



Report on Developed Tools for Joint Activities

June, 2015

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June, 2015

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ISBN: 978-9979-68-369-8



The Geothermal ERA NET is supported by the European Union's Seventh programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement No 291866

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Executive summary

Work Package 7 (WP7) under the framework of Geothermal ERA-NET mainly centres on the implementation of Joint Activities (JAs). In line with that the implementation of the 3 following activities, which are brought together in this report, are sine qua non to the realization of important opportunities to build more collaboration among the countries participating to Geothermal ERA-NET:

1. Joint Calls,
2. Common Programmes
3. Collaborative Activities

These implementations will in turn provide the opportunity for opening up national programs, pooling resources, improving cross border cooperation, achieving critical mass, avoiding duplication of funds and efforts. All of these actions are in turn necessary for the promotion of the application of geothermal energy at their own right.

One of the main objectives of the key activity within WP7 defined for task WP7.1 is to address and consequently provide a summary of the most common funding schemes, the list of data and documents and the timing for the preparation of Joint Calls. In this task Common programme rules and procedures has been identified based on learning's from WP4. It also describes other paths or methods for organizing Joint Activities(JAs), including “Common Programme Organization” and “Collaborative Activities”. This report in turn aims to explain what are the various modalities for implementing joint activities, and to provide guidelines for implementation. To facilitate the development of Joint Activities (JAs), this report also offers a brief overview of recent or ongoing European and international activities. This overview forms a basis to identify the Joint Activities (JAs) that would best complement the existing work.

Common Joint Call (JC) will foster transnational coordination of national research activities after a common strategy is being set up and a joint work programme is being developed. The schemes involves partners agreeing to commit new funds to support research topics. There are three main modalities for funding the Joint Call (JC): the ‘common pot’, the ‘virtual pot’, and the ‘mixed mode’ models. These modes have been described in detail in the reports. It is noted that implementation of Joint Calls, can be targeted in particular at current and future ERA-NETs, ERA-NET Plus and JPIs (Joint Programming Initiative).

“Common Programs” are defined as cooperation among national programs already funded. These programs are of mutifold goals and objectives, namely: to foster practical cooperation between partners on existing or planned research programs, to improve the collaboration between scientific institutions in Europe, and to introduce more complementarity among the National Programs definition. The aim behind this challenge is to try to move together on important areas of research already targeted and funded by partners. By experience, it appears that many of the research challenges are actually common across Europe. Therefore, effective

collaborative work will bring added value and benefits. The “Common Program” concept has been used in other ERA-NETs but can be considered still at the experimental level.

“Collaborative Activities” may extend outside the strict focus of developing joint research projects and include the development of detailed databases on current research to help identify common priorities and avoid duplication, and the agreement on the sharing of data. The latter topic has been part of Geothermal ERA-NET activities, and the development of a Pilot European Geothermal Information Platform has been an example of Collaborative Activity.

There are main stages in developing and adopting Common Programs: Identification of candidates; refining the list and developing a work program; and finally formalising the collaboration. The report also propose guidelines that set out different stages and different levels of involvement of the various actors. It is noted that building Common Programs is a new step by step approach that requires strong commitments and also flexibility from the partners, involving ministries, funding agencies, research operators and experts. The roles of each actor must be well defined in a participative way.

The present report provides guidelines for competitive and non-competitive funding mechanisms and collaborative activities. It aims not only at the facilitation of the production of calls but also at the consideration and promotion of the favourable conditions for common programming.

This report and the list of research topics defined in WP4, will comprise the backbone of the uptake of JA, to be defined in the engagement meeting to be held in Brussels on October 2015..

1 Introduction

Following the European Commission indication of four steps of cooperation and coordination, the concept of Geothermal ERA-NET is to foster the coordination of the network participants' programmes through a need-driven approach based on four steps each one contributing on its own to the reinforcement of the cooperation, and providing the basis for the design of the next stages:

Step 1 - Information exchange and mapping of existing programmes to improve mutual acquaintance and share of best practices

Step 2 - Strategic orientation of research programmes to eliminate overlapping and open novel issues

Step 3 - Development of joint activities between national programmes to consolidate and harmonise partnership outline common vision and agenda

Step 4 - Implementation of joint transnational research activities to expand the structuring impact of the network

As for other ERA-NETs, each step has its potential output, outcome and impact, related to the goal of mutual learning as in step 1 and 2, and to the goal of joint coordination of programmes calls and mutual opening of research activities as in step 3 and 4. Figure 1 summarises the concept.

| High level Goals | Intermediate Goals | Impacts demonstrated by activities | Activities | |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| Restructuring the fabric of research in Europe via the improved coordination of national and regional research activities and policies | Improved cooperation and coordination at the programme level | | Steps 3 and 4 Development and implementation of joint activities | |
| | | Joint coordination of programmes, calls and related activities | Impacts on joint coordination | Coordination of nationally funded research projects Establishment of common evaluation procedures Joint training activities Mutual opening of research facilities Mutual opening of programmes |
| | | Mutual opening of national and regional | Impacts on mutual opening | Definition of common ex-post evaluation schemes Definition of common schemes for monitoring Personnel exchange Establishment of cooperation agreements Design of JC Implementation of JC Design of joint R&D programmes Implementation of joint R&D programmes |
| | | Mutual learning | Impacts on mutual learning | Step 2 Identification of strategic issues (common strategic agendas) Research activities of mutual interest Practical networking arrangements Barriers to trans-national activities New opportunities and gaps in research Work on benchmarking |
| | | | Step 1 Information exchange | |

Figure 1: Impact of ERA-NETs based activities under the steps for implementation (From: NETWHATCH, 2012)

While possible thematic priorities based on the identification of research topics performed in WP4 are being established, common programme rules and procedures for joint activities must be defined.

The aim of this report is to explain what the various modalities for implementing joint activities are, and to provide guidelines for implementation.

2 Joint Calls and funding schemes

After setting up a common strategy and developing a joint work programme, transnational coordination of national research activities can be fostered by common joint calls for proposals. The schemes involves partners agreeing to commit new funds to support research topics.

There are three main modalities for funding the Joint Call (JC): the ‘common pot’, the ‘virtual pot’, which are schematically described in Table 1 and 2, and the ‘mixed mode’ models.

Table 1: Real common pot funding scheme highlights

| Real common pot | |
|--|---|
| Main features | <i>A common budget, irrespective of the national/ regional affiliation of applicants, is established. The decision on which proposals should be retained for funding will be based on the evaluation by the international experts committee and the designated decision-making body.</i> |
| Suitability | <i>For ERA-NET-networks wishing to engage in a transnational joint call with an agreed research theme, with evaluation undertaken by an international expert committee, and where funding decisions are based on a joint ranking list.</i> |
| Advantage and Benefit | <i>To jointly fund the best quality proposals, and excellent resident and non-resident researchers taking part in these proposals. To take advantage of an expert and transparent international evaluation with transnational rules and procedures.</i> |
| Commitment | <i>Earmarked national funds. The national/ regional funding organisation does not retain control of funding decisions and funding, and might, depending on the funding decisions, fund non-national and non-resident researchers according to the committed budget. Cross-border funding.</i> |
| Administrative efforts and benefits | <i>Administrative coordination with other national funding organisations is necessary to establish joint call procedures, and administrative effort is needed in order to ensure efficient operation of joint call decisions and joint funding, in accordance with joint standard rules and procedures.</i> |
| Critical issues | <i>The contribution of a guaranteed budget is essential. National legal provisions may in some countries restrict or disallow cross-border funding.</i> |

Table 2: Virtual common pot funding scheme highlights

| Virtual common pot | |
|--|---|
| Main features | <i>Each participating funding organisation funds its own successful participants, and no cross border funding is involved. Evaluation of proposals is undertaken by an international expert committee, whereas funding decisions and funding is undertaken by individual national organisations, in accordance with their own standard rules and procedures</i> |
| Suitability | <i>For ERA-NET-networks wishing to engage in a transnational joint call with an agreed research theme, with evaluation undertaken by an international expert committee, but which also wish to retain control of funding decisions and funding, in accordance with own standard rules and procedures.</i> |
| Advantage and Benefit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To take advantage of an expert and transparent international evaluation with transnational rules and procedures.</i> • <i>Internationalisation of programme portfolia.</i> • <i>No cross-border funding and related administrative issues is involved.</i> |
| Commitment | <p><i>Earmarked national funds.</i></p> <p><i>National funding organisation fund own nationals or residents, where both international expert committee evaluation and subsequent national funding decisions retain these proposals for funding.</i></p> <p><i>Cross-border funding</i></p> |
| Administrative efforts and benefits | <i>Administrative coordination with other national funding organisations is necessary to establish joint call procedures, and administrative effort is needed in order to ensure efficient operation of joint call decisions, in accordance with own standard rules and procedures.</i> |
| Critical issues | <p><i>The contribution of a guaranteed budget is essential.</i></p> <p><i>However, national funds may be selectively increased according to the national/ regional demand of the evaluation result.</i></p> |

The *mixed mode model* is the minimum condition for implementing an ERA-NET Plus and co-funded ERA-NET Cofund. In this case a Call may receive a European Commission (EC) financial contribution (up to 33 % of the total cumulative funding of the joint call budget) to top up the call budget. It can be used in the traditional ERA-NET scheme call between Member States, but in this case the top-up funding is provided by Member States.

The consortium may establish virtual or real common pot rules, and the top-up funding is used to close the gaps of funding within the ranking list (i.e. project participants for which no

more national/regional funding is available). An agreed share of top-up funding is to be allocated to fill these funding gaps irrespective of nationality. Moreover, funding organisations may also commit to fund non-national and non-resident researchers.

The ‘common pot,’ whereby participants pool their funds, represents the greatest degree of integration, and arguably aligns most closely to the ERA objectives. As this model can meet national political and administrative barriers, under the ‘virtual pot’ model funding does not cross national boundaries, with national and regional funders only contributing the funds for their own participants. Under the ‘mixed-mode’ model, researchers are funded by the network participants from their country, although, but under certain conditions participants may fund researchers from a different country.

Usually, the *funding* of real common pot is distributed centrally and the virtual common pot is operated by the single partners. The same applies for the two separate shares of the mixed common pot.

2.1 Designing a Joint Call

Joint Calls in ERA-NET may benefit of the experience of other ERA-NETs and the tools developed in ERA-LEARN, which is part of NETWATCH, a Platform for Transnational R&D Programme collaboration (<http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/home>). While NETWATCH will be phased out in Fall 2015, ERA-LEARN will evolve to ERA-LEARN 2020, to build on and update the information an analysis hitherto provided by NETWATCH. The following description is based on these.

In order to design a Joint Call, the following steps are required:

- Consultation process and Preparatory phase of the Call
- Launch of the first call and Call management
- Review of main results
- Recommendations

The Consultation process and Preparatory phase of the Call is firstly characterized by the **Selection of topics** (recommendations, check with funding agencies for interest and possible budget and date of availability. It is then important to prepare the **terms of reference**. It is therefore important to organize a funding agency workshop with the following objectives:

- Finalize the selection of topics taking into consideration the indications sent in advance of the workshop by the funding agencies.
- Define the budget they are willing to allocate for the 1st joint call.
- Discuss and finalize the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) through which all funding parties will confirm that they fulfill the intentions expressed in the Joint Call as well as in the financial framework.
- Discuss and finalize the Terms of Reference and the call documents. These are: Call announcement text, Guidelines for applicants, Guidelines for evaluators.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be also defined, describing all the administrative issues.

The **Terms of Reference** should include (1):

- Call topics
- Funding:
 - ✓ Minimum number of Funding Parties
 - ✓ Maximum number of projects intended to be funded
 - ✓ Type of funding scheme
 - ✓ Definition of eligible costs that can be funded (equipment, personnel, travelling, events etc.)
 - ✓ Funding agreement
- Eligibility and evaluation:
 - ✓ Eligibility criteria (formal criteria) and evaluation criteria (scientific excellence, impact and expected outcomes, scoring system etc.)
 - ✓ Evaluators: Each funding agency will nominate evaluators from their countries, who are independent, international experts in the field(s) or on the instruments represented in the first joint call.
 - ✓ Evaluation and decision making procedures / Peer Review Panel / Monitoring
- Application process (1-step or 2-step process)
- Recipients of funding
- Submission Process
- Call secretariat: who will handle the proposal management and the evaluation process (building on a pool of independent, international peer reviewers). It will be supported in all stages by the consortium
- In addition to the call secretariat, each partner will nominate **national contact persons** that serve as interface at national level between the applicants and the answers / questions from the funding parties, especially on the application process, the eligibility and evaluation criteria and funding modalities.
- Key elements of the management of funds and reporting.

Documents to be prepared to prepare the Joint Call are:

- Joint Call Text,
- Guide for applicants,
- FAQ,
- Proposal form,
- National contact point list,
- National regulations (embedding the contact point list),

- Guideline for evaluators written for the experts who will evaluate the projects, but will be useful to researchers wishing to understand the evaluation criteria.

Other tools to be prepared are:

- Call webpage (usually on the project website) with a reference of contact person per country and link, budget (total, then each country set its own budget),
- Web-based matchmaking facility to help researchers wishing to submit projects as a consortium to find partners.

To launch and manage the Call it is necessary to foresee a correct timing, taking into account the time for launching the Call, eligibility check and evaluation, funding negotiation. On the base of the available document the following table synthetize the required timing for a 2 stage Call.

Table 3: Proposal of required timing for a 2 stage Call

| | | |
|----------------|---|--------------------|
| Stage 1 | Publication date – invitation for pre-proposals | 0 |
| | Deadline for submitting pre-proposals | 2-3 months |
| | Selection of pre-proposals to be invited to submit full proposals | 1-2 months |
| Stage 2 | Deadline for submitting invited full proposals | 1-2 months |
| | Deadline peer evaluation of full proposal, Selection ranking for funding proposals, Deadline national/regional funding decisions | 2-5 months |
| | Project start | 2 months |
| TOTAL | | 8-12 months |

To implement a Joint Call using a virtual common pot, a draft Guideline for implementation is provided in Appendix 1. Since it includes many topics that are embedded in the Terms of Reference, this draft document may be considered a first step for the preparation of the Call. If the Consortium will decide for a Real Common Pot or Mixed Mode funding scheme, the proposed Guidelines will be quickly modified to embed the specific funding scheme. All the other issues will be discussed in the Meeting that will take place in Brussels on October 2015.

Based on ERALEARN Tools, and as soon as topics and Terms of Reference details will be defined, all the documents related to Call evaluation and monitoring will be also prepared.

3 Other ways of coordination: Common Programmes and Activities

As mentioned in the Introduction, the objective of the ERA-NET scheme is to enhance the cooperation and coordination of research activities carried out at national or regional level by the Member States and Associated States through the:

- Networking of research activities conducted at national or regional level, and
- Mutual opening of national and regional research programs.

Joint or coordinated funding is not the only way to improve the coherence and coordination of research programs across Europe. Both networking and mutual opening of programs require a progressive step by step approach. The ERA-NET scheme should have a long-term perspective that must also allow for the different ways that research is organized in Member States and Associated States to merge to a consensual basis for common management.

A *Common Program*, which is the cooperation among national programs already funded, aims to foster practical cooperation between Partners on existing or planned research programs, to improve the collaboration between scientific institutions in Europe, and to introduce more complementarity among the National Programs definition. The aim behind this challenge is to try to move together on important areas of research already targeted and funded by partners. By experience, it appears that many of the research challenges are actually common across Europe. Therefore, working collaboratively will bring added value and benefits.

The “Common Program” concept has been used in other ERA-NETs but can be considered still at the experimental level.

By cooperation, it is intended a junction of some national programs funded through their national research organizations, in a view of contributing collectively to Common research Programs.

Thereby research programs carried out at national or regional level should have the following characteristics:

- be strategically planned, i.e., should be composed of a number of research projects focused on a defined subject area or set of problems, scheduled to run for a set dedicated period of time and have a coordinated management;
- be carried out at national or regional level, and
- be already funded by national or regional public bodies

The major objective is to push these national programs to build collaboration at European level, so they based mainly on non-competitive funds, in order to stimulate the coordination and to increase the critical masses among the major Research Performing Organizations (RPO) of the EU.

The collaborative activities may extend outside the strict focus of developing joint research projects and include the development of detailed databases on current research to help identify common priorities and avoid duplication, and the agreement on the sharing of data. The latter topic has been part of Geothermal ERA-NET activities, and the development of a Pilot European Geothermal Information Platform has been an example of *Collaborative Activity*.

There are main stages in developing and adopting Common Programs: Identifying candidates; refining the list and developing a work program; and finally formalising the collaboration.

The general guidelines proposed below set out different stages and different levels of involvement of the various actors. Building Common Programs is anyway a new step by step approach that requires strong commitments and also flexibility from the partners, involving ministries, funding agencies, research operators and experts. The roles of each actor must be well defined in a participative way.

3.1 Developing a Common Program or Activity

After a topic/research area has been selected, following the activities of WP4, a detailed analysis of the existing research in the selected topic and the different countries will show the convergence, the gaps and the alignment of the different projects, leading to identify the contents of the Common Program. The RPOs that perform the national program have to be involved in the elaboration of the precise content and in the discussion on how the national projects could be interlinked, what areas would be most valuable for collaboration, with which schedule. In the general case, the scientific leaders and national experts from a research organization participate in the drafting of the Common Programs.

The partners involved in Common Program sign an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding that set out what would be achieved and the modalities for partners to work together. The MoU is a mutual statement of intention among the partners agreeing to make efforts to fulfil their intentions and which also establishes the nature and the specific governance attached to the agreed collaboration in terms of shared resources, timing and practical interactions between project participants. It could normally be signed for the total duration of the program even if it lasts longer than the duration of the Geothermal ERA-NET.

A Steering Group is created including the leading scientific actors as well as the concerned partners of the Geothermal ERA-NET consortium to follow up the results and to achieve continuous improvement of the collaboration.

The follow up of the activities is an important process with periodic analysis of the activity reports and results of the Common Program.

4 Conclusions

The implementation of Joint Calls, Common Programmes and Collaborative Activities provide important opportunities to build more collaboration among the countries participating to Geothermal ERA-NET, opening up national programs, pooling resources, improving cross border cooperation, achieving critical mass, avoiding duplication of funds and efforts.

The present report provides guidelines for competitive and non-competitive funding mechanisms and collaborative activities. Its aims have been to facilitate not only the production of calls but also to consider and promote the favourable conditions for common programming.

This report and the list of research topics defined in WP4 will be the base for the uptake of JA, to be defined in the engagement meeting already planned in Brussels on October 2015.

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