

First experiences of ERA-NET Cofund Projects (Dec 2015)

Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Main findings	2
2.1 Call Planning / Preparation	2
2.2 Pre-proposal Evaluation	2
2.3 Avoidance of unbalanced Oversubscription	2
2.4 Funding of trans-national Projects.....	3
2.5 Preventing Gaps in the Final Ranking List	3
2.6 Unexpected budgetary Situations.....	3
2.7 Budget Models for Implementations Costs.....	4
2.8 Reporting of Additional Activities	4
3. Conclusions	4
Annex I: Anonymised Questionnaires	6

About:

ERA-LEARN 2020 is a support action (CSA) funded by Horizon 2020. It started in January 2015 as a support platform for the Public-Public-Partnerships (P2P) community. It continues and expands services previously provided by ERA-LEARN, NETWATCH, and JPIs To Co Work. ERA-LEARN 2020 will involve the main stakeholders engaged in designing and deploying the broad structures and functions for the coordination and cooperation of national and/or regional research programmes; the P2P community will be supported in investigating what has been learned and achieved by existing networks, if expectations have been met, and which positive effects have been observed by participating organisations or countries.

More information: <https://www.era-learn.eu/service/about>

1. Introduction

In summer 2015 ERA-LEARN 2020 conducted a survey among the “First Round” ERA-NET Cofund projects, funded from the H2020 work programme 2014. 11 ERA-NET Cofund projects received the survey. 9 questionnaires were returned (82%).

The survey included an analysis of consortium agreements and call-documents and focused on financial management. The aim of the survey was to collect some first experiences with specific crucial issues in a co-funded call in order to make these experiences available to the P2P (Public-Public-Partnership) community. The individual questionnaires were anonymised and are available in Annex I.

2. Main findings

2.1 Call Planning / Preparation

In the call planning phase it is essential to **plan the national/regional budgets appropriately**. This will **avoid problems with unbalanced oversubscription** rates per country. The likely demand of the respective research community can be estimated based on former calls or similar activities. The national contributions to the call should allow funding more than one transnational project participations.

The **call documents** should **clearly indicate the eligibility rules of each of the participating national programmes**. It is not sufficient to provide links in the call documents. As experience shows, these websites are not read thoroughly and eligibility problems usually arise. It is a requirement in the Grant Agreement (cf. 15.1 Rules for providing support to or implementation of trans-national projects) that only entities that are eligible for funding under the national programmes involved in the joint call may be invited to Step 2.

Therefore, to avoid problems in Step 2 the national/regional eligibility criteria should be described in a crystal clear language in the call text.

A requirement of the EC is to keep the joint call open for at least 60 days. Survey shows that the responding networks kept the joint call open longer as required (between 5 and 10 months for both stages).

2.2 Pre-proposal Evaluation

There are no requirements or specific obligations imposed by the EC concerning the pre-proposal phase.

The majority of the 2014/15 ERA-NET Cofund networks used a **central scientific evaluation** with independent experts to select the pre-proposals. The other networks used **national/regional checks** and a **joint decision** procedure of the funding organisations.

The **briefing of the evaluators** and a **quality check of the written evaluation** reports appeared important.

The number of pre-proposals is much higher than the number of full-proposals and it reduces efforts if the written reports can be used as they are for the feedback letters to the applicants.

2.3 Avoidance of unbalanced Oversubscription

When selecting the full proposals for funding the consortium is obliged to follow the final ranking list without skipping any proposal on the list; the first gap in the list is automatically the end of the list (at least concerning the EU top-up calculation). Therefore it is essential to **avoid an unbalanced oversubscription** from pre-proposal to full proposal. A situation must be avoided where a single funding organisation runs out of money too soon and the common ranking list cannot be followed.

To deal with that the following approaches have been applied:

- **Ensure appropriate national budgets**
- Define **rules for applicants to limit their number of participations**
- **Limited number of proposals to be invited in the full proposal stage** (2-3.5 times the respective national budget)
- **Increase the national budget** after pre-proposal selection

2.4 Funding of trans-national Projects

It is up to the consortium to decide in which way the EU-Top-Up is used. The EU-Top-Up is limited to 33% (or less) of the total real expenditures for the co-funded transnational call.

66% of the responding **ERA-NET-Cofund-Projects** put a **certain percentage of the EU-Top-Up** in a common **“balancing” pot** and distribute the rest among the funding agencies. The percentage of Top-Up used for balancing purposes varies between 30 and 50% of the EU-Top-Up.

33% of the Cofund-Projects plan to use the **EU-Top-up in a common pot** in order to fund as many good proposals as possible. In these networks no individual return rate is fixed and therefore it could happen that some funding agencies eventually receive no EU-Top-up at all.

2.5 Preventing Gaps in the Final Ranking List

In the Grant Agreement of ERA-NET-Cofund-Projects it is indicated in Art 15.1.1 that *“Proposals must be ranked according to the evaluation results. The selection must be made on the basis of this ranking.”*

It is therefore important to avoid gaps in the ranking list.

To avoid that the ranking list is blocked because one of the agencies runs out of money the following modes are used.

- All methods used to **avoid oversubscription**. A balanced availability of national funds avoids “blocking situations”
- Using **scores with high level graduations** so that several projects will receive the same scores and the ERA-NET-Cofund consortium can choose according to the circumstances
- Agree to **adapt the percentage which is used for gap-filling** to use more of the EU-TOP-Up to finance the projects according to the ranking list.
- **Increase the initially committed national/regional call budgets**
- Another funding agency agrees to fund the organisation which is not able to be funded by their respective national agency.

2.6 Unexpected budgetary Situations

The real financial contribution of the European Commission for the Cofunded Joint Call will be based on actual costs reported at the end of the 5 years. The fixed reimbursement for the direct costs of providing financial support for the transnational projects is 33%. Therefore, if the direct costs of providing financial support for the transnational projects are less than originally planned in the Grant Agreement -for example due to project failures-, the financial contribution of the European Commission will be less as well.

Some of the responding networks intend to avoid such situations by:

- **Selecting at least 10% more transnational projects than necessary** concerning the Grant agreement – longer selection list

- **Allowing** the respective transnational projects **consortia to substitute a defaulting partner** by a new partner.
- **Using additional national funding** when the EU-Top is reduced.

None of the networks has encountered this problem until now; some even do not have a defined mode to deal with such a problem. The awareness is raised within some of the consortia. Some plan a continuous budget monitoring to become aware of any unexpected situation well in advance.

2.7 Budget Models for Implementations Costs

It is up to the ERA-NET Cofund consortia to decide how to arrange the financing of the network activities. From screening 10 ERA-NET Cofund consortium agreements ERA-LEARN 2020 has identified the following 4 budget models to cover the implementation costs:

1. **Only the core partners are fully reimbursed;** all other beneficiaries get an agreed budget e.g. for travel expenses (This model is used by 20% of the networks.)
2. **The same fixed amount is paid to all network members irrespective of level of activity.** Countries not eligible for EU funding are obliged to contribute to the implementation costs in cash. (This model is used by 20% of the networks.)
3. **Real costs of each beneficiary** (e.g. personnel costs, travel costs, subcontracting) **are** calculated and reimbursed based on their involvement in the project quite similar to former FP7 ERA-NETs. (This model is used by 40% of the networks.)
4. Each **beneficiary pays an agreed cash contribution** to cover the implementation costs (e.g. in proportion to the individually assigned EU contribution. (This model is used by 20% of the networks.)

In general, budgets for covering implementation costs are subtracted from the EU-contribution (i.e. project Top-Up funding and Unit Costs, if applicable). If the EU contribution is not sufficient additional national/regional contributions are foreseen.

2.8 Reporting of Additional Activities

Most of the responding networks indicated that they plan various additional activities in addition to the mandatory cofunded joint call, including summer schools, conferences or additional calls..

The EC insists on adequate recording and other supporting documentation for the additional activities to prove that the declared number of units (for the requested unit costs) is correct.

- **many of the networks will use attendance lists, reports or similar** to prove the number of units declared.
- **Some will additionally use an internal reporting template** for this purpose.
- **A few networks are not planning any additional activities** at all.

3. Conclusions

The survey made clear that the new ERA-NET Cofund scheme is well understood. The projects identified various approaches to deal with critical issues. Whereas the requirements by the European Commission are now simpler than in FP7 the complexity within the ERA-NET Cofund networks themselves increased as a consequence. There are more issues as in the FP7 ERA-NETs that could be critical and that need to be planned thoroughly and agreed by the consortium.

As a first conclusion it is evident that **a successful ERA-NET-Cofund call starts with a good preparation.** This includes a detailed and **understandable planning of the cofunded call, including** the commitment of **reasonable national call budgets** (e.g. from the experience of previous calls) **and a clear description of the eligibility criteria.**

Moreover, **flexibility is important.** Rules for financing the selected transnational projects should not be too strict in order to be able to fund all good trans-national proposals according to the ranking list. Concerning the implementation costs it can be said that according to their Consortium Agreements the many of the 2014/15 ERA-Net Cofund projects are **using an approach similar to FP7 ERA-NETs.** Costs for each partner are calculated and reimbursed based on their respective involvements in the project, meaning that different organisations will typically receive different amounts of funding.

The financial contribution of the EC for the Joint Call will be based on actual costs. The reimbursement for the direct costs of providing financial support for the trans-national projects is limited to 33%. If the direct costs of providing financial support for the trans-national projects are less than planned in the Grant Agreement, the financial contribution of the EC will be smaller as well. Thus it could happen that the EC contribution is not sufficient to cover the costs as originally planned. **The crucial question of how to deal with such unexpected “losses” has so far not been considered in the consortium agreements.**

Therefore ERA-LEARN 2020 has included a paragraph in the Model consortium agreement dealing with insufficient EC contribution (Art. 7.5 of the Model https://www.era-learn.eu/manuals-tools/p2p-in-h2020/practical-documentation/ModelCA_Cofund_version2.docx).

At the time of implementing the survey none of these “First round” ERA-Net Cofund networks had reached the stage of reporting on the final ranking list towards the European Commission. ERA-LEARN 2020 will further follow the experiences to identify which of the planned approaches prove its effectiveness in practice.

An update of the survey with an extended list of questions is planned for summer 2016.

Annex I: Anonymised Questionnaires

Network #1	
Cofunded Call Timeline	Launch: M1 Pre-proposal Deadline: Full-Proposal Deadline: M6 Evaluation End Date: M9 Start of funded Transnational. Projects: M11/M12
Pre-proposal selection	
Please describe the main elements of the pre-proposals-phase (assessment, selection, feedback to applicants)	<p>Stage 1 – Outline (pre) Proposal Phase:</p> <p>Assessment: <u>Basic eligibility check:</u> All Stage 1 proposals are checked by the Joint Call Secretariat to confirm that the proposals meet the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The deadline for submitting the proposal was met; • The Stage 1 (outline) proposal form (Annex C of the Joint Call Guidance document) has been completed in English and the page limits have not been exceeded; • The proposed project meets the eligibility criteria (set out in section 5 of this Call document). <p><u>National/regional check:</u> In parallel, each Stage 1 proposal was evaluated by the Funding Organisations in all the relevant countries/regions. The national/regional check was carried out for all the consortium partners from each of the countries/regions using the relevant national/regional eligibility criteria and funding rules (Annex B of the Guidance document).</p> <p>Selection: Based on the Stage 1 checks and discussion at a Stage 1 moderation meeting involving all members of the Management Group (i.e. representatives of all the funding organisation), the Funding Organisations jointly decided which project consortia to invite to submit a Stage 2 (full) proposal. All proposals which were eligible within the terms of the eligibility criteria and the relevant national/regional funding criteria were invited to submit a Stage 2 (Full) proposal. There was also an option to invite project teams to submit a Stage 2 proposal provided they could make changes to their proposals to address minor eligibility issues or to improve the quality of their proposal.</p> <p>Feedback to Applicants: The project coordinators for all the Stage 1 applicant consortia each received a letter with the results of the Stage 1 assessment, including summary comments from the relevant Funding Organisations. The Stage 1 results letter included either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An invitation for the project consortium to submit a full proposal submission with requirements and/or conditions necessary to meet any minor eligibility issues and/or to

	<p>improve the quality of the full proposal; or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An explanation of why the Stage 1 proposal did not meet the Joint Call eligibility criteria and/or the national/regional requirements for the relevant Funding Organisations.
<p>Which rules do you use to avoid unbalanced oversubscription from pre-proposal selection to full-proposal phase?</p>	<p>In this particular call, the nature of the projects (large-scale, capital-intensive offshore wind demonstration projects) and relatively rapid launch of the first Joint Call meant that we did not expect over-subscription for this particular call. In practice, there was a good level of applicants (14 at Stage 1) but – as expected – the first Joint Call was not over-subscribed.</p> <p>In future calls, in the event of a very high level of subscription (which we determined to be applications which in total exceeded the relevant funding organisation budgets by more than 3 times), we expect to look at the relative level of cost reduction expected to be secured by the projects – and to select those which are expected to secure greater cost reductions. Reduction in levelised cost of offshore wind energy is the key aim for the call.</p>
<p>Funding of transnational projects</p>	
<p>Which mode do you use to finance the trans-national projects of the cofunded call (100% common pot, mixed mode...)</p>	<p>The expects to use a mixed mode approach to financing the trans-national projects, as described in this extract from the Consortium Agreement:</p> <p>“In order to ensure the best possible use of funds, up to 40% of the total EU contribution available for co-financing the selected Projects will be reserved for financial balancing purposes in a common “balancing pot”. This balancing pot will be used to ensure that the maximum number of Projects as per the final ranking list are funded if the sum of Member State funding and EU contribution cannot cover the full cost of a Project. The Management Group may agree to increase the level of EU contribution included in the balancing pot in order to maximise the number of funded Projects.”</p>
<p>What is your approach to avoid gaps in the final ranking list? E.g. ways to increase the national funding commitments</p>	<p>The Stage 2 scoring will be kept at high level gradations – so that there are likely to be several projects receiving the same score in the ranking list – in order to help ensure that the maximum number of projects can be funded. We have not yet tested this process as the Stage 2 assessment process is still underway (due to be completed at end of October 2015).</p>
<p>How do you deal with failures of funded transnational projects or budget cuts within their duration (EU-Top-Up Funding will be based on real expense)</p>	<p>This is not an issue which has arisen yet (we’re still selecting the projects to support under the first Joint Call) but each case would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis by the relevant funding organisations. Possible approaches would include: reducing or changing the scope of the project; seeking alternative project partners supported by other funding organisations; looking at the possibility of securing additional funding from the other existing funding organisations.</p>
<p>Internal financial management</p>	
<p>What is your approach to sharing the management costs (call preparation, execution etc.) between the partners ? Are there any special rules if non-</p>	<p>The following extract from the Consortium Agreement sets out the approach for to sharing common project expenses:</p> <p>“Each Party will contribute to common programme expenses in proportion to the EU Contribution that is assigned to the Party according to the actual funding provided by the Party to the</p>

<p>European countries are involved ?</p>	<p>Project participants from its country/region. A Party's contribution to common programme expenses shall not exceed its assigned EU Contribution. Common programme expenses include, but are not limited to, Advisory Board expenses and travel costs, stakeholder events, third party costs associated with website and electronic submission system, dissemination material, assessor costs for the second, independent assessment stage. The common programme expenses will be agreed by the Management Group in advance."</p> <p>Apart from the specific common programme expenses, most of the costs incurred by the Funding Organisations in delivering the ERANET-Cofund will be met by the Organisations themselves, as described in this further extract from the Consortium Agreement: "With the exception of the common programme expenses, costs incurred during the management and delivery of the ERANET-Cofund (including management and delivery activities that are required to deliver the Work Packages) will be covered by each Party, as in-kind contributions to the project."</p> <p>No non-EU countries are involved in this initial Call – but we have had interest from non-EU countries for future calls so we will need to develop an approach for handling them if we secure further funding for future calls.</p>
<p>Which evidence is foreseen to prove that the partners took part in additional activities (reports, attendance lists) ?</p>	<p>No additional activities proposed for the initial Call. In future calls, we would expect to see evidence, such as: conference/meeting arrangements; attendee lists and attendee feedback forms; minutes of meetings; written reports; published papers; website screenshots.</p>
<p>Other aspects</p>	
<p>Are there any lessons learned you want to share?</p>	<p>We're still at relatively early stages in (partway through the first Joint Call selection process) so have limited experience to share at this stage. We did find that we will need to be more prescriptive in future eligibility criteria about the level of trans-national collaboration in the projects – some project teams presented project groups which included partners from a range of countries but where the great majority of the project work would be completed by partners in a single country.</p>

Network #2	
Cofunded Call Timeline	Launch: M1 Pre-proposal Deadline: M4 Full-Proposal Deadline: M10 Evaluation End Date: M14 Start of funded Transnat. Projects: M18
Pre-proposal selection	
Please describe the main elements of the pre-proposals-phase (assessment, selection, feedback to applicants)	Call was opened in late January of 2015. Assessment of the outline proposals was conducted by an independent international review panel of 32 members. Panel was appointed by the Board based on suggestions from the funding organisations participating in the Joint Research Programme (JRP). Before panel assessment, the handling agency of the call conducted a general eligibility check on proposals, and partners conducted national eligibility checks. Review panel assessed 570 outline proposals. Panel prepared a consensus statement on each proposal based on preliminary statements from three Panel members, as well as lists of proposals to be invited to submit full proposals and proposals not to be invited. Based on Panel's recommendations, the Board chose 100 proposals to Full Proposal Phase. Following Board's decision in June 2015, the call coordinator informed all the applicants of the decision and sent applicants the panel feedback and feedback from the eligibility checks.
Which rules do you use to avoid unbalanced oversubscription from pre-proposal selection to full-proposal phase?	To avoid oversubscription in general, the ERA-NET-Cofund-Project uses a two-stage application process. Proposals need to come from Collaborative Research Projects (CRP) comprising applicants (PIs and research teams) from at least <u>four</u> countries involved in the JRP. PIs of the CRP sub-projects cannot be involved in more than one proposal; the same applies to CRP coordinators (project leaders, PL). Partners will ensure that the focus of the call is not too open and that the aims of the call are communicated as clearly as possible in order to ensure that relevant proposals are submitted. To allow for a reasonable success rate the Board had stipulated that maximally 100 consortia would be allowed into the second stage to submit a full proposal. Considering it is expected that approximately 20 1.2 million euro projects can be funded, it would mean that about 20% of submitted full proposals can be funded.
Funding of transnational projects	
Which mode do you use to finance the trans-national projects of the cofunded call (100% common pot, mixed mode...)	Mixed mode: national funding will only be used to fund researchers in that country (virtual common pot); the EC top-up is put into a "real common pot".
What is your approach to avoid gaps in the final ranking list? E.g. ways to increase the national funding commitments	The EC top-up is used as a "common pot" and most partners have reserved an additional amount of 25% of their contributions to ensure that as many as possible excellent CRPs can be funded.
How do you deal with failures of	Funded CRPs will be asked to report about the scientific

<p>funded transnational projects or budget cuts within their duration (EU-Top-Up Funding will be based on real expense)</p>	<p>progress, their planned knowledge exchange activities and their finances. The phase 2 handling agency (IRC) ensures the timely submission of all reports by CRP Project Leaders and prepares overall annual reports. The scientific reports that are submitted after the first year will be assessed and commented on by the Board and Management Team (administrative representatives of partners). The scientific reports that must be submitted after the second and final year will be assessed by the JRP Review Panel members. A summary of assessments will be prepared by the handling agency and, once approved by the Review Panel members, submitted to the Board and sent forward to the Project Leaders. In case of problems the Handling Agency will require to relevant PL to take adequate action and may withhold payments until such actions have been taken.</p>
<p>Internal financial management</p>	
<p>What is your approach to sharing the management costs (call preparation, execution etc.) between the partners ? Are there any special rules if non-European countries are involved ?</p>	<p>All partners are required to pay € 15.000 to cover for the costs of organising the selection process for the call. In addition the middle sized and larger partners pay an additional fee to cover for the costs of the financial management and monitoring of the funded projects and the knowledge exchange costs for the JRP UP programme as a whole. Additional activities (supporting the Network, organising capacity building activities, and preparing for new joint activities) are covered for with unit.</p>
<p>Which evidence is foreseen to prove that the partners took part in additional activities (reports, attendance lists) ?</p>	<p>Reports and attendance lists.</p>
<p>Other aspects</p>	
<p>Are there any lessons learned you want to share?</p>	<p>Having a joint Handling Agency to manage the projects both financially and practically, allows for better coordination of the transnational projects because Project Leaders have control over the full budget of the transnational projects.</p>

Network #3	
Cofunded Call Timeline	<p>Launch: M1 Pre-proposal Deadline: M3 Full-Proposal Deadline: M7 Evaluation End Date: M10 Start of funded Transnat. Projects: M13</p>
Pre-proposal selection	
Please describe the main elements of the pre-proposals-phase (assessment, selection, feedback to applicants)	<p>In the first step the pre-proposals were evaluated by the Scientific Evaluation Committee (SEC) members that are independent experts. The composition of the SEC is adapted accordingly to the number and character of pre-proposals received. Two members were assigned per pre-proposal and asked to submit a review of the assigned pre-proposals. Evaluation scores were awarded for the 3 main evaluation criteria "Excellence", "Impact", "Quality and efficiency of the implementation". For the face-to-face SEC meeting, the pre-proposals were preliminarily ranked according to the mean summary score from both reviewers to structure the discussion. All pre-proposals were discussed and a final score given. Only pre-proposals reaching a 12 point final score were invited for full proposal submission. The SEC evaluation reports that were given prior to the evaluation meeting were sent (anonymized) to the applicants along with a summary report from the evaluation meeting.</p>
Which rules do you use to avoid unbalanced oversubscription from pre-proposal selection to full-proposal phase?	<p>In advance of the launch of the call detailed statistics of previous 6 calls were made, which allowed to identify the agencies that under/over estimate their budget. In order to avoid similar situation in the co-fund call the participating agencies either adapted their budget (increased or decreased) or took specific measures like for ex. limiting the budget per project.</p> <p>However, since the pre-proposal selection was based on the scientific evaluation only it was impossible to avoid completely some unbalanced oversubscription for some countries. The respective agencies have been asked to increase their budget commitment for the call, for which most complied.</p>
Funding of transnational projects	
Which mode do you use to finance the trans-national projects of the cofunded call (100% common pot, mixed mode...)	<p>The total call budget will take into account the Maximum Financial Commitment of Parties – Virtual Common Pot and the EC provision – Real Common Pot (RCP). The final distribution of the EC funding will be discussed and agreed by the Call Steering Committee (CSC), taking into account the principle of fair return, in order to maximize the number of high quality proposals to be funded. In this step the following principles will be followed: 1. Not more than 50% of the RCP should be used for gap filling; 2. The total funding taken from the Real Common Pot, received by the Party shall not exceed the total national contribution provided by this Party to research projects. In case these two principles would provoke Highly Detrimental Situation to the overall goals of optimizing the national and EC contributions as well as maximizing the</p>

	number of high quality proposals to be funded once the final ranking list is established by the SEC, the possibility to re-evaluate these principles is given.
What is your approach to avoid gaps in the final ranking list ? E.g. ways to increase the national funding commitments	As explained above all possible measures were taken before the launch of the call and after the pre-proposal evaluation.
How do you deal with failures of funded transnational projects or budget cuts within their duration (EU-Top-Up Funding will be based on real expense)	The awareness of the issue will be raised among the funding partners and budgets of the funded projects will be closely monitored. It is quite likely that the ERA-NET Cofund Project will be able to fund projects with a budget that is higher than necessary to receive the maximum earmarked EC top-up funding. In that case, minor budget cuts in the lifetime of the projects will not influence the final EU-Top-Up funding.
Internal financial management	
What is your approach to sharing the management costs (call preparation, execution etc.) between the partners ? Are there any special rules if non-European countries are involved ?	The management budget for the whole ERA-Net cofund activities was fixed before the project start and will be covered from the EC contribution composed of the budget corresponding to the Unit Costs and complemented by the sum issued from the remaining provision of the Commission. The management budget will be redistributed among partners according to the indicative budget plan agreed by the consortium (as stipulated in the Consortium Agreement). The EU-TOP-UP-Funding is used to cover the cash-flow for the compensation. The amounts of EU-TOP-UP funding used for the management will be replaced by national funding contributed to the transnational projects. The non-European countries involved were accepted at the condition that their call budget is sufficiently high to fund all projects that may appear in the ranking list. In case of the blocking situation provoked by a non-European country, first it will be highly encouraged to increase the budget in order to unblock the list. If this is not possible, the consortium will have to use the EU-TOPUP funding to fill the gap.
Which evidence is foreseen to prove that the partners took part in additional activities (reports, attendance lists) ?	In order to administer the management budget the financial reports will be submitted to the Coordination on a yearly basis by all Parties except Associated Parties that are not eligible for EC funding. Attendance lists and reports will be used to document the participation in additional activities.
Other aspects	
Are there any lessons learned you want to share?	Lessons learned will be drawn at the end of call implementation.

Network #4	
Cofunded Call Timeline	Launch: M1 Pre-proposal Deadline: M3 Full-Proposal Deadline: M9 Evaluation End Date: M11 Start of funded Transnat. Projects: Earliest M13
Pre-proposal selection	
Please describe the main elements of the pre-proposals-phase (assessment, selection, feedback to applicants)	The submitted pre-proposals were checked for eligibility, with the help of the eligibility criteria indicated in the Call Announcement and the national criteria (checked by the respective funders). Eligible pre-proposals were evaluated by a panel of independent experts according to the following 3 criteria 1) Relevance to the scope of the call in the context of the Strategic Research Agenda Core Theme 2 (threshold of 3/5), 2) European added value and 3) Potential scientific and/or technological excellence. Each criteria was scored on a scale of 5. The panel met to finalise a ranking list build with the total scores reached by each pre-proposal (the sum of the 3 scores). The funders used this ranking list to select proposals for the second application stage and taking also into account a maximum oversubscription factor of 3 for each funder (with a minimal flexibility). Consortia rejected for ineligibility reasons received information on why they were ineligible. Consortia which were not invited due to an insufficient score in the evaluation were informed about this and received an evaluation report. Consortia invited to the second step received also their evaluation report as well as (if relevant) conditions to their eligibility (e.g. correct the calculation of your overhead costs).
Which rules do you use to avoid unbalanced oversubscription from pre-proposal selection to full-proposal phase?	It was decided that each funder may not have an oversubscription factor (total requested funding from this funder in the full proposals/available budget for this funder) higher than 3. This led to discussions as some funders had many proposals ranked very high. In this case, those funders were asked to adjust their budget accordingly, to try to "shift" a proposal to another national funder present in the consortium, potentially to shift parts of the project to another partner in the research consortium. In the end, we had to show some flexibility, allowing an oversubscription factor of up to 3,5.
Funding of transnational projects	
Which mode do you use to finance the trans-national projects of the cofunded call (100% common pot, mixed mode...)	We use a mixed mode. Approx. 50% of the EU funding available for the co-funded call has been added to the budget of the individual funders proportionally to their initial commitments. The rest is planned to be used as real common pot. Nevertheless, this mode might be revised when we come to the final ranking list, in order to fund more projects.
What is your approach to avoid gaps in the final ranking list ? E.g. ways to increase the national funding commitments	The use of the oversubscription factor reduces this risk.
How do you deal with failures of	The projects are not running yet. Obviously, in order to

<p>funded transnational projects or budget cuts within their duration (EU-Top-Up Funding will be based on real expense)</p>	<p>minimise this risk, we should select projects for at least 10% more requested funding than necessary to claim to the EC.</p>
<p>Internal financial management</p>	
<p>What is your approach to sharing the management costs (call preparation, execution etc.) between the partners ? Are there any special rules if non-European countries are involved ?</p>	<p>Only a few partners are in charge of the WPs and get their costs for this reimbursed. Other partners do not get any money, except travel costs.</p>
<p>Which evidence is foreseen to prove that the partners took part in additional activities (reports, attendance lists) ?</p>	<p>In the case of additional calls, funders participating in a call (being in the call announcement) can claim units. Also partners running the call, the evaluation (documents are then available proving this). Projects from these additional calls will have to be monitored, and partners in charge of those can claim units. The same is valid for the communication aspects (e.g. website). Other events are planned, e.g. project meetings, conference, summer school, workshops... Agendas, participant lists, potentially reports... can be used as evidence of participation.</p>
<p>Other aspects</p>	
<p>Are there any lessons learned you want to share?</p>	<p>The evaluators should be briefed once, if not twice, about their tasks, the timeline... before starting the evaluation. Sending them guidelines is useless as they will most probably not read them. Also, it might be clever to indicate them that payment of their fee for evaluation is subjected to the timely delivery of their evaluation and evaluation reports.</p>

Network #5	
Cofunded Call Timeline	Launch: M1 Pre-proposal Deadline: M3 Full-Proposal Deadline: M7 Evaluation End Date: M10 Start of funded Transnat. Projects: M16
Pre-proposal selection	
Please describe the main elements of the pre-proposals-phase (assessment, selection, feedback to applicants)	<p>A Scientific Evaluation Committee (SEC) was appointed. The funding agencies checked the eligibility of the pre-proposals. Pre-proposals passing the formal eligibility checks (117 out of the 121 submitted) were reviewed by the SEC panel. For each eligible pre-proposal two different SEC members were assigned to individually assess the pre-proposal according to the assessment criteria Excellence, Impact and Quality and efficiency of the implementation. Thereafter, the panel met in a consensus meeting. One of the two SEC members acted as rapporteur for the specific proposal. In the meeting, all pre-proposals were discussed one by one, and a consensus ranking list was prepared. 33 pre-proposals suggested by the evaluators as eligible for funding were invited to submit a full proposal.</p> <p>Feedback to applicants:</p> <p>*Unsuccessful applicants got a rejection with no scientific explanation.</p> <p>*Successful applicants invited to submit a full proposal got the SEC scientific evaluation. In addition they were informed about the possibility of including one additional research group in the consortia coming from potential undersubscribed countries.</p>
Which rules do you use to avoid unbalanced oversubscription from pre-proposal selection to full-proposal phase?	<p>A few additional pre-proposals were invited to submit full proposals due to few or none research groups from specific countries participating in proposals on the list. It was agreed in the SEC meeting.</p> <p>For the final decision process the following budgetary rule has been decided: Each funding agency has a maximum budget possible to spend from the common pot calculated from the funding the specific agency has committed to the call.</p>
Funding of transnational projects	
Which mode do you use to finance the trans-national projects of the cofunded call (100% common pot, mixed mode...)	Mixed mode. Mainly the funding of projects is by a virtual common pot. The coordination/management costs were fixed as low as possible before the ERA-Net-cofund activities started. Additional EU-Top-Up funding will be used to fund as many proposals as possible in a common pot mode (gap filling).
What is your approach to avoid gaps in the final ranking list ? E.g. ways to increase the national funding commitments	<p>A relatively large common pot and possibly additional funding from funding agencies when needed.</p> <p>It is an awareness for the problem in the consortium, but it will mainly be dealt with during the final decision process.</p>
How do you deal with failures of funded transnational projects or	Traditionally (lesson learned from previous projects some countries has not been able to spend all/any budget. Thus, in

<p>budget cuts within their duration (EU-Top-Up Funding will be based on real expense)</p>	<p>the call text the following was written: "In order to strengthen the European translational research area, a wide inclusion of research team from all the countries/regions participating in the call is encouraged, with a particular attention to research teams from Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia and Turkey."</p> <p>The successful pre-proposal list is much longer that possible to fund.</p> <p>In addition, coordinators for successful pre-proposals are allowed to invite researchers from countries with potential additional funding available to join as partner into their full proposals.</p> <p>It is a strong awareness for the problem in the consortium.</p>
<p>Internal financial management</p>	
<p>What is your approach to sharing the management costs (call preparation, execution etc.) between the partners ? Are there any special rules if non-European countries are involved ?</p>	<p>The pre-set budget for coordination and management costs to each funding agency was specified in the Grant and Consortium Agreement and will be funded by a common pot.</p>
<p>Which evidence is foreseen to prove that the partners took part in additional activities (reports, attendance lists) ?</p>	<p>Reports on the activity outcome and the time spent on the specific activity.</p>
<p>Other aspects</p>	
<p>Are there any lessons learned you want to share?</p>	<p>As the evaluation process is currently ongoing, there are no real lessons learned to be summarized for future calls.</p>

Network #6	
Cofunded Call Timeline	Launch: M1 Pre-proposal Deadline: M2 Full-Proposal Deadline: M5 Evaluation End Date: M8 Start of funded Transnat. Projects: M12
Pre-proposal selection	
Please describe the main elements of the pre-proposals-phase (assessment, selection, feedback to applicants)	Following a national eligibility check, eligible pre-proposals were assessed by three independent experts using the evaluation criteria: "Excellence"; "Impact", "Quality and efficiency of implementation" and scoring system from 0-5. A ranking list was made based on the mean score and a Steering Committee meeting decided to invite applicants with a mean score above 3 to submit a full proposal as this corresponded to a 3,1x oversubscription to the available call budget (34 out of 45 pre-proposals were invited to submit a full proposal). In the Steering Committee meeting it was also decided that the assessment from the first round would not be disclosed directly to the applicants, but that they would be able to contact the Call Secretariat for further information regarding the assessment. The Call Secretariat would then make sure that the feedback given to applicants was fair and equal.
Which rules do you use to avoid unbalanced oversubscription from pre-proposal selection to full-proposal phase?	After the 1st step of the evaluation, the total budget of all transnational project pre-proposals selected for step 2 should not exceed the proposed total budget of the co-funded call by more than three times.
Funding of transnational projects	
Which mode do you use to finance the trans-national projects of the cofunded call (100% common pot, mixed mode...)	Each party commits a budget to the call which is used to fund their partners in as many of the proposals as possible according to the final ranking list. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of 30 to 50 % of the EC contribution (after removal of the expenses for management and additional activities) will be used for gap filling. • A range of 50 to 70 % of the of the EC contribution (after removal of the expenses for management/coordination and additional activities) will be allocated to each individual Party proportionally to its final budget in the call. The part of the EC contribution which is not spent for gap filling could be used for the top up funding. • The final distribution of the EC funding will be discussed and agreed by the Steering Committee taking into account the principle of fair return.
What is your approach to avoid gaps in the final ranking list ? E.g. ways to increase the national funding commitments	Once the final ranking list has been agreed, the principles above may be re-evaluated to make sure that overall goals of optimizing the national and EC contributions as well as maximizing the number of high quality proposals to be funded can be met. The overall aim of the consortium is to fund as many projects as possible.
How do you deal with failures of funded transnational projects or budget cuts within their duration	Has not been considered yet.

(EU-Top-Up Funding will be based on real expense)	
Internal financial management	
<p>What is your approach to sharing the management costs (call preparation, execution etc.) between the partners ?</p> <p>Are there any special rules if non-European countries are involved ?</p>	<p>The indicative management budget is estimated to 1.6 M€ and will be covered from the EC contribution composed of the budget corresponding to the Unit Costs and complemented by the sum issued from the remaining provision of the Commission. The management budget will be redistributed among partners according to the indicative budget plan agreed by the consortium. A defined budget from the EC contribution has been set aside to partially cover the cost of Steering Committee members attending the meetings (travel/subsistence costs) where required. With the exception of those costs described above (costs related to meetings), each Party is responsible for costs incurred as a result of undertaking the designated management functions of the Era-Net Cofund-project.</p>
<p>Which evidence is foreseen to prove that the partners took part in additional activities (reports, attendance lists) ?</p>	<p>The Consortium plans additional calls (not co-fund) and some awareness activities. In addition monitoring and impact evaluation is also described in this work package. These activities will be documented through normal meeting minutes, reports and the like.</p>
Other aspects	
<p>Are there any lessons learned you want to share?</p>	<p>Maybe a bit too early.</p>

Network #7	
Cofunded Call Timeline	Launch: M1 Pre-proposal Deadline: M4 Full-Proposal Deadline: M10 Evaluation End Date: M12 Start of funded Transnat. Projects: M13
Pre-proposal selection	
Please describe the main elements of the pre-proposals-phase (assessment, selection, feedback to applicants)	For each pre-proposal 3 different evaluators were assigned of whom one was selected as rapporteur. After the individual assessment of the pre-proposals according to the selection criteria (Excellence, Impact, Quality and efficiency of the implementation) all of the evaluators met in a consensus meeting. The call secretariat ranked the pre-proposals based on the individual scores and the ranking place of the individual evaluators (to minimise the imbalance of high and low scorers). The ranking list was marked with colours and only proposals with unbalanced scores were discussed. After the discussion the ranking list was finalised with the evaluators. At home each of the funding agencies checked the eligibility of the proposals and those pre-proposals which were suggested by the evaluators as eligible for funding were invited to submit a full proposal.
Which rules do you use to avoid unbalanced oversubscription from pre-proposal selection to full-proposal phase?	In the consortium agreement it was agreed that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the aim is to have a “reasonable” success rate, - at least two pre-proposals of each Funding Agency shall be invited and - in the case that the number of pre-proposals submitted is more than 10 times the number of proposals that can be funded, the funding agencies shall strive to bring additional national funding. <p>In reality the evaluators didn't select that many pre-proposals for quality reasons. So the oversubscription was less than expected.</p>
Funding of transnational projects	
Which mode do you use to finance the trans-national projects of the cofunded call (100% common pot, mixed mode...)	The EU-TOP-UP is used in a common pot to allow funding as many good proposals as possible (EU-TOP-UP Funding for gap filling).
What is your approach to avoid gaps in the final ranking list ? E.g. ways to increase the national funding commitments	The minimum national financial contribution was indicated in the consortium agreement. In the consortium meeting the Cofund funding mechanism was explained and each funding agency was asked to reserve additional budget. With Non-European Partners, which are not eligible for EU-TOP-UP-Funding, it was agreed and indicated in the consortium agreement that additional budget of 1 Mio. EURO has to be reserved.
How do you deal with failures of funded transnational projects or	The selection list should be longer as the sum that qualifies for the EU-TOP-UP agreed in the EU-Contract.

<p>budget cuts within their duration (EU-Top-Up Funding will be based on real expense)</p>	<p>Up to now only the awareness for the problem was created in the consortium.</p>
<p>Internal financial management</p>	
<p>What is your approach to sharing the management costs (call preparation, execution etc.) between the partners? Are there any special rules if non-European countries are involved?</p>	<p>The coordination costs (call preparation, administration etc.) were fixed before the project start. The management team can get a compensation for its efforts to a certain agreed amount. The management team has to report their costs towards the steering committee. The coordination costs are taken from the EU-TOP-UP-Funding. The money is replaced with national funding for the transnational projects. Non-European partners have to contribute to the coordination costs up to an agreed amount.</p>
<p>Which evidence is foreseen to prove that the partners took part in additional activities (reports, attendance lists) ?</p>	<p>The management team plans to provide a reporting template for the additional activities. The basic agreement for this is fixed in the consortium agreement. The template is not ready yet.</p>
<p>Other aspects</p>	
<p>Are there any lessons learned you want to share?</p>	<p>The quality of the evaluation summary reports prepared by the rapporteurs varied a lot. In future a minimum length should be fixed as well as a quality check of the evaluation summary reports done by the Chairman of the Expert Panel.</p>

Network #8	
Cofunded Call Timeline	Call Launch M1 Advisory period 23 March 2015 M4 Project outline proposal deadline M4 Full project proposal open M4 Full project proposal deadline M6 Evaluation End Date: M12 Start of funded Transnat. Projects: M14
Pre-proposal selection	
Please describe the main elements of the pre-proposals-phase (assessment, selection, feedback to applicants)	<p>The pre-proposal-phase merely consists of an advisory period based upon project outlines. The project outlines are not evaluated. Nevertheless the Project outline proposal is a prerequisite for submitting a Full project proposal. The Advisory period is meant as a support and quality assurance mechanism for the projects, during which project partners can receive feedback from their individual national/regional funding agency in terms of scope, eligibility and desirability of the project outline. This will also give the project partners time and opportunity to later revise their intended project proposals, expand or contract its scope, re-evaluate the participating partners and obtain necessary national/regional funding agency requirements information. National/regional contact points should also provide information on the national/regional requirements for the full proposals, e.g. as to whether a/the relevant project partner(s) must also submit a full national/regional proposal (e.g. in the national/regional funding agencies' submission system and language, adhering to their formal requirements and documentation needs).</p> <p>The advice given is non-binding. The advice provided does not engage in any way the funding agencies with respect to acceptance or rejection of the full project proposal.</p>
Which rules do you use to avoid unbalanced oversubscription from pre-proposal selection to full-proposal phase?	In the consortium agreement it was agreed that each funding agency may only forward twice as many projects as funding was committed nationally to the transnational evaluation (oversubscription rate 2:1).
Funding of transnational projects	
Which mode do you use to finance the trans-national projects of the cofunded call (100% common pot, mixed mode...)	The EU-TOP-UP contribution is used in mixed mode manner. The Partners agreed that a minimum of 40% of the EC Call Contribution will be reserved for financial balancing purposes in a common "balancing pot". If more than 40% of the EC Call Contribution is needed for balancing purposes in order to maximise the number of projects that can be funded, this percentage may be further increased by a decision of the Steering Board. The remaining EC Call Contribution, as well as potentially undrawn assets from the balancing pot, will be used for proportional topping-up of national/regional funding.
What is your approach to avoid gaps in the final ranking list ? E.g. ways to increase the national funding commitments	There are no further mechanisms foreseen than the oversubscription rate of 2:1 and the mixed mode financing model.
How do you deal with failures of	The selection list should be longer as the sum that qualifies for

<p>funded transnational projects or budget cuts within their duration (EU-Top-Up Funding will be based on real expense)</p>	<p>the EU-TOP-UP agreed in the EU-Contract. Up to now only the awareness for the problem was created in the consortium.</p>
<p>Internal financial management</p>	
<p>What is your approach to sharing the management costs (call preparation, execution etc.) between the partners? Are there any special rules if non-European countries are involved?</p>	<p>The coordination costs (call preparation, administration etc.) were fixed before the project start. The coordination team gets a compensation for its efforts up to a maximum amount that was specified in the Consortium Agreement. The coordination team has to report their costs towards the steering board. The EU-TOP-UP-Funding is used to cover the cash-flow for the compensation. Coordination costs are replaced by national funding contributed to the transnational projects. Non-European partners have to contribute to an agreed amount to the coordination costs.</p>
<p>Which evidence is foreseen to prove that the partners took part in additional activities (reports, attendance lists) ?</p>	<p>As it was open which evidence has to be provided to the EC, this was not specified within the consortium agreement. Most likely the coordination team will provide a reporting template for the additional activities. The template is not ready yet.</p>
<p>Other aspects</p>	
<p>Are there any lessons learned you want to share?</p>	<p>As the evaluation process is currently ongoing, there are no real lessons learned yet.</p>

Network #9	
Cofunded Call Timeline	Launch: M1 Pre-proposal Deadline: M3 Full-Proposal Deadline: M6 Evaluation End Date: M9 Start of funded Transnat. Projects: M13
Pre-proposal selection	
Please describe the main elements of the pre-proposals-phase (assessment, selection, feedback to applicants)	<p>The Joint Call Secretariat (JCS) checks the pre-proposals to ensure that they meet the call's formal conditions. In parallel, each funding organisation checks compliance with their respective regulations (eligibility check).</p> <p>Each pre-proposal is sent to at least three Peer Review Panel (PRP) members for evaluation, asking for written statements and scoring. The selection of pre-proposals for full proposal submission is done in a face to face meeting including the funders (Call Steering Committee, CSC) and some reviewers (PRP members). Scores are adjusted in case of high standard deviation for the mean of the scores of the three reviewers or added in case of written evaluations are missing from any of the reviewers. Pre-proposals are ranked according to their overall average score. Based on the ranking list, the CSC decides how many pre-proposals are invited for the full proposal stage.</p> <p>The co-ordinators of the pre-proposals were informed by the JCS whether or not they were invited to submit a full proposal. The written evaluations and the scores are provided to the co-ordinators proposals in an anonymous way.</p>
Which rules do you use to avoid unbalanced oversubscription from pre-proposal selection to full-proposal phase?	<p>a) In the consortium agreement it is agreed that funding partners shall make all reasonable efforts to match the availability of national funding with the likely demand of their respective research communities. Funding partners shall explore all potential solutions to unblock situations at national level if any, and as early as possible in the call process i.e. already at stage one of the call evaluation, once the pre-proposal of Ranking List is known.</p> <p>b) The CSC selected a reasonable number of pre-proposals for submission of full proposals according to the available budget and the oversubscription rate.</p> <p>c) After the selection of pre-proposals, the oversubscription rate for each funding organisation was calculated and communicated. In response to the data rate the funding organisation with the highest oversubscription rate increased the national budget available.</p>
Funding of transnational projects	
Which mode do you use to finance the trans-national projects of the cofunded call (100% common pot, mixed mode...)	<p>In the consortium agreement it is agreed that the main goal of CSC will be first to fund as many projects as possible that are above the fundable threshold. The EU top-up contribution will be used in mixed mode manner:</p> <p>1. Each final sum paid to the Partners will be topped-up by 10% with EC Contribution. In case of any problems, this percentage may be revised and will be subject to a decision of</p>

	<p>the CSC.</p> <p>2. A part of the EC Contribution will be used to fund partners participating in the selected transnational projects, for which no more national funds are available from in their respective country in order to fund as far as possible down the final ranking list ("filling the gap"). Prior to the use of the EC contribution to fill the gap, all funding partners will first explore all the possible solutions to fill any funding shortfall at national level.</p>
<p>What is your approach to avoid gaps in the final ranking list? E.g. ways to increase the national funding commitments</p>	<p>a) Match the availability of national funding with the likely demand of the respective research community. b) Increase the national budget after pre-proposal selection. c) Increase the national budget after the final full proposal ranking list will be provided. d) Cut national budgets of funded research projects if possible. e) Use EC top-up funding ("gap filling").</p>
<p>How do you deal with failures of funded transnational projects or budget cuts within their duration (EU-Top-Up Funding will be based on real expense)</p>	<p>We assume that we will be able to fund more projects with a budget that is higher than necessary to receive the earmarked EC top-up budget In the unlikely event that budget cuts will reduce EC top-up funding, the budget will be replaced with national funding or one project less will be funded.</p>
<p>Internal financial management</p>	
<p>What is your approach to sharing the management costs (call preparation, execution etc.) between the partners ? Are there any special rules if non-European countries are involved ?</p>	<p>The coordination costs (call preparation, administration) are specified and agreed in the consortium agreement and will be taken from the EC top-up funding. The budget will be replaced with national funding for the transnational projects. Non-European countries, e.g. Canada are treated like European countries. Canada participates in the co-funded call, provides in-kind contribution and, if necessary, can receive top-up funding. Potential EC top-up funding for Canada will be replaced with national funding from the other partners.</p>
<p>Which evidence is foreseen to prove that the partners took part in additional activities (reports, attendance lists) ?</p>	<p>We will report about additional activities including participation of the partners. The partners will be listed in the internal documentation (meeting minutes, call text and call documents, other internal papers).</p>
<p>Other aspects</p>	
<p>Are there any lessons learned you want to share?</p>	<p>There will be a separate lessons learned meeting after the final funding decision. A few lessons learned issues from our experience as JCS – not only for co-funded calls: - Good practice in call implementation must consider impartiality, transparency, and confidentiality - Documentation is essential - Communication is essential, too - There is no one procedure for all calls, flexibility is necessary There are many more aspects that may be discussed somewhere else.</p>