

# Supporting the preparation of future European Partnerships

Session: **Implementation of joint calls for transnational R&I projects**

Jan-Arne Eilertsen (The Research Council of Norway)

Rapporteurs: Hannele Lahtinen (AKA), Michele Guerrini (CNR)

**Need for standardisation**

**Interoperability of National Research systems**

**Need for flexibility**

**New partnerships should be open and transparent**

**Continued good cooperation with the Commission**

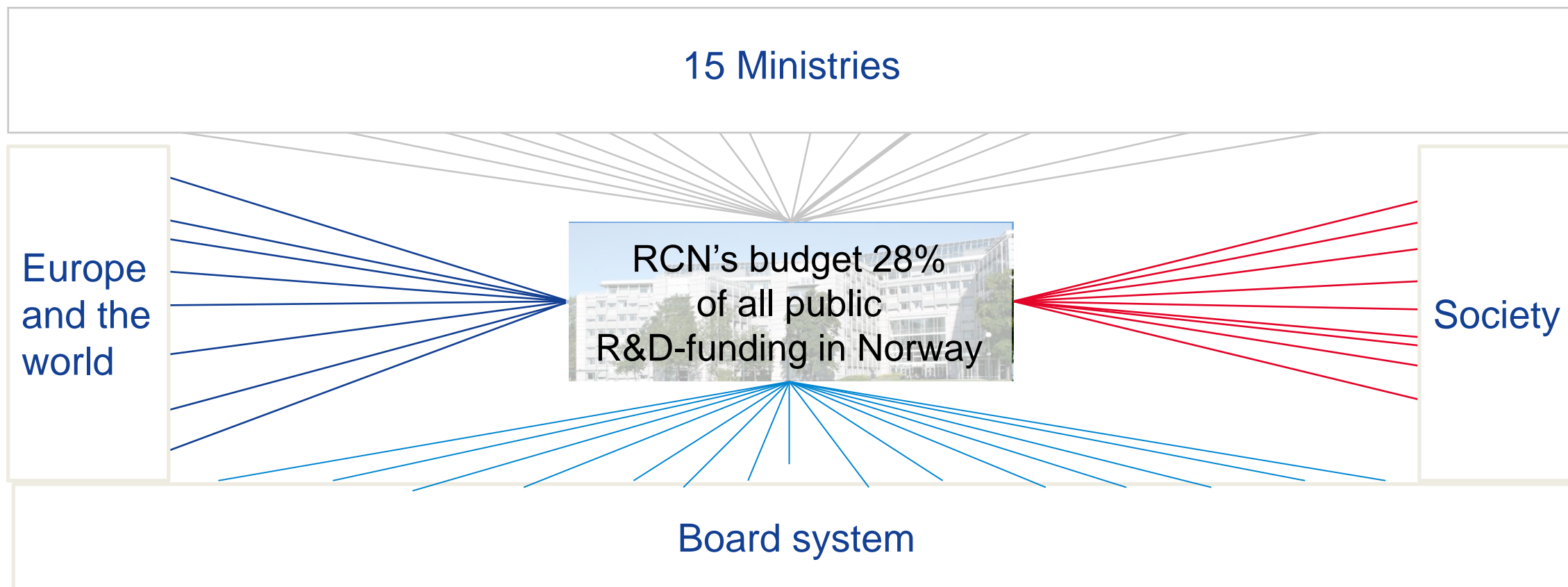
- division of labor
- balance research and innovation

## **Long-term commitment – important with**

- Relevance!

## **Benefits and challenges for managing projects centrally**

- Specialized competence
- Countries
- EC or Agencies



## Criteria for joining

- Coherence with national policies and targets
- Budget and cost efficiency
- Competitiveness

## Internal process

- Internal discussion in RCN and first discussion with the board system
- Discussion and feedback from relevant ministries
- New discussion with the board system and integration in portfolio plans
- Feedback from Ministries
- Inclusion in investment plans

# Supporting the preparation of future European Partnerships

Parallel Session C: Implementation of joint calls for transnational R&I projects

Andrej Lintu (EC)

## What does Horizon Europe say?

*Annex III: Systemic approach ensuring active and early involvement of Member States and achievement of the expected impacts of the European Partnership through the flexible **implementation of joint actions of high European added value** also going beyond **joint calls for research and innovation activities**, including those related to market, regulatory or policy uptake.*

**Why?** To fund a higher number of excellent collaborative trans-national R&I projects than by the participating States alone

## What is the experience so far?

- Joint calls have been a successful way to start, maintain and increase trans-national collaboration in R&I
- There is a good know-how on implementing joint calls in the established networks
- National systems are heterogeneous – high effort to align joint call execution

# Input to the discussion

## European Commission perspective

- **Annex III** – “Appropriate measures ensuring **continuous openness** of the initiative and transparency during implementation, notably for priority setting and **for participation in calls for proposals**, visibility of the Union, communication and outreach measures, dissemination and exploitation of results, including clear open access/user strategy along the value chain” - **Ensuring continuous openness for joint calls**
- **Which calls are co-funded and which are not**
  - Call topic highly aligns with EU policies / priorities – **Co-funded**
  - Call topic mostly focuses on national policies / priorities – **Not co-funded**
- “For Horizon Europe, the award criteria will be excellence; impact; and quality and efficiency of the implementation. These are the same criteria as for previous Framework Programmes.” – **Co-funded calls will have to be implemented on the basis of clearly defined criteria, ensuring the eligibility of costs of funding**
- **Annex III** - “Detailed information on the evaluation process and results from all calls for proposals within partnerships, to be made available timely and accessible in a common e-database” - **Need for increased quality and inter-operability of data produced during joint calls**
- **Need to ensure ambitious and long-term commitment for call contributions**
- **Institutionalised partnerships – projects should be managed centrally to the highest extent possible**



- **Two stage evaluation**
  - Step 1: eligibility check / review at national or trans-national level
  - Step 2: single international peer review
- **Evaluation based on the three main criteria in Horizon 2020:**
  - Excellence
  - Impact
  - Quality and efficiency of the implementation
- **At stage two – peer review by at least three independent experts**
- **Observer**
- **Joint call open for at least 60 days**
- **Consortium sends call text for approval to COM at least 30 days before publishing the call**
- **Proposals ranked according to the evaluation results**

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R&I projects

Duncan Jarvis (European Metrology)

**EMRP and EMPIR have held annual joint calls since 2009 following standard FP eligibility and evaluation processes with a few modifications:**

- The budget defined in the Co-Decision sets expectations for the split of funding directed towards the "internal" partners (those providing the co-funding) and the "external" partners (those funded at standard FP rates), so a mechanism is required to control the development of proposals so that the funded projects will meet those expectations. The internal partners have their bidding capabilities restricted over the life of a programme in proportion to their national commitment. There is a 2-stage process - first identifying and prioritising needs, before specifications defining the detailed technical objectives to be delivered by the project proposals are published. The bid control at the second, competitive, stage is designed to result in a success rate of about 50 %. This means proposers put much more effort into developing robust proposals and the evaluation process can be more in depth - proposers defend their proposals to the evaluators face-to-face.**

**The call process has been refined over the last decade and is expected to continue with incremental improvements.**

**New initiatives are based on developing much closer, and long term, relationships with stakeholders allowing them to define the related strategic research agendas well before the calls are opened.**

**The cofunding develops a separate stream of activities which will continue indefinitely and long after the EU funded projects complete – providing the basis for the “exit” strategy.**

**The annual call budgets over the life of the partnership have been profiled to reflect the “exit” strategy.**

# **Supporting the preparation of future European Partnerships**

Session C: Implementation of joint calls

Olaf Heilmayer, DLR Project Management Agency

# DLR: participation in partnerships

- Partner in 56 (all types of) partnerships overall (since 2003)
- DLR is acting on behalf of different Federal Ministries (Research, Agriculture, ...)
- More than 1.000 employees; large number of scientific officers engaged in partnerships (esp. health department)
- Knowledge development in partnerships for almost 20 years
- Partner in 21 active networks in H2020
- Responsible for many joint call secretariats
- Involved in all types of "additional activities"

# Format/scope/limitations of calls

## Formats:

- mono-beneficiary (prizes, awards), additional calls only
- multibeneficiary/ies

## Scope:

- career-building (mono)
- generation of evidence (multi-PI research consortia)

## Limitations:

- variable geometry (not all MS scientists can apply)
- limited impact (limited funding)
- limited possibility for structure-building due to limited duration of partnership  
(e.g. 10 cycles of clinical trial funding by BMBF in Germany to enhance the field of clinical research)

# Calls design, evaluation, selection list

## Preparatory phase:

- call documents, MoU, ...

## Design:

- usually two-step (reasons: unknown number of received proposals, potential overload of work for reviewers for large number of proposals, attractiveness for scientists)

## Evaluation:

- pre-proposal evaluation meeting (select not more than about twofold number of pre-proposals for full proposal submission)
- written external reviews (usually)
- rebuttal (optional, error correction, enhances acceptance by applicants; only in additional calls)
- full proposal evaluation meeting: final ranking list

## Decision

- Call Steering Committee (involved funders): decision on selection list



# Challenges / Expectations to the future

## Challenges:

- "matching problem" (stick to the ranking list): several partnership solutions; „jumping“ possible for additional calls, not possible for co-funded call
- observer in co-funded call: limited usefulness with high administrative burden (given the professional and extensive experience of involved funding organizations)

## Expectations

- EC evaluation criteria proved to work quite well and provide the basis for a common ground for the call implementation
- more flexibility for the ranking list would be feasible
- co-funded call: multi-beneficiaries only (to secure enough flexibility)
- no major changes required for future call implementation!

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EUREKA Association: DIS of Eurostars



Co-funded by EUREKA member countries and the European Union Horizon 2020 Framework Programme

### **Eurostars is an international programme with GLOBAL outreach**

- Of the 45 EUREKA members, 36 and the EU are actively participating in Eurostars-2
- EU27, CH, IL, IS, NO, TR, UK, South Korea, Canada, South Africa.
- Future programmes have seen expression of interest from other countries; how are these accommodated?

### **Funding Rules**

- Approximately 75% of the funding is from the NFB. The EU contribution is a top-up for money spent according to national rules. Will this change so that NFBs have to spend national money in compliance with the EU rules?
  - E.g. Number of partners in the project/funding rates/eligible costs

### **Leverage effect**

- Eurostars-2 will mobilise 1 Billion Euros of public funds. The programme benefits heavily on contributions from the NFBs whose costs are not reported. This makes it an exceptionally efficient and cost effective implementation from the EU perspective.

### The effectiveness of the Virtual Common Pot

- Real common pots tend to favour countries with high participation rates, high numbers of quality projects on the ranking list and low contributions; the common budgets fill in the gaps of the national fund. This can precipitate a race to the bottom.
- Whereas Virtual Common pots ensure:
  - sovereignty of the funds; NFBs are free to commit budgets, add more as required, and re-appropriate unspent money as needed.
  - Funding that is reflective of the true make up of the ranking list, greater opportunity for approved projects from smaller countries, or those with less R&D&I intensity

### Income Recognition for DIS

- The DIS receives income as a proportion of what the NFB receives from the EU contribution which is based on what the NFB pays to a third party, up to 5 years after the cost has been incurred by the DIS. This methodology has proved detrimental for accurate investment planning.
- The DIS is contracted to perform a role, for which it may not be paid.
- The DIS receives payment for approved and funded projects. All other work (filtering low-quality projects) is ignored.

## Benefits

- Enhance administrative efficiency
- Promote standardisation - single set of rules, funding rates, etc.
- Leaner rules are easier to be understood by participants
- Higher integration of practices

## Challenges

- Possibility of duplication - if national contract, national rules apply. Is any central monitoring then a duplication ?
- Loss of national support - i.e. national language, local currency, proximity between participants and NFBs all bring high added-value.
- Clear compliance with national regulation i.e. taxation, IP, etc.
- Reduced flexibility over national strategic priorities – funding rates and funding of activities mirror national priorities
- Continuity with Eurostars 2
  - Participants have to learn a completely new framework
  - NFBs may need to adapt several processes and review resourcing.

- **EIC Accelerator Award Criteria**

- Excellence
- Impact
- Risk level/implementation/need for EU support

- **Benefits**

- Standardization across programmes
- Mutual visibility
- Cost and time efficient
- Standardized procedure on Ethics appraisals in compliance with EU best practice

- **Open questions and challenges**

- Harmonisation of disparate evaluation criteria/scoring and thresholds? How different can we all be?
- European Green Deal and SDGs – Common evaluation of these criteria? compatible with bottom-up initiatives?
- Requirements on financial viability checks (done at national level) or assurances

- **Single companies vs cooperative funding programmes (Accelerator – Eurostars)**

# Supporting the preparation of future European Partnerships

Session C: “Implementation of joint calls for transnational R&I projects”

OMAR AMAWI  
Deputy Director ,  
PRIMA Foundation

**PRIMA**  
PARTNERSHIP FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION  
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA

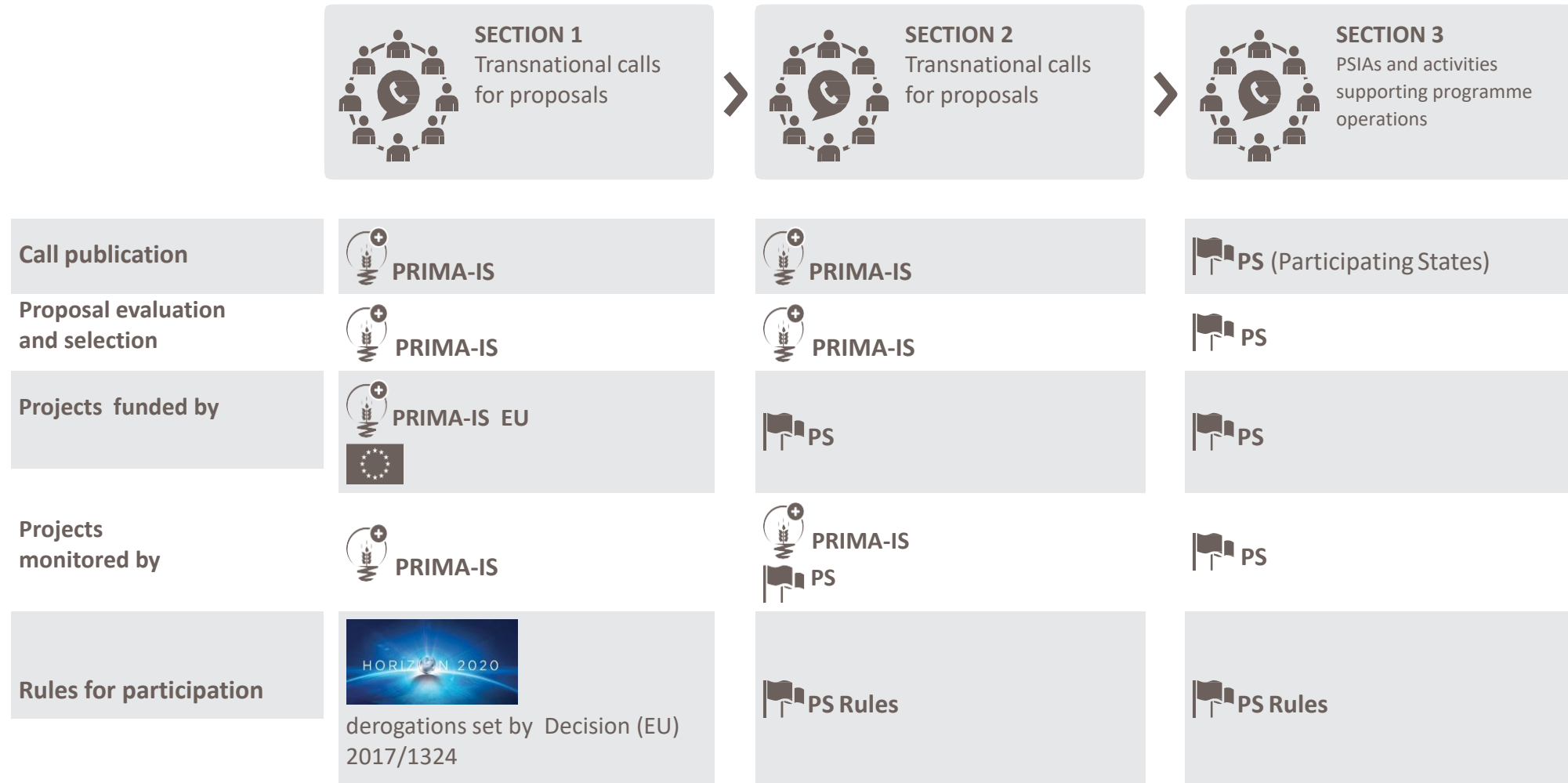


## The Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda

- Sets the technical and scientific basis of the PRIMA Program
- Is the output of a process encompassing the collection of inputs from a wide range of sources, workshops, events involving experts and stakeholders from all sectors of society
- Identifies three thematic areas to address







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Paloma Mallorquin (BBI JU)

Ministry for Science and Innovation



## **A. The Partnership approach is a challenge also at the inner structure of the Ministry and funding agencies, it will require profound adaptations in our Funding Agencies (AEI, ISCIII, CDTI) and a inter-ministerial dialogue:**

- Co-funded calls require civil servants reproducing national calls, meetings and different call procedures and call management IT systems.
- Co-funded activities will need a greater amount of national funds. This is something to be established by political leaders in national budgets and the design of a budget needs certainty and financial resources. Synergy with Structural funds.
- Principle of transparency and a equilibrated participation of MS and AM and third countries.

## **B. It is essential that calls under any partnership follow a homogenous pattern: to make them recognisable as open calls under H2020. A long-term commitment is based in trust and relevance and cannot be achieved by heterogeneity.**

- Calls for cooperative R&D&I projects funded with grants.
- The design and update of SRIAs must follow similar rules though maintaining flexibility when needed.
- We proposed in the early stages of the HE negotiation a common management structure for partnerships
- Second best: Efficiency at all levels. Same ICT call management and dissemination tools, same calendar, rules oriented by HE and Commission services including the GA and CA, keep low number of travelling and additional activities. Same indicators, same evaluation criteria and evaluation panel configurations, same call steps and ranking procedures.

## How to ensure a fair and efficient distribution of HE funds into partnership initiatives?

- D. HE funds must be allocated to R&D&I projects mostly. Dedication to ALL administrative and management matters must be less than 5% of the total amount allocated to projects.**
- E. Upfront commitment of the funding organizations must assure a minimum number of projects, not a minimum amount of funds, each country finances according to its standards, rules and cost models.**
  - ✓ The funding agencies must commit funds according to the intensity of the expected national demand. There is a need to estimate success rate/country in order to optimize top-up and national funds.
  - ✓ Full cost model: The EU contribution should be calculated on the total costs, and not on the national in-cash contributions. Staff and infrastructure of Spanish projects sum almost half the total costs of a project.
  - ✓ EU funds must leverage the investment effort of the national agencies ensuring a minimum amount of at least 20% of the total cost of the projects.
  - ✓ Common pot budget in order to fill some gaps on the ranking list is success practice but TOP UP captured by a single agency must not exceed in any case 30% of its upfront commitment.
- F. HE funds must ensure the management of joint calls through dedicated and experienced secretaries.**

**Thank you.**