Published on *Digital Agenda for Europe* (http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda)

La vie des projets – CHIST-ERA

Published by Newsroom Editor on 25/07/2013
CHIST-ERA is a coordination and co-operation activity of national and regional research funding organisations in Europe and is supported by the European Union under the ERA-NET funding scheme of the FP7. We interviewed the project Coordinator, Dr. Edouard Geoffrois, to get his feedback and advices about CHIST-ERA project coordination experience.
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Would you please give a brief overview on CHIST-ERA (I & II) along with its main achievements so far?
CHIST-ERA is an ERA-NET supporting long-term, transformational, multidisciplinary research in the area of Information and Communication Science and Technologies (ICST). Its main objectives are to reinforce the transnational collaboration between Member States in that area, and to integrate the related national research communities in Europe through the funding of transnational research projects.

In the framework of CHIST-ERA, participating research funding organisations launch every year joint call for proposals on two focused, emergent themes of common interest, which are selected to build critical mass at the European level and to have the potential to lead to significant breakthroughs.

As a main achievement, the CHIST-ERA consortium has grown from 9 to 15 participating organisations in about three years, and these organisations have successfully anchored the initiative in their portfolio of activities. Already three calls have been issued in 2010, 2011 and 2012, through which 26 projects have been selected, and the preparation of the next calls is under way.

What have you learned from this cooperation? What are the main benefits for the participating agencies and/or issues faced?
The participating agencies in CHIST-ERA have set up the basis for an effective and durable coordination and cooperation, which reduces the fragmentation of long-term ICST research along national lines. This creates synergies which amplify the activities of the national agencies and contribute to the development of a concerted scientific policy throughout the European Research Area. These synergies also fulfil the needs and reinforce the strengths of the European ICST research community, so that it can be at the leading edge of world competition.

Have you received feedback from the research groups funded so far? What is their assessment of the CHIST-ERA funding mechanism?
As part of the ERA-NET activities, all the processes of CHIST-ERA are reviewed on a yearly basis. In

particular, surveys are conducted to assess the interest of the applicants. The two main drivers of their interest in the program are the opportunity to reinforce collaborations with complementary groups abroad while keeping the simplicity of national contracting mechanisms to which there are accustomed, and the fact that the call topics correspond to focused research topics of emerging importance which are of high interest to identified communities.

What are your priorities for the next future?
In the short term, our priority is to prepare the upcoming Call, which will be published in October 2013. It will address two new topics, for which we have gathered input from the research community to identify the long term challenges and research priorities:

- Adaptive Machines in Complex Environments, and

- Heterogeneous Distributed Computing.

Another priority is to further expand the consortium to involve more countries. We already expect an increased participation for the upcoming call, and since the CHIST-ERA process is well established, we can hope a further increase for the next call to be published in October 2014.

The CHIST-ERA project coordinated by "Agence Nationale de la Recherche - ANR" - Paris (France) was funded under the FP7-ICT-2011-7 objective and started the 1st of December 2011 (total duration 48 months, EC contribution: 2,498,000 €).

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