



# MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ERA-NETS FOR TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH

Recommendations for best practice

Olga Mashkina  
Eeva Furman  
Hanna Mela  
Paula Kivimaa

Finnish Environment Institute, SYKE  
SKEP ERA-Net



Helsinki 2009

## Acknowledgement

*The SKEP* ('Scientific Knowledge for Environmental Protection') *ERA-Net* (*European Research Area Network*) brings together 16 research funding agencies from 13 European countries. The members of SKEP are composed of ministries, academies or institutions that fund environment-related research. SKEP aims to improve the quality of environmental research, encouraging innovation through more efficient use of research funding and creating joint research programmes between the partners ([www.skep-era.net](http://www.skep-era.net)).

*The Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) and the Finnish Ministry of the Environment* jointly coordinate one of the six Work packages of SKEP. The Work package aims to recognize and share good practice in the management and evaluation of environmental research funding programmes. It also aims to rationalize and harmonize management and evaluation practices in different countries and seek ways in which programme management can support the use of research knowledge in policy-making.

Report concentrates on analyzing experiences of the environmental ERA-Nets when planning and managing joint calls/research programmes. A team of SYKE researchers from the Research Programme for Environmental Policy has produced the report.

We would like to thank all the ERA-Net coordinators and partners who contributed to this report by taking part in the survey, interviews, and in the workshop as well as providing their valuable comments on the report!

Authors

January 2009  
Helsinki

## Executive summary

ERA-Nets are networks of research funding agencies with the aim of promoting the creation of jointly coordinated and funded research programmes. Developing the European Research Area (ERA) and ERA-Nets as an instrument of networking research funders are one part of the implementing the Lisbon strategy to combine resources of different member states and improve the coordination and focus of research and innovation activities in Europe.

The first ERA-Nets started in September 2003 under the EU's Sixth Framework Programme and by now majority of the ERA-Nets have launched and carried out a series of co-funded transnational research calls ('joint calls'). In planning and carrying out these joint calls ERA-Nets have gained experience, responded to numerous challenges and develop good practices. The aim of this report is to analyse experiences of the environmental ERA-Nets in the process of preparation and implementation of the transnational (joint) calls, and based on this experience to develop "good practices" for the future transnational calls.

This report uses several sources of data: ERA-Nets' publications, an on-line survey, interviews/case studies of three ERA-Nets, and the results of group work at the Helsinki workshop in October 2008.

Joint calls of the environmental ERA-Nets are perceived to have many benefits, but mostly these benefits are similar to the ones of the other ERA-Nets. The majority of the ERA-Nets interviewed have the perception that joint calls have added value, above and beyond the funding or research itself. Some of these additional benefits have been seen in increased scientific competitiveness, capacity-building, and higher quality research.

When comparing transnational joint calls with national programmes, finding consensus on funding and proposal evaluation criteria seemed to be more difficult. However, finding agreement on duration and themes is often similar or even easier than in national programmes.

Some of the main challenges of joint calls include: uneven call benefits from for partners, and the lack of a national budget available for funding joint calls, especially when the funder participates in too many ERA-Nets. Other challenges include agreeing on a common theme and a common timeline for a joint call, accommodating the different requirements of ERA-Net partners and the differing level of stakeholder commitment.

Following are the general conclusions and recommendations that can be relevant for all ERA-Nets, and in the end there are specific recommendations that for particular three types of ERA-Nets, which were identified in the report.

### **General recommendations:**

In general, overall management was perceived quite positively during all stages of planning and implementation of the joint calls by majority of ERA-Nets.

Concerning *the type of funding structure*, the majority of ERA-Nets have employed the virtual common pot for their joint calls. Because, according to national regulations in some countries, national money has to be used for funding national researchers and are not allowed to use for foreign researchers. However, some ERA-Nets have managed to attained a higher level of funding integration through the use of the true common pot.

*When planning a joint call* it is very important to have clear description of funding and research terminology and of the process itself. It is good practice to start by agreeing on the critical path of

the call, and then on the details. The development of a timeline should allow some flexibility from partners. The challenge here is how to give everyone a say, but at the same time make decisions on time.

It is very important to *agree on funding standards* as some partners use national rules whereas other partners use EU rules on funding standards. The rules should be clear, and the partners can decide after this whether they want to join or not. Also it is very important *to focus on budget at the beginning*, with the recognition that partners cannot fully commit until all the details are known. From the funders perspective it is important to select carefully into which ERA-Nets they are going to participate.

With respect to *theme* selection, the good practices included horizon scanning - including an assessment of what has already been done, what are the policy/research needs in the future, and consulting different organizations for specific themes. It is good practice to first identify the funders and then ask them what they need and want from the research and to create a funding matrix: marking which topic is relevant for which funder. It is especially important to link the money from the very beginning, as agencies are prepared to fund only areas which are on their priority list.

The finalisation of a *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or Funders' Agreement (FA)* can only be undertaken after the partners achieve a common understanding on the theme. Before signing the *MoU/FA*, it has to be decided what is the type of funding. It is good practice is to draft a *MoU/FA* with as much detail as possible, so that funders know if they can commit. It is necessary to keep in mind that the development of a Memorandum of Understanding or Funding Agreement can be a very time consuming process.

During this process it is crucial to keep the momentum with a lot of partners. It is good practice to have joint workshops, face-to-face meetings, teleconferences, a positive atmosphere, and frequent communication.

*In administration* a good practice identified is to have a separate Work Package (WP) for management, and a common secretariat and committee. Networks need to ensure that key decision makers, are present at the meetings. Careful selection of the composition of the steering committee is necessary.

It is also considered good practice to establish Joint Call Secretariat to prepare proposals/documents on the management process of the call, also the Funding Agreement (or Memorandum of Understanding), to be responsible for call logistics, information provision (website preparation, online application system), and call communications plan (including dissemination of project results). The Call Steering Committee (CSC) should make the decision on identification of a scientific peer review pool, and its level of commitment.

When planning *proposal evaluation* it is important to have transparency, a fixed process, a fixed timeline, and clear guidelines for the applicants. Networks need to allow sufficient evaluation time and an adequate budget for the proposal evaluation (evaluation meetings, payment for external referees, translation costs). A common evaluation procedure is recommended, which combines the results of scientific evaluation and policy relevance. When developing common evaluation criteria it is important to take into account that different countries have different criteria on excellence and relevance. Also, it is important to agree on how to deal with conflicting interests in sufficient detail (as good practice, this should be written into the Funding Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding – or these documents should make reference to the Consortium Agreement). Those networks interviewed considered that it was good practice to define evaluation criteria, evaluation procedures, conflict resolution and other issues in advance. It is important to allow sufficient time for achieving consensus.

The establishment of a joint evaluation panel with balanced representation is strongly recommended. The use of international and external experts not linked with the programme is necessary. Also, enough time should be factored into the call timeline for finding good experts from each country. It is recommended to obtain detailed feedback from applicants and the evaluation panel afterwards in order to learn lessons from the call. Stakeholder involvement is crucial and it is considered good practice to form an advisory board, international panel, or external peer review to mediate this process. Panel meetings are necessary to balance the ratings and achieve consensus on funding decisions.

*The stakeholders/research users* should be identified early in the process. It is considered good practice to first ask the funders where they want to put the focus, then, armed with that information, to proceed to identify stakeholders. It is important to achieve a balance of stakeholders between scientists, policymakers and others, as some may be missing due to involvement in many ERA-Nets. A good practice is to involve relevant European institutions (including European Commission Directorate Generals) as stakeholders and have external stakeholders as well. It is strongly recommended that funding networks *define clear rules for stakeholder participation*, and their role and responsibilities in the evaluation process.

It is important to have a dialogue between researchers and stakeholders. However, there may be diverging interests because different countries are strong in different fields of research. A compromise should be strived for instead of giving “too much power” to researchers. Within the scope of this study, it was considered good practice to set up an *advisory board* composed of stakeholders, which are involved in the process to advise on the theme, evaluation and dissemination and therefore also have a role in disseminating information and knowledge on the programme.

There are several parallel *learning processes* that take place in the ERA-Net joint call. These are both intercultural and inter-organizational. Intercultural differences trigger tremendous learning experiences, however they were found to be not as challenging as inter-organizational differences.

It helps when one organization is involved in several ERA-Nets, as well in national programmes, to avoid overlaps or inefficiencies in the research topics funded; to allow the sharing of templates, and the use of common electronic submission systems. Due to the large number of ERA-Nets it is very time consuming to consult all networks, and there is a need to make an inter-network, ‘inventory of experiences’. The EU Learning Platform and NetWatch can play an important role in this process. Joint meetings between ERA-Nets early in the process are recommended.

It is very important to bring the *right information to the ERA-Net at the right time*. Sufficient budget is needed for keeping it up-to-date (and sharing papers, reports databases) to facilitate continuous learning. It is crucial to maintain the network website in order to maintain a transparent process to both call funders and external stakeholders.

### **Specific recommendations by the ERA-Net type:**

Based on the survey data in this study *three distinctive types of ERA-Nets* based on their experiences in joint calls were identified, and for each of these types we developed recommendations for good practices:

#### **I. ERA-Nets with strong common planning**

This type of funding network is more common among environmental agencies and research councils and has a very high level of organization. This type is quite categorical about the formal participation: if partners don't fund the joint calls - they shouldn't participate. The role of steering committees is strong and the representation of the steering committee is perceived adequate (more than in other types). Stakeholders have enough possibilities to influence the ERA-Net call development process, however, end-users are not very involved in the process. Thus, even though coordina-

tion and making decisions is easier in this type of network, there may be a accompanying gap in the dissemination of results.

*Good practices for this type of network to consider:*

- Allow more flexibility for partners (formal documents and committees could only benefit from having some flexibility);
- As the steering committee plays such a strong role, to ensure its balanced and adequate composition;
- More involvement of research users from the beginning. The challenge here is how to give everyone a say, but at the same time make decisions on time;
- Having a better dialogue between the researchers and stakeholders. However, there may be different interests because different countries are strong in different fields of research. Finding a compromise. Not to give “too much power” to researchers;
- Using advisory systems, where relevant organizations are consulted at national level (i.e. building advisory board for researchers and stakeholders).

## **II. ERA-Net with strong national rules**

This type of funding network uses the strength of national partners and national procedures, and does not generally create common, and formal documentation. Therefore, there is less emphasis on common organization, in favour of using the best national practices that are already established. Challenges are in many national differences, especially in proposal evaluation due to the differences in national policy priorities.

*Good practices for this type of network to consider:*

- The reliance on strong national practices can sometimes cause more problems than advantages. Develop a Funding Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding very carefully (perhaps by adapting the templates from other ERA-Nets);
- These rules should be ready and the partners can decide after this whether they want to join or not. Because partners cannot be fully committed until all the details are known;
- Use experiences of other ERA-Nets which have already developed common agreements, including common funders rules, common evaluation procedures etc.;
- Allow learning from the national practices, but then adopt the best one;
- Carefully define the practices of solving cases of disagreement – it will make some of the challenges easier.

## **III. ERA-Net with common planning with high user-involvement**

This type of funding network combines strong common planning with high end-user involvement. It may be more difficult to agree about the funding, topics and proposals evaluation due to the higher user involvement. However, due to the early user involvement from different countries there are no negative attitudes about the common pot and spending, stakeholders commitments, and differences in the national priorities.

*Good practices for this type of network to consider:*

- To keep a well developed common structure, ensure the participation of both research users and partners, and plan carefully for end-user involvement ;
- Define very clearly the rights and responsibilities of stakeholders;
- Develop a good strategy tool for decision making among stakeholders.

**Experiences and good practices of the environmental ERA-Nets which have been collected in this report can be used for planning of the future joint calls of the ERA-Nets and for the EC Learning platform to further develop and enhance joint collaboration between funding agencies and researchers of the EU member states.**

## Recommendations to the Commission from participants of the Helsinki workshop<sup>1</sup>

- The number of ERA-Nets is too big. The present overlap in ERA-Nets can be the basis for creating clusters. The ERA-Net Learning Platform could help identify the rules and the focuses of the ERA-Nets;
- It would be good to have large umbrella ERA-Nets. Umbrella ERA-Nets are desired because there is no good separation of topics. Such umbrella ERA-Nets can carry out both large calls as well as smaller focused calls. In terms of the size of the call, focused smaller calls are preferred as they are easier to coordinate and manage. However, no strict rules should be created for the size of the call;
- Some flexibility from the Commission in terms of rules and funding would be beneficial. For example, "juste retour" is a real bottle neck and has strong implications on which topics can be funded;
- Funding Agreements (FA) and Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and certain ancillary rules and documents are common in many ERA-Nets, so there is no need to reinvent the wheel every time. The Commission should provide templates for funding agreements or memoranda of understanding, but also leave space for flexibility;
- The Commission should also accept in the future that for certain calls there is no need to have all funders participating. When the funders are too different, selecting the topics becomes difficult and time consuming. Therefore, calls should be clustered, using subsets of funding networks to create a mosaic of joint call strategies and approaches. One size should not be made to fit all.
  
- At present the SKEP network is an important discussion forum for the environmental ERA-Nets. How could this collaboration be organised in the future?

---

<sup>1</sup> ERA-Net Workshop was organized by SKEP ERA-Net, Finnish Ministry for Environment (FiMoE) and Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) in Helsinki October 8-9 2008. There were 27 representatives from 12 environmental ERA-Nets.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgement .....	2
Executive summary.....	3
Recommendations to the Commission from participants of the Helsinki workshop .....	7
Table of Contents.....	8
List of figures.....	9
List of tables .....	9
List of boxes .....	9
1. Introduction.....	10
2. General Characteristics.....	11
2.1. ERA-Net instruments .....	11
2.2. Research objectives .....	12
2.3. Study design and data.....	12
3. Perception of joint calls: results of survey .....	16
3.1. Perception of barriers and benefits.....	16
3.2. Perception of management in different stages of a joint call.....	18
3.3. Participation in decision making in different stages of a joint call.....	19
3.4. Comparison with national calls.....	20
4. Planning joint calls .....	21
4.1. Deciding on funding scheme .....	21
4.2. Challenges of partners participation in a joint call.....	23
4.3. Implementation of funding model and administration.....	24
4.4. Formal documents .....	25
4.5. Deciding on themes of a joint call.....	26
5. Proposal evaluation .....	30
5.1. Defining proposal evaluation procedures and criteria.....	30
5.2. National differences and their effect on proposal evaluation .....	31
5.3. Conflict of interests .....	31
5.4. Gender equality .....	32
5.5. Feedback .....	32
6. Involvement of stakeholders and end-users.....	34
6.1. Identification of stakeholders and end-users.....	34
6.2. Extent and timing of involvement.....	35
6.3. Channels of communication .....	36
7. Using the results of research programmes.....	38
7.1. Dissemination of research results from joint programmes .....	38
7.2. Programme evaluation and its use.....	39
8. Learning.....	43
8.1. Learning in ERA-Nets' transnational calls and national programmes .....	43
8.1. Intercultural learning .....	44

8.2. Inter-organizational learning.....	45
9. Typology of experiences in ERA-Nets .....	48
9.1 Building a typology .....	48
9.2. Description of Type 1 networks: "ERA-Net with strong common planning" .....	49
9.3. Description of Type 2 networks: "ERA-Nets with strong national rules" .....	49
9.4. Description of Type 3 networks: "ERA-Nets with strong user-involvement" .....	50
10. An ideal joint call .....	52
11. Conclusions.....	55
11.1. Joint-call checklist for ERA-Net partners.....	55
11.2. Recommendations for ERA-Nets by type .....	56
References .....	57
Appendices .....	59
Appendix 1. Questions for on-line survey.....	60
Appendix 2. Questions for semi-structured interviews .....	67
Appendix 3. List of participant for ERA-Net workshop in Helsinki.....	69
Appendix 4. Workshop program.....	70

## List of figures

Figure 1. Design of the study.....	12
Figure 2. Benefits of the joint calls, % .....	17
Figure 3. Barriers of joint calls, % .....	18
Figure 4. Perception of management of the various phases of a joint call.....	19
Figure 5. Possibilities to influence decisions during various parts of a joint call .....	19
Figure 6. Comparison of finding consensus in joint calls and national programme .....	20
Figure 7. Means of collecting suggestions for themes selection .....	26
Figure 8. Problems in proposals evaluation in ERA-Net joint calls .....	31
Figure 9. End-users involvement.....	35
Figure 10. Communication channels .....	37
Figure 11. Ways for results dissemination for ERA-Net joint calls .....	38
Figure 12. Main problems in dissemination of the results of the joint calls to the end users .....	39
Figure 13. Possible problems in joint call's implementation due to national differences.....	45
Figure 14. Three types of ERA-Nets and the factor loadings .....	48

## List of tables

Table 1. Overview of ERA-Nets involved in the study .....	13
Table 2. Joint calls case studies details .....	14
Table 3. Influence of the stakeholders in theme selection .....	26
Table 4. Ideal joint call flow chart.....	53

## List of boxes

Box 1. Cases of partners' participation.....	24
Box 2. Cases of administration of joint calls.....	25
Box 3. Cases of defining the themes.....	28
Box 4. Cases of proposal evaluation.....	30
Box 5. Cases of stakeholders and users involvement .....	35
Box 6. Cases of programme evaluation .....	41

*".. This call has been a fantastic process of learning on each other procedures and administrative culture, which constitutes a strong step forward towards a European Research Area"*

## 1. Introduction

The ERA-Net scheme of the European Union is aimed at increasing the cooperation and improving the coordination between national and regional research institutions and activities. The strength of these transnational research initiatives is in bringing together experiences and knowledge of researchers from different countries. In the environmental research sector in particular, many issues cannot be researched only on the national level. Because of the nature of many environmental problems they do not respect national borders, and are too vast and complex to be solved by any one country alone, and the collaboration of several countries is vital.

Many ERA-Nets have established, or plan to establish, joint transnational research programmes on a particular theme. There are many ERA-Nets that are already in the stage where programme management has been planned and agreed upon and the first joint calls have been announced. However, there are still several challenges that ERA-Nets are facing when planning, managing and evaluating these research programmes. Today's ERA-Nets are pilots of the future research programmes.

This study has looked at the management challenges of the ERA-Nets for transnational calls/research programmes on issues important for environmental governance and identifying possible solutions for building a mutual understanding on cost-effective, motivating and user oriented management of the ERA-Net joint calls.

The report is structured in the following way: chapter two describes data and methodology, chapter three provides an overview of the perceptions towards joint calls, including a review of benefits and barriers, management and decision making. Planning the calls and issues that partners face before launching the call (i.e. deciding on funding structure, preparing formal documentation, agreement on topic selection etc.) are discussed in the chapter four. In the chapter five, the process of development of proposal evaluation is described in detail, and challenges that partners are facing as well as good practices are also identified. Chapters six and seven are focused on ERA-Net's experiences with stakeholder involvement and the uptake of research results. After that we discuss one of the important processes of ERA-Nets joint calls - learning. Chapters ten and eleven are devoted to building a typology of ERA-Net experiences and identifying the "ideal joint call" process. The reports ends with the summary of good practices to the ERA-Net partners and coordinators, as well as notes to the Commission.

## 2. General Characteristics

### 2.1. ERA-Net instruments

Since 2004 the EU has funded trans-national research funding networks in the form of ERA-Nets to enhance the bottom up collaboration of national research agencies in the spirit of the Lisbon Strategy. The goal of the ERA-Net instrument has been to encourage calls for proposals issued jointly by Member States, and countries associated to the Framework Programme, as a contribution to pooling the resources in the European Research Area.

As a result a total of 71 ERA-Nets were supported under FP6 (not including support measures for project preparation and applications for additional funding). By 2006, the scheme had included more than 1000 participations, and 449 different participants (EU 2006).

In addition, the *ERA-Net Plus* scheme was developed for use in FP7, which provides a possibility of topping up funding for joint calls of several member states.

The *Article 169* EC treaty was first applied in FP6, the goal is to merge different national and regional research programmes into one joint programme. This Article provides for the possibility of EU participation in R&D programmes which are designed and implemented by several Member States. EDCTP (European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership) is the first activity carried out under Article 169. Further measures are planned under FP 7: AAL (Ambient Assisted Living), BONUS (Baltic Sea research), EMRP (metrology).

By December 2006 more than 500 million EUR national research funding was coordinated through ERA-Nets, mostly via joint calls: including calls under planning - 202 million EUR, already launched calls - 97 million EUR, and already implemented calls - 281 million EUR. The current overall estimate is more than 800 million EUR (Joerg Niehoff, 2008).

Each of the ERA-Nets is going through an individual learning curve when planning and implementing joint calls and due to the large number of ERA-Nets different practices it often became difficult for partners to keep up with what is happening in each ERA-Net. Therefore, the EU Commission in 2008 launched the *ERA-Net Learning platform* to monitor, guide and assist harmonising structures and procedures for simplified and efficient joint call activities towards a common organisational framework ([http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/coordination/era\\_lp\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/coordination/era_lp_en.html)).

In addition, as a part of Learning platform the *NetWatch* initiative is being developed by the European Commission for all ERA-Nets to enhance transnational cooperation between national research programmes. *NetWatch* collects comprehensive country-specific data on research policies, programmes and organizations. It aims to improve the visibility of the ERA-Net scheme and its national programmes and joint actions and facilitate learning between the ERA-Nets. (<http://cordis.europa.eu/erawatch/>).

In this report we will use the term 'joint call' to refer to both individual transnational joint calls and the joint research programmes of the ERA-Nets.

## 2.2. Research objectives

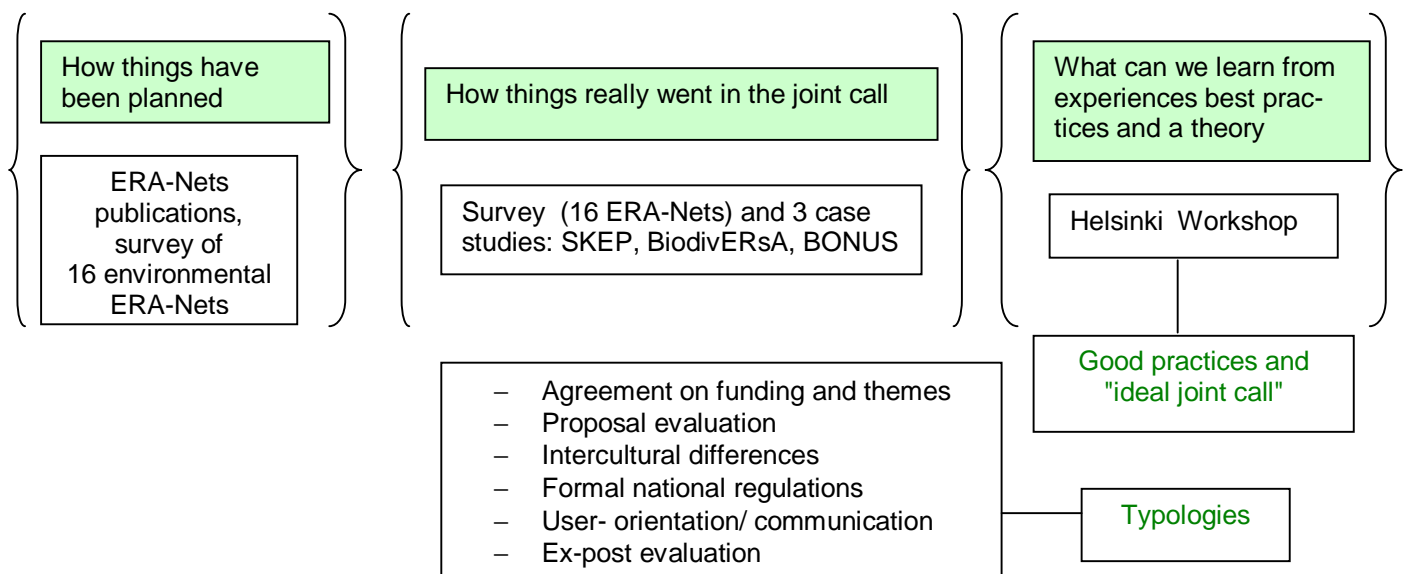
Experiences and challenges that ERA-Nets face in joint calls, and solutions to these challenges, are very valuable and important for further development of the ERA-Net scheme, and for further cooperation between funding agencies in the area of environmental research. Thus, the research objectives of this report are the following:

- to analyze the experiences of the environmental ERA-Nets in planning and managing transnational joint calls;
- to learn what happened in practice in ERA-Nets when they planned and implemented the joint calls.
- to create a typology of the experiences of the ERA-Nets in management of joint calls;
- to identify the "good practices" for management of ERA-Net joint calls

## 2.3. Study design and data

The empirical material for the study has been collected by combining various methods of social science. In addition to analysis of the ERA-Net documents/publications and programme related documents, information on joint call/programme management was collected through an on-line survey of programme coordinators and partners of the ERA-Net joint calls and through interview data for the selected case (see figure 1).

**Figure 1. Design of the study**



### The survey

The survey included 31 respondents from 12 countries and from 16 environmental ERA-Nets (see the list of ERA-Nets below). Respondents include both ERA-Net coordinators, steering committee members, work package leaders, and they represent ministries, research/academic institutions and universities, as well as agencies.

Some organizations are involved in several ERA-Nets and therefore can be simultaneously in different stages of joint calls. This has caused certain difficulties for the respondents to reply but as the respondents have specified on behalf of which ERA-Net they will be answering it didn't create any methodological problems with data analysis.

**Table 1. Overview of ERA-Nets involved in the study**

<i>ERA-Net</i>	<i>respon dents</i>	<i>Funding structure</i>	<i>Stage</i>	<i>Stage of the call</i>
BiodivERsA	1	virtual	Est. 2005 for 4 years	Joint call launched September 2007
BONUS	2	virtual	Est. 2004 for 4 years	BONUS plus launched in the fall of 2007, as a bridge to research programme article 169
BIOENERGY	1	virtual	Est. 2004 for 4 years	2 pilot calls (2006, 2007) main joint call January 2008
CIRCLE	5	virtual	Est. 2005 for 4 years	2 joint calls: Mediterranean and Nordic
CRUE	3	mixed	Est. 2004	1 joint call completed, another is planned in summer 2008
ECORD	1	common pot	Est. 2003 for 4 years	completed 2 joint calls and has launched the third call
EUWI	1	virtual	Est. 2007 for 4 years	
INNER	3	virtual	Est. 2005 for 4 years	Joint call launched March 2007
IWRM	2	virtual	Est. 2006 for 5 years	pilot call launched at the end of 2007
Mari Fish	2	virtual	Est. 2006 for 5 years	Joint call launched October 2008
MarinERA	1	virtual	Est. 2004	Pilot call October 2008
SKEP	4	first call: virtual second: common pot third call: virtual	Est. 2005 for 4 years	Launched 2 joint calls in 2007 and 2008 and planning the third call in January 2009
SNOWMAN	1	virtual	Est. 2004	Pilot joint call December 2006, planning joint call January 2009
SUSPRISE	1	virtual	2005	Pilot joint call March 2007
URBAN	2	virtual	Est. 2006 for 4 years	Joint call planned for September 2009
NET BIOME	1	virtual	Est. May 2007	No announcement on joint calls yet

### Case studies

The three *case studies* were carried out to see in depth how the joint call preparation and implementation happened in practice. We have chosen *BONUS*, *BiodivERsA* and *SKEP*, as they allow to represent different levels and structure of funding and ways of planning and management of the calls. Table 1 below summarizes details of the joint calls of the three case -studies.

**Table 2. Joint calls case studies details**

	<b>SKEP</b>	<b>BiodivERsA</b>	<b>BONUS</b>
Number of countries	16 government ministries and agencies, from 13 countries	19 major research funding agencies from 15 countries	10 research funding organisations from 9 countries
Stage of the joint call	Call 1: June 2007, Call 2: February 2008, Call 3: January 2009	Launched November 2007	Launched September 2007
Amount	Call 1 (pilot): 0,550M EUR virtual pot Call 2 (pilot): 0, 325M EUR, true common pot Call 3: 2.15 M EUR, virtual pot	21.36M EUR - virtual pot	22 M EUR - virtual pot
Proposal selection	Call 1: three projects got funded Call 2: two projects got funded Call 3: Launch in February 2009	181 initial proposals 47 proposals have been invited to go onto the full proposal stage. 12 projects funded	149 Letters of Intent 55 proposals have been invited to go onto the full proposal stage. 16 projects got funded
Themes	Call 1: Sustainable consumption and production Call 2: Science into policy processes Call 3: Impact of converging technologies for environmental regulation (with sub-topics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Global change and biodiversity dynamics</li> <li>- Ecosystem functioning</li> <li>- Ecosystem services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Linking Science and Policy</li> <li>- Understanding Climate Change and Geophysical Forcing</li> <li>- Combating Eutrophication Achieving Sustainable Fisheries</li> <li>- Protecting Biodiversity</li> <li>- Preventing Pollution</li> <li>- Integrating Ecosystem and Society</li> </ul>
Call Management	- for the 3rd call: Call Steering committee was established - also 3 working groups established for call topic development, framework, principles, procedures and legal agreements, call communication & dissemination plans	-Establishment of secretariat, management committee, scientific committee, and review panel - more important is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) - management is flexible emphasis on strong trust between partners	- Independent organisation BONUS EEIG was found. - Joint Baltic Sea research program is managed by the secretariat, the steering committee, the advisory board evaluation panel, and the Call task force
Proposal evaluation procedure	In the SKEP pilot calls the proposal evaluation procedure was conducted in two-stages. In the first instance, a scoping and priority check was carried out. Each funding partner assessed each proposal's contribution to the thematic area of the joint call. Also a funders priority evaluation was conducted, which graded the proposal on the basis of funding priorities within their respective organisations. In the second phase, each proposal was peer reviewed by an independent pool of international experts. The scores from these two processes was integrated in a specially designed spreadsheet to give an indexed, ranked score in order to guide Call Steering Committee discussions.	Two stage process, initial letter and full proposal stage. Agreeing on evaluation criteria took long time. Each proposal is evaluate by three evaluators. Evaluation committee consists of 22-23 experts of whom 1/3 have policy and 2/3 scientific background. Also, there are external evaluators separately from evaluation committee, also 1/3 with policy expertise	Common evaluation scheme was developed. Procedure was a 2 step process. Proposals are evaluated in terms of scientific content and relevance by 3 evaluators and then research users rank the best scientific proposals.
End-users involvement	End users for the three calls are very different.	User orientation is addressed at the proposals stage, (under dissemination of results and knowledge transfer/ Uses and impacts). ERA-Net management includes a very broad group of stakeholders.	Involvement of end users from the beginning :thousands are informed and participated in theme selection. Also research users such as HelCom and there are decision bodies that can make use of the research results
Program evaluation	The ERA-Net has prepared guidelines for ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post evaluation and a mid-term evaluation has been conducted for the first joint call. It has evaluated the experiences of stakeholders regarding the planning and management of the first pilot call through questionnaires.	The ERA-Net research funding has not included any programme evaluation into its management. The programme secretariat is interested in doing an ad hoc self-evaluation at the end of the programme. The structure or the criteria have not been planned as yet, even though the programme has already been implemented.	Program evaluation is developed and implemented as part of common scheme. Both a mid-term evaluation and a final evaluation are planned. Final evaluation is to be divided into scientific quality and management processes, and impacts of the programme.

## Helsinki workshop

Another source of data of the study was the ERA-Net Workshop in Helsinki. It brought together 27 coordinators and partners from 12 ERA-Nets. It has been a unique opportunity for ERA-Net coordinators to meet and to share their experiences, as well as to have a representative from the Commission DG Research, who presented the current state of the ERA-Net Learning Platform and answered questions on Commission view on the ERA-Nets.

Presentations and discussions of the workshop were focused on the experiences of environmental ERA-Nets when planning and implementing a joint call. Experiences of several ERA-Nets were shared: on planning a joint call and preparing "Memorandum of Understanding" in BiodivERsA; involving stakeholders in two joint calls in CIRCLE; learning from national programmes and other ERA-Nets in the case of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency; and developing common evaluation scheme for proposals in BONUS. The full workshop programme is available in Appendix 4. The presentations and workshop memorandum can be found on the SKEP website<sup>2</sup>.

Discussions in the work groups pointed out successful practices and challenges that ERA-Net coordinators and partners have experienced in their planning, involving stakeholders, evaluation and learning from the other ERA-Nets. The results of the workshop are analysed and presented as perceived, 'good practices', at the end of each chapter.

In addition, one of the group exercises of the workshop was devoted to outlining an *ideal joint call*, which allowed us to see similarities and differences between the participants' perceptions of how the ideal joint call should be managed (see chapter 10).

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.skep-era.net/site/79.asp>

### 3. Perception of joint calls: results of survey

Many ERA-Nets have launched or are in the process of planning joint calls. In our survey 60% of respondents indicated that they have participated in a joint call already and only 3 % of respondents indicated that they haven't participated in any joint calls. All the others have had some experience, the majority of them having carried out more than one joint call, and 20% are taking part in transnational research programme.

#### 3.1. Perception of barriers and benefits

As joint calls are a relatively new initiative it is still difficult to judge whether the joint calls have added value in comparison to national calls. It would be necessary to evaluate funded projects and the output gained from the projects to evaluate the added value. When talking about the perception of added value of joint calls majority of the our survey respondents (70 %) believe that joint calls have more added value, while 22% of respondents have concerns about its significance. 7% of respondents saw the advantages only theoretically and a very small share of respondents (4%) didn't see any advantages at all. According to many respondents it is either *"still early to tell"* or *"both kinds of calls is necessary and useful"*, *"it depends on a topic"* Also, there was an opinion that some national programmes can also fund transnational research (for example, in the Netherlands there are no pure national calls which are open for Dutch citizens only).

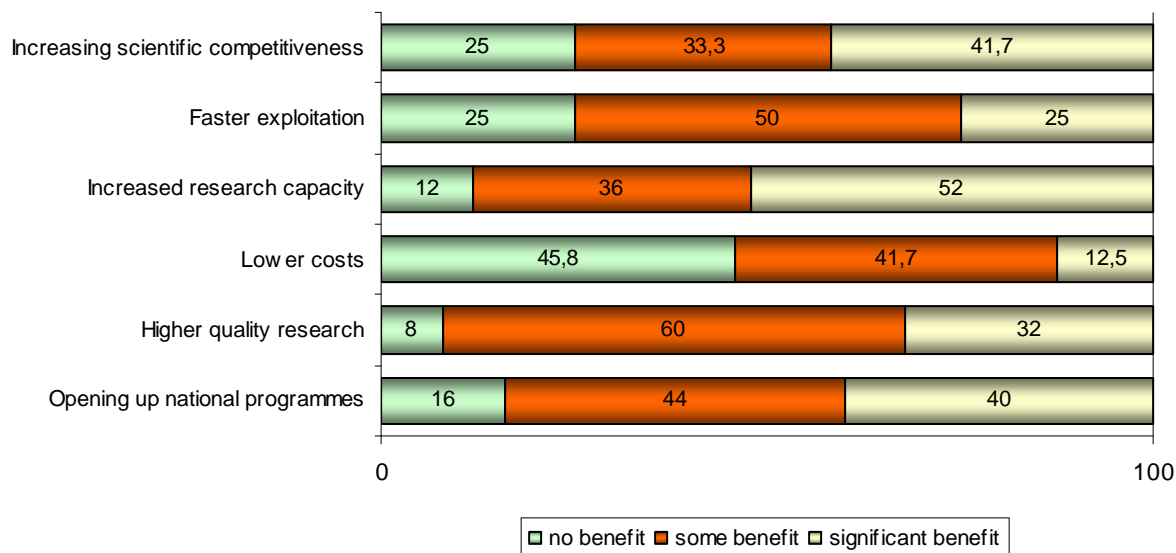
Respondents mentioned the following to be the benefits of the joint calls:

- Networking and international cooperation: benefits accrued from work with prominent research teams, scientists of different countries can learn from each other during a research project;
- Access to a larger pool of research results for transfer to policy makers;
- Joint dissemination of research results increases the access to the results worldwide;
- Budget reduction on a national level (one has to pay only a part for research conducted).
- Learning of new administrative procedures;
- Generation of a European research culture beyond the national level, and the creation of European consortia;
- Enhancement of the science-policy interaction: improving the strategic role of the research community with a common voice influence decision makers;
- Knowledge of who shares the 'same' responsibilities in other countries.

According to the survey results, the most perceived benefit came from increased scientific competitiveness and capacity, and higher quality research (see figure 2).

Because of the global nature of many environmental issues it would be logical to suggest that environmental ERA-Nets should benefit more from transnational calls. However, our survey showed that there is no unanimity in the perception of advantages of the joint calls for environmental ERA-Nets: 52% respondents noted that there are more advantages for the environmental ERA-Nets, while 44% of respondents didn't see it any different compared with the other ERA-Nets.

**Figure 2. Benefits of the joint calls, %**



Among the main barriers faced by joint calls is the different nature the ERA-Net partners and the level of stakeholder commitment, as well as uneven benefits from “common pot” for partners and finding the common and topic and timeline, while cultural differences, complexity of coordination and administrative costs didn't seem to be of a high concern.

According to the respondents of sixteen environmental ERA-Nets, the main barriers of the joint calls include the following issues (see figure 3):

- Political limitations to opening up national programmes;
- Uneven benefits for funding partners;
- Negative attitudes about spending national taxpayers money in transnational projects;
- Lack of an available national budget, especially when funder participates in too many ERA-Nets;
- Agreeing on a common topic and a common timeline for a joint call;
- Different nature ERA-Net partners;
- Different level of stakeholder commitment;

Cultural differences, the complexity of coordination, and administrative costs, were perceived as less significant challenges.

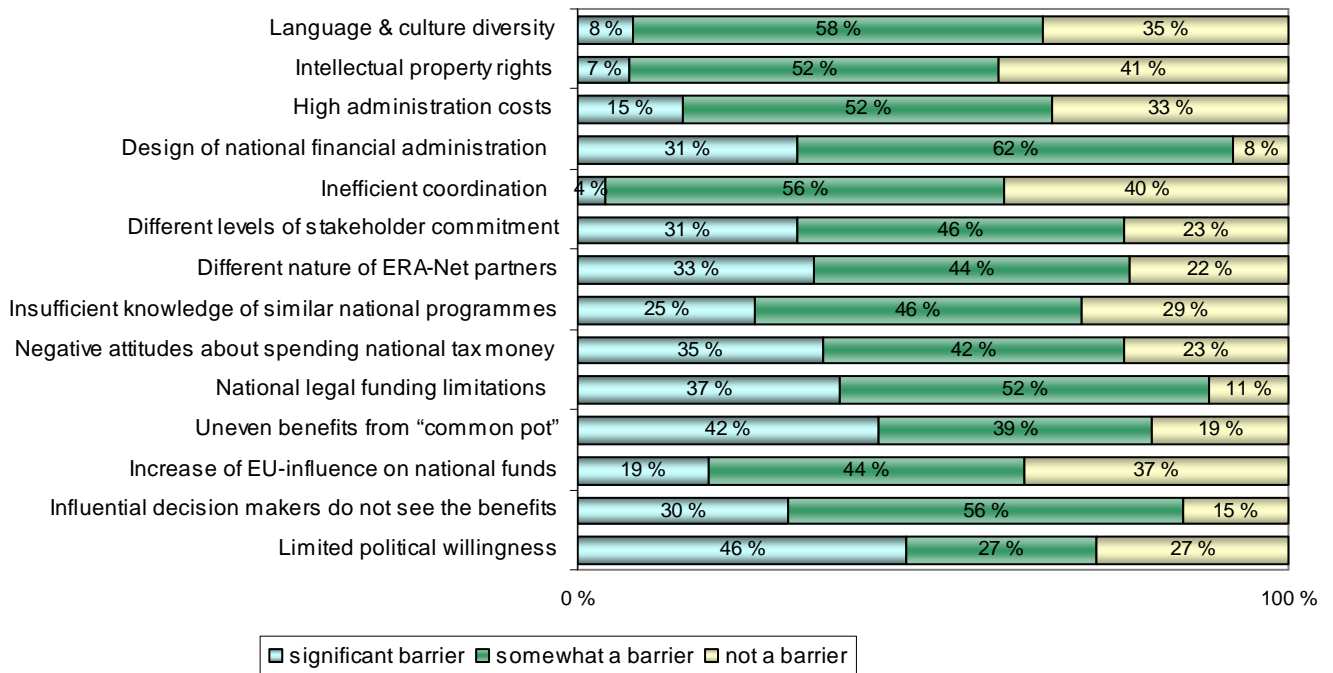
Many ERA-Nets have analyzed the barriers and advantages of the joint calls prior to launching the first calls.

For example, the BONUS ERA-Net identified possibilities and barriers for the joint call in their publication in 2005. Possibilities and barriers were divided into formal and informal and three models of programme structure and funding procedure have been analysed and discussed to make recommendations for planning of the BONUS plus call. Possibilities of the joint call were clearly seen in terms of increased integration between funding organizations and environmental policy, which would strengthen the knowledge based management of the Baltic Sea problems (BONUS 2005, nr.2).

The SKEP ERA-Net has carried out two pilot-scale joint calls before planning its third joint call. During the pilot call phase, different models of funding were implemented and experience was gained on what could be possible barriers in the third call: agreement on themes procedure, and development of the common proposal evaluation procedure<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Comparison of two pilot calls is forthcoming under WP3, please check SKEP website for update: [www.skep-era.net](http://www.skep-era.net)

**Figure 3. Barriers of joint calls, %**



The BiodivERsA ERA-Net also identified the main barriers that it faced while planning and managing the joint call as the following (BiodivERsA 2006):

- Lack of available information about ongoing research: inventory and development of tools for analysis;
- National priorities and working methods: learning from each other; finding common ground;
- Reluctance to relinquish control over national funding programmes: trust building and securing political commitment;
- Diversity of funding agencies and programmes: finding innovative approaches to make the more “blue-sky” and the more “policy oriented” agencies work together;
- An experience of learning by doing: finding areas of flexibility.

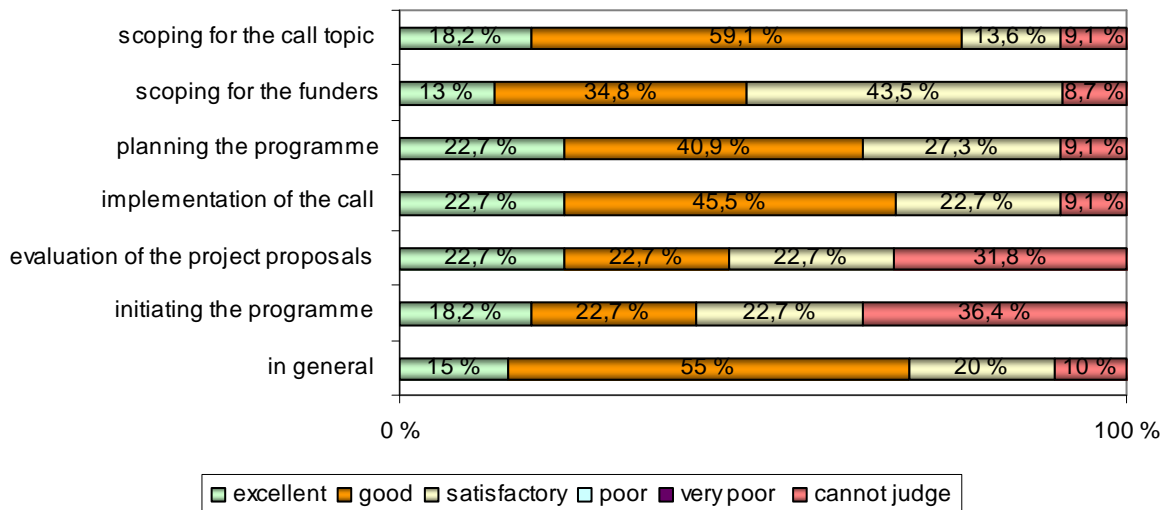
### 3.2. Perception of management in different stages of a joint call

Various ERA-Nets are currently in different stages of joint call activities. However, despite the different length of experience, the majority had formed a very high opinion of overall management of the ERA-Net joint calls. According to the results of our survey the overall management of the different stages of the joint calls was evaluated very positively (15% rated it excellent and 55% - good). There were no "poor" or "very poor" estimates for any stage of the calls.

Looking at each particular stage of a joint call we found out that management in scoping for the themes was perceived quite positively by the majority of the respondents (18% excellent and 59% good), while during the phase of scoping for funders, majority respondents felt that management was just satisfactory (43,5%).

Respondents mentioned that there is often a vicious circle between budget and themes: without themes there is no budget, without budget no involvement in theme development.

**Figure 4. Perception of management of the various phases of a joint call**



In planning of the joint call ERA-Net partners seem to have difficulties with the common timeline. Partners have to agree on the timing for joint calls in line with the national schedules. Also, the preparations of the proposals among the participants from many countries may require extra time.

The processes of proposal evaluation often depends on the different national evaluation practices that may require considerable time to resolve to everyone’s satisfaction. The timing of different national activities is likely to be complicated. One of the suggestions is to organize several phases of calls that create the required flexibility. Also, when planning the timing of responses and evaluations it is recommended to include some lag time in different actions (Könnola et al. 2007).

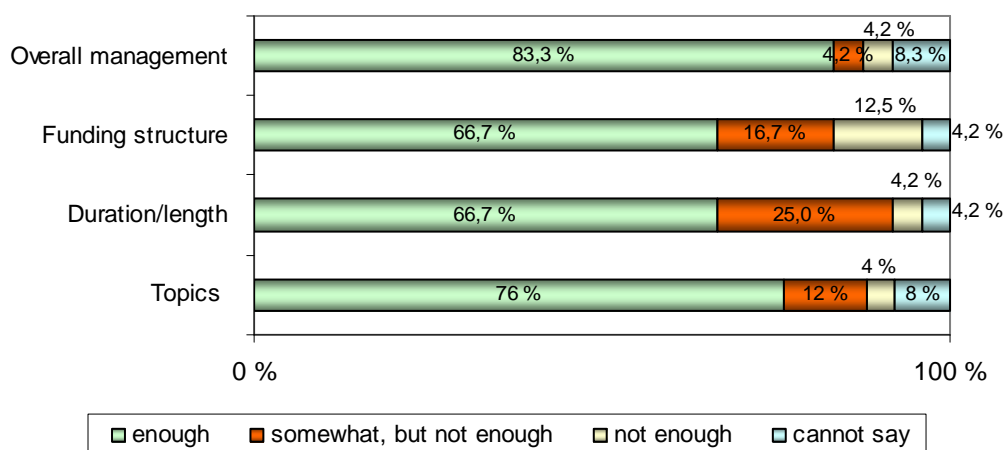
*"We experienced problems in securing the funding in one country, it was making it frustrating for the researchers from that country, delaying the start of the projects"*

A lot of problems that different ERA-Nets have experienced during different stages of planning and implementation the joint call were solved on ad-hoc basis. Therefore, there are not ‘one problem - one solution’, experiences, but instead a multitude of experiences and ad-hoc solutions.

### 3.3. Participation in decision making in different stages of a joint call

The majority of the respondents felt that they had enough possibilities to participate and influence decision-making in relation to the overall management of the joint call. (see graph 5). In thematic selection, the majority of respondents felt they had enough opportunities to influence the situation. However, almost 30% considered that they didn't have enough influence on the decision about funding and duration of the call.

**Figure 5. Possibilities to influence decisions during various parts of a joint call**



This could be explained by the fact that decisions about the funding mode are made by the steering committee, and may be decided prior to the agreement on other issues when planning the call. The duration and length could most likely also be predetermined before the call planning begins and could be a subject for the definition of ERA-Net/ERA-Net plus.

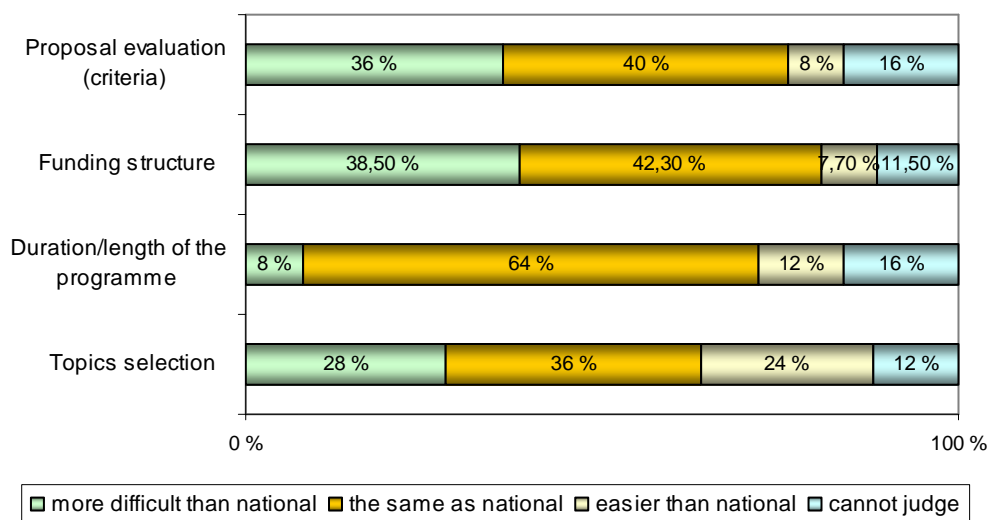
### 3.4. Comparison with national calls

There were many discussions comparing the value of ERA-Nets joint calls and national programmes. According to the survey results there is no unanimity between the ERA-Nets respondents about this matter (see figure 8). For example, the opinions about funding structure were the following: 38% of respondents believe it is more difficult to agree on funding structures than in national programmes, and 42% think that it is of the same difficulty level.

The perceived situation is different with the theme selection. In comparison with other issues, reaching agreement on research themes is actually quite similar and even easier in joint calls than in national programmes (36% and 24% correspondingly) (see fig.6).

Agreeing on the duration of joint calls appears quite similar to the national procedure (64% of respondents recognized it, while only 8% thought it was more difficult). However, agreeing on funding structures and proposal evaluation criteria seemed to be more difficult for respondents (38% and 36%) .

**Figure 6. Comparison of finding consensus in joint calls and national programme**



Comparing the process of finding consensus in joint calls with national programmes - agreeing about duration of program - is most similar with national programmes, while agreeing on funding structure and proposal evaluation is more difficult.

According to the majority of respondents the overall consultation process was successful (84%). Several respondents commented that finding agreement took longer than in a national call, it was more laborious, but the end result was good.

## 4. Planning joint calls

Planning an ERA-Net joint call is a very important process which involves several major processes: defining funders and stakeholders, establishing steering and other committees, deciding on funding structures, planning the budget, defining themes, deciding on proposal evaluation procedure, developing and signing the formal agreements with partners and many others. So, in this chapter we will describe the main issues that ERA-Nets face when planning the joint call, their experiences and outline good practices.

### 4.1. Deciding on funding scheme

When planning a joint call, one of the first issues that need to be decided is the funding structure. There are several funding schemes, which can be used by the ERA-Nets in the transnational programmes real (true) common pot, virtual common pot, and a coordinated common pot (mixed mode).

Real (true) common pot – a funding model where the funding is provided irrespective of the applicant nationality. It allows transnational flow of funds. It works well for larger countries with high amounts of successful researchers. The real common pot cannot guarantee the backflow of the national research funds contributed (no *juste retour*). This type of funding architecture was the preferred mode of the European Commission for ERA-Nets in FP6, and offers the highest level of integration and efficiency (through reduced management complexity and costs).

Virtual common pot – a funding model for a joint call where each country funds its own national project partners. This model ensures '*juste retour*'. This model involves a high level of administrative effort, because budget approval is granted separately for national project partners and national administrative procedures have to be done separately. It offers a lower level of integration, but is possible for a greater proportion of ERA-Net participants.

Coordinated common pot (mixed mode) – a funding model which is a mixture of the true common pot and virtual common pot. It has more centralized procedures, and may apply a '*juste retour*' principle.

The virtual common pot model is more commonly used funding model among the ERA-Nets because the true common pot model is often more challenging for a significant proportion of network participants. Some countries have national regulations that impede funding research outside the country or there may be an implicit rule that national money has to be used for funding national researchers. Even in the absence of legal barriers to joint funding, in some cases it is still not yet culturally acceptable to receive and distribute funds from other parties and to fund foreign researchers unless it is strongly linked to the national research interest. Despite the safeguards in place to prevent funds being spent on research which is not of high priority or quality, there is a concern by some organisations of losing administrative sovereignty and control of final funding decisions as a result of a common pot model. Some smaller countries also point out that their national funds are small, which makes it more difficult to present arguments for funding research outside of the national borders. However, the common pot system allows smaller funders to take part more easily (unlike the virtual common pot approach which ring-fences funds at a national level).

Virtual common pots allow each country to continue to operate in its own way. Virtual pots are the most commonly-used approach, as they are easier and do not require exchanging funds and allow each programme to fund national partners to national mechanisms. However, the downside of virtual pot is that it doesn't ensure the funding for all the best projects. (EC Workshop 2006). According to the summary of an EC workshop on joint calls (2006) basic research is more at ease with real

common pot, while competitive/industrial research is often very reluctant and thus employ the virtual common pot more often.

In our survey the majority of respondents have used the virtual pot (77%). Common pot was used only by 8% and 23% chose the mixed mode (see table 1).

In many ERA-Nets, respondents noted that they would like to use the common pot, but it was not working for them due to different reasons, such as some countries have limitations on using national research funding or national policies that prohibit funding foreign researchers. The true common pot is perhaps best used within ERA-Nets with a high level of uniformity amongst participants, or to fund clusters of research within ERA-Nets (no more than 6 participants, high integration).

SKEP ERA-Net tried different funding models in its pilot calls: the virtual pot and the true common pot. The main call is planned to be a virtual pot in order to allow an increase in funding magnitude, and the interaction of as many participants as possible. The pilot calls were designed to derive lessons learnt in terms of call management, and were thus modest in the level of their funding. Thematic decisions were relatively easy for these first two joint calls. However, for the third joint call there were many discussions on which partners were interested and will fund which theme. A comparison of the experiences with two funding models in the pilot calls is being undertaken (see update on SKEP web pages <http://www.skep-era.net>).

In BiodivERsA, partners joined the ERA-Net for many reasons and with different expectations. Collaboration between BiodivERsA partners had previously been in an ad hoc way, or via a joint scheme such as EuroDIVERSITY. The range of different funding bodies and their experiences of collaborative working, coupled with the fact that the biodiversity research community is particularly wide, which meant that an ERA-Net for biodiversity research was, by definition, ambitious. In the beginning there were talks about doing a common pot for a joint call. Everyone agreed that the common pot is best but at the end of the day hardly anyone could do it, and thus it was decided to go with a virtual pot. So, now every partner funds only its own country's researchers but there is some flexibility if needed not to be forced to leave out some excellent projects. This is possible as some partners are able to fund other countries.

The amount of funding that each funding agency pledges toward a particular theme is also not so obvious and often is a subject for numerous meetings and discussions.

In the case of BONUS, all funding models were examined, and as a result of discussions the decision was made to use a virtual common pot. To make decisions on how much funding each country should give, the steering committee used 2004 as a benchmark year. They studied what had been funded and how much funding was consumed in 2004. The aim was to estimate how much each country was spending on marine research and then discuss how much each country would put towards the virtual common pot. At the end of this exercise, the figures received were in approximate proportion to the national funding, but quite flexible. So, large developed countries tended to underestimate their capacity to consume the funding, while the transition countries tend to overestimate this. In the future it would be better to see funding commitments more equally distributed, or to have a set value range (percent for all, i.e. 12- 15 %) (BONUS, 2005, Nr.3).

When deciding what funding model to choose, it is important to consider the following (adapted from the EU Learning Platform):

- the amount of the call (for smaller calls true common pot or coordinated common pot has more advantages as well as for huge consortiums, like ERA-Net Plus);
- number of partners involved (larger numbers of partners from different countries may benefit from virtual common pot, depending on legal provisions of the partner countries. This may help drive wider cultural change);

- type of research (for innovative competitive/industrial research is more likely to use virtual common pot);
- national provision/ regulations limitations of the partners;

## 4.2. Challenges of partners participation in a joint call

There are several challenges that may hinder partners participation in an ERA-Net joint call. The main one is national regulations and budget limitations, or that topics of the call are not well suited for the funding organization in question. In cases when a partner cannot fund a specific call, the question arises as to whether it should still be able to participate and get the learning experience from the call or be involved in some other ways.

As it was pointed out earlier that some countries have **national provisions/regulations** that impede funding research outside the country, and that this makes it difficult to implement the coordinated or true common pot.

According to our survey results, partners' country formal regulations cause problems only for some of the respondents: the share of those and the ones who didn't experience problems are the same (38%). Out of formal regulations the budget and the funding route were noted to be the most difficult to deal with.

**Funding foreign partners** can sometimes be problematic depending on the national formal regulations. Policy in different countries regarding funding have been mentioned as also one of the biggest challenges and resulted in fewer partners participating in the call than was wished. Also, in some cases, when a non-EU member state<sup>4</sup> becomes an ERA-Net partner it causes more problems, as the formal regulations systems are completely different.

When we looked at the answers of the respondents to better understand who were affected by the national formal regulations we found out the following:

- Respondents who have had the virtual pot experienced slightly more problems with national regulations than the ones who have used the coordinated common pot.
- Most problems with the national regulations are experienced at the planning and proposal evaluation stage. Once the joint call is in the implementation stage the ERA-Nets are experiencing less problems with formal national regulations.
- Formal regulations are perceived to be more of a problem by ERA-Net coordinators than by partners. However, it doesn't necessarily concern work package leaders, as they expressed both positive and negative responses to this question.

ERA-Net are managed according to project management principles, and timing was considered as a limiting factor and in some cases ERA-Net respondents explained that it was impossible to wait until all members were ready and able to join the call, so the decision had to be made as soon as sufficient funding was available, and only consider the ideas and limitations of those providing the funds.

It was interesting to note that when the results were cross-tabulated according to type of organization the environmental protection agencies acknowledged the importance of member participation in case they didn't fund the call (71%), while majority of research councils considered this participation as not very necessary (71%). For environment ministries it was 50-50% for and against.

---

<sup>4</sup> Under Non-EU member state we understand the countries that have not joined the EU, i.e. Russia

In the cases when national regulations or budget constraints don't allow partners to fund the call there was still a question concerning whether they could participate in the process. There was no unanimity in opinions about member participation in cases when they didn't fund the call.

About half of the respondents considered that ERA-Net members should participate in the call procedure even if they didn't participate in funding (52%) while the other half of respondents disagreed (48%).

The participation of partners even when they are not funding the call seems to be valuable because participation is a learning process for future calls: when a partner can observe, it can help making lower barriers to future call participation. Even if not funding the call, partners can bring valuable inputs as experts, and they can benefit from the experience and the outputs.

For the perspective of some respondents, a partner's participation when not funding seems to be *unnecessary* as it would only complicate things and make the burden for the administrator too large and become too time consuming. Also, it was not desirable because non-participating partner's may have ideas for call procedure design which are not necessarily applicable. On top of these reasons, it is often difficult enough to involve those participating.

Many respondents agree that there should be certain limitations to participation when not funding the call. For example, those providing the budget for the call should make key management decisions, whilst others can give comments and their say should be more limited than that of funding partners (excluding, for example, any right to veto). Partners still can be involved by suggesting and discussing the call topics, and can be involved as an external foreign expert for evaluation, providing their skills and expertise and at the same time obtaining the experience of participation in the call. However, it may not be easy to make partners participate if they don't have decision-making powers.

**Box 1. Cases of partners' participation**

<p><b>BiodivERsA:</b> Out of 19 partners all but 2-3 partners are funding the calls. For example, one country is not funding the joint call because the funding rules were too complicated. They have been taking part in planning the call but not in deciding who to fund. Another partner did not fund because they saw that the call was too applied. But there are other partners from the same country who provide funding. (there is a separate body for the joint call - the call funding committee - where the countries which don't fund are not part of).</p>	<p><b>SKEP:</b> One of the partners was not able to participate in the call because as an organization they participate in many ERA-Nets, which really overlapped considerably in subjects. As a small agency, it is not possible to follow up with all ERA-Nets and other funding and to decide which ones to fund due to budget cuts. In some national agencies there is a specific budget for 3-4 years, and it is not flexible. Also, some people are not totally convinced in the added value of the ERA-Net concept: giving money and decision making power to other countries but not necessarily their own.</p>
--	---

**4.3. Implementation of funding model and administration**

Depending on the funding model there are differences in implementation of funding rules. In our survey, respondents saw the funding rules applied differently in joint calls. Majority of respondents (61%) noted that there were some common rules agreed, while national rules were also applied. According to 38% of respondents only national rules were used and 8% used only common rules.

In a virtual common pot the joint call is funded in accordance with national regulations/provisions and this has some consequences (i.e. administrative effort and costs are high due to the different national procedures, but no adaptation of procedures are needed). Coordinated common pots derive benefits from having a central secretariat and reduced administrative burden for partners. Both have to be agreed and planned out early, and it include the costs of funding a separate administrative body in the form of a joint call secretariat. The coordinated common pot is recommended for large consortiums with high budget (ERA-Net Learning platform workshop 2007).

## Box 2. Cases of administration of joint calls

BONUS established an independent organisation, BONUS EEIG. The Joint Baltic Sea research program is managed by the secretariat, the steering committee, the advisory board evaluation panel, and the Call Task Force.	SKEP established a Joint Call Secretariat, a Call Steering Committee, and a peer review panel for its joint calls. Also, 3 working groups established for 1) call topic development, 2) framework, principles, procedures and legal agreements, and 3) call communication & dissemination plans	BiodivERSA established a secretariat, management committee, scientific committee, and review panel for its joint call. It was decided that the management should be flexible and have no strict steering and other committees for the project. There was only one large management body - a management team - but even that was not very formalized. It has worked out well, because there is strong trust between the partners
---	---	---

The majority of the ERA-Nets established a common administration for management of the joint call. In our survey, 87% of ERA-Net respondents noted that their ERA-Net established a Call Steering Committee for joint call planning and coordination. There can be problems of ensuring appropriate representation on call steering committees to create a good balance between research and user perspectives. The representation in steering committee is usually similar to the representation in the wider ERA-Net (ministries, environmental agencies, research councils) consisting of funding institutions, WP- leaders and coordinators, and sometimes national consultants (professors) depending on an ERA-Net and country. In some ERA-Nets each country's research council have appointed a member to the steering committee.

Generally the ERA-Net respondents were pleased with the representation of their steering committee (48% perceived it as adequate and 22% as somewhat adequate for achieving a balance between research and user perspectives. However, quite a high percentage of respondents (30%) didn't provide an answer whether their steering committee representation was adequate.

### 4.4. Formal documents

Implementation agreements and rules for joint calls are usually done on two levels: at the ERA-Net level as well as at the partner country level because partners may have different national policies in view of contracts that need to be considered.

At the ERA-Net level, depending on the funding scheme, the call implementation is planned and written out in a Funding Agreement (FA), Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or in an implementation agreement in order to have clear understanding of the roles of partners, secretariat, the decision making process on the amount of funds pledged, and rules for participation if not funding. This has been seen important even though development of an FA or MoU inevitably takes time.

A Funders Agreement (FA) is a legally binding agreement between partners, whilst a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is often less legally binding and is made for recording the partners commitment to work together. It also sets out the parties' rights and obligations and summarizes how the funding and work is to be divided. Both documents provide the structure for decision-making, conflict avoidance, and conflict resolution. As every ERA-Net develops its own FA or MoU, templates could be made available from the Commission under the ERA-Net Learning platform in the future.

There are several general points that can be included in an FA or MoU (based on MoU of BiodivERSA):

1. Common expectations and objectives for the call
  - Science plan and themes of the call
  - General aim of the call
  - Added value of international cooperation
  - Type of research projects: fundamental/ applied/ “policy relevant”, duration, etc.
2. Agreement on the general framework
  - Evaluation procedures
  - Choice of funding model
  - Management and organization

### 3. Agreement on the details of the call

- time needed for this step should not be underestimated, as agreeing on details tends to reveal any remaining issues or disagreements
- Try to adopt a reasonable set of rules (rather than a compilation of all the national rules)

An FA or MoU usually includes general provisions and annex with detailed instructions. Annexes can include announcement of opportunity, application forms for each stage, funding model, assessment criteria, as well as instructions to call secretariat, to evaluation committee and to others.

Some of the ERA-Nets preparing joint research calls also sign additional agreements. In the case of Article 169 application it is necessary to establish a legal entity to manage the program (for example in BONUS ERA-Net BONUS EEIG was established for this purpose).

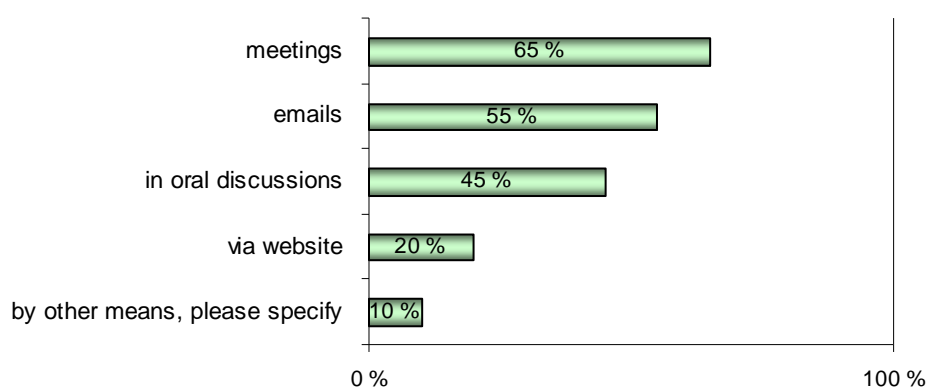
At the national level, it is common that ERA-Net participants sign a contract with the consortium or organization that they fund. Often they also require or recommend project consortia to sign a consortium agreement. The funding organizations may have different routines and practices how to organize the format and timeline of the joint call including the form of the call, form of response to call, evaluation of proposals, and informing applicants of funding decisions.

### 4.5. Deciding on themes of a joint call

One of the important issues ERA-Net partners have to agree on, is how to go about theme selection. It is a complex process, which requires agreeing on the methodology of how to elicit democratic feedback and agreement on the themes (i.e. questionnaires, workshops etc.) from prospective funders. The definition of the themes often depends on the size of the budget available and vice versa.

The way in which themes are selected differs between the ERA-Nets, but generally it has been accomplished through meetings, oral discussions (including international teleconferences), and emails, and to a lesser degree via websites (see figure below).

**Figure 7. Means of collecting suggestions for themes selection**



According to the data collected, 80% of the respondents felt that their national priorities in research interests were being taken into consideration when topics for the joint calls were decided, while 16% felt it was accounted for somewhat, but not enough.

**Table 3. Influence of the stakeholders in theme selection**

ERA-Net team in your organization	68 %
Other employees in your organization	40 %
Other	40 %

It was also noted that theme selection has to be based on where research is needed the most, instead of finding a topic that fits with all participating partners. It was pointed out as good practice to concentrate on defining the objectives for the joint call and use them to select the themes.

Some respondents note that it is like "*hitting a moving target*" when defining the topic of the call. "*The topic may feel relevant at the beginning of the process, but the whole process takes time and the situation changes*".

When the themes are very broad, everyone seems to agree, but when they are focused more narrowly, problems can arise, as some partners become less committed to the process. Therefore, a good representation of themes is needed, with a series of more narrowly focused areas. The narrowness of the themes will limit the number of applications and therefore help to make the process manageable.

Also, when selecting the thematic structure for a joint call, the discussions on the *balance between basic research, policy relevance and applied science* usually arise among the partners, as some partners have very strong views of one or the other. If some of the persons dominate the decision making, this could lead to a situation where the selected themes echoes their views only.

Several respondents mentioned that there had been very little time for the preparation of their first joint call. Still, it provided the ERA-Nets with experiences for the next call. Respondents also expressed the opinion that in the future the selection of themes will be easier as their ERA-Net calls tackled this question, and came up with good practices for themes selection.

There is a difference in theme selection in different ERA-Nets: in some (i.e. BONUS and BiodivERSA) the themes evolved from the nature of the ERA-Net, like the Baltic Sea or Biodiversity, and the thorough development of science plans and identification of the gaps in existing programmes allowed for effective theme selection. The SKEP ERA-Net conducted a thorough analysis of research gaps and priorities as part of its Work Package 2 (Gardner et al. 2008).

On the other hand, there are ERA-Nets which did not make any decision on what themes to do in the joint calls when they were formed: "*we didn't have to decide on any theme because when the themes grew up we could easily check with other ERA-Nets so that we were not overlapping*"

The themes that ERA-Nets are working with especially in the case of environmental ERA-Nets may occasionally overlap. However, when ERA-Nets have established good links among each other the overlapping of the funding and the themes seems to be less of an issue, as ERA-Nets are aware of what might be funded elsewhere. For example in BiodivERSA some ERA-Nets were identified to become advisory members of BiodivERSA. The advisory panel is kept informed of the activities of BiodivERSA and gets a chance to comment at the annual meeting of the project. The advisory panel currently includes representatives from several ERA-Nets with an environmental focus or component, namely MarinERA, SKEP, BONUS and CIRCLE (BiodivERSA 2006). It is hoped that the launch of the NetWatch system by JRC-IPTS in Sevilla, will further reduce the chances of thematic overlap or co-launch of calls requiring funding.

### Box 3. Cases of defining the themes

<p><b>BONUS</b></p> <p>"During two years we have developed a Science plan. There were meetings in several countries, then in many countries they were followed up by email discussions. A lot of people - close to thousand looked and discussed it. Also many users besides the scientific community looked at it. Agreement on themes was very slow and lengthy process, but it was worth it. When we had the call, everyone around the Baltic was informed about it, as they participated in developing it."</p>	<p><b>BiodivERsA</b></p> <p>"We built the science plan and it took one year to plan it as we collaborated with various stakeholders such as the Diversitas, UNESCO etc. and it became very detailed. Then we went to the actual call planning. We had three meetings with everyone and we used examples from other ERA-Nets. Everyone was interested and it was easy to agree on the themes as biodiversity is such a transnational issue. Then we agreed on the cross-cutting issues. That was quite easy."</p>	<p><b>SKEP</b></p> <p>"Theme selection in the main call was more difficult than in the pilot calls. There were extensive discussions beforehand and quite a long list of possible themes. We haven't screened out the topics. We should have realized it earlier that we may not be able to have all the themes, but when it was realized, the decision was very efficient. Two topics had to be left out, which were very interesting, but not fitting very well with the other topics."</p>
---	--	---

## Suggested good practices for planning the joint call

- *In the first iteration of this process it is crucial to keep the momentum with a lot of partners. Good practice is to have joint workshops, face-to-face meetings, teleconferences, good spirit and communication;*
- *It is very important to have a clear description of terminologies and processes. Start by agreeing on the cornerstones and then on details. Leave some flexibility in timelines (also keep in mind the low activity periods) and allow some flexibility from partners. The challenge here is how to give everyone a say but at the same time make decisions on time;*
- *It is very important to agree on funding standards as some partners use national rules whereas others employ EU rules on funding standards. The rules should be ready and the partners can decide after this whether they want to join a particular call or not;*
- *It is important to focus on budget in the beginning. Partners cannot fully commit until all the details are known. From the funders perspective it is important to carefully select in which ERA-Nets they are going to participate (i.e. the balance of their organisation's ERA-Net portfolio);*
- *Partners need to decide whether they will use a Memorandum of Understanding or a Funders' Agreement. It depends what is more suitable to the network as a whole;*
- *For defining the themes it is very important to engage in some horizon scanning. Also, the pre-screening of potential topics: you have to be aware that the nature of funding agencies may affect preferences (environmental protection agencies act as both funders and users of research).*
- *In administration a good practice is to have a separate WP for management, and call secretariat and a call steering committee. Make sure that the key decision makers are present at the meetings. Selecting the composition of the steering committee, and having a separate working group for programme managers (not mixing people from different levels) is important in terms of risk managing the process.*

## 5. Proposal evaluation

Proposal evaluation is the next step that needs to be planned in advance. Partners should agree on criteria, procedures, research users involvement, who will be evaluators, and how to solve conflicts of interests. The study also looked at whether national differences affected proposal evaluation.

### 5.1. Defining proposal evaluation procedures and criteria

There are as many proposal evaluation procedures as there are partners in ERA-Nets. They can also involve a one-step or a two-step procedure. Also, proposal evaluation procedures differ depending on the type of evaluators used (whether there is a board of evaluators, or a pool of external experts).

However, in many ERA-Nets evaluation of the proposals received involves a two-stage process. Firstly, there is a scientific evaluation undertaken by experts and a selection by a board. Secondly is a policy relevance ranking of the highest ranking proposals from the first stage (by a steering committee or other equivalent body). In some ERA-Nets, research users are also invited to look at the proposals and rank them according to their relevance.

The precedence of science versus policy should be defined before evaluation. It should be agreed among the funding partners which of the two issues is more important in a given call, or how they should interact with each other in the call governance model.

The main challenge facing proposal evaluation in joint calls is the difference of **evaluation focus** between partners. When different types of research projects are evaluated (applied, scientific or policy-oriented) it is very difficult to compare them and provide one ranking. For example, in cases when two-stage project evaluation processes were used (scientific peer review and national) it is difficult to match them afterwards, unless there is a clear procedure for decision making or the use of aggregate scores to create a ranked index.

In order to overcome these differences in proposal evaluation, a majority of ERA-Nets have developed **common evaluation guidelines**, where they have agreed and set up common evaluation criteria and also determined how the evaluation procedure will be carried out. Some ERA-Nets, like BONUS and MarinERA have published guidelines for common evaluation procedures/scheme, which describe details of carrying out proposal evaluation (BONUS 2006 – nr. 4, MarinERA 2008).

#### Box 4. Cases of proposal evaluation

<p>In <i>BONUS ERA-Net</i> proposal evaluation guidelines were developed as a part of common evaluation scheme. Proposals were evaluated in terms of scientific content and relevance. There are two stages, letter of intent and full proposals. In the first stage every application was sent to 3 evaluators, then a task force group looked at it. The second stage – full applications, which were sent to evaluators; at the end there was a meeting of evaluators, where each application was discussed. Each application got written scientific evaluation feedback. Then DG Environment, and others were invited to look and say whether the list was good. After that steering committee invited the users to look at the list, which included only scientifically high rankings (including 4.0 rankings). All the projects with</p>	<p>In <i>BiodivERsA</i> project evaluation was a two-stage process, initial letter and full proposal stage. However, agreeing on evaluation criteria took a long time. Some agencies were prepared to fund projects which had no policy relevance as long as they had excellent scientific quality while others were prepared to fund projects with lower scientific quality if they brought relevant knowledge to policy making. It was an awkward situation, but in the end the two were combined. Evaluation committee consisted of 22-23 experts of whom 1/3 have policy background and 2/3 scientific background. Also, there were external evaluators separately from evaluation committee, of which 1/3 were with policy expertise. Each proposal was evaluated by</p>	<p>In the SKEP pilot calls the proposal evaluation procedure was conducted in two-stages. In the first instance, a scoping and priority check was carried out. Each funding partner assessed whether each proposal received made a significant contribution to the work area of the joint call, and was within its thematic scope. They also conducted a funders priority evaluation, which graded the proposal on the basis of funding priorities within their respective organisations. In the second phase, each proposal was peer reviewed by an independent pool of international experts. The scores from these two processes was integrated in a</p>
--	---	---

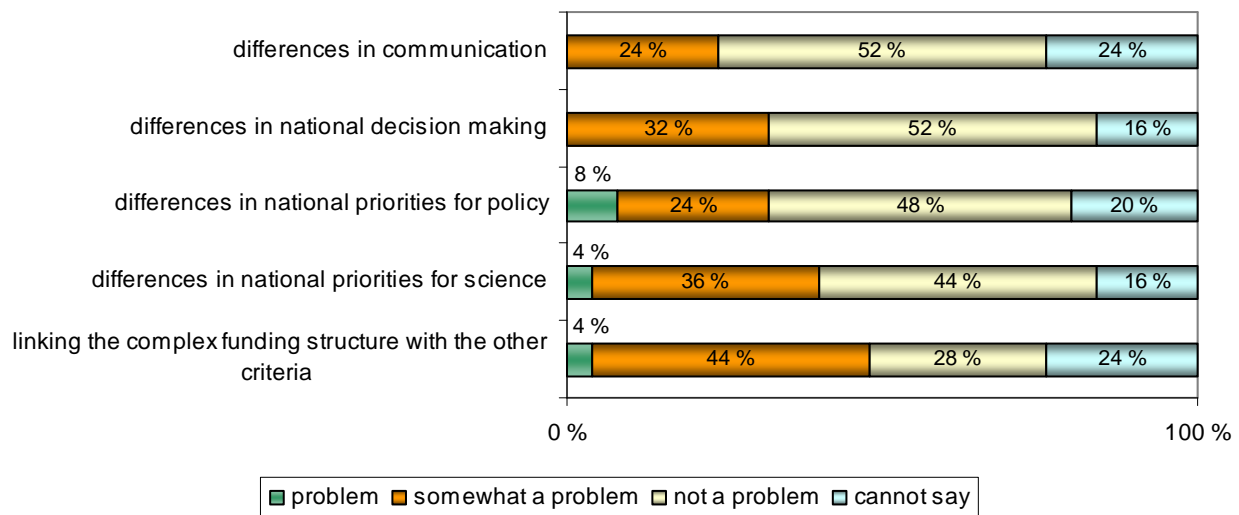
scientific ranking of 5.0 were taken without discussions.	three evaluators. All evaluators took a look at all criteria including policy relevance.	specially designed spreadsheet to give an indexed, ranked score in order to guide Call Steering Committee discussions.
---	--	--

In our survey all the respondents had a common set of project proposal evaluation criteria for their ERA-Net joint call (and 80% of respondents perceived this evaluation criteria as appropriate).

## 5.2. National differences and their effect on proposal evaluation

There were no major problems in proposal evaluations that were expressed by our survey respondents. However, differences in national priorities for policy and science were considered to be somewhat of a problem by 24% and 36% of respondents correspondingly (8% of respondents noted that differences in national priorities for policy were also a problem). This is related to the fact that different partners have different national priorities in science and policy, and also different traditions and ways to fund research.

**Figure 8. Problems in proposals evaluation in ERA-Net joint calls**



## 5.3. Conflict of interests

Most ERA-Nets combine different types of organizations: research funding agencies, as well as ministries and research institutes. In countries with better developed science and administrative structures, the functions are more defined and divided, but in some countries (i.e. in the new EU member states), people combine the ERA-Net activities and their own research activities. In the old EU countries, on the other hand, people in funding bodies have experience of research administration but the connection with universities/research institutes may sometimes be limited.

When a decision is being made as to which research project should get funded, there may be a conflict of interest in countries where the roles are not clearly defined. The question appears: *"how much influence does the funding agency (partner) have on projects that will be funded?"* Various ERA-Nets and various partners in ERA-Net have different strategies and experiences of dealing with this issue.

Some ERA-Nets developed guidelines for the management of conflicts of interest:

*"Usually the procedure is the following: partners declare their conflict of interest and when those projects are being discussed the partner just leaves the room and doesn't participate in the discussion. It is reflected in the minutes of the meetings".*

In some ERA-Nets the problem occurs when some of the funders rely on the statements of the evaluators and the committees while other funders want to have a stronger role and keep the strings in their own hands.

#### **5.4. Gender equality**

Another issue that requires discussion is how the gender equality is treated in proposal evaluation in joint calls. When there is a change from national calls to the transnational arena, there can be problems in adjusting the evaluation criteria. For example, in some countries there is a national requirement for a minimum percentage of researchers within an application to be women, (i.e. in Sweden - 30 %), otherwise the application is dropped. In other countries there are no such requirements. So, there has to be a compromise between national rules, and finding a middle ground that all partners can accept.

In the case of the BONUS ERA-Net, different national regulations on gender equality have been analysed and common rules established. Gender policy is explained in the evaluation guidelines of each organization (BONUS 2006, nr.4).

According to our survey results, the majority of ERA-Net joint calls use international scientific experts when they evaluate proposals (88% of our respondents) and much less use the expertise of national experts and funding agencies (20% and 24% correspondingly). Research users have a say in the evaluation of the proposals in only 8% of cases in our survey.

#### **5.5. Feedback**

After the proposal evaluation is done, it is considered a good practice to have a feedback from applicants, evaluators and/or independent observers on the process of proposal evaluation.

The feedback can provide important information on how different groups perceived the process, whether the process was transparent enough, whether the rules were clearly defined, what challenges did the evaluators have and how they were solved, and how it can be improved in the future.

In BONUS the analysis of the feedback was done in the form of a report from an independent observer. In SKEP the feedback from applicants, evaluators and Call Steering Committee members of both pilot calls were collected and analysed as part of evaluation in Work Package 3.

### **Suggestions for good practices in proposal evaluation**

- *For project evaluation it is important to have transparency, fixed process and fixed timeline and clear guidelines for the applicant and use a standardized electronic submission system;*
- *There is a need to allow sufficient time to develop the evaluation criteria, procedures, and evaluation panel;*
- *It is very important to develop common evaluation criteria, which can be done by writing a proposal by a smaller group, and get acceptance by the wider group. In cases where different partners have different criteria (i.e. excellence vs. relevance) there is a need for allow time for achieving consensus;*
- *A common evaluation procedure is necessary. In common evaluation it is important to combine the results of scientific evaluation and policy relevance. For example, policy relevance evaluation after scientific evaluation. It was proposed to have a joint evaluation meeting, so scientific and relevance evaluators hear each others' views, discussing policy relevance and the way relevance criteria are addressed;*
- *It is important to acknowledge and define the role of gender in evaluation, and account for native language advantage, as well as to develop guidelines for resolving conflicts of interest;*
- *There is a need for a budget for evaluation and associated evaluation meetings, payment for external referees, translation costs;*
- *It is perceived good practice to establish a balanced joint evaluation panel. Also, use of international and external experts not linked with the programme is helpful. It is challenging to get experts from each country, and to get good experts in general, so there is a need to start recruiting potential evaluators early;*
- *Theme selection and proposal evaluation criteria should aim for an optimal number of proposals and therefore also plan for the optimal number of evaluators;*
- *It is important to capture feedback from consortia submitting proposals, and the evaluation panel.*

## 6. Involvement of stakeholders and end-users

Involvement of the stakeholders and research users in a research programme is very important for the dissemination and uptake of research results. 'Stakeholders' are usually the funders (ministries, research councils etc.). 'End-users', are potentially a wider group, which includes stakeholders (funders and researchers), and also especially in the case of environmental research it includes NGOs, policy makers, the wider science community, municipalities, and the general public.

In the ERA-Net joint calls there is usually a working group which is devoted to the communication and dissemination of research results. This chapter looks at how stakeholders and end-users are defined and involved in joint calls, and what channels of communication are deemed most useful.

### 6.1. Identification of stakeholders and end-users

According to the questionnaire results, the main stakeholders are the ERA-Net team (68%). Other stakeholders included other employees in the organization participating in the ERA-Net call (40%) as well as members of the research community, councils, ministry members, policy makers (together 40%) who also influence the theme selection for the joint call.

When it comes to research users involvement, most of the ERA-Nets have defined their end users either formally or noted that they know them informally (36% and 52% correspondingly). However, 12% of ERA-Net representatives did not define their end-users either formally or informally. However, about 12-16% of ERA-Net respondents didn't have any cooperation with end-users during any stage of the joint call.

The formally defined end-users include: scientists, policy makers, agencies, ministries, industries, applied research stakeholders, urban planners, European Commission Directorates, and others. Among the informally listed end-users are: the public sector, policy makers, consultants, ministries, the research community, and industries (mainly SME's).

*"In our call we had to quite carefully enlist organisations and make them aware of the call. This process was also linked to recruiting people for the peer review process. We made a lot of useful contacts with people, particularly in the UK, with institutes, government departments, other agencies. That helped to publicise the call as well. So that was a whole new learning exercise: how do we connect the joint call with business users within the organisation".*

A small number of ERA-Nets have established, or plan to establish, a separate national body to enhance collaboration with their end-users (11,5%). For example, in BiodivERsA IFB became a coordinator for that purpose, and SKEP is establishing a Communication working group for its main call. However, the majority of respondents (88, 5%) haven't done so.

**Box 5. Cases of stakeholders and users involvement**

<p>BONUS's theme – Baltic Sea – involved a very wide range of the end users. When developing the theme for joint call there conferences were held, which brought together all the marine researchers from the country and it was a very unique opportunity in some countries, like Russia. The follow up discussions and communication with stakeholders have been done differently in each country, in some through email discussions or workshops. In the end, the end-user involvement was very successful and high, almost everyone in the Baltics knows about BONUS.</p>	<p>One of the SKEP work packages is devoted to the dissemination and implementation of environmental research. The work package publication analysed partners planning and management of users involvement and communication methods. it also produced guidelines for use in the planning of the third SKEP joint call. The end-users for the three calls (two pilot calls and the main call) are very different, but the guidelines provide recommendations that can be tailored for each of them.</p>	<p>BiodivERsA: Most ERA-Net members are represented on other fora including the Convention for Biological Diversity, Diversitas, the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS) and the European Science Foundation (ESF). End-users are also present in the advisory board of BiodivERsA.</p>
---	---	--

When comparing SKEP, BONUS and BiodivERsA there is a totally different picture in terms of organization and discussion about end-user involvement. In BONUS, the end-users include large geographically-based organizations such as the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), the European Commission's Marine Strategy Group etc. They have been deeply involved in the design of the research plan, and there are decision bodies that can make use of the research results, while it is not so easy to do the same in other ERA-Nets.

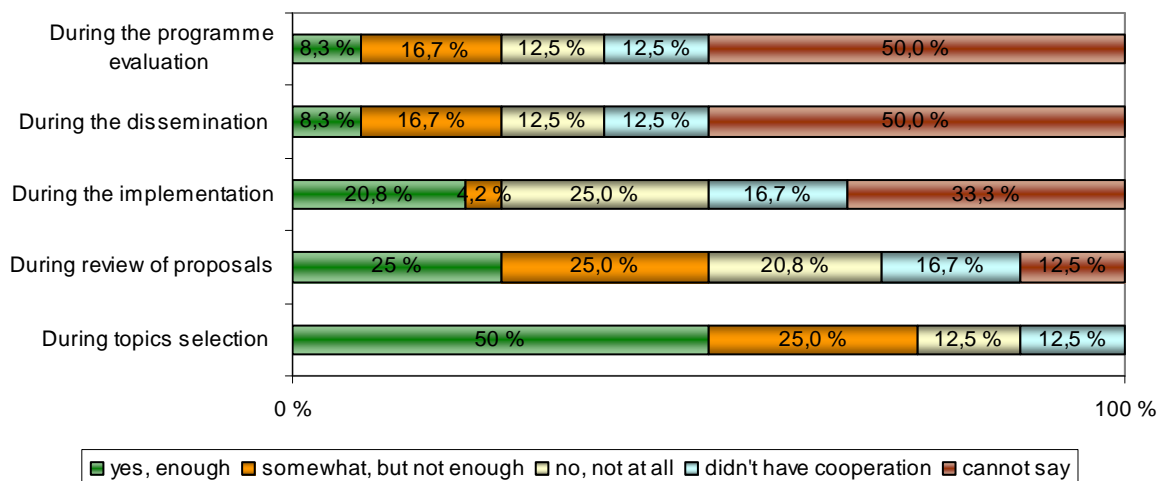
User involvement also depends on the nature of research and research topic. For example, *MariFish* ERA-Net is specifically aimed at comparing the evidence base for fisheries managers and therefore there are direct links to the end-users. Application oriented projects can be more user-oriented (i.e. end-users of technologies). In some cases, an ERA-Nets research basis is such that user involvement is not so crucial if the project produces e.g. a new tool for decision making concerning environmental problems, as was pointed out by some respondents.

Involvement of the relevant DG of the Commission can be recommended. Those ERA-Nets who have DG as their stakeholder/user can get a wider implication of their research results to users and policy.

**6.2. Extent and timing of involvement**

As many ERA-Nets are still in the planning or implementation stage of their joint calls it was sometimes difficult for them to estimate the end-user involvement in the later stages such as dissemination and evaluation of a programme.

**Figure 9. End-users involvement**



However, during the topic selection process the involvement of the end-users was quite high – 50% of respondents believed it was enough involvement, while 25% acknowledged the involvement but thought that it was insufficient.

During the review of proposals the picture is slightly different: the number of ERA-Net respondents who are satisfied with the end-user involvement is much lower than in the topic selection phase, and accounts for only 25%.

In many ERA-Nets' joint calls/programmes end-users were involved in the programme evaluation, and 41% of respondents noted that research users are involved in the evaluation panel.

It is important to take into account that in some ERA-Nets certain projects of the research programme can be more user-oriented than others (36% of respondents), however this is difficult to judge (according to 44% of respondents).

Respondents noted the importance of involving end-users from the very beginning of the research process in the different stages of the programme implementation starting from the identification of research needs.

### **6.3. Channels of communication**

It has been recognized that there is no one best way for communication of research to the end-users, and approaches need to be tailored to the audience and circumstances (Holmes 2008). According to our survey results, the ERA-Nets were using the communication channels, shown in figure 10.

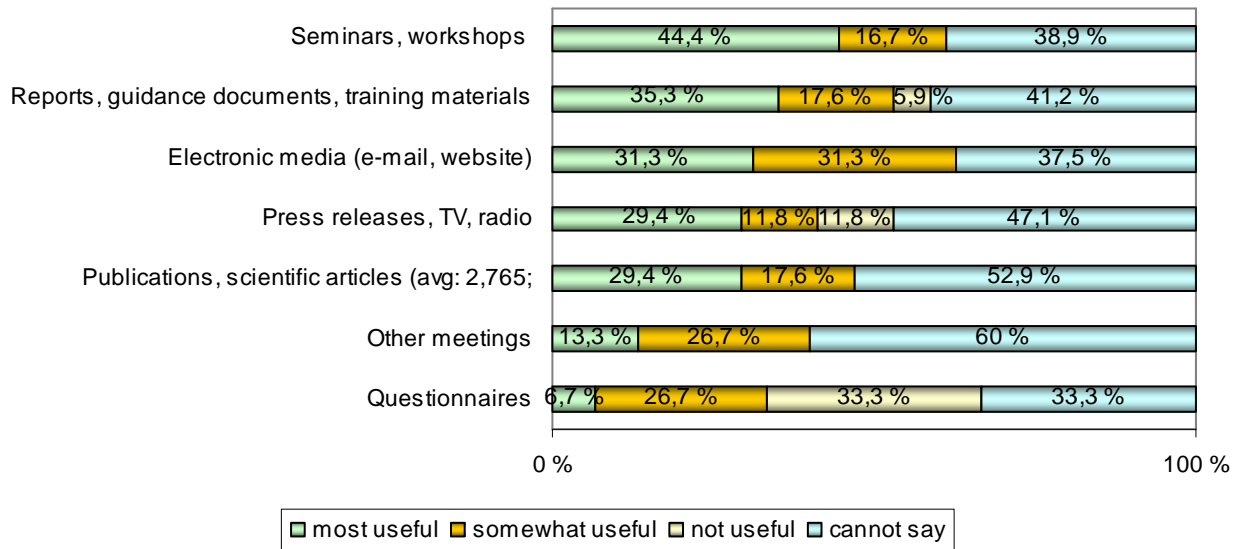
It was pointed out that to improve the communication of the results it is important to prepare a communication strategy, which identifies the key targets and the best way to approach them, and to implement it systematically (Holmes, 2007)

As it can be seen from figure 10, meetings and workshops were considered to be the most useful tool for communicating the end results by the majority of the respondents. To make the communication of results better, it was proposed that focused (transnational) workshops for end-user groups within the topics of the joint call could be organized, and that intermediaries and EC channels could be used as channels.

Some of the proposed tools included sophisticated PowerPoint presentations (including audio) with instructions for the actual use of the hard copy report in order to appeal to all senses at the time.

In our survey, the communication of the results to the end-users was difficult to judge for many ERA-Nets (71%) as many of them are in the planning stages of their joint calls. However, of those who could provide an answer, 21% noted that the intermediate results were communicated to the end-users. The main channels of communication of intermediate results according to our respondents included public media channels, a mid-term seminar, and reports (see figure 10).

**Figure 10. Communication channels**



### Suggested good practices for ensuring stakeholder involvement

- *It is very important to identify the stakeholders early in the process;*
- *To identify stakeholders, first, ask the funders what they want to focus on, and put their funds, then with this information it is possible to narrow down the list of possible stakeholders;*
- *National workshops with a broad range of stakeholders are very important for initial national consultations;*
- *It is very important to define clear rules for stakeholder participation, and their role and responsibilities in the evaluation process;*
- *It is important to achieve a balanced representation of stakeholders: scientists, policymakers and others relevant bodies. In some ERA-Nets, policymakers are involved as funders. The challenge is that some important stakeholders are missing as they are overloaded with too much work from other ERA-Nets;*
- *Relevant European Commission DGs can be involved as stakeholders;*
- *It is necessary to have external stakeholders in the evaluation process.*

## 7. Using the results of research programmes

### 7.1. Dissemination of research results from joint programmes

Involvement of the research-users is closely related to the dissemination of the research results. The dissemination of research results has been addressed in many ERA-Nets through separate Work Packages (i.e. SKEP, BiodivERsA, BONUS, CRUE and others). However, some ERA-Nets don't have a particular work package dedicated to this area..

In this study, 45% of the environmental ERA-Nets have prepared a formal dissemination plan, and 33% are in progress. For some ERA-Nets, the dissemination plan is part of a communication plan (4%). Even though the importance of having a dissemination plan from the early stages has been noted in many publications, 16% of respondents noted that they have no formal dissemination plan.

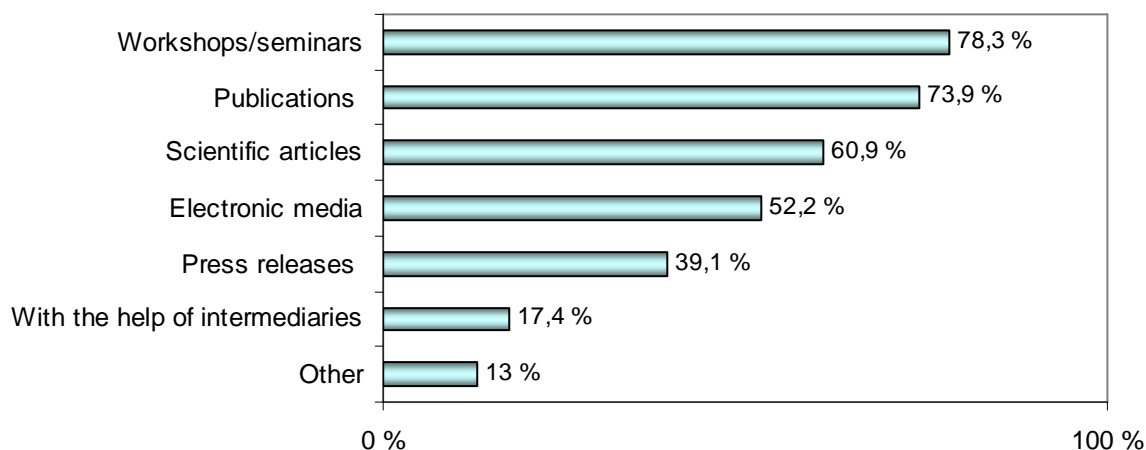
Generally, the dissemination of the call research results is undertaken by the ERA-Net secretariat, Steering Committee, ERA-Net partners, the project leaders, and the researchers themselves through publications.

Steering committees play a very important role in the dissemination of the results, as they structure the way of dissemination and develop a unified network approach. According to ERA-Net respondents, the steering committee typically coordinates the dissemination of the results to improve the integration of knowledge. However, several respondents pointed out that the steering committee doesn't play any role in dissemination of results and its role is rather to monitor the projects.

Defining the audience in the beginning of the programme allows funding networks to identify the channels which would suit best the dissemination of the results to end-users. Many ERA-Nets are just in the starting phase of their joint calls, so they were not able to describe the dissemination channels that they are planning to use in detail.

Workshops/seminars, publications, and scientific articles, were the most commonly used way to disseminate results of the joint calls/programmes (78%, 73% and 61% correspondingly). About half of the respondents (52%) noted the importance of electronic media. Press releases were considered an effective way to disseminate the results by 39% of respondents. Usually a combination of communication channels is used (see Fig.10).

**Figure 11. Ways for results dissemination for ERA-Net joint calls**

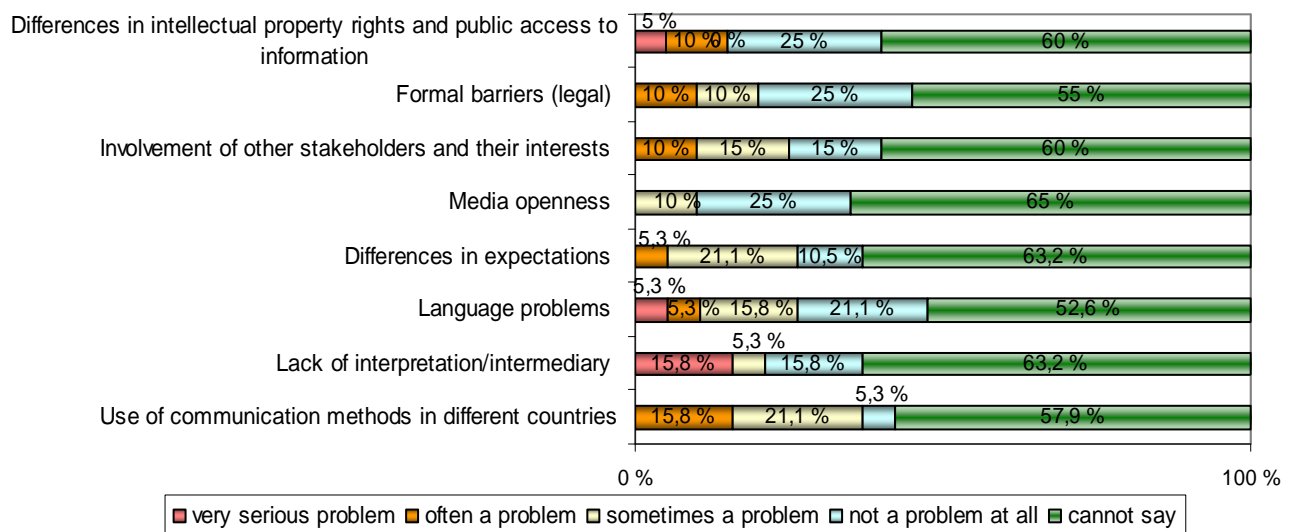


When analyzing problems that may take place during the dissemination phase, more than half of the respondents couldn't provide an answer, mostly due to the fact that they haven't reached this phase yet.

However, based on the information provided by the other respondents, the lack of interpretation and language were considered to be "very serious problems" according to 16% and 5% correspondingly. Differences in intellectual property rights are also causing problems in 15% of cases (Fig.12)

The role of intermediaries/interpreters is essential to put the research results into context and in proportion, using language that can be understood by policy makers and other stakeholders. According to the survey results the highest number of respondents mentioned 'lack of interpretation' to be very serious problem.

**Figure 12. Main problems in dissemination of the results of the joint calls to the end users**



The majority of the respondents were not able to say if in practice things were different from what was planned, as they haven't reached the dissemination level yet. Those who had experienced it already, shared the opinion that the plan and the practice didn't differ much and dissemination went beyond their expectations.

## 7.2. Programme evaluation and its use

Programme evaluation is a process where impact and effectiveness are monitored to legitimize the programme and learn for future programmes. The purpose of the evaluation is to monitor the outcomes of the research programme and its scientific merit for end-users, as well as implications for policy stakeholders. Programme evaluation can consist of a variety of evaluation approaches (e.g. peer review, internal evaluation, or evaluation by external experts). Several researchers pointed out that there is no universally applicable method for evaluation and that it is usually necessary to understand the setting of the evaluation and the discourse in which its results are located before the choice of approach can be fully appreciated (Georghiou and Roessner, 2000, Kanninen and Lemola, 2006).

When planning programme evaluation for transnational programmes, ERA-Net partners have to agree on the terms, basis and type of evaluation approach. Defining type and timing of evaluation was perceived not to be a problem (33% and 41%, while about 50% were not able to judge). The focus of the evaluation - whether it should be scientific quality, user orientation or cost effectiveness - was more often an issue. Only 17% didn't see it as a problem, while 29% mentioned having faced problems either rarely or more frequently.

According to respondents many ERA-Nets have a formal procedure for the systematic evaluation of their research programmes (54%), in the form of reports, mid-term seminars, ex-post evaluation at the end of the ERA-Net, or an evaluation form with criteria. Those who didn't have formal systematic evaluation procedures or didn't get to the evaluation stage (27% and 18% correspondingly) used, or intended to use, informal processes, feedbacks etc.

When planning the evaluation it has to be decided what type of evaluation the ERA-Net joint programme will be using: ex-ante, ex-post evaluation or a mid-term appraisal. According to Kivimaa *et al* (2008) it is important that there is continuity between ex-ante and ex-post evaluation, so that the objectives and the evaluation criteria will be coherent over the whole programme cycle. In our study, 47% of respondents noted that their ERA-Net had carried out a mid term evaluation.

When planning programme evaluation it is necessary to develop common evaluation mechanisms for all funding partners. Even though many ERA-Nets have developed common evaluation mechanisms, there are national differences which have exert influence on how it is accomplished. The majority of respondents noted that to some extent the national evaluation mechanisms had an influence on how programme evaluation is carried out.

Concerning the basis for the programme evaluation, scientific outcomes were balanced with the policy relevance of the programme (100% and 76% correspondingly). International benefit perspective was also seen as one of the main grounds for evaluation for many respondents (59%). Relevance to the private sector was less significant, and accounted for only 12% of responses. No one respondent included relevance to NGO as a important basis for programme evaluation.

Programme evaluation can be carried out by external experts (consultants) or through self-evaluation. Usually, ERA-Nets themselves establish the evaluation panels for their joint calls/programmes. According to our survey results 44% already have evaluation panels and 28% are in the progress of establishing one. According to the survey results, evaluation panels in ERA-Nets consist of representatives of the funders (54,5%), scientific experts (36%), and call coordinators (27%). People from outside of the ERA-Net are part of the evaluation panel according to 18% of respondents, and 9% of respondents mentioned that researchers and programme users were part of their programme evaluation panels. The majority of the respondents considered the evaluation panel for their research programme quite adequate.

There is a clear division of responsibilities in programme evaluation of the joint calls. Scientific results are more often evaluated by a formalized procedure and international experts (54,5%), while socio-economic results are evaluated more by national experts (25%) and a programme board (28%). User orientation of the project is undertaken by stakeholders and national experts (29%), while policy impacts are more often evaluated by the programme board (29%).

The problems that ERA-Nets have faced with ex-post evaluation are similar to the case of research dissemination. As many research projects will be finished in 2-3 years, it will be impossible to do any evaluation of the research programme, unless it has been planned/budgeted in the beginning of the programme. So, from the evaluation point of view it is important that ERA-Nets exist in some form for the entire period of the research programme. This is unlikely in the majority of cases according to our results.

**Box 6. Cases of programme evaluation**

<p><b>SKEP:</b>          The ERA-Net has prepared guidelines for ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post evaluation and a mid-term evaluation has been conducted for the first joint call. It has evaluated the experiences of stakeholders regarding the planning and management of the first pilot call through questionnaires. The research programme will finish after the FP6 ERA-Net has come to an end. Therefore, legal schedules have been prepared for a self-funded post-FP6 network to continue to manage, and develop future joint calls..</p>	<p><b>BiodivERsA :</b>          The ERA-Net research funding has not included any programme evaluation into its management. The programme will finish after the ERA-Net has come to an end, so there will not be any funding left to carry it out. The programme secretariat is, however, interested in doing an ad hoc self-evaluation at the end of the programme. The structure or the criteria have not been planned as yet, even though the programme has already been implemented. The ERA-Net funding programme is not carrying out a mid-term evaluation. The ERA-Net management includes a broad group of stakeholders which could show potential if a stakeholder evaluation was to be carried out.</p>	<p><b>BONUS:</b>          The ERA-Net developed guidelines for a common evaluation scheme. The guidelines specify that clear and measurable goals should be unanimously agreed by various partners and set in the planning phase of the programme. Both a mid-term evaluation and a final evaluation are planned to be carried out. The mid-term evaluation and the first part of the final evaluation will be undertaken by an evaluation panel, while the second part of the evaluation could be done by the representatives of the EC and a relevant regional body. Final evaluation is to be divided into two phases: scientific quality and management, and impacts of the programme.</p>
---	---	--

Data for programme evaluation partially comes from monitoring the outputs of the research projects. These outputs can be in the form of scientific publications, reports, or seminars/workshops. Most of the ERA-Nets require the results to be submitted at the end of the programme (59%) and some require it once a year (47%). A lower percentage of respondents noted that researchers had to report their results only when they felt it was necessary (12%). Most of the respondents considered the monitoring methods adequate. Among the other ways to monitor results were annual meetings, and mid-term and final seminars/ reporting of the projects (6%). The majority of the respondents mentioned that it would be good to have common requirements for the final reports for all projects (71% ).

## Suggested good practice for dissemination and programme evaluation

- *Defining the audience in the beginning of the programme allows to the identification of those channels which would suit best the dissemination of the results to end-users;*
- *Lack of interpretation and language, as well as differences in intellectual property rights, most commonly cause the problems in the dissemination, so it is necessary to not underestimate the role of intermediaries and interpreters, who can put the research results into context and in proportion, using language that can be understood by policy makers and other stakeholders;*
- *It is necessary to agree on the focus of the programme evaluation - whether it should be biased towards scientific quality, user orientation or cost effectiveness. Also it is necessary to agree common evaluation mechanisms for all funding partners;*
- *It is recommended to allocate the funding for evaluation in the beginning of a research programme, otherwise there is a possibility of failure of carrying it out due to the closure of ERA-Nets;*
- *It is important to agree who will carry out the evaluation: evaluation panel/external evaluators/other and to incorporate research users into the evaluation process;*
- *If an ERA-net doesn't have a formal systematic evaluation planned in the beginning of the research programme, alternatively it can undertake self ad-hoc evaluation, as it is important to have some evaluation than none in order to facilitate reflexive learning processes;*
- *The participation of the research users in their programme's dissemination and evaluation is important.*

## 8. Learning

*"..most helpful was the time we spent together, been frustrated together, learned to work together."*

### 8.1. Learning in ERA-Nets' transnational calls and national programmes

One of the goals for establishment of the ERA-Nets is for researchers and agencies from different countries to learn to plan and work together to create European Research Area - networks of research agencies, ministries, scientists and research users from different EU countries.

During the time of the ERA-Net joint activities partners got to know each other, learn about differences and similarities of research programme funding and planning, nuances of administrative routines and different communication modes. Results of our survey and interviews show that it has been a very valuable learning experience.

In comparison with national programmes, learning in ERA-Nets' joint calls provide many more opportunities for learning. Learning is shown to be closely linked to the use of programme evaluation results (Kivimaa et al 2009). Table 4 shows comparison of learning from national programme evaluations and in ERA-Nets based on the following four aspects: the availability of evaluation results to different stakeholders, applicability, robustness and acceptability.

It can be noted that in joint calls of ERA-Nets, learning is supported by a larger geographical and intercultural context, a wider group of stakeholders committed to networking, and a potentially larger sum of resources for evaluation than in national programmes (Kivimaa et al. (2009)

**Table 4 Programme evaluation and learning** (Source: Kivimaa et al, 2009)

<b>Evaluation results</b>	<b>Evaluations of national research programmes</b>	<b>Evaluations of ERA-Nets</b>
<b>Availability</b>	Regarding proposal evaluation, learning mostly limited to evaluators, funders and researchers. Programme boards with a wide range of members enable good availability of mid-term and ex-post evaluation results. Language may limit the international availability.	A larger group of funding organisations and other stakeholders than in national programmes, therefore, improved availability. ERA-Nets are by nature networks of organisations and individuals with connections to other networks, improving availability. A commonly known language improves availability.
<b>Applicability</b>	A number of different evaluation criteria provides extensive applicability. Applications to policy and international collaboration more common than to private sector and NGOs. Programme management processes often evaluated.	A number of different evaluation criteria provides extensive applicability. Applications to policy and international issues more common than to private sector and NGOs. Different cultural and national contexts provide a wider applicability than in national programmes. Programme management processes not always evaluated, but planning evaluation processes themselves between different partners provide important learning applications.
<b>Robustness</b>	National level programme evaluations have a longer history and therefore tend to be better and more systematically planned.	Trans-national programme evaluations have a wider group of stakeholders and are more often targeting policy-relevance.
<b>Acceptability / assumed reliability</b>	Common issues apply to national and trans-national research programme evaluations. Thematic evaluations of several programmes provide more comprehensive learning opportunities, but may not be accepted by programme managers and others who are only interested in their programmes. Acceptability requires openness to critique and avoidance of blame. Common methodologies improve acceptability across partners.	

## 8.1. Intercultural learning

National differences and intercultural factors play a very important role in the ERA-Net joint calls/research programmes. In order to plan and implement a joint call, partners have to come to agreement (see chapter 4) on various details of management and coordination. As we have shown earlier, restrictive national regulations can create problems, sometime to the point that partners are unable to participate/fund the call.

Different countries have different traditions and ways to fund research. For example, in Sweden there are a lot of different research agencies/councils, while in Denmark there is one for basic science. In new EU member states traditions are also very different, as they have some legacy of the Soviet history of public research funding. When comparing, for example, the Scandinavian countries with Germany, France, Estonia, Latvia and so on it is not easy to have a common project. It takes time to learn these traditions of research funding in different countries.

According to our results national legal barriers for funding were perceived to be significant for respondents from Sweden, UK, Ireland and Italy, somewhat difficult for respondents from France, Germany and Netherland, and Norway but not a barrier at all for respondents from Austria. When planning a joint call, formal regulations caused some problems, but not for all countries. Respondents from France, Germany and Norway didn't experience any problems due to this factor, while respondents from Sweden, Netherlands, Ireland, and UK have expressed this concern.

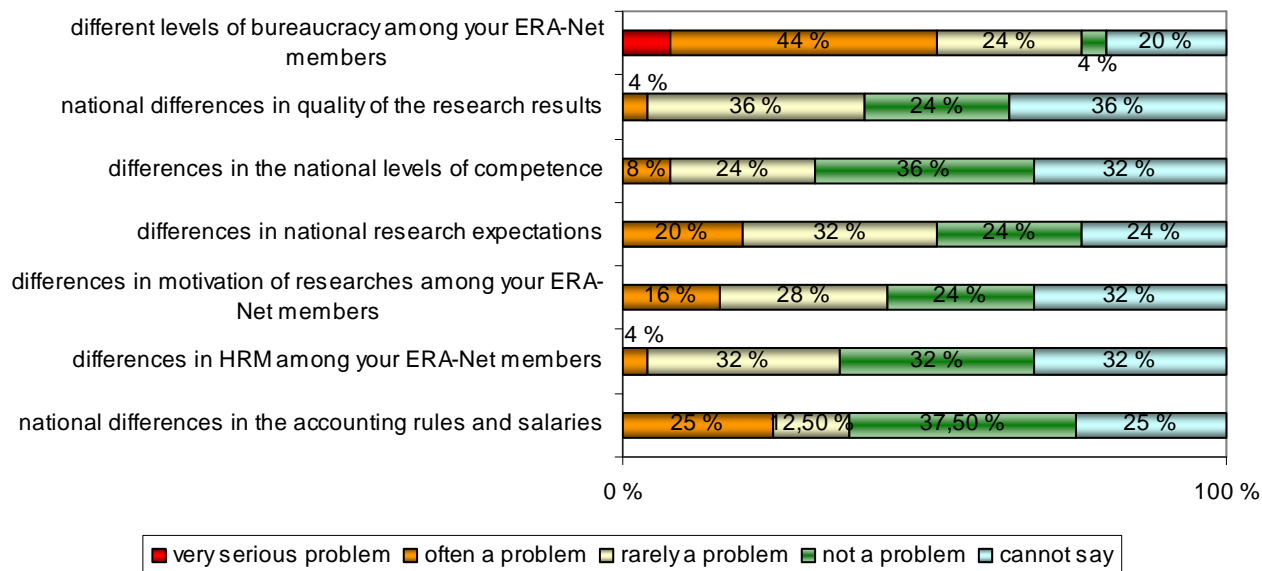
National differences still cause certain problems during planning and implementation of joint calls. According to the survey, 'different levels of bureaucracy', was the only category which received a mark as "a very serious problem" and 44% of respondents noted that it was often a problem. National research expectations and difference in the accounting rules and salaries were considered as often occurring problems by 20% and 25% correspondingly (see figure 13).

It was interesting to see how the respondents see the different levels of bureaucracy among the ERA-Net members, even though the majority of the respondents experienced some problems, the answers slightly varied depending on the country. Based on results of cross tabulation, respondents from France, Norway and Sweden have experienced problems, while Germany and Finland didn't express any strong concerns.

Differences in accounting and salary systems were considered a problem by 25% of respondents. Mostly they are respondents from Austria and Ireland, while respondents from Norway and Germany noted that they didn't experience problems of this nature. French and Finnish respondents didn't have unanimity among the answers gained from their staff.

Differences in national research expectations were not a problem for respondents from France, , Norway or Finland, while respondents from Sweden, Netherlands and Austria noted it as an issue. Similar picture is evident in the perception of differences in national levels of competence: respondents from France and Norway don't see any problems, while respondents from Sweden, Ireland and Austria have mentioned it as a recurring problem. The motivation of researchers was seen as a problem for only some respondents and particularly from Sweden, Ireland, while the respondents from Norway and France didn't perceive it negatively. National differences in human resource management (HRM), and the quality of research results was not considered to be a problem for the majority of the respondents.

**Figure 13. Possible problems in joint call's implementation due to national differences**



Among other barriers that we assessed through the survey, language and cultural diversity were considered to be a problem to some degree by respondents from Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden and Norway, while respondents from Germany and Portugal didn't perceive it as a barrier. French respondents supported both opinions: some respondents considered language and cultural difference to be a barrier and some did not.

Intellectual property rights was not perceived as a problem by respondents from France, Ireland and Portugal, but respondents from UK, Norway, Netherlands and Austria considered it to be somewhat of, or a significant problem.

Thus, it is possible to say that there are certain similarities as well as differences among opinions of the respondents based on country of origin, but overall, international differences were not perceived as barriers for ERA-Net joint calls.

## 8.2. Inter-organizational learning

In addition to international differences between partners in ERA-Net joint calls, there are differences between the types of organizations that are involved in ERA-Nets (i.e. funding agencies versus research institutes). According to the results of the study, these inter-organizational differences cause more barriers in planning and implementation of the joint call, than the national differences.

For example, coming to agreement about research themes or evaluation criteria is problematic not because partners are from different countries, but because they represent different types of organizations. Thus, it is more difficult to agree on a theme or on a proposal ranking between a "blue sky" oriented funding agency and policy-oriented funding agency, than two similar kinds of agencies from different parts of Europe.

It part, this can be explained by the fact that scientists from different countries have worked together for many years, especially in natural sciences. So, there is a lot of experience and people already know each other well.

Within the joint calls of ERA-Nets, some funding agencies had to work together with little experience of networks and very different priorities and ways of operating. In some ERA-Nets, ministries and research agencies appointed research institutes to represent them in specific ERA-Nets at one point, as they had more knowledge of the themes and scientists involved.

For many ERA-Nets, management of the joint calls was something new, the calls were tackled on an ad-hoc basis, problems were discussed and solved only when they arose in a process of '*knowing through doing*'. Joint calls created beneficial links between ERA-Net partners: the experienced ERA-Net partners can provide useful information to the newcomers and less experienced ones. The learning process of the ERA-Nets brought considerable benefits, that need to be assessed in their entirety. It is important to record those experiences, so people who will be involved in the ERA-Nets in the future can benefit from the experiences. However, it is a challenging task, as many of these learning processes are passed orally and not documented in any official documents.

Learning from other ERA-Nets occurs through different channels of communication. For example, through cross-representation at workshops, when representatives of other ERA-Nets are often invited to workshops to share experiences on specific issues where they are known to have been successful, or where some topical overlap is involved. Some ERA-Nets (i.e. BiodivERsA, SKEP, CIRCLE) agreed on common approaches to research information systems, building databases, and knowledge management tools. Also, for example, joint horizon-scanning can facilitate learning between compatible ERA-Nets. However, as there are many ERA-Nets, it limits possibilities to communicate with all of them, share experiences and learn from each other. Thus, communication between a smaller number of thematic ERA-Nets may lead to a more productive learning experience.

Having the same organisations in several parallel ERA-Nets, facilitates the building of links and sharing of experiences. According to our survey, the majority of the respondents perceived positively the fact that the same people can be involved in several ERA-Nets. Respondents consider that it supports the linkages between the projects and makes the call management easier (87,5% and 75% correspondingly). About 21% of the respondents thought that it has no influence for management and only a very small group (4%) acknowledged that having same organizations/people in several ERA-Nets can create problems. Administrative challenges and possible solutions can be transferred more easily within one agency.

The ERA-Net *Learning platform* and *NetWatch* application which are currently being developed by the EU Commission can enhance trans-national cooperation, share experiences in joint calls, and facilitate learning between ERA-Nets by supporting the creation of the necessary toolkits, guidelines and supporting activities related to the exchange of experiences and good practice. They can also provide access to, and advice on how to set up databases of experts.

## Suggested good practices for learning

- *Up until now, in many cases every ERA-Net was individually inventing the wheel because it was difficult to find time to consult other parallel networks. Also as there are too many ERA-Nets, so it limits concentration and thus learning from being involved. Smaller grouping of partners for certain calls is better and improves possibilities for learning;*
- *Learning from each other can be facilitated by formal and informal contacts between ERA-Nets, cross-invitations to meetings, and joint workshops. Website maintenance and transparency are important for retrieving current information. There is a need to build-in budgets for communication of successful practices, such as ad-hoc learning platforms (legal agreements, databases), sharing papers, and reports databases. There is also a need for joint horizon scanning in some cases;*
- *When one organisation is involved in several ERA-Nets as well in national programmes it gives it additional value for communicating comparative learning experiences and for avoiding the overlapping of research topics;*
- *It is important to bring the right information to the ERA-Net at the right time. Dedicated budgets are needed for keeping it up to date to facilitate continuous learning. It may be beneficial to have an, 'inventory of experiences', which can for example be supported by the EU Learning platform and NetWatch.*

## 9. Typology of experiences in ERA-Nets

### 9.1 Building a typology

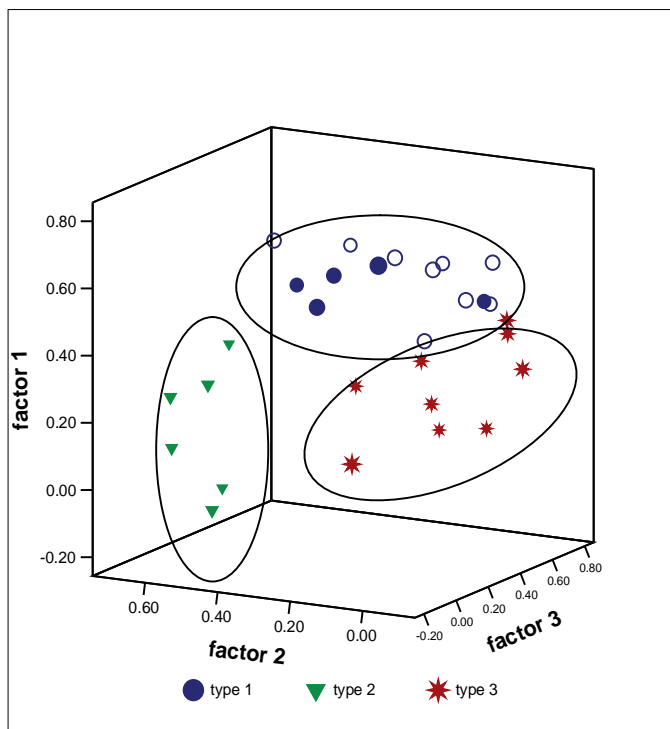
Based on the data collected from on-line surveys we defined three types of ERA-Nets experiences in the context of management of joint calls. It was done using q-methodology, which allowed us to correlate participants' experiences and opinions about the joint call process.

Q-methodology<sup>5</sup> has also been widely used in political sciences and resource management issues. (Stephenson 1935, Brown 1986, 2002, Steelman and Maguire 1999, Jacobson 2001, Mashkina 2003 and others.)

Building typologies with q-methodology has several advantages over more traditional factor analysis. Q methodology, in a sense, is an inversion of conventional factor analysis; it correlates people instead of tests (Brown 1986, 2002). By correlating people, Q methodology gives information about similarities and differences in viewpoints on a particular subject.

As a result, three ideal types were extracted. These types show that experiences of ERA-Nets share certain conceptual approaches, while having particular differences.

Figure 14. Three types of ERA-Nets and the factor loadings



<sup>5</sup> <http://qmethod.org>

## **9.2. Description of Type 1 networks: "ERA-Net with strong common planning"**

This type of funding network mostly consists of research councils, academies, and some environmental protection agencies. The ERA-Nets which comprise this type have already carried out at least one or more joint calls, or taken part in a joint research programme. This type has the highest number of representatives, so can be considered most common and numerous type among the three.

This type is quite categorical about the formal participation: if partners don't fund the joint call - they shouldn't participate. At the same time, they didn't note problems related with partners' national regulations when planning a joint call.

The role of the steering committee is strong, and the representation of steering committee is perceived adequate (more than in other types). This type has a formal procedure for the systematic evaluation of the call.

In this type of funding network, stakeholders believe that they have enough possibilities to influence the ERA-Net call. Proposal evaluation is viewed very positively, and proposal evaluation criteria deemed very appropriate. Stakeholders are content that they had enough possibilities to influence the ERA-Net call development process. Supporting the applicants in their applications and communicating with them on the evaluation results was thought successful. Differences in national evaluation mechanisms don't affect the evaluation in joint calls, and selection of the type of evaluation chosen was not difficult.

However, the end-users are not involved as much as in other types. During the topic selection process, proposal evaluation, or implementation phase, their input is perceived to be much less than in other types. End-users are also not usually involved in the evaluation panel. However, in this type of funding network, the intermediate results are communicated directly to the research users (while in other types it was not so obvious). In communication with end-users, electronic media and scientific publications were considered very important (more so than in other types).

In contrast with other types of ERA-Nets, this type doesn't perceive the different nature of partners and the different funding levels of stakeholders commitment as a problem. Also, administration costs are not perceived as big a problem as in the other types.

## **9.3. Description of Type 2 networks: "ERA-Nets with strong national rules"**

This type of funding network consists of various institutions including environment ministries, environment protection agencies, and research councils - with a range of stages from planning the first pilot call to the ones that have carried out several already.

This type strongly believes that ERA-Nets benefit more from trans-national calls than from national calls, but it doesn't see many advantages of environmental ERA-Nets over other ERA-Nets. Difficulties with the "common pot" for some partners, as well as some negative attitudes about spending national tax money in transnational projects are perceived as significant cultural barriers. Also, differences in national evaluation mechanisms is considered to be an issue. However, in contrast, limited political willingness to open up national programmes was not perceived as a significant barrier.

Some of the key benefits of joint call was considered to be higher quality research, lower costs, and faster exploitation. All were viewed as very significant, in contrast to the other types.

According to this type of funding network, the different nature of ERA-Net partners and levels of stakeholder commitment are seen as a hindrance to the joint call planning process and implementation.

This type believes that deciding on funding structure and proposal evaluation is not more difficult than at the national level, in contrast to “type 3” networks (see below).

Contrary to the other types, this type of network experiences problems in proposal evaluation due to differences in national priorities for policy.

It is less formal in organisation than type 1, and often doesn't have a formal dissemination plan or formal procedure for the systematic evaluation of the programme. Some representatives of this type of network do not establish a common steering committee, and there can be no mid-term evaluation.

This type of network feels that not all participating organisations always have enough possibilities to influence the joint call. It strongly believes that ERA-Net members should participate in the call procedure even when they do not fund the specific call, in contrast to “type 1” networks. Research users are not included in the evaluation panel, but are involved in the selection of call topics.

#### **9.4. Description of Type 3 networks: "ERA-Nets with strong user-involvement"**

This type of funding network mostly consists of environment ministries, and ERA-Nets that have just launched a joint call, but with little experience. It believes that environmental ERA-Nets have some advantages in comparison with other ERA-Nets.

This network type can be characterized as having strong planning, and includes formal dissemination plans and end-user involvement from the very beginning. Research users have enough involvement when decision on topics, and are routinely part of the evaluation panel (in contrast to “type 2” networks).

This type believes in a more flexible participatory model: if partners don't fund they can participate in the joint call process (and in that sense is similar to “type 2” networks).

When identifying problems and barriers this type of network especially highlights national legal barriers for funding foreign researchers as an issue. Also, according to this type decision making on funding structures and topic selection are perceived to be much more difficult than on a national level.

On the contrary with other types, “type 3” networks don't believe that different levels of stakeholder commitment is necessarily a problem, and that national financial systems or that linguistic and cultural diversity create significant problems for joint calls. Also this type strongly disagrees with the perception that negative attitudes about spending national tax money in transnational projects create problems in joint calls.

Among the benefits associated with joint calls, this type of funding network points out increased research capacity, while faster exploitation and lower costs are deemed to be of a lesser benefit.

From the three types of ERA-Net experiences identified, we can conclude that each type has some strong practices that it benefits from, as well as some parallel challenges that it faces. Relating your ERA-Net to one of the types described above may allow you to further develop your strengths, and to lessen the impact of any issues that are currently creating challenges.

## Suggested good practices for three types of networks:

- *Good practices for type 1 networks - "ERA-Net with strong common planning" are derived from very strong organization, common planning, and communication of results to the end users. This type is more likely to be used by the environmental protection agencies, and research councils. This type doesn't experience significant problems with national regulations, or differences due to the strong common decisions and sometimes a lack of flexibility. The disadvantage of this experience: some partners are not able to participate due to their formal regulations. Lesser extent of research users involvement at the earlier stages and during implementation allow for easier coordination and making decisions, but can create a gap and problems associated with the dissemination of results.*
- *Good practices" for the second type - "ERA-Net with strong national rules" are in using the strengths of national partners and national procedures, and not creating common, and formal documentation. The advantage is in less common organization and expenses and using the best national practices that are already established. The disadvantages are in many national differences, especially in proposal evaluation due to the differences in national policy priorities.*
- *"Good practices" in the third type - "ERA-Net with strong user-involvement" are in combining strong common planning with end-user involvement. The downside for this type is that it may be harder to decide about the funding, topics and proposals due to the higher user involvement. However, due to the early user involvement from different countries there are no negative attitudes about the common pot approach and spending, stakeholder commitments, and differences in the national priorities.*

## 10. An ideal joint call

This chapter explains the outcomes from working groups during the Helsinki Workshop in October 2008, where participants had a chance to discuss how to plan an ideal ERA-Net joint call. There were four groups used to simulate hypothetical ERA-Nets. These were composed of: Ecosystem services and society; Sustainable water management; Sustainable production and consumption; and Understanding climate change.

In two working groups, the first and most important things to do were to select a **leader and a joint steering committee** (and its composition: usually it includes funding agencies with decision making power). Also, establishment of a **joint call secretariat** (to prepare proposals/documents on the management process of the call; formulate an FA/MoU; and to take responsibility for logistics, information, website preparation, finalisation of online application system, and a Call communications plan which would include the dissemination of project results). A Call Steering Committee should be created in order to govern the call, and make decisions on the identification of scientific peer review pool, and levels of commitment. However, in some groups the first steps were to identify the funders, their organisational level of interest and a call timeline, and then establish the steering committee if necessary.

Everyone agreed that **funding mode and structure** should be decided on quite early. The next step was to get confirmation of expressions of interest from network participants, and then receive pledges from call funders.

The **call topic** was the next step that was common for all the groups. The recommended good practices included horizon scanning; conducting an assessment of what has already been done, and what are the predicted science-policy needs in the future; and consulting different organizations for specific themes. It was noted that it is good to start from a 'predicted needs perspective' rather than funder's existing programmes.

Some working groups proposed the initial identification of the funders, and then to ask them what they needed and wanted from the research, and to proceed to create a funding matrix: marking which topic is relevant for which funder. It was considered very important to link the money from the very beginning, as agencies are prepared to fund only areas which are on their individual priority lists.

All groups noted that it was important to develop a theme with initial interest/preliminary agreement from funders (and that this should be carried out well in advance, so that potential funding partners can earmark their national budgets and will be interested in staying till the end of the process). The topics should be first defined very generally and then narrowed down based on the perceived added value associated with them

All the groups mentioned setting up an **advisory board** composed of stakeholders, which are involved in the process to advise on the call theme, proposal evaluation and research dissemination.

While all the working groups indicated the necessity of **defining stakeholder** from the beginning, in some groups stakeholders were defined at the same time as the funders, and in other groups stakeholders were identified after the themes were discussed with funders.

It was noted however, that it was important to having a **dialogue between the researchers and stakeholders**. Although, there may be different interests because different countries are strong in different fields of research. A compromise should be strived for instead of giving "too much power" to researchers.

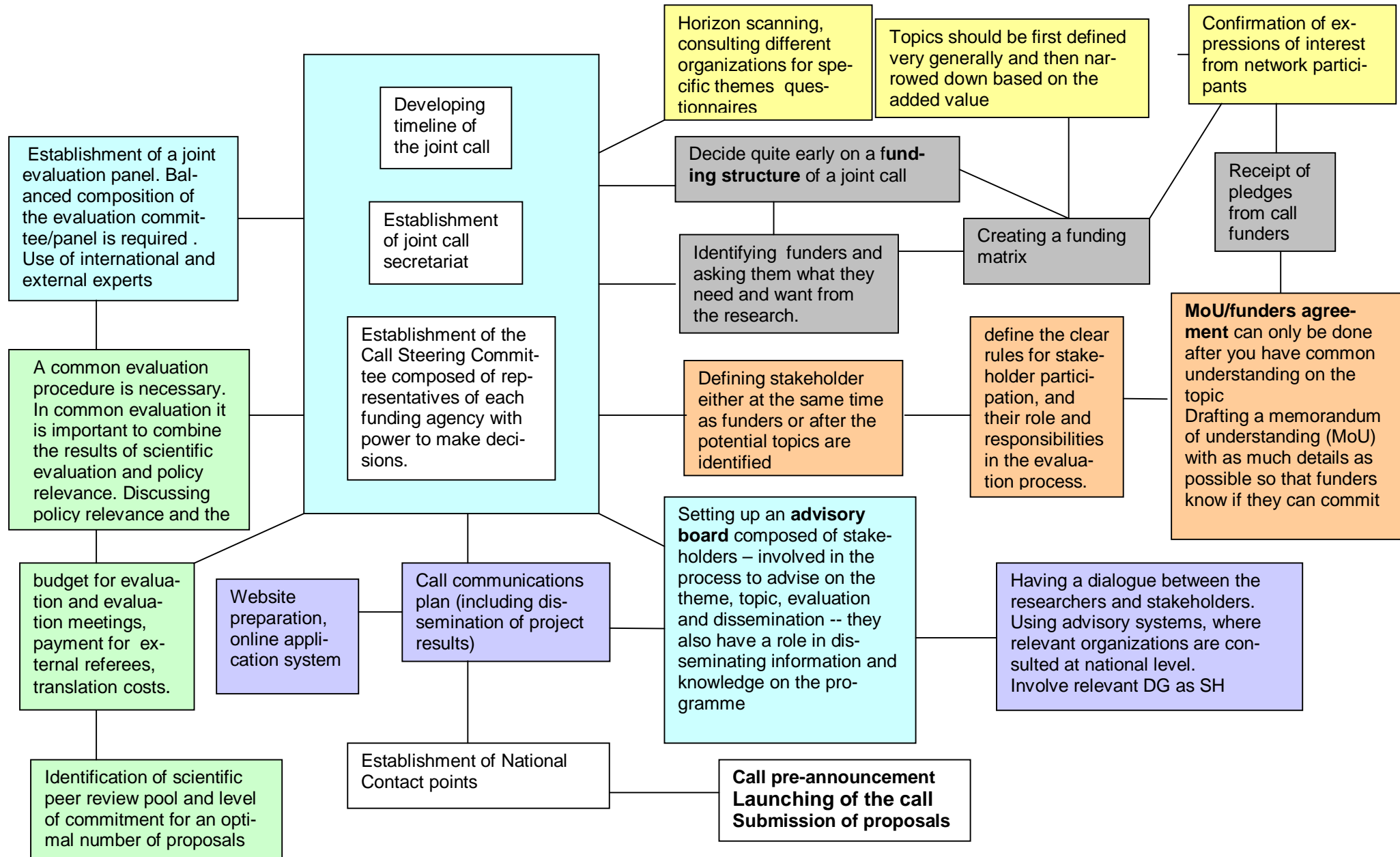
It was deemed to be good practice to build a trans-national panel of researchers and a trans-national panel of stakeholders for defining the topics, then to have a joint meeting of the two.

The **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)/Funders' Agreement (FA)** can only be finalised after the partners achieve a common understanding on the topic. Before signing the MoU/FA, it has to be decided what will be the mode of funding. Perceived good practice is to draft an MoU or FA with as much detail as possible so that funders know if they can commit. The MoU/FA should include the detailed procedures of the call as an annex.

When planning the proposal evaluation process, first of all it is important to decide on the **funding of the proposal evaluation**. Then to define eligibility criteria, and perform formality checks. Stakeholder involvement is crucial and a perceived good practice is to form an advisory board / International panel/ External peer review. Panel meetings are necessary to balance the ratings and achieve consensus on funding decisions (i.e. chairman of the panel to report to the advisory board). It is important to identify who can be peer reviewers well in advance, as it takes long time. Agreement on the evaluation procedure is crucial (i.e. scientific evaluation + relevance evaluation, where scientific evaluation acts as the first filter. Among the scientifically excellent projects, choosing the most relevant). It is important to agree on how to deal with conflicting interests in sufficient detail (as a good practice it should be already written in a Funding Agreement, or MoU, and references made to any pre-existing Consortium Agreements).

**Funding decisions** should be carried out by Call Steering Committee (or equivalent). Contract negotiations follow partly from the choice of funding model.

**Table 5. Ideal joint call flow chart (see below)**



## 11. Conclusions

This report has illustrated the challenges faced by ERA-Nets when planning and implementing joint calls, as well as the opportunities which arose, and successful practices they learned during this process. In conclusion we would like to summarise perceived good practices for ERA-Net coordinators to use in a form of a checklist, and have provided below some recommendations for each type of ERA-Net.

### 11.1. Joint-call checklist for ERA-Net partners

#### Main principles

- Produce a clear description of terminology and terms for the call
- Agree on the cornerstones of the call process
- Allow some flexibility
- Maintain the momentum with partners by teleconferences, face –to face meetings, workshops etc..

#### Coming to agreement

- Agree on funding standards
- Agree and develop a detailed call timeline

#### Funding and Budget

- Focus on budget in the beginning.
- Carefully select which ERA-Nets you are going to participate in as an organisation
- Allocate enough budget for proposal evaluation (payment for external referees, evaluation meetings) and programme evaluation

#### Timing

- Allow enough time to develop Memorandum of Understanding
- Allow sufficient time to identify the right evaluators

#### Administration

- Create separate network governance structures for management, a call secretariat and call steering committee.
- Make sure that the decision makers, who actually decide are present at the meetings

#### Themes

- Undertake horizon scanning
- Conduct pre-screening of potential topics
- Start from broad research themes, then narrow down to topics
- First ask funders what areas they are interested in funding

#### Proposal evaluation

- Ensure transparency in proposal evaluation
- Have a fixed process and fixed timeline and clear guidelines for the applicants.
- A common evaluation procedure is necessary, so develop common evaluation criteria
- There is a need to determine the role of gender in evaluation, and native language advantages
- Ensure balanced composition of any joint evaluation panels
- Remember that in common evaluation it is important to combine the results of scientific evaluation and policy relevance.

## 11.2. Recommendations for ERA-Nets by type

Combining the outcomes of the workshop, the typology, and an ‘ideal’ joint call, the following recommendations for the ERA/net coordinators and partners have been developed.

If you think that your ERA-Net shares more of the characteristics of the "ERA-Net with strong common planning", consider the following recommendations:

- Allow more flexibility for partners (formal documents and committees could only benefit from having some flexibility);
- As the steering committee plays such strong role ensure the balanced and adequate composition of the steering committee;
- Ensure involvement of research users from the beginning. The challenge here is how to give everyone a say but at the same time make decisions according to project timelines;
- Have an active dialogue between the researchers and stakeholders. Although there may be different interests because different countries are strong in different fields of research, find a compromise. Do not give “too much power” to researchers;
- Use advisory systems, where relevant organizations are consulted at national level. (i.e. building an advisory board for researchers and stakeholders).

If you think that your ERA-Net shares more the characteristics of the "ERA-Net with strong national rules" type, consider the following recommendations:

- A reliance on strong national practices sometimes leads to more problems than advantages. Develop a Funding Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding very carefully (use the templates from other ERA-Nets);
- These funding rules should be made ready, and the partners can decide after this point whether they want to join a specific call or not. Because partners cannot be fully committed until all the details are known;
- Use the experiences of other ERA-Nets which have already developed common agreements, including common funders rules, common evaluation procedures etc.;
- Allow learning from national practices, and adapt the best ones;
- Carefully define the practice of solving cases of disagreement (for example through a consortium agreement) – it will make some of the challenges faced easier

If you think that your ERA-Net shares more the characteristics of the "ERA-Net with strong user-involvement" type, consider the following recommendations:

- Keep a well-developed governance structure, which ensures the participation of research end-users;
- Define very clearly the rights and responsibilities of stakeholders (for example using a Funding Agreement or MoU);
- Develop a good strategy tool for decision-making amongst stakeholders (advisory boards, electronic tools);

## References

- BONUS (2005) The joint Baltic Sea research programme- best practice, possibilities and barriers. BONUS Publication Nr. 2.
- BONUS (2005) Baltic Sea research and R<sup>^</sup>D funding in 2004. BONUS publication Nr2.
- BONUS (2006) Guidelines for a common evaluation scheme for a joint Baltic Sea research programme. BONUS Publication Nr. 4.
- BONUS (2006) BONUS 169-Baltic Sea science plan and implementation strategy. BONUS Publication Nr. 5.
- BONUS (2008) Identification of cooperation areas and gaps in existing programmes. BONUS publication Nr. 6.
- BiodivERsA: Ferris R. and C. Fenwick (2006) An Assessment of Best Practice in Commissioning and Managing Biodiversity Research in Europe, and Approaches to Overcoming Barriers to Cooperation.
- BiodivERsA (2006) Report on linkages with other ERA-Nets and other funding agencies.
- Brown, Steven R. (1980). Political subjectivity. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Good practices guide: Increasing the impact of national research programmes through transnational cooperation and opening. (2005) Optimat Ltd. VDI/VDE Innovation and Technik GmbH.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download\\_en/good\\_practice\\_guide\\_dec05.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/good_practice_guide_dec05.pdf)
- Gardner M, Hunt D, Gardner S, Shackell K. A framework for the classification, prioritisation and analysis of research for European environmental regulators. *European Environment*. **18** (2008) 312-324. European Commission DG: Overview of ERA-Nets in the Field of Environment: Basis for Further Strategic Discussion <http://euroceans.org/european/calls.html>
- ERA-Net Learning platform. Report on the workshop for ERA-Nets on industrial technologies. Brussels 14.10.2007. European Commission.
- European Commission (2007) Survey on joint activities in individual ERA-Nets. Aggregated results with comments.
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) (2008). Guide for the participation of the BMBF in the preparation and implementation of transnational calls for proposals 10.04.2008
- Furman, E., Kivimaa, P., Kuuppo, P., Nykänen, M., Väänänen, P., Mela, H., Korpinen, P. 2006. Experiences in the management of research funding programmes for environmental protection. Finnish Environment 43. Finnish Environment Institute.
- Holmes, J., 2007. Study of dissemination and implementation of research in SKEP Member organisations. Vol 1. Main report.
- Jordan, G. B., 2006. Factors Influencing Advances in Basis and Applied Research: Variation due to Diversity in Research Profiles. In, J. Hage, M. Meeus (eds.) *Innovation, Science and Institutional Change: A Research Handbook*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kivimaa P, Mela H, Furman E. 2008. Approaches and practices in the evaluation of environmental research programmes: SKEP ERA-Net Work Package 3. The Finnish Environment 13. Helsinki: Finnish Environment Institute.
- Kivimaa P., Furman E., Mashkina O., and H. Mela (forthcoming 2009) Evaluations of National and Trans-national Research Funding Programmes and Their Learning Potential. EES Biennial Confer-

ence Building for the Future: Evaluation in governance, development and progress, 1-3 October 2008, Lisbon, Portugal

Könnölä, del Río, Pombo-Juárez, Carrillo-Hermosilla & Unruh (2007) An Empirical Analysis of Institutional Barriers to European Hydrogen RD&D Cooperation. EMAEE 2007: Globalisation, Services and Innovation: The Changing Dynamics of the Knowledge Economy, 17 – 19 May 2007, Manchester Metropolitan University Manchester, UK

MarinERA (2008) Towards Common Evaluation Procedures and Performance Indicators in MarinERA. MarinERA report No 3. Facilitating the Coordination of national and Regional Marine RTD Programmes in Europe 2004-2008.

Niehoff Joerg (2008) Coordination between National Research Programmes

Mashkina O. 1997. Measuring attitudinal diversity through q-analysis – an illustration of a research approach. In: L. Carlsson and M. Olsson, eds. Initial Analyses of the Institutional Framework of the Russian Forest Sector. IIASA Interim report, IR-98-027.

McKeown, Bruce and Thomas, Dan (1988): Q Methodology. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Scott, A. 2005. Science meets Policy 2005. Next steps for an effective science-policy interface. Report of London conference held as part of the UK's presidency of the European Union, 23-25 November 2005. NERC, EA, DEFRA.

Stephenson, W. 1953. The study of behaviour: Q-technique and its methodology. Chicago: University Press.

Yin (1980) Case Study Research: Design and Methods. Applied Social Research Methods Series, Volume 5.

## Appendices

## Appendix 1. Questions for on-line survey

### Background

Please provide responses from the perspective of your own organization and one ERA-Net, which you are coordinating or have a formal responsibility for the joint call within the ERA-Net (if you are involved in several ERA-Nets, please select one).

1. The name of the ERA-Net you are part of?
  2. Your role in the ERA-Net
  3. Your name and the name of your institution, country
  4. Type of your organization (please tick as appropriate)
    - a) research council/academy
    - b) environment agency
    - c) ministry/government department
    - d) other, please name \_\_\_\_\_
  5. Describe your experience in the joint calls/transnational programmes?
  6. If your organization is currently involved in planning or implementation of an ERA-Net joint call/programme, please indicate at what stage?
    - a) at the planning stage
    - b) the joint call has been launched
    - c) proposal evaluation stage
    - d) implementation stage
    - e) not involved and haven't started to plan
    - f) other, describe \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Participation in Helsinki Workshop
- I. Advantages and barriers of the transnational calls
1. Do you think that there is a real added value in trans-national programmes vs. national programmes?
    - a) Yes
    - b) Theoretically yes, but not in practice
    - c) To some degree, but not significant
    - d) It depends on a country
    - e) No
    - f) Don't know
    - g) Other \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Do you think that environmental ERA-Nets benefit more from trans-national calls than from national calls?
    - a) Yes, there are more advantages
    - b) No, there are no advantages
    - c) There is no difference
    - d) Cannot say
    - e) Other, explain \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Is there any specificity of environmental ERA-Nets that creates more advantages/barriers for carrying out trans-national calls in comparison with other ERA-Nets?
  4. What in your opinion are the main benefits of ERA-Net transnational programmes in theory and in practice (tick all appropriate):

	no benefit	some benefit	significant benefit
Opening up national programmes			
Higher quality research			
Lower costs			
Increased research capacity			
Faster exploitation			
Increasing scientific competitiveness			
Other, specify			

5. What in your opinion are the most significant barriers (bottlenecks) to transnational programmes theoretically and in practice (tick all appropriate)?

	significant barrier	somewhat a barrier	not a barrier
Limited willingness of national policies to open up national programmes			
Influential decision makers do not see the value			
National ministries are afraid of too much EU-influence on national funds			
Source of funding does not allow use of funds for transnational activities			
Different levels of stakeholder commitment			
The legal constitution forbids payments to non-residents			
National researchers not keen to see more budget used for transnational			
Some countries benefit less from "common pot"			
Spending national tax money in international scene			
Financial administration systems are not designed to cope with non-national contracts			
Inefficient coordination with a high number of countries			
Administration costs of transnational projects outweigh the benefits			
Cumbersome audits			
Insufficient knowledge of similar national programmes			
There is sufficient volume of high quality applications from internal capacity			
Intellectual property rights and data protection issues			
Language & culture diversity makes transnational programmes impractical			
Different nature of partners (ministries, agencies, research councils, universities, research institutes)			
Other, please describe			

## II. Planning

6. What funding structure was used in your ERA-Net for a joint call? (tick all that apply)
- Common pot
  - Mixed mode
  - Virtual pot
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
7. How were the rules regulating funding for your ERA-net joint call defined?
- only national
  - Some common rules have been agreed, while national rules still apply
  - Agreed common funding rules apply equally to all
8. Do you think that ERA-Net members should participate in the call procedure even when they do not fund the specific call?
- Yes, explain \_\_\_\_\_
  - No, explain \_\_\_\_\_
9. Have you experienced any problems with your country's formal regulations when planning a joint call?
- yes, (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
  - no, formal national regulations were not a problem
  - cannot judge
10. When planning a joint call, who were invited to take part in suggesting topics to your ERA-Net joint call in your country?
- the ERA-Net team in your organisation
  - other employees in your organisation
  - other stakeholders in your country, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
11. If others (apart from the your ERA-Net team) were allowed to suggest topics to the joint call in your country, how were their suggestions invited and collected?
- in oral discussions
  - meetings
  - emails
  - via website
  - by other means, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
12. Do you think that national priorities in research interests were being taken into consideration when topics for the joint calls were decided?
- yes
  - no

- c) some but not enough
- d) cannot judge

Is there something you would change in the national topic selection process?

---

13. Do you feel you had enough possibilities to influence the ERA-Net call development process?
- a) yes
  - b) no
  - c) some but not enough
  - d) cannot judge

If not, what would have increased your possibilities to influence? \_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you consider that all your ERA-Net members had enough possibilities to influence the topics, duration, funding structure and the overall management of the joint call?

	yes	Somewhat, but not enough	no	cannot say
Topics				
Duration/length				
Funding structure				
Overall management				

If not, how could the possibilities to influence be improved? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Please judge communication process at the various phases of the joint call in your ERA-Net

	generally successful	somewhat successful	not successful	Cannot say
informing about the ERA-Net and its objectives				
motivating researchers to take part in the call				
supporting the applicants to fill in the application forms				
communicating with the applicants on the evaluation results				
initiating the implementation of the call				

In case communication was not successful, you may describe here why: \_\_\_\_\_

16. How difficult was it to find consensus on the following issues in comparison to national calls:

	More difficult than national	The same as national	Easier than in national	Cannot judge
Topics selection				
Duration/length of the programme				
Funding structure				
Proposal evaluation (criteria)				

17. Was the internal consultation process for the call development in your ERA-Net appropriate?

- a) yes, the consultation gave everyone a say
- b) no, the consultation was too restricted and did not give enough opportunities to balance the views
- c) no, the consultation was too extensive and wasted time and effort
- d) cannot judge

If there were any problems in the consultation in the ERA-Net joint call, you can describe it here

---

18. Who were the reviewers of the ERA-Net joint call proposals?

- a) National scientific experts
- b) International scientific experts
- c) Funding agencies
- d) Research users
- e) Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

19. In your opinion, was the combination of reviewers in the ERA-Net joint call appropriate?

- a) Yes
- b) To some extent
- c) No
- d) Cannot judge

20. Did you have a common project proposal evaluation criteria for your ERA-Net joint call?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) no, but in the future we will

21. Were the used project proposal evaluation criteria in the ERA-Net joint call appropriate for your ERA-Net joint call?
- yes
  - no
  - cannot judge
22. Did you experience any problems in proposals evaluation in the your ERA-Net joint call due to the following reasons?

	Problem	Somewhat a problem	Not a problem	Cannot say
differences in national priorities for science				
differences in national priorities for policy				
differences in national decision making				
differences in communication				
linking the complex funding structure with the other criteria				

### III. Implementation of the programme

23. Did your ERA-Net establish a common steering committee for the joint call?

- yes
- not yet due to lack of resources, but plan in the future
- no
- other

24. If yes, describe what institutions were represented in your ERA-Net steering committee?

\_\_\_\_\_

25. Was the representation of the steering committee adequate for achieving a balance between research and user perspectives?

- yes
- somewhat
- no, (explain why) \_\_\_\_\_
- cannot say

26. Involvement of the same people in different ERA-Nets:

	Yes, I agree	No, I think it creates more problems	It has no influence
Positively contributes to the linkages between the projects			
Makes the joint calls management easier			
Other			

27. In the implementation of the ERA-Net joint call, did you experience any of the following problems:

	very serious problem	often a problem	rarely a problem	not a problem at all	cannot say
National differences in the accounting rules and salaries					
National differences in human resource management among your ERA-Net members					
National differences in motivation of researches among your ERA-Net members					
Difference in national research expectations					
Difference in the national levels of competence					
National differences in quality of the research results					
Different levels of bureaucracy among your ERA-Net members					
Other, please specify					

#### IV. User orientation

28. Have you defined the end users for your ERA-Net programme outputs?

- a) Yes, they are: \_\_\_\_\_
- b) We have not formally defined them, but they are: \_\_\_\_\_
- c) No

29. Were the end users involved as any part of a trans-national research programme?

	Yes, enough	Somewhat, but not enough	No, not at all	Didn't have cooperation	Cannot say
During topics selection					
During review of proposals					
During the implementation					
During the dissemination					
During the programme evaluation					

30. Did you establish a separate national body to enhance collaboration with the end users for the joint call?

- a) yes, please describe
- b) no

31. Were the intermediate results been communicated directly to the research users?

- c) Yes, how \_\_\_\_\_
- d) No
- e) Cannot judge

32. Have the research users been included into the evaluation panel of the ERA-Net research programme?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) We do not have an evaluation panel
- d) Cannot judge

33. Were some of the projects within the ERA-Net trans-national programme more user-oriented than others?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) cannot judge

If yes, how to make project to be more user oriented? \_\_\_\_\_

34. If you cooperated with the end users, please indicate the main channels of communication between the ERA-Net programme and the end users?

	Most useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful	Cannot say/didn't use
Seminars, workshops				
Other meetings				
Reports, guidance documents, training materials				
Publications, scientific articles				
Press releases, TV, radio				
Questionnaires				
Electronic media (e-mail, website)				
Other				

35. How do you think the communication with trans-national joint call end-users can be improved?

#### V. Dissemination

36. Did your ERA-Net have a formal dissemination plan?

- a) yes
- b) it is in progress
- c) no
- d) other, specify

37. How did your ERA-Net plan to communicate the research results? (tick all that apply)

- a) Workshops/seminars
- b) Publications
- c) Press releases
- d) Electronic media
- e) Scientific articles
- f) With the help of intermediaries (describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- g) Other \_\_\_\_\_

38. What happened in practice, did it differ from what was planned? \_\_\_\_\_

39. In your ERA-Net programme, who were required to take part in the dissemination of the research results? \_\_\_\_\_

40. If you had a steering committee, what was its role in disseminating the results? \_\_\_\_\_

41. If yes, how were the challenges/problems dealt with? \_\_\_\_\_

42. The main problems in dissemination of the results of the joint calls to the end users are (please tick appropriate):

	very serious problem	often a problem	sometimes a problem	not a problem at all	cannot say
Differences in use of communication methods in different countries					
Lack of interpretation/intermediary					
Language problems					
Differences in expectations					
Media openness					
Involvement of other stakeholders and their interests					
Formal barriers (legal)					
Differences in intellectual property rights and public access to information					
Other, please specify					

## VI. Evaluation of the programme

43. Does your ERA-Net have a formal procedure for the systematic evaluation of the programme?

- a) Yes, please describe \_\_\_\_\_
- b) no
- c) cannot judge

44. How was the evaluation of your ERA-Net trans-national programme carried out (tick as appropriate)?

	Evaluation of scientific results	Evaluation of socio-economic results	Evaluation of policy development	User - orientation
By formalized procedure				
By programme board				
By stakeholders and end users				
By national experts				
By international experts				
Others(specify) _____				

45. Did you have a mid term evaluation of the research programme?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Cannot judge

46. How did your ERA-Net evaluate success for research dissemination in projects and programmes?

\_\_\_\_\_

47. Did you have common requirements for the final reports for all projects?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Other
- d) cannot say

48. How did your ERA-Net monitor the outputs of the programme?

- a) The researchers reported outputs when actual
- b) The researchers reported of outputs once a year
- c) The researchers reported of outputs at the end of the programme
- d) The outputs were not monitored
- e) Other way of monitoring, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

49. Do you think the monitoring was adequate?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) cannot say

50. Have you got an evaluation panel for your ERA-Net call?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) in progress

51. If you have an evaluation panel for your ERA-Net call, who does it consist of? (tick all that apply):
- a) Persons who coordinated the call
  - b) Researchers who took part in the projects of your ERA-Net's programme
  - c) Persons from various funding organizations
  - d) Persons from outside your ERA-Net
  - e) Persons who are expert in the scientific quality
  - f) Persons who represent the users of the programme outputs
  - g) Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_
  - h) Don't have an evaluation panel
52. Do you think that the representation of evaluation panel was adequate?
- a) yes
  - b) to some degree
  - c) no
  - d) cannot say
53. In your opinion, how do the differences in national evaluation mechanisms affect the evaluation in joint calls?
- a) significantly
  - b) to some extent
  - c) doesn't affect
  - d) cannot judge
54. Do you think that trans-national projects should be evaluated on the basis of: (tick as many as appropriate)
- a) Policy relevance
  - b) Relevance to NGO
  - c) Scientific quality
  - d) Relevance to the private sector
  - e) From the perspective of trans-national benefit
  - f) Other, please specify

55. How has evaluation of outcomes been used in practice?

56. When planning the programme evaluation procedure, which issues caused most and which least challenges to find consensus?

	very serious problem	often a problem	rarely a problem	not a problem at all	cannot say
Selection of the type of evaluation (external/internal)					
Focus of the evaluation (scientific quality, user orientation, cost-effectiveness)					
Extent of the evaluation (expensive- economic, broad-narrow)					
Timing of the evaluation (continuous, mid-term, ex-post)					

### Overall assessment

57. Please rate the overall management of the various phases of joint call

	excellent	good	satisfactory	poor	very poor	cannot judge
in general						
scoping for the call topic						
scoping for the funders						
planning the programme						
implementation of the call						
evaluation of the project proposals						
initiating the programme						

58. Feel free to add anything on any additional factors make the planning and carrying out international calls difficult or rewarding?

---



---



---

59. Any comments on questionnaire content/structure?

Many thanks for your time and valuable information!

## **Appendix 2. Questions for semi-structured interviews**

Many ERA-Nets have established or are in the process of establishing joint calls/ a research program on a particular theme. There are several management challenges that ERA-Nets are facing when planning and managing these research programs. Our study aims to analyze ERA-Nets' management challenges in trans-national research programs on issues important for environmental governance and to identify possible solutions for building a mutual understanding on cost-effective, motivating and user oriented management of the ERA-Net calls.

### **General**

- Can you tell a bit about your (pilot) joint call experience?
- How do you feel about the overall management of your ERA-Net joint call (pilot call)?
- How did the "best practices guidelines" help in preparing for the joint call?
- How was the coordination of the call: steering committee role?
- What things did you find challenging?
- What were the good experiences that can be used in future calls?
- What can be done in the future to make coordination better?

### **Planning the joint calls**

- How did your organization participate in planning and launching the ERA-Net (pilot) joint call?
- How did the development of a common road map for a joint call go?
  - a. What were the issues that you had difficulty agreeing on?
  - b. What went well from your view?
- How did your organization participate in funding the joint call?
  - a. How was the funding structure of the joint call decided upon?
  - b. Was your organisation satisfied with the process and the result?
- How did the agreement on research topics/themes happen?
  - a. What was challenging in the theme selection/funding?
  - b. What went well?
- How was the proposal evaluation carried out?
  - a. Who participated in the evaluation process?
  - b. What kind of criteria were used in evaluating the proposals?
  - c. How did the evaluation process go from your view?

### **User oriented research management**

- How was the communication of the research results to end-users organized?
  - a. Was it successful? How / why not?
  - b. What proved to be problematic or challenging?
- How were end-users involved in the planning and management of the joint call?
- What were the most effective channels for involvement /dissemination?
- Was there a need for intermediaries? How were the intermediaries used?
- What was good and what can be improved in dissemination and involvement of users?

### **Intercultural /national issues affecting management**

- What were the main national specifics that influenced the management of joint call (positively or negatively)?
  - a. How did the national formal regulations influence management of the joint call?
  - b. How did different levels of administration / bureaucracy affect your joint call management?

- c. How did the informal cultural differences affect the planning and managing of the joint call?
- Was there a certain stage of the joint call management when national differences became challenging?
  - a. planning, implementation, dissemination, evaluation?
  - b. Give example.
- How would you improve the management of cultural/national issues?
- What do you think about accepting new members?
  - a. What kind of challenges / benefits are linked with it?
- Was there difference in research or management quality during joint call implementation between countries?
  - a. How did you deal with it?

### **Ex-post evaluation**

- How was the programme/call evaluation organized for the joint call? (mid term, ex-post, continuous, by whom?)
  - a. Who carried out and participated in the evaluation?
- How were the impacts on science, policy, end-users evaluated?
  - a. Was this done during and after the program?
  - b. If some elements were not evaluated, ask why
  - c. What were the findings?
- What was challenging in the evaluation processes?
  - a. What went well?
- What did different stakeholders learn from this joint call?
- Was the evaluation from your view expensive?

### **Looking into the future**

- Did the joint call management happen as expected?
- What things you have learned from this joint call?
- What can be done in the future to improve the management of the joint calls?
- What management practices you think can be useful for your future joint calls/programme and other ERA-Nets?
- Is there still something you would like to add?

### Appendix 3. List of participant for ERA-Net workshop in Helsinki

<b>Name</b>	<b>ERA-Net</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Fellenius Erik	SKEP, CIRCLE, BONUS	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
Forss Mikael	INNER	Nordic Energy Research
Furman Eeva	SKEP/SYKE	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)
Gardner Simon	SKEP	Environment Agency for England and Wales
Harju-Autti Pekka	SKEP	Finnish Ministry of Environment
Jansbo Kerstin	SNOWMAN	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
Jensen Dennis	MariFish	Dannish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries
Kienegger Manuela	SKEP	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management
Kivimaa Paula	SKEP	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)
Koivisto Reetta	BONUS	BONUS EEIG
Kononen Kaisa	BONUS	BONUS EEIG
Leitner Markus	CIRCLE	Federal Environment Agency Austria
Lesne Jean	ENV-HEALTH	French Agency for Environmental and Occupational Health Safety
Mashkina Olga	SKEP	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)
Mela Hanna	SKEP	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)
Niehoff Joerg	DG Research	European Commission
Palin Estelle	SKEP	Environment Agency for England and Wales
Pelegrin Flora	BiodivERsA	Institut français de la biodiversité (IFB)
Percy-Smith Alexander	ERA ARD	University of Aarhus
Sas Katalin	OSH ERA	Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Shackell Keela	SKEP	Environment Agency for England and Wales
Valkeasuo Laura	CIRCLE	The Academy of Finland
Van Lith Dick	SKEP	Ministry for Housing, Spatial Planning & Environment (VROM)
Vanderstraeten Martine	SKEP	The Belgian Federal Science Policy Office
Vert Julien	SKEP	French Ministry of Ecology
Vetter Stefan	SKEP, SNOWMAN	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management
Vindimian Eric	SKEP, BiodivERsA, IWRM, CRUE, ENV-HEALTH, CIRCLE	French Ministry of Ecology
Westerberg Ulla	URBAN ERA-Net	Swedish Research Council for Environment

## Appendix 4. Workshop program

### October 7

Arrival, hotel check-in, free time, self-organized dinner

### October 8 *Säätytalo (Snellmaninkatu 9-11)*

9:30 *Arrival, coffee*

10:00 Welcoming words (Eeva Furman, SYKE / Pekka Harju-Autti, FiMOE)

10:10 EU Commission Learning Platform (Jörg Niehoff, DG Research)

10:35 SKEP ERA-Net (Simon Gardner, EA)

10:45 Results of the ERA-Net study (Olga Mashkina, SYKE)

11:00 *Coffee break*

*Joint work towards good practice in transnational joint programme management starts*

11:15 Instructions for the working groups

11:20 Planning the joint call: defining the rules of the call (Flora Pelegrin, BiodivERsA)

11:30 Defining the stakeholders of the joint call (Markus Leitner, CIRCLE)

11:40 Discussion in workgroups

12:25 Presentation of results by groups and discussion (Paula Kivimaa/Hanna Mela, SYKE)

*13:00-14:00 Lunch at Pihapaviljonki (Snellmaninkatu 5)*

14:00 Presentation of results by groups and discussion continues

14:30 Learning from national programmes and between ERA-Nets (Eric Fellenius, SKEP, BONUS)

14:40 Development of common evaluation and use of evaluation results (Kaisa Kononen, BONUS)

14:50 Discussion in workgroups

15:30 *Coffee break*

15:45 Presentation of results by groups and discussion (Paula Kivimaa / Hanna Mela, SYKE)

17:00 Closing of the day 1

*18:00 Welcoming cocktails at the Ministry of the Environment (Kasarmikatu 25)*

*19:30 Dinner at the restaurant "Juuri" (Korkeavuorenkatu 27)*

### October 9 *Säätytalo (Snellmaninkatu 9-11)*

9:30 Reviewing the results from the previous day – summary of experiences (Eeva Furman, SYKE)

9:45 Working in groups "Ideal joint call" exercise (Olga Mashkina, SYKE)

10:45 *Coffee break*

11:00 Workgroups presentations and discussion (Olga Mashkina, SYKE)

12:15 Synthesis and discussion on the further steps Simon Gardner, EA / Eeva Furman, SYKE)

12:30 Closing of the workshop (Pekka Harju-Autti, FiMOE / Simon Gardner, EA)

*13:00 Joint lunch at restaurant Aino (Pohjoisesplanadi 21)*