



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Directorate G – Common Policy Centre
Common Missions & Partnerships Service

Minutes of the workshop on European Partnerships phasing-out strategies – 21 Sept 2023

Context and objectives of the workshop

The Horizon Europe Regulation states that every partnership needs to develop a phasing-out strategy. Nevertheless, the activities of the partnerships and the attainment of their objectives should go beyond the availability of Union funding. Therefore, dependency on this funding should be gradually reduced. The legal basis is given in article 10.2 c and Annex III of Horizon Europe regulation and in the Single Basic Act for Institutionalised Partnerships. For co-programmed partnerships there is a provision in the MoU, for co-funded partnerships in the respective Grant Agreement.

The aim of the workshop was to initiate a reflection on the phasing-out strategies of European partnerships and to elaborate potential future scenarios in the best interest of their members and of the EU. All types of of partnerships (institutionalised, co-funded and co-programmed), were represented to facilitate the sharing of ideas and experiences and to discuss about alternative funding in case HEU funding would be discontinued.

Introduction

Fabienne GAUTIER, Head of Unit Common Missions and Partnerships service (DG RTD-unit G4) welcomed the audience and introduced the topic and the objectives of the workshop.

Fabienne Gautier stressed the obligation for European Partnerships to develop a phasing out strategy as this is an explicit criterion for European partnerships under Horizon Europe but she also stated that preparing a phasing out strategy does not automatically mean that European partnerships will be discontinued. It should rather be regarded as a reflection on the partnerships' added value, on their contribution to the political goals of the EU, on their broader economic impact and uptake.

In the morning sessions, which were moderated by Pierre Michel (Unit Common Missions and Partnerships service (G4), examples of good practices of networks with alternative funding were presented.

Case studies

- **BONUS/ BANOS, the Joint Baltic Sea research and development programme, 2010 – 2020, Dr Karoliina Koho, former Bonus Secretariat project officer and BANOS CSA coordinator**

BONUS and BANOS projects have played a central role in the elaboration of a joint Baltic and North Sea research policy. They have been impact enablers by fostering exchanges of knowledge among scientists, industries and policy makers. Dr Koho mentioned that building trust between all stakeholders is key and takes time. She also noted that evolution requires transformation and

adaptability to changes in policy landscapes.

The collaboration of many of the BANOS CSA consortium members continues today also as part of BlueMission BANOS CSA -project, with the aim of supporting the implementation of the EU Mission 'Restore our Ocean & Waters' in the Baltic and North Sea.

- **EUPHRESCO, European Phytosanitary Research Coordination, Dr Baldissera Giovani, programme coordinator, EPPO, European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization**

Euphresco is a network of organizations interested to collaborate on plant health research matters. Started as an EU-funded ERA-Net project, Euphresco has become a self-sustained network in 2014. The membership of the network has grown from 28 organizations in 2014 to 75 organizations from more than 50 countries on 5 continents currently.

The success of Euphresco has raised the interest of several intergovernmental organizations, such as the G20 and FAO and countries worldwide have been called to work on the development of a global network for phytosanitary research coordination. This example demonstrates that agile networks are able to adapt to changes and to deliver output and transfer of knowledge within a short time. Phasing out is regarded as a reflection on the evolution and the growth of the project.

Dr Giovani considers that additional funding from EU will be essential to raise the level of ambition and build global research coordination.

- **QuantERA ERA-NET Cofunds –Dr Christian Trefzger, Policy Officer, DG CNECT, expert on Quantum Technologies**

The QuantERA Programme is a European network of 39 public Research Funding Organisations from 31 countries (including 15 widening countries). QuantERA supports excellent Research and Innovation in Quantum Technologies. It collaborates closely with the European Quantum Flagship.

Thanks to the experience gained from this ERA-NET, National Research Funding agencies have achieved a way of working together with limited EU funding. However, the EU incentive has been instrumental to build the network. As new instruments are evolving, the network will have to learn how to adapt, the best way is to work and learn together. Dr Trefzger suggests that a RIA action with Financial Support to Third Party (FSTP) is another option to further develop the activities of the network. Phasing out must be interpreted with care: the fact that the EU is present in a way or another brings more options in the choice of the funding instruments.

Session on Institutionalised Partnerships

Simona Staicu, Deputy Head of Unit, Common Service for Executive Agencies and Funding Bodies (RTD - Unit H4) presented the Commission template for the phasing-out strategy to be implemented by the Joint Undertakings. Simona Staicu stressed that phasing out refers to the gradual process leading to the end of funding from the Framework Programme. It is to be noted that the decision of terminating/renewing a partnership is an independent process closely linked to the evaluation and continuous monitoring process which has been implemented throughout the whole life of the partnership. An effective phase out requires commitment to the partnership's plan by the members other than the Union. It should not affect continued transnational funding, private investment and on-going projects. A plan should enable members to reach self-sustainability, achieved through clear, measurable criteria for monitoring and evaluating activities. The plan should set up options for the future of the partnership.

Speakers of the session:

- **Dr Jesus Contreras**, Chief Operations and Financial officer, EIT Digital
- **Mirela Atanasiu**, Executive Director of Clean Hydrogen Partnership (acting)
- **Bruno Mastantuono**, Head of Governance Unit of Clean Aviation Partnership

The speakers strongly underlined that the partnerships have proved to have very strong political impact. Evolution in terms of governance has been realised, more synergies have been created. From the representatives of the institutionalised partnerships, phasing out strategies can therefore only look at improvement and disruptions must be avoided. It is important to take a fresh look at these instrument and potential improvements, but long-term EU funding is necessary for the success of the partnerships and for industry to join. Only national and private funding would not suffice.

In an open discussion many participants agreed that a phasing out strategy should reflect on the partnerships' success and their future objectives. It was stressed that the strategy has to be useful for all actors involved.

On the other hand, some participants pointed out that a phasing out strategy is meant to provide a long-term strategy for Europe and foresight and to provide space for strategically important and necessary new topics. This might mean discontinuation for some partnerships.

Roundtable: how to prepare a smooth phasing out strategy

The afternoon roundtable was introduced by the moderator **Alexander Grablowitz**, MS-Co-Chair of the Partnership Knowledge Hub. He reminded of the ceiling of budget for partnerships in Horizon Europe and the goal to gradually reduce the partnerships' dependency on the Horizon Europe funding as set out in the legal bases.

Marnix Surgeon, Deputy Head of Unit G4 at DG RTD stated that a clear definition of the phasing out strategy is essential. In his view, the term "transition strategy" might be more adequate. The strategy should be a plan for a transition from one phase to the next. It should be a reflection on the partnership in the future. This transition could take different forms: continuation with the same legal status and new objectives, discontinuation or decrease of EU funding compensated by non-EU funding sources (private, national, international...), merging with other partnerships, becoming entirely private...

Speakers of the session:

- **Petra Manderscheid**, Joint Programming Initiative "Connecting Climate Knowledge for Europe", Executive Director of the Central Secretariat
- **Pierre-Olivier Pin**, Head of European and International coordination at "Agence Nationale de la Recherche" in France (ANR)
- **Malwina Gębalska**, CHANSE programme coordinator, Narodowe Centrum Nauki (Poland)
- **Alexandre Caussé**, Head of the Secretariat of the JPI Cultural Heritage and Global Change
- **Mikko Merimaa**, EURAMET Secretary General

The speakers emphasized the partnerships' value in bringing knowledge into policy making. For this reason, the EU has the duty to support the coordination of R&I policies. Intergovernmental formats are costly but possible. Partnerships play a significant role to the organization of a scientific community. EU contribution is important "glue money". Nevertheless, scarcity of resources might require more agility of the network. It was stressed that building synergies is essential for a successful transition. Without doubt, there will be a need for partnerships in FP10.

In the closing session, **Fabienne GAUTIER**, Head of Unit Common Missions and Partnerships service (G4) summarized the key takeaways of the sessions and formulated the conclusions of the workshop:

She reminded that the workshop's objective was to initiate a common brainstorming of the involved actors on possible phasing out strategies. Fabienne Gautier underlined that European Partnerships need to reduce their dependencies from EU funding and that the phasing out strategy is also part of mid-term evaluation of Horizon Europe. JUs will have to develop a phasing out strategy before the end of 2023.

In the workshop it turned out that due to different experiences from different partnerships of various fields, size and actors, different interpretations of phasing out was developed. A common understanding needs to be developed and negative perception of the term should be avoided. Scarcity of resources might lead to more agility of the networks.

Fabienne Gautier summarised some common features linked to phasing out strategies:

- Phasing out strategies must be part of partnerships strategy because European partnerships are long-term projects and should aim at becoming sustainable.
- The evolution of consortia and the development of additional activities will increase the added value and the political importance of the partnerships.
- Agility is key: becoming independent of EU funding is challenging because EU support plays an important role of "glue money" for the networks.
- No EU funding at all might mean being disconnected from EU policies.

Concluding the session, Fabienne Gautier formulated important next steps:

- Phasing out strategies have to be put in the right context, a common understanding needs to be developed. A preferred term might be: "transition strategy".
- Transition means also developing more synergies; next steps will depend on the links with other instruments.
- The reflection on the future of Partnerships in FP10 will be launched soon and will involve all stakeholders.
- Excellence needs to remain the heart of partnerships.