unofficial meeting in May was held to prepare the process. "We will launch a two-step call and aim to launch it by the end of this year or very beginning of next year. And then get the second step proposals in next spring," says Absetz. Projects could start in early 2014.



Systems Biology is not so much a field of science, as a revolutionary approach. It takes a holistic view of biological and biomedical research, focusing on the complex interactions within biological systems. The approach is expected to transform biosciences and shake up how we diagnose and treat disease.

“It is also about bringing together traditional practical (wet lab) scientists, who hypothesise and experiment in labs, and theoretical (dry lab) scientists, who rely more on data and complex models”, Dr Bernhard Gillessen explains. Gillessen is a vice-coordinator in the ERA-NET ERASysBio Plus, which supports 16 projects in this area.

Featured ERA-NETs

Gillessen, who is a molecular biologist by training but plying his trade as a scientific officer at Project Management Juelich (PtJ) in Germany, is fascinated by the complexity of biological systems. He describes it as something difficult to investigate thoroughly if you are a “wet” lab biologist. But modelling and computational simulation can offer a helping hand. His systems biology ERA-NET has brought “wet” and “dry” scientists together.

Systems biology will have obvious applications in medicine, such as in the rational design of pharmaceuticals. It can facilitate the development of drugs specific to small groups of people or even individuals, made possible by new insights from genome research. ApoNET is one project in ERASysBio Plus which seeks to understand how cell death signals are regulated in cancer and non-cancer cells. It will investigate the regulation and threshold of signalling pathways induced by death receptor messaging in normal and cancerous cells.

“Cancer is a difficult disease to address with traditional approaches,” says Gillessen. “We need to understand the complex and dynamic interactions that are happening in cells when cancer is diagnosed. Systems biology has the strength to unravel all relevant factors and interactions in a tumour cell.”

But it is not all plain sailing, as there are particular challenges in getting dry lab (theoretical) and wet lab (practical) scientists to read off the same hymn sheet. Gillessen recalls experiencing the communication gap during a summer school for systems biologist on Tenerife, organised by the ERA-NET. “There was a discussion about the word ‘static’. A biologist was talking about a cell being static,” he says, meaning that you have a balance. However, a modeller assumed this meant that nothing was happening at all in the cell. This is a minor example and it becomes a lot more complicated when you talk about data management and standardisation.

“Wet lab biologists need to understand what the theoretical guy needs; but the theoretical scientist, bioinformatician or modeller also needs to understand the limitations of the biological systems and what experiments they can reasonably ask for,” Gillessen explains.



ERASysBio summer school on Tenerife (2009)

One project which intrigues Gillessen is SHIPREC. It tackles an issue normally neglected: the strategies the bacteria *Salmonella* deploys to infect animals but also plants. Salmonellosis causes around 1.5 billion infections worldwide; meat is the usual suspect, but the bacteria can infect fruit and veg too. The new project will take a system-wide view for *Salmonella*, which is in its infancy but is critical to fully grasp the mechanisms of host-pathogen responses.

Gillessen says a major advantage of the ERA-NET Plus scheme is that it allows in certain flexibility in spending the 24 million in funding. “We have a top-up of 5.5 million [from the Commission] and this can be used flexibly,” he says, as this “common pot” can be used to fill gaps as they arise. “With ERA-NET Plus, you can provide a specific partner with a bit more money.” But he is clear that this funding element’s chief benefit is more projects. Also the transnational part of these projects is critically important, since the expertise in systems biology is somewhat thinly distributed. The ERA-NET allows collaborators come together from different countries under one funding roof.

The start of the programme in 2006 proved challenging from an administrative point of view, as everyone adjusted to the new tool. But this initiative gave birth to many offspring, says Gillessen. The Infrastructure for Systems Biology-Europe (ISBE), coordinated by the United Kingdom, was announced last year to support the convergence of life sciences with information technology and system science. Its opening is planned for 2017 and it will cost around 300 million euro to construct. Another progeny was the EuroSynBio initiative. But the true successor to the ERA-NET, which ended last February, will be a programmed designated ERASysAPP. “It is currently in negotiation with the Commission,” says Gillessen, who is hopeful the project will be on its feet in 2013.



A workshop with key research funders in Europe was held on the 13th June in Brussels. It looked at the future of ERA-NET instruments under Horizon 2020. During the opening session, Joerg Niehoff (DG Research & Innovation) spoke about the lessons learned from the practical implementation of ERA-NETs and what lies ahead. Three parallel workshops then followed. They looked at how the future ERA-NET instrument may allow a simplified combination of top-up funding for calls from Horizon 2020 with essential networking activities; how ERA-NETs can broaden the scope of coordination towards institutional funding; and how they can best support joint programming of research and innovation between member states.

In a second parallel session, the first topic was how to ensure broad participation of research funders and researchers in future ERA-NETs and their calls, while the second looked at the required scope of an information, learning and support platform for the 2014-2020 period.

The final discussion conducted by Peter Hahn (VDI/VDE-IT) looked at the topic of how to monitor and assess efforts and benefits of ERA-NETs and their calls. A number of issues important to stakeholders were noted, including adding to national programs, facility sharing, scientific results, leveraging funding and answering societal questions. In terms of benchmarking against other networks, research councils and universities stressed the importance of co-authored papers and PhDs; applied stakeholders focused on number of projects, volume of money and number of applicants; whereas the JPI looked at leverage.

The report is available here.

VOTE FOR YOUR FAVOURITE ERA-NET

Which ERA-NET would you like to see profiled in the next newsletter?

Let the ERA-LEARN Team know by participating in the recently launched NETWATCH Online Forum.

ERA-LEARN Newsletters are available on-line at <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/lp/learning-platform/publications>