Webinar: Implementation of co-funded European Partnerships
27 April 2023
Summary Q&A Session

On 27 April 2023, the European Commission and ERA-LEARN organised a webinar to provide additional support for the implementation of co-funded European Partnerships.

This document is a summary of the Q&A session.

General aspects

Q: What is meant with "Top up amendment"?

A: For some partnerships, because funding is provided separately from multiple work programmes of Horizon Europe there is a 'Top-up' Amendment to provide additional funding within the same Grant Agreement. E.g. for a partnership established by WP 2021/2022, there is a new topic in WP 2023/2024 that requires submission of a new/amended proposal and a subsequent evaluation. At the end of the evaluation there is a 'Top-up' to the existing Grant Agreement provided through an amendment of the existing Grant Agreement using funds from the 2023/2024 budget.

Q: How long is the phasing out period after implementation of the last calls?

A: At least 3 years but usually more (ca. 3.5 years) as funded projects have usually a three-years duration and it's needed to allow enough time at the end of the funded projects to collect all their data and allow funding organisations to do a financial reporting on the costs incurred by funded projects. The Partnerships' life time should be such that the phasing out period following the last calls is included.

Q: Are there any Guidelines or best practices about the redress procedures available?

A: Guidelines on redress procedures are not available but examples that have been approved by the EC in the context of running Partnerships. ERA-LEARN has not collected these examples yet.

Q: Can 'Third Country' participate in public-public partnerships?

A: Like in all other Horizon Europe actions participation is possible but receiving funding is limited to legal entities established in countries listed in the general annex to the WP https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-13-general-annexes_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf*), except when provisions to the contrary are included in the work programme or a request for 'exceptional' third country funding is made and approved by the evaluators. Therefore, legal entities established in countries not listed in the document above will be eligible for funding only under specific call conditions, or if their participation is considered essential for implementing the action by the granting authority.*

Governance and implementation of European Co-funded Partnerships

Q: Regarding the 'country level of decision' there have been some issues and discrepancies because some regions demand the model one partner/one vote?

A: There is no general rule. Voting rules have to be agreed within the partnership consortium and defined in the Consortium Agreement.

Q: Which activities need to be defined and described: general activities of an RPO or their role in the partnership?

A: The role of the RPO in the partnership.

Q: About DUT: How is the analysis regarding themes and topics actually chosen in the call and the funded projects done and how is it integrated in the funding cycle?

A: The process is coordinated by the management team, in particular the coordinators of the 3 transition pathways. First orientation for call priorities is based on the multi-annual call agenda which has been published as part of the DUT Strategic Roadmap. These priorities are put forward to stakeholder consultations to further develop the priorities and identify most relevant topics. These are reflected with the Steering Groups to align with national priorities. The outcomes of the consultations are summarized and further elaborated towards call topics which are then presented to the Call Steering Committee (CSC). The funding agencies are asked for their final feedback and their decision making which topics they want to support/fund. The learnings from the process are then presented at the Governing Board to draw conclusions for next year's process.

Q: About DUT: The various configurations of the GovB are interesting, but seem difficult to organize: are some members involved in all of these groups and others not, thus

leading to various parallel governing boards? How is information (actions/decisions) shared with the 'entire' GovB?

A: For clarification: There is 1 DUT Governing Board, with delegates from each partner. The configurations involve always the same person per organisation, but not all partners are involved in all configurations and decisions or at least in different ways. And information is always shared with the whole consortium.

Q: For clarity: talking about 'fire walls', you mean a way to avoid conflict of interest so that companies and other profit-seeking entities do not 'capture' the main budget?

A: No, it is meant that persons and entities involved in preparing/executing /monitoring the transnational calls cannot apply for funding in the related call, whatever their origin is (public or private). Vice versa persons and entities applying for funding in the transnational call cannot be involved in activities related to the preparation/execution/monitoring of the related call.

Q. How will synergies/learnings from the transversal activities of each of the partnerships be implemented? E.g. capacity building/research integrity

A:

- There is lot of flexibility to respond to the societal needs, dealing with policy issues etc. Plenty of things are possible to create the knowledge in the first place. Strategic activities create valuable input to Partnerships and that requires funding. Due to the co-funding Partnerships can be more transformative.
- Capacity building activities are provided to the community as a whole as integrated approach to the ecosystem e.g. educate the researchers on specific issues/ data management and ethics.
- It's also up to the Partnerships to have exchanges among them to define areas of collaboration, how they could complement and enrich each other's.

Q: About Water4al: How do you deal with conflicts of interest?

A: A lot of RPOs are involved in our Partnership. We do use a fire wall based on our pillars. Only funding agencies in that pillar are involved in call planning and execution. RPOs will get no information of advantages for future calls. This was all settled in the Grant Agreement and the commitment, which was signed. We asked RPOs to separate the teams involved in our partnership (those involved in the partnership and those applying in calls). But for small organisations this is not easy and the funding rate to participate is not attractive.

Q: Conflict of interests expressed regarding roles of Partnership coordinators/beneficiaries in both HE Programme Committees and the individual Partnerships.

A: This is a legal matter – answer needs to be provided by the EC legal services

Financial and Call Management

Q: How to deal with the cost/value calculation of already existing datasets as an in kind contribution?

A: This depends on the related costs. Reimbursement is based on the value of the contribution, which should be known and documented. You can contact your legal NCP to analyse and discuss specific cases since the rules for cost reimbursement are the same as for HE RIA and IA projects https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/ncp.

Q: "The costs of in-kind contributions can be included by the beneficiary using it" – this is not clear. Does it mean that if organisation A provides its infrastructure in-kind to the consortium but this infrastructure is being used by beneficiary B and B then declares the costs? Who should declare the costs -beneficiary A (provider) or beneficiary B (user)?

A: The beneficiary that puts the contribution at the disposal of the partnership, so in the case above the provider A.

Q: In an information note from the EC (from March 2023) on the implementation of co-funded Partnerships it was indicated that «Regarding the funding rate, our guidance is that a 50% funding rate can be granted for co-funded partnerships, provided that the centre of gravity of the partnership funding is allocated to in-house activities or what is typically called 'in kind activities' ». How is this decided? And is the EC co-funding rate fixed for the whole partnership or could it be adapted depending on the activities (e.g. 30% for calls but 50% for the additional activities)?

A: This is a decision that is taken at time of work programme development and adoption. There can only be one funding rate per action, so not modified according to type of activities.

Q: Just to make sure: once the internal funding rate is fixed for one partner (e.g. 30% for partner A) does partner A need to contribute 30% to each of the work packages or just 30% altogether?

A: With a funding rate of 30%, the partner needs to contribute 70%. Beyond that, the funding rate per work package and per Partner depends on the specific agreement and on the consortium plan. Usually the internal funding rate is calculated based on activities or cost categories.

Q: About EJP RD: If I understood correctly you used ALL the EU-top up of the transnational call as resource for other activities. I wonder if all funding bodies really liked this approach? Is it fair?

A: No, we did not use the whole top up for other activities, we have secured part of it for the co-funded calls and the rest was used to cover the costs of other actives. The funding rates we applied in the EJP RD are: max. 33% for joint transnational calls (but in practice it was about 20%), 70% for in house research activities, 80% for education activities and 100% for coordination & management. All funding bodies agreed on this approach and signed the CA.

Q: More simplification of internal distribution/finances is still needed. Having different practices in each Partnership with complex arrangements on how to redistribute the EU contribution to cover certain activities (including management costs) results in additional administrative burden: i.e. double reporting (Commission and Coordinator, these being sometimes very different). This can be more difficult and risky to deal with, in a context of higher costs of the Partnerships.

A: It is a freedom of the individual partnerships to distribute the EU contribution as they internally agree. This could make participation in several partnerships more complicated, but it is nothing where the EC can intervene since it would eliminate the freedom of establishing internal funding rates for different cases.

Q: About Biodiversa: Could you apply the planned (85/15% mix mode) top –up distribution to the first call or did you have to change the distribution percentage to fund more projects according to the ranking list.

A: For our first call, we slightly adjusted our funding model and increased a bit the part allocated on a common pot basis since we had a high financial pressure on a few countries, but it remained a model with most of funding allocated on a pro-rata basis.

Q: About Biodiversa: Can you please repeat the difference between Evaluation Committee and external Reviewers?

A: We have an independent Evaluation Committee that is set-up for both step 1 and step 2. It is composed of both scientific and policy/management experts and evaluates proposals at step 1 & 2 and agrees on the final scores given to proposals and ranking lists. The external

reviewers are individual experts mobilized at step 2 to help the Evaluation Committee in the evaluation (e.g. to cover specific expertise that are not covered sufficiently in the Evaluation Committee). External reviewers only review 1-2 projects and are not part of the panel, they do not contribute to the final discussion of the Evaluation Committee on final scoring and ranking.

Further information

European Partnerships website: https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/european-partnerships-horizon-europe_en

ERA-LEARN Support for Partnerships: https://www.era-learn.eu/support-for-partnerships

Events: https://www.era-learn.eu/news-events/events

Newsalert: https://www.era-learn.eu/newsletter