

Specific support actions to prepare ERA-NETs

Specific support actions are mainly aimed at developing future ERA-NETs. They may involve conferences, seminars, studies and analyses, working groups and expert groups, operational support and dissemination, information and communication activities, or a combination of these – as appropriate in each case.

Specific support actions may facilitate in particular participation from the candidate countries in the ERA-NET scheme.

The minimum number of participants in a specific support action is one legal entity established in a Member State or Associated State.

Preparatory actions should have a limited scope and a duration not exceeding one year. Community funding (maximum 100% of total eligible costs) over €200 000 will only be considered in exceptional cases.

Indicative budget

The indicative budget for the ERA-NET scheme is set at €148 million for the period 2003-2005.

Timetable for implementation

An 'open call' inviting proposals for ERA-NET activities on a 'bottom-up' basis was published in the *Official Journal* on 17 December 2002. The following closure dates have been set: 03.06.2003, 02.03.2004, 05.10.2004, 02.03.2005 and 04.10.2005, at 17:00 (Brussels local time).

Evaluation of proposals

Proposals will be evaluated by independent experts using a peer review system.

Key issues to be addressed during the evaluation of ERA-NET scheme coordination actions include:

- Relevance to the objectives of the programme
- Quality of the coordination
- Potential impact
- Quality of the consortium
- Quality of the management
- Mobilisation of resources

Key issues to be addressed during the evaluation of ERA-NET scheme specific support actions:

- Relevance to the objectives of the programme
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What else do you need to know?

More detailed information can be found by consulting the Background Document 'Provisions for implementing the ERA-NET scheme' which can be downloaded at the following website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/coordination/era-net_en.html

For further information about the ERA-NET scheme and the related call please consult the following websites:

Coordination: <http://www.cordis.lu/coordination/home.html>

Infopack: <http://fp6.cordis.lu/coordination/calls.cfm>

Helpdesk: rtd-coordination@cec.eu.int

Pre-screening of proposals is offered and recommended.

For a broad range of information about FP6 and ERA consult the following websites:

Europa: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/index_en.html

CORDIS: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6>

FP6 and the European Research Area

"The Sixth Framework Programme should have a structuring effect on research and technological development in Europe, including the Member States, Associated candidate countries and other Associated countries and make a significant contribution to the establishment of the European Research Area and innovation." (Cited from the *European Parliament and Council decision on FP6*)

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The 'ERA-NET' Scheme

Supporting
cooperation &
coordination of
national or regional
research programmes



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Sixth Framework Programme 2002-2006

The ERA-NET scheme will be the principal means for the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) to support the cooperation and coordination of research activities (i.e. programmes) carried out at national or regional level. The scheme will be financed as part of the specific programme 'Integrating and strengthening the European Research Area'.

Objective

The objective of the ERA-NET scheme, in the context of the European Research Area (ERA), is to step up the cooperation and coordination of research activities (i.e. programmes) carried out at national or regional level in the Member States and Associated States through the networking of research activities, including their 'mutual opening' and the development and implementation of joint activities.

Definition of research activities carried out at national or regional level

The 'research activities' carried out at national or regional level should be understood as full research and innovation programmes, part of such programmes, or similar initiatives. Typically, such activities should be:

- strategically planned;
- executed at national or regional level; and
- financed or managed by national or regional public bodies or by structures closely related to or mandated by public authorities

Fields of research

ERA-NET covers any field of science and technology. It should be emphasised that the ERA-NET scheme will be implemented using a 'bottom-up' approach, giving no preference to one research topic over another.

Activities supported by ERA-NET

Ways of networking research activities carried out at national or regional level

Networking activities may involve many levels of cooperation and coordination in an evolutionary perspective, whose precise form will depend on the degree of maturity of the network. The networking foreseen by an ERA-NET should be ambitious, and in this sense it must cover (or go beyond) at least the first two levels described below, and should produce concrete deliverables. In particular, it should lead to sustained cooperation between national or regional research and innovation programmes continuing beyond the duration of the ERA-NET contract itself.

- **Systematic exchange of information and good practices on existing programmes** (i.e. improve communication, develop better

reciprocal knowledge, and promote trust-building among programme managers in similar scientific and technological areas).

- **Identification and analysis of common strategic issues** (i.e. identification and analysis of research activities carried out by different programmes that could lead to the design of future multinational schemes; identification and analysis of practical networking activities and mutual opening mechanisms; identification and analysis of barriers that hinder transnational cooperation activities; identification of new opportunities and gaps in research; exploration of possibilities of setting up common evaluation systems; identification of 'horizontal' issues of common interest; identification of mutual complementarities; etc.)
- **Development of joint activities between national or regional programmes** (i.e. development of mechanisms for clustering of nationally- or regionally-funded research projects; development of multinational evaluation procedures; development of schemes for joint training activities; development of schemes for mutual opening of facilities or laboratories; development of common schemes for programme monitoring and evaluation; development of schemes for personnel exchange; development and preparation of specific cooperation agreements or arrangements; development of an action plan; etc.)
- **Implementation of joint transnational research activities** (i.e. setting up a common strategy; a joint work programme; pilot activities; common (mutually open) or joint calls for proposals; a common multinational evaluation system and a common plan for dissemination of results or experiences; etc.)

Management framework of an ERA-NET

Given the long-term nature of the cooperation inside an ERA-NET, the partners will be advised to establish a 'unified management framework', with specific staff dedicated to coordinating their activities and ensuring continuity of operations. Management tasks could include:

- overall management of the networking activities
- overall legal, contractual, ethical, financial and administrative management of the consortium
- leading the development of the strategic vision of the ERA-NET
- ensuring high-quality standards throughout the activities of the ERA-NET
- knowledge management and other innovation-related activities (if applicable)
- maintenance of any consortium agreement
- overseeing the promotion of gender equality in the ERA-NET
- overseeing science and society issues

Participating in ERA-NET

The participants in ERA-NET will be:

- public bodies responsible for financing or managing research activities⁽¹⁾ carried out at national or regional level
- other national or regional bodies that finance or manage such research activities

- bodies operating at European level whose mission includes the pan-European coordination of nationally-funded research activities⁽²⁾

The legally established minimum number of participants for each of the two instruments given below must only include entities belonging to the above three categories. However, over and above this minimum, the following may also participate and receive Community funding:

- legal entities, such as charities or other private organisations which also manage research programmes that are strategically planned and executed at national or regional level

Instruments to be used

Coordination actions to implement ERA-NETs

Coordination actions will be used for implementing ERA-NET projects.

The minimum number of participants in an ERA-NET scheme coordination action has been set at **three independent legal entities** established in different Member States or Associated States, of which at least two shall be Member States or Associated candidate countries.

A single participant, such as a European Economic Interest Group (EEIG) or any legal entity established in a Member State or Associated State according to its national law, which is made up of independent legal entities managing publicly funded national or regional programmes from at least three different Member States or Associated States – of which at least two shall be a Member State or Associated candidate country – may be the sole participant in an ERA-NET.

Preference will be given to ERA-NET actions involving a more substantial number of Member States or Associated States than the legally required minimum in order to obtain a significant structuring effect at European level.

The financial support from the Community will be limited to the costs of the additional activities undertaken to implement the ERA-NET. No support will be provided for the research activities themselves, for which the members of the ERA-NET will be expected to use their own resources.

Community funding (maximum 100% of total eligible costs) for an ERA-NET could be as high as €3 million. In exceptional cases, for example if several fields of research are covered by a single ERA-NET, a greater contribution could be envisaged.

Each ERA-NET should last sufficiently long to have a **durable impact** on the research programmes involved. Durations of up to five years may be envisaged.

(1)(2) "activities" understood as research and innovation programmes or parts thereof