



Draft report for ERA-Net Workshop
Helsinki 8-9 October, 2008

EXPERIENCES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ERA-NETS IN JOINT CALLS /TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS

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".. 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 is aimed at increasing the cooperation and improving the coordination between national and regional research activities. The strength of the transnational programs is in bringing together experiences and knowledge of researchers from different countries. In the environmental research in particular many issues cannot be researched only on the national level. Because of the nature of the environmental problems they are too vast and complex to be solved by any one country alone, collaboration of several countries is vital.

Many ERA-Nets have established or plan to establish a joint transnational research program on a particular theme. There are many ERA-Nets that are already in the stage where program 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 programs. Today's ERA-Nets are pilots of the future programmes.

Present study looks at the management challenges of the ERA-Nets for trans-national research programs 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 calls.

This study is part of the Work Package 3 activity of the SKEP ERA-Net, which aims to develop good practices for program management. The Work Package 3 is led by Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) and Finnish Ministry of Environment. The work has been carried out by the research team of the Finnish Environmental Institute for SKEP ERA-Net.

This draft report is aimed to present results from the data which has been collected during spring-summer 2008 and to set the scene for the participants of a workshop in Helsinki. The full publication of the results of the study, including the outcomes of the workshop is expected to be published in the beginning of 2009.

The upcoming *workshop in Helsinki* is aimed at presentation of the results of this report and developing the best practices for the joint calls based on discussions and work group exercises.

There will be several themes for discussions:

- Planning the joint call: Defining the rules of the call
- Defining the stakeholders of the joint call
- Learning from national programmes and between ERA-Nets
- Development of common evaluation and use of evaluation results

Also, from the workshop we hope to understand more about learning for ERA-Net joint calls:

- What is learned from ERA-Net joint calls?
- What problems are common for all: are solutions common too?
- What problems are specific: how is solved in particular case.
- Developing common guidelines and deadlines for all ERA-Nets,
- How to deal with overlapping issues

We would like to thank already at this stage all the ERA-Net respondents who have participated in our research by filling the questionnaire, giving an interview or who are attending the workshop.

We invite comments on this draft by email to olga.mashkina@ymparisto.fi or you may bring written comments with you to the workshop.

2. General Characteristics

2.1 Research objectives

Generally, barriers that ERA-Nets face in trans-national research programs can be divided into formal (e.g. legislative, due to diversity of funding rules and administrative practices or different intellectual property rights) and informal (i.e. national differences in policy priorities resulting in different research interests, differences within cultural and communicative features, levels of scientific competence between partners, different expectations related to trans-national research cooperation).

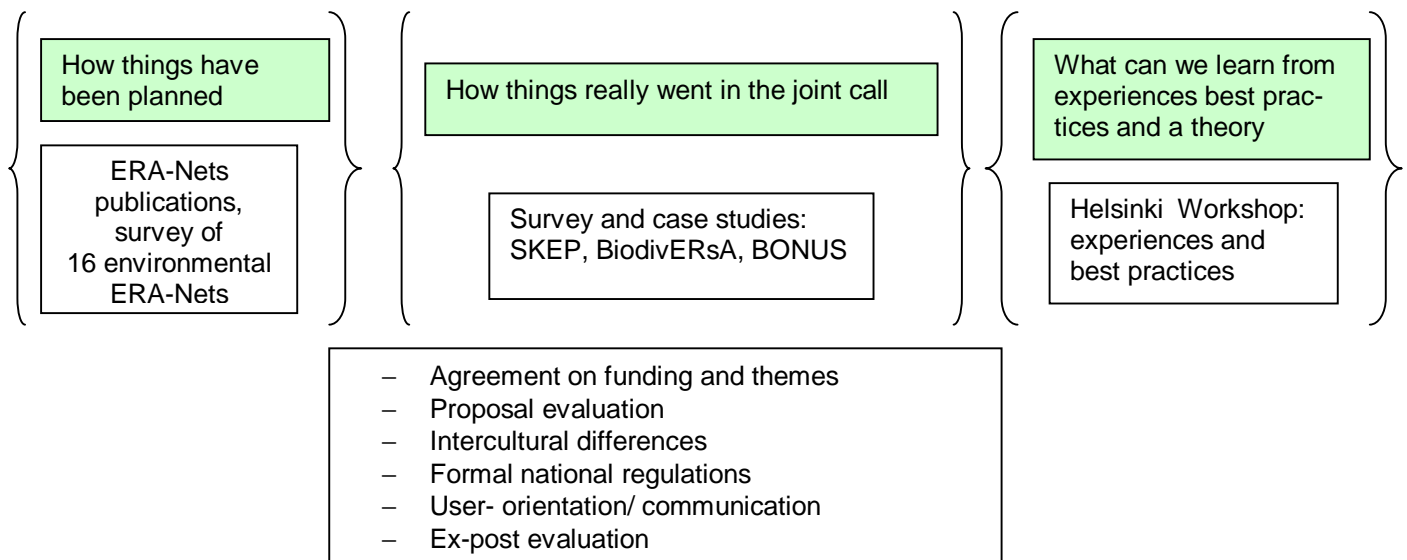
The study aims to:

- analyze formal and informal barriers for effective planning and management of transnational research programmes of environmental ERA-Nets.
- analyze how intercultural differences affect the management of the joint calls
- learn what happened in practice in ERA-Nets when they planned and implemented the joint calls/research programmes.
- identify best practices for management of ERA-Net joint calls to avoid barriers in the future.

2.2. Data and materials

The empirical material for the study has been collected by combining various methods of social science. Apart from document analyses of literature and programme related documents, information on programme management was collected through an on-line survey of programme coordinators and partners of the ERA-Net programmes and through interviews of programmes, which were selected as cases for our research (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Data of the study



The **survey** included 31 ERA-Net coordinators and partners from 12 countries and from 16 environmental ERA-Nets. Respondents include both ERA-Net coordinators, steering committee members, work package leaders, coming from ministries, research/academic institutions and universities, as well as agencies.

Some organizations are involved in several ERA-Nets and therefore can be at the same time in the different stage of the joint call/programme. 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.

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, majority of them have carried out more than 1 joint call and 20% are taking part in transnational programme. This is quite a change from the results of the ERA-Net survey in 2006-2007, when 43% has not started any joint activities, 14 % are planning, 10% have launched and 23% have completed joint activities (ERA-Net Survey 2006).

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 call of the three case -studies.

Table 1 Summary of the joint calls details of the three ERA-Nets

	SKEP	BiodivERsA	BONUS
Number of countries	17 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	Pilot 1: June 2007, Pilot 2: February 2008, Main call: January 2009	Launched November 2007	Launched September 2007
Amount	Pilot 1: 0,550M EUR virtual pot Pilot 2: 0,325M EUR, true common pot Main call: 1.3 M EUR, virtual pot	21.36M EUR virtual pot	22 M EUR virtual pot
Proposal selection	Pilot 1: three projects got funded Pilot 2: prequalification questionnaire before the tender process. Main call: planning in progress	181 initial proposals 47 proposals have been invited to go onto the full proposal stage. Final decision in September	149 Letters of Intent 55 proposals have been invited to go onto the full proposal stage. 16 got funded
Themes	Pilot 1: Sustainable consumption and production Pilot 2: Science into policy processes Main call: Emerging technologies for environmental regulation (with 5 topics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global change and biodiversity dynamics - Ecosystem functioning - Ecosystem services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linking Science and Policy - Understanding Climate Change and Geophysical Forcing - Combating Eutrophication Achieving Sustainable Fisheries - Protecting Biodiversity - Preventing Pollution - Integrating Ecosystem and Society
Call/programme Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - for the main 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 pilot calls proposal evaluation was not formalized, there were no common guidelines developed because there was a small number of proposals. In the main call it has to be changed to make it more simple and transparent.	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	Prepared guidelines for ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post evaluation but a specific mid-term or an ex-post evaluation has not yet been planned for the joint calls.	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.

2.3 Perception of benefits and barriers of transnational calls/programmes

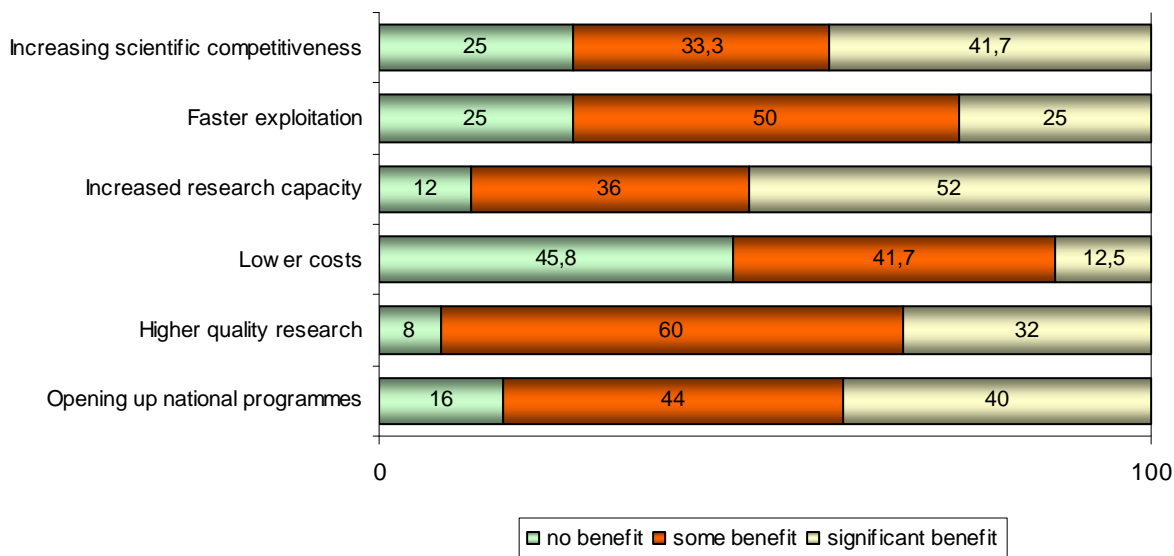
As joint calls are a relatively new initiative there are still some doubts about their added value in comparison to national calls. In our survey, majority of the survey respondents (70 %) believe that joint calls have more added value when compared with national programmes, while 22% of respondents had 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 some 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 Netherlands there are no pure national calls which are open for Dutch only).

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

- Networking and international cooperation: benefit from work with prominent research teams, scientist 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).
- Learn new administrative procedures
- Generation of a European Culture beyond nationals and creation of European consortia.
- Enhance science – policy interaction: 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 most benefit was in increased scientific competitiveness and capacity and higher quality research (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Ranking of the benefits of transnational calls, %



Because of the global nature of the 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 about advantages of the joint calls for environmental ERA-Nets: 52% respondents noted that there are more advantages for environmental ERA-Nets, while 44% of respondents didn't see it any different compared with other ERA-Nets.

Among the main barriers of the joint calls is different nature ERA-Net partners and level of stakeholder commitment as well as uneven benefits from "common pot" for partners, finding the com-

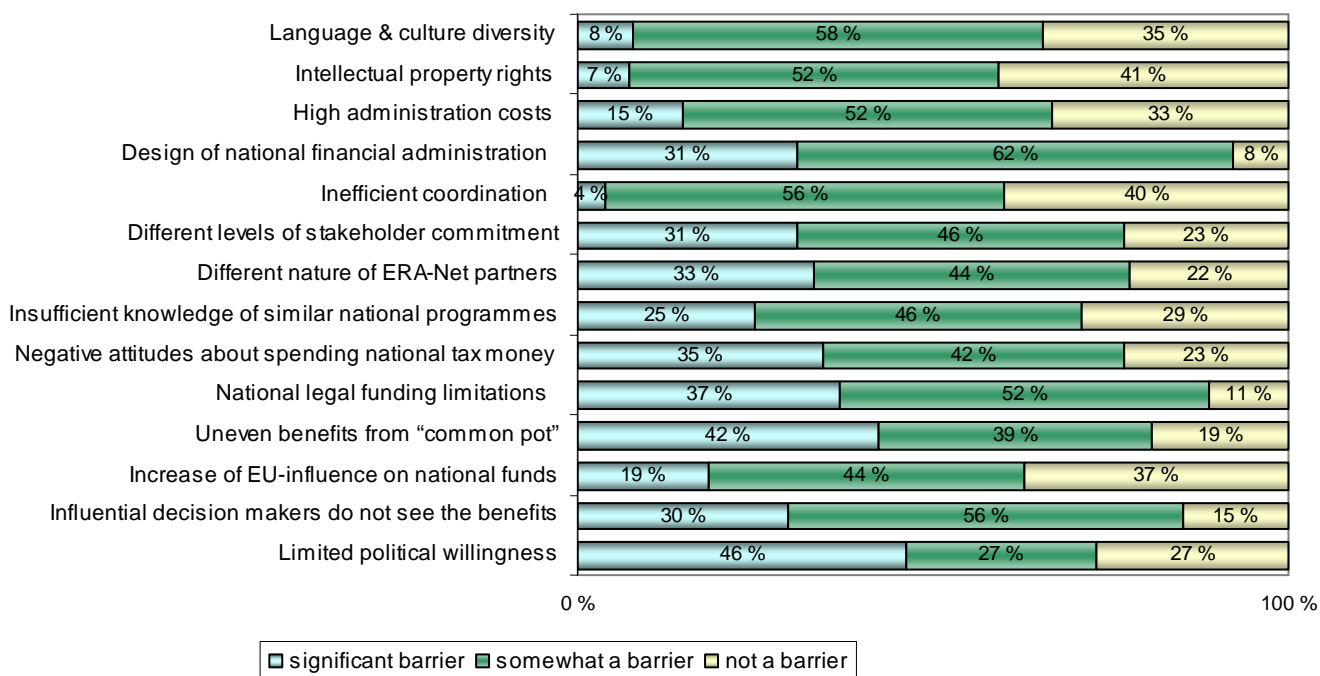
mon and topic and timeline, while cultural difference and complexity of coordination and administrative costs didn't seem to be of a high concern.

According to the respondents of sixteen environmental ERA-Nets the main barriers of the joint calls include the following issues (see figure 2) :

- Political limits to open up national programmes
- Uneven benefits from “common pot” for partners
- Negative attitudes about spending national tax money in transnational projects
- Lack of 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, complexity of coordination and administrative costs were perceived as less significant challenges.

Figure 3. Ranking of barriers of transnational calls



For example BiodivERsA ERA-Net identified the main challenges that is facing while planning and managing the joint call:

- 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

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 increased

integration between funding organization and environmental policy which will strengthen the knowledge based management of the Baltic Sea problems.

SKEP ERA-Net has carried out two pilot calls before planning the main call. During the pilot calls different models of funding were implemented and experience is gained on what could be possible barriers in the main call: agreement on themes procedure, and development of the common proposal evaluation procedure.

In the next chapters we will look into the issues identified as barriers in the joint calls and bring the examples from the survey and case studies to better understand ERA-Net experiences in coming to the agreement on funding, theme selection, proposal evaluation, overcoming national differences, reaching the end users and planning program evaluation.

Lessons learned:

- Majority see the benefits of ERA-Nets joint calls (i.e. in networking, increased international cooperation, larger pool of research results, learning experience, enhance science – policy interaction, organizational learning)
- Some doubts about added value of joint calls in comparison to national calls
- No unanimity among respondents whether environmental ERA-Nets have more advantages than other ERA-Nets
- Main barriers are political unwillingness, limitations of national funding regulations, uneven benefits from “common pot” for partners, finding the common and topic and timeline.
- Different nature of ERA-Net partners: challenging for funding agencies and research programmes to work together
- Cultural differences, complexity of coordination and administrative costs were note perceived as significant challenges.

Notes, comments, suggestions:

3. Which funding scheme?

There are several funding schemes, which can be used by the ERA-Nets in the transnational programmes common pot, virtual pot, and a mixed mode.

Common pot - where there is a transnational flow of funds.

Virtual pot - where each funding partner pays only for participation of its national researchers in a successful bid.

Mixed mode-a part of the budget handled as common pot, while the rest is virtual.

Each of these models can be used with or without "juste retour"

With 'juste retour' means that trans-national projects are funded on a country by country basis (funding stays within national boundaries) and financial benefit is derived from sharing the costs of each project.

Without 'juste retour' means that projects are also funded mainly on a country by country basis, but with some 'cross funding' to maximise the number of funding opportunities.

A common pot model is often considered as a hindrance for partners to participate in trans-national research programmes. As 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, it is not a general practice to receive and distribute funds from other parties and to fund researchers outside national borders unless it is strongly linked to the national research interest. Thus, there is a concern of losing administrative sovereignty and control of final funding decisions as a result of a common pot model. Some countries also point out that their national funds available for research are small, which makes it more difficult to present arguments for funding research outside national borders. (AMPERA 2006).

3.1 Going with virtual pot

According to the summary of a EC workshop on joint calls (2006) virtual common pot is more appropriate for topics where much research is ongoing in many partner countries and for internationalization of the researchers. A real common pot is less problematic when addressing a very relevant but new or less investigated topic.

Virtual pots allow each country to continue to operate in its way. Virtual pots are becoming more frequent, 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).

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. Compared to the results of the EC survey in 2006-2007 virtual pot was used by 64% of respondents, common pot by 27% and mixed mode by 9%. This shows the trend of increasing use of the mixed mode and decline of the common pot (EU survey, 2007).

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.

After the funding scheme is decided, the steering committee gets together and partners decide on how much their country is giving.

BONUS had looked at all funding models and as a result of discussions they had a virtual common pot. To make decisions on how much funding each country should give steering committee took 2004 as an etalon year. They studied what has been funded and how much funding was consumed in 2004. The aim was to estimate how much each country is spending on marine research and then discuss how much each country will put towards the common pot. At the end the figures received were in some proportions to the national funding, but quite flexible. So, large developed countries tend to underestimate their capacity to consume the funding, while the transition countries tend to overestimated. In the future it would be better to see funding commitment to be more equal distributed or have a set value range (percent for all, i.e.12- 15 %).

BiodivERsA: In the beginning there were talks about the common pot. Everyone agreed that the common pot is best but hardly anyone could do it and therefore they decided not to take it. So now every partner funds only their own country's researchers and then we have some flexibilities if needed and not to leave out some excellent projects. Some partners are able to fund other countries.

SKEP had tried different funding models in pilot calls. The main call is planned to be virtual pot, as it seems to be working best. The pilot calls were quite small in amount of funding. Decision was easy, however for the main call there were many discussions on which partners are interested and will fund which theme.

3.2. Participating vs. funding

In some cases partners are not able to fund and participate There was no unanimity in opinions about member participation in case when they don't fund the call.

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

Participation of partners even when they are not funding the call seems to be valuable due to the following reasons:

- participation is a learning process for future calls. When partner can observe, it can help making decisions in the future on whether to participate or not
- even if not funding the call, partners can bring valuable inputs as experts, and they can benefit of the experience and of the results.

Participation when not funding seems to be unnecessary to some respondents due to the following reasons:

- there are too many problems anyway which have to be solved individually without allowing "theoretical" discussions with non-active partners
- it would unnecessarily complicate things and make burden for the administrator too large and become too time consuming
- it is difficult enough to involve those participating
- there is little value added in them participating in the design of the call procedure as they may have ideas which are not applicable

Many respondents agree that there should be certain limitation of participation when not funding the call:

- those providing the budget for the call should decide, others can give comments, their say should be more limited than that of funding partners, must not have veto right.
- partner still can be involved by suggesting and discussing the call topics
- partner can be involved as an external foreign expert for evaluation, providing the skills and expertise and at the same time obtaining the experience of participation in the call.

However, it is not easy to make partners participate in any stage of a call if they don't have a decision power.

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.

Some ERA-Nets members are not able to fund the call because of national financial problems, in spite of the potential benefit to them.

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

SKEP:

One of the partners was not able to participate in the call because as organization they participate in many ERA-Nets, and they really overlap 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 ERA-Net: giving money to the EU and EU decides.

BiodivERsA:

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).

3.3. National regulations

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 own researchers. Even in the absence of legal barriers to joint funding, it is not a general practice to receive and distribute funds from other parties and to fund researchers outside national borders unless it is strongly linked to the national research interest. Thus, there is a concern of losing administrative sovereignty and control of final funding decisions as a result of a common pot model. Some countries also point out that their national funds available for research are small, which makes it more difficult to present arguments for funding research outside national borders. However, at the same time there are partners that are open towards the idea of joint funding and consider that there are no insuperable obstacles to it.

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. However, respondents noted that they have collectively found solution. 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.

In some cases, when a non EU-country becomes an ERA-Net member 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 are affected by the formal regulations we found out the following:

- Respondents who have had the virtual pot experienced slightly more problems than the ones who have used the mixed pot.

- Most problems with the national regulations are 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 more of a problem by ERA-Net coordinators than by partners. However, it doesn't concern work package leaders, as they express both positive and negative responses to this question.

3.4. Steering committees

Research programmes usually establish some form of a steering committee, which is responsible for defining programme objective, research topics and themes. Sometimes steering committees play an important role in overseeing the implementation of the call/programme and dissemination of the results, but in some ERA-Nets a new committee is formed for implementation. Also in some ERA-Nets a separate science committee is established to focus on the quality of science. (Holmes 2008).

In our survey, 87% of ERA-Net respondents noted that their ERA-Net established steering committee for joint call planning and coordination.

There can be problems of ensuring appropriate representation on steering committees to create a good balance between research and user perspectives. The stakeholders representation in steering committee is usually similar to the representation in the ERA-Net (ministries, environmental agencies, research academies) 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 appointed a member to the steering committee. This person was either a researcher (university professor) or someone from the research council and mostly professors from the participating countries.

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 high percentage of respondents (30%) didn't provide an answer whether their steering committee representation was adequate.

BiodivERsA:

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 themes that ERA-Nets are working with especially in case of environmental ERA-Nets may overlap. However, when ERA-Nets have established good links among each other (i.e. MarinERA, CIRCLE, BONUS and SKEP) the overlapping of the funding and the themes seems to be less, as ERA-Nets are aware of what might be funded elsewhere.

Having the same organizations in several ERA-Nets also facilitates that. According to our survey, 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 a small group (4%) acknowledged that having same organizations/people in several ERA-Nets creates problems.

Lessons learned:

- Virtual pot funding structure dominates despite the wishes to do the true common pot (mostly due to differences in national regulations)
- Agreeing on funding is more difficult than other stages of joint call.
- Policy in different countries regarding funding is one of the biggest challenges and results in fewer partners participating in the call than was wished. But once the joint call is in the implementation stage the ERA-Nets are experiencing less problems with formal national regulations.
- Partners' participation even if not funding: no unanimity among respondents, but seems that limited involvement is perceived positively
- Links between ERA-Nets and same organizations in different ERA-Nets is seen as additional value

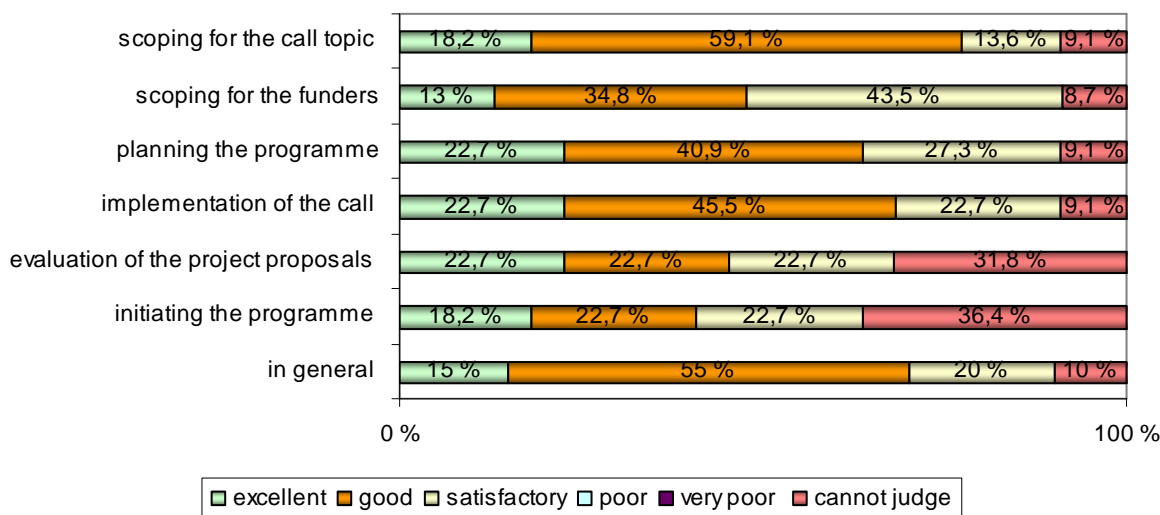
Notes, comments, suggestions:

4. Perception of overall management

Various ERA-Nets are currently in different stages of joint call/programme activities. However, despite the different length of experience, 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 call.

Looking at each particular stage of the joint call/program 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 a vicious circle between budget and themes: without themes no budget, without budget no involvement in theme development.

Figure 4. Perception of management of the various phases of joint call/programme



The cost of management of joint calls per project is significantly higher than for national projects of a similar size and will be a big barrier in the future when project management costs have to be reduced.

As for many ERA-Nets management of these joint calls was something new, the calls were tackled on an ad-hoc basis, problems were discussed and solved only when they arose. It may thus be that the procedure can be completely different next time.

Joint calls create beneficial links between the ERA-Net partners: the older ERA-Net partners can provide useful information to the younger ones. The learning process of the ERA-Nets brings considerable benefits, that need to be assessed.

Lessons learned:

- General perception of management is good, scoping for funders perceived to be more less positive than other parts of the joint call
- A vicious circle between funding budget and themes: without themes no budget, without budget no involvement in theme development.
- Ad-hoc basis for solving problems

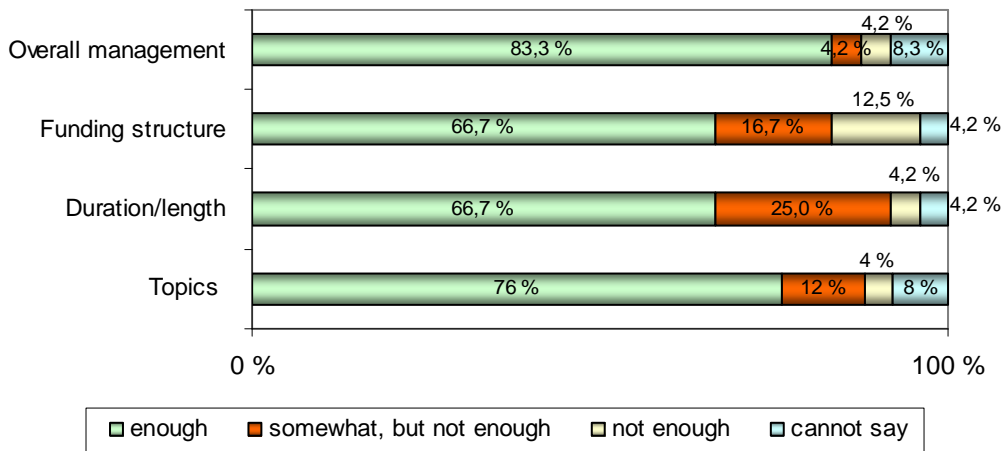
Comments, suggestions:

5. Coming to agreement

Coming to agreement about funding structure, topics selection, evaluation of proposals and overall management are perceived to be among the barriers for joint calls/programmes of ERA-Nets. In this chapter we will look at how different ERA-Nets are coming to agreement, which issues are more challenging, and how different participants feel about having a possibility to influence decisions.

Majority of the respondents feel that they had enough possibilities to participate and influence decision making in overall management of the joint call. In themes selection, majority of respondents felt they had enough opportunities to influence the situation. However, almost 30% considered that they had not enough to say in the decision about funding and duration of the call.

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

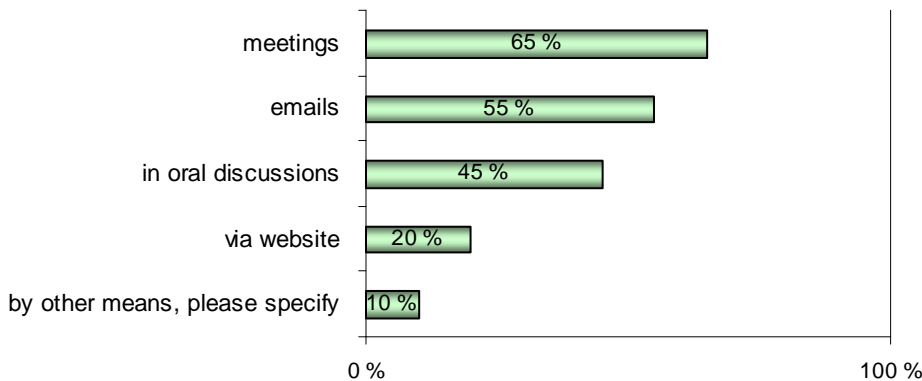


5.1. Theme selection

The way of how themes are selected differs between the ERA-Nets, but generally it is done through meetings and oral discussions and emails, and to a less degree via websites (see figure below).

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

Figure 6. Means of collecting suggestions for themes selection



It was also suggested that theme selection has to be based on where research is needed the most, instead of finding a topic that fits in all participating programmes. It was pointed out as a good practice to use more time to define the objectives for the joint call and use them to select the themes.

Some of the respondents mentioned that the theme for the call had been fixed to suite one organisation which the others had to follow, which lead to a situation where the relevance of the theme was important only for one organisation.

One of the suggestions proposed by the respondents was the idea of having a "stock exchange for topics to be funded".

Several respondents mentioned that there had been very little time for the preparation of the 1st call, but it provided the ERA-Nets with experiences for the next call. Respondents also expressed the opinion that in the future the selection of topics will be easier as their ERA-Net calls tackled this question and come up with good practice.

There is a difference in theme selection in different ERA-Nets: in some (i.e. BONUS and BiodivERsA) the topics are evolved from the nature of the ERA-Net, like the Baltic Sea or Biodiversity, and the thorough development of science plan and identifying the gaps in existing programmes allowed for effective theme selection.

BONUS:

"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 I think it was worth it. When we had the call, everyone around the Baltic was informed about it, as they participated in developing it. It was worth the process. Involving as many people as possible took time, but it was worth it".

BiodivERsA:

"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."

However, not everything went smoothly according to some respondents : "...there were deep and hectic discussions on the balance between basic research, policy relevance and applied science. Some partners had very strong view of one or the other".

On the other hand, there are ERA-Nets which *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*" did not make any decision when they were formed on what kind of subjects to do in the calls.

SKEP:

".. 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."

When the themes are too broad, everyone seems to agree, but when it needs to be more narrow it becomes more of a problem because some partners are not interested. So there needs to be a good representation of themes, but narrow enough at the same time. Also, it is important to think

about the themes as "*flexible, live and adaptable*" as it takes long time to develop and come to agreement on the themes.

5.2. Proposals evaluation process

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

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

There are also examples of ERA-Nets which used a 'false' two stage, where the proposals are not really evaluated in the first stage, but used for identifying most suitable evaluators.

The main challenge in proposal evaluation in the joint calls - is the difference of **evaluation focus** between partners. When different type 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 process was used (scientific peer review and national) it is difficult to match them afterwards, unless there is a clear procedure for decision making .

For overcoming these differences in proposal evaluation majority of ERA-Nets develop **common evaluation guidelines** where they agree and set up a common evaluation criteria and also determine how the evaluation procedure will be carried out. Some ERA-Nets, like BONUS and Marin-ERA developed and published the common evaluation procedures/scheme guidelines, which describe details of carrying out proposal evaluation.

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 appropriate).

In *BONUS ERA-Net* proposal evaluation guidelines were developed as a part of common evaluation scheme. Proposals are evaluated in terms of scientific content and relevance. There are two stages, letter of intent and full proposals. In the first stage every application is send to 3 evaluators, then a task force group looks at it. The second stage – full application, 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. Then, steering committee invited the users to look at the list, which included only scientifically high rankings (including 4.0 rankings). So, all the projects with scientific ranking of 5.0 were taken without discussions.

In *BiodivERsA* project evaluation is a two stage process, initial letter and full proposal stage. However, agreeing on evaluation criteria took 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 awkward situation. But in the end the two were combined Evaluation committee consists of 22-23 experts of whom 1/3 have policy background and 2/3 scientific background. Also, there are external evaluators separately from evaluation committee, of which 1/3 is with policy expertise. Each proposal is evaluated by three evaluators. All evaluators take a look at all criteria including policy relevance.

In SKEP pilot calls proposal evaluation procedure was not very formalized. There were no common guidelines developed because there was a small number of proposals. However, there were still quite many discussions. In the main call the proposal evaluation procedure has to be formalized and changed to make it more simple and transparent.

5.3 Gender equality

Another issue that needs to be discussed here is how the gender equality is treated in proposal evaluation in joint calls. When there is a change from national calls to the transnational there can be problems in adjusting the evaluation criteria. For example, in some countries (Sweden) the national requirement is that at least 30 % of the researchers within an application should be women, otherwise the application is dropped. In other countries there are no such requirements. So, there has to be a compromise of national rules and finding the agreement that all partners accept.

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

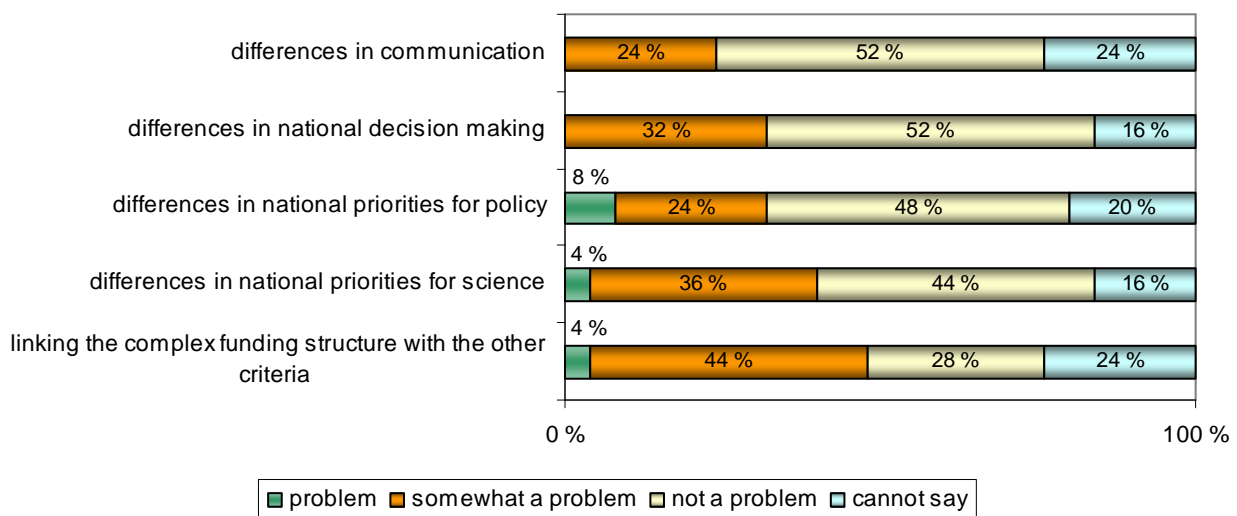
According to our survey results, majority of ERA-Nets use international scientific experts when they evaluate proposals (88% of our respondents) and much less use the expertise of national experts and funding agencies (20% and 24% correspondingly). Research users have a say in the evaluation of the proposals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

5.4. Differences in national priorities

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 a problem by 24 and 36% of respondents correspondingly (8% of respondents noted that national priorities for policy are a problem).

"The international experts evaluated the project proposals, afterwards the funding bodies decided what projects to support, mainly based on the evaluations, but also considering national interests."

Figure 7. Problems in proposals evaluation in ERA-Net joint calls



5.5. 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, 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 but the connection with universities/research institutes may be very thin.

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

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

"Usually 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.

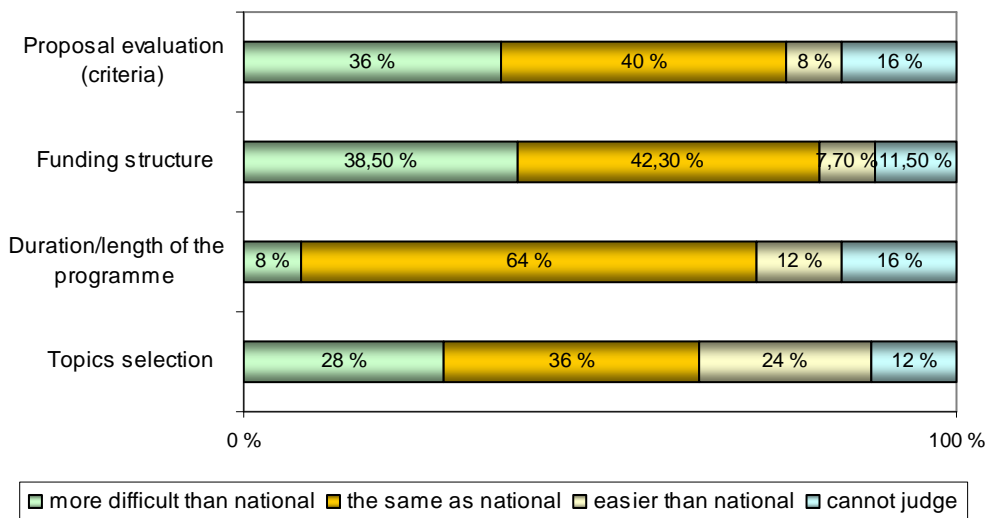
5.6. Comparison with national calls

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). Funding seems to be the most questionable 38% of respondents believe it is more difficult to agree on funding than in national programmes, and 42% think that it is just as difficult.

There is a different situation with theme selection. In comparison with other issues agreeing on themes is actually seems to be quite similar and even easier in joint calls than in national programs (36% and 24% correspondingly) (see fig.8).

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

Figure 8. 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 results were interesting.

Lessons learned:

- Theme selection is a lengthy process, but worth it and input of research users is crucial
- Themes are "flexible, live and adaptable", need to be broad and narrow enough at the same time, also avoiding potential overlapping
- Respondents generally feel that they had enough possibility to affect the decision and satisfied with the process
- Among problems in proposal evaluation differences in national priorities for policy and science are somewhat a problem
- common formalized procedure for proposal evaluation including details on evaluators, conflict of interest, gender issues makes life of ERA-Net easier.

Notes, comments, suggestions:

6. Reaching for the end-users

End-users involvement in the ERA-Nets research is very important and many ERA-Nets develop at the planning phase of the project a strategy for communication with end users. In the joint calls the situation is similar (Fig.9).

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 calls.

According to our survey results, about 12-16% of ERA-Net respondents didn't have any cooperation with end-users during any stage of 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 didn't not define their end-users neither formally or informally.

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

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

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

However, during the topic selection 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.

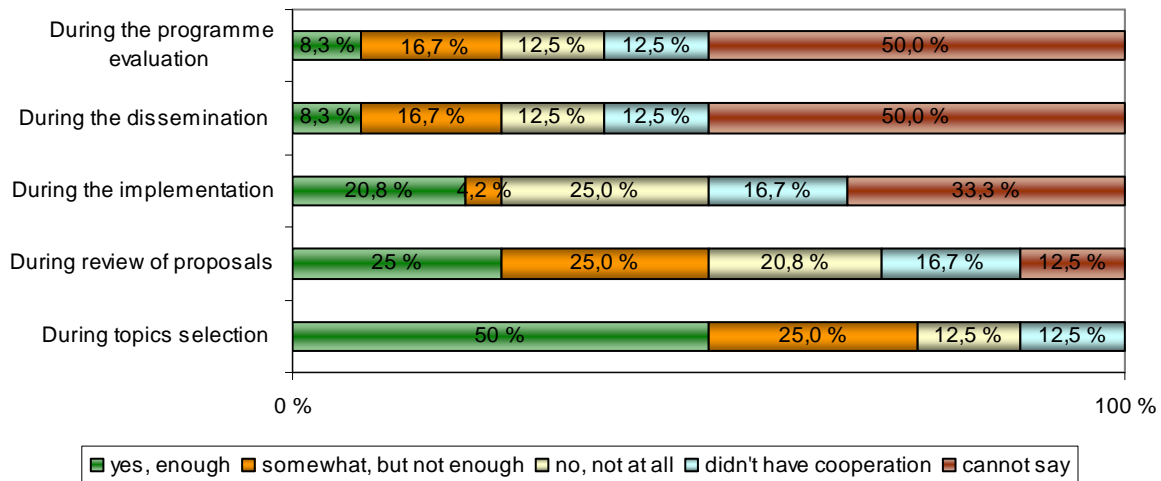
During the review of proposals the picture is slightly different: the number of ERA-Net respondents who are satisfied with the end-user involvement is much lower than in the topic selection phase, and accounts for 25%.

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).

According to SKEP, pilot calls are very useful in terms of learning the communication with stakeholders.

"In the case of the second pilot call (virtual common pot) we had to quite carefully enlist organisations and make them aware of the call. That 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".

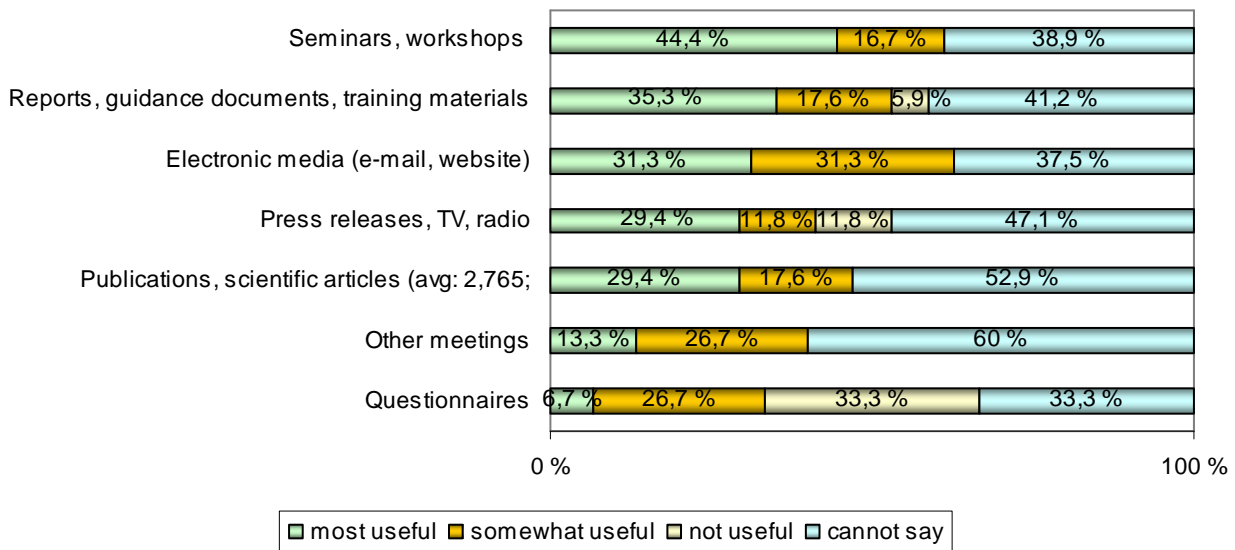
Figure 9. End-users involvement



6.1 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 are using the communication channels, shown in figure 10.

Figure 10. Communication channels



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

As it could be seen from above figure 10, meetings and workshops were considered to be the most useful tools 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, intermediaries and EC channels could be used as channels.

Some of the proposed tools were included sophisticated power point (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 stage of a joint call. 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.

Respondents noted the importance of involving the 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. They also pointed out that by adapting the communication to their understanding one enhances dissemination of results and reaches the end-users more effectively.

BONUS's theme – Baltic Sea – involved very wide range of 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 has 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 everybody in the Baltics know about BONUS .

SKEP: End users for the three calls are very different. Maybe that has been a drawback of SKEP that there has been three calls with very different end users. Maybe it should have involved the end users more. It has been more difficult to have a good dialogue with the end users with this type of calls compared with national calls.

BiodivERsA: It was initiated by the science policy process of IPBRS. Many of the research themes arose from the IPBRS. End-users are also present in the advisory board of BiodivERsA.

In many ERA-Nets research users are being involved in the programme evaluation, 41% of respondents noted that research users are involved in the evaluation panel.

User involvement also depends on the nature of research and research topic. For example, *Mari-Fish* 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, 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.

When one compares SKEP with BONUS it is a totally different organization and discussion about the research users. In BONUS, the end users are large organizations as the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), 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.

Lessons learned:

- Most of the ERA-Nets have defined their end users either formally or noted that they know them informally
- In many ERA-Nets research users are part of evaluation panel
- Depending on type of research users in some ERA-Nets they are able to provide more influence

Notes, comments, suggestions:

7. Using results of research programme

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 on this.

In our survey 45% of the environmental ERA-Nets have prepared a formal dissemination plan, and 33% are in the progress. For some ERA-Nets 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.

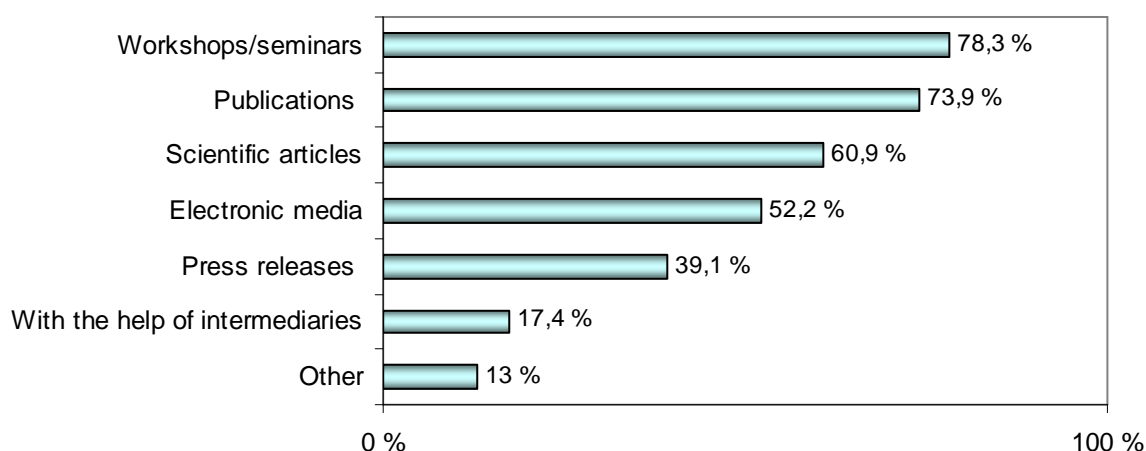
Generally, the dissemination of the research results is done by ERA-Net secretariat, Steering Committee, ERA-Net partners, the project leaders, and the researchers themselves through publications.

Steering committees play a very important role in the dissemination of the results, it structures the way of dissemination, develops an effective network. 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 to identify the channels which would suit the best the dissemination of the results to the end-users. Many ERA-Nets are just in the beginning 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 and publications as well as scientific publications are 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 the electronic media. Press releases were considered being an effective way to disseminate the results by 39% of respondents. Usually a combination of communication channels is used, so it is reflected in the results (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.

8. Challenges of joint research programme evaluation

For the majority of ERA-Nets outputs are monitored at the end of the call or a programme (59%) and for many of the researchers have to submit their work once a year (47%). The lower percent of respondents noted that researchers had to report their results only when feel necessary (12%). Among the other ways to monitor outcomes are project leaders annual meeting attendance, mid-term and final seminars/ reporting of the projects (6%). Majority of the respondents mentioned developing and using common requirements for the final reports for all projects (71%). Monitoring of outputs was considered adequate by majority of respondents.

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

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).

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

When planning the evaluation it has to be decided what type evaluation the ERA-Net joint programme will be using: ex-ante, ex-post evaluation or a mid-term. According to Kivimaa et al (2008) it seemed important that there is continuity between ex-ante and ex-post evaluation, so that the objectives and the evaluation criteria would be coherent during the whole programme cycle. In our survey 47% of respondents noted that their ERA-Net had carried out the 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 the common evaluation mechanisms there are national differences which have an influence on how it is done. The majority of respondents noted that to some extent the national evaluation mechanisms had an influence on how programme evaluation is carried out.

BONUS ERA-Net developed guidelines for a common evaluation scheme as a recommendation from the partners. The programme evaluation will be carried out by an international panel appointed by the programme steering committee. Researchers, policymakers, people with previous experience in programme management and other stakeholders are included. The guidelines specify that clear and measurable goals should be unanimously agreed by various partners and set in the planning phase of the programme.

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 quite many respondents (59%). Relevance to the private sector was less significant, it accounted for only 12%. 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 establish the evaluation panels for their joint calls/programmes. Ac-

According to our survey results 44% already have evaluation panels and 28% are in the progress of establishing one. Evaluation panels in majority of ERA-Nets consist of representative of the funders (54,5%) scientific experts (36%) call coordinators (27%). People from outside of 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. Majority of the respondents considered the evaluation panel for 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 programme board (28%). User orientation of the project is done by stakeholders and national experts (29%), while the policy effects are more often evaluated by the programme board (29%).

SKEP:

The ERA-Net has prepared guidelines for ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post evaluation but a specific mid-term or an ex-post evaluation has not yet been planned for the joint calls. It has, however, evaluated the experiences of stakeholders regarding the planning and management of the first pilot call through questionnaires. The programme will finish after the ERA-Net has come to an end. Some kind of maintenance of the cooperation is planned to enable follow-up and ex-post evaluation of the programme. There are plans to do a mid-term evaluation on the 1st pilot call.

BiodivERsA :

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.

BONUS:

Both a mid-term evaluation and a final evaluation are planned to be carried out. Final evaluation is to be divided into two phases. The first is focused on scientific quality and management processes, and the second phase is focused on the impacts of the programme. The mid-term evaluation and the first part of the final evaluation will be undertaken by an evaluation panel appointed by the programme steering committee, while the second part of the evaluation could be done by the representatives of the EC and a relevant regional body.

The problems that ERA-Nets 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 very unlikely according to our results.

Lessons learned:

- Many ERA-Nets have a formal procedure for the systematic evaluation of the research programme
- Defining focus of the evaluation - whether it should be scientific quality, user orientation or cost effectiveness - often causing a problem.
- Not many ERA-Nets have research users in their programme evaluation panels
- If programme evaluation is not planned and funds for it are not allocated from the beginning of research programme, there is a possibility of failure of carrying it out due to the closure of ERA-Nets.

Notes, comments, suggestions:

9. Overcoming national differences

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

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 compare 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. One of the goals of ERA-Nets is for researchers and agencies from different countries to learn to plan and work together. Results of our survey and interviews show that it has been a very successful learning experience. ERA-Nets have created networks of research agencies, ministries, scientists and research users from different countries. During the time of the ERA-Net joint activities people got to know each other, differences and similarities of research funding and planning, nuances of administrative routines and different communication modes.

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 national formal regulations create problems, sometime to the point that partners are unable to participate/fund the call.

According to our results national legal barriers for funding were considered 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 cause 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.

When asked about the national/intercultural differences, many respondents suggested that differences between countries are not so problematic as differences between various agencies in ERA-Net. So, coming to agreement is a problem 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 of similar kind agencies but from different part of Europe.

Interesting point which was noted by many respondents is that scientists from different countries have worked together for many years, especially in natural sciences. So, there is a lot of experiences and people already know each other well. What new in ERA-Nets' joint programs is that now research agencies have to work together and between them there is far less experience and networks. Various research agencies have very different priorities and ways of operating. In some ERA-Nets, ministries and research agencies appointed research institutes to represent them in the ERA-Net at one point, as they had more knowledge of the themes and scientists.

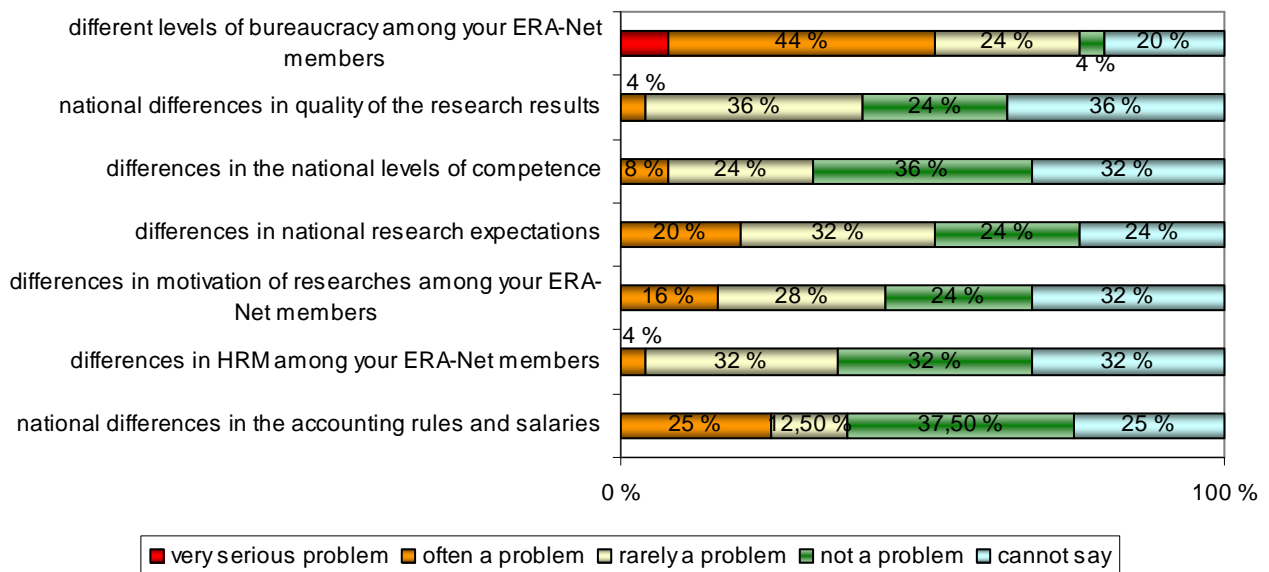
National differences still cause certain problems during planning and implementation of the joint calls. According to the survey different levels of bureaucracy was the only category which received a mark as "a very serious problem" and 44% of respondents noted that it was often a problem. National research 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 experience 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 such a strong concerns.

Differences in accounting and salaries systems were considered as 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 the problems of this factor. French and Finnish respondents didn't have unanimity among their answers gained from their citizens.

Differences in national research expectations was not a problem for respondents from France and Norway and Finland, while respondents from Sweden, Netherlands and Austria noted it as existing. Similar picture is in perception of difference in the national levels of competence: respondents from France and Norway don't see any problems, while respondents from Sweden, Ireland and Austria has mentioned it as a occurring problem. Motivation of the 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), quality of the 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, Norway, while respondents from Germany and Portugal didn't see it as a barrier. French respondents supported both opinions: some respondents considered language and cultural difference to be a barrier and some – not.

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

Lessons learned:

- There are certain similarities among opinions of the respondents based on country of origin of the ERA-Net respondent
- National differences in the bureaucracy levels cause most problems during implementation of the joint call/programme
- Inter-organizational differences are stronger than intercultural (funding agencies vs. research institutes) and cause more barriers in all stages of the call

Notes, comments, suggestions:
