



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Community research

ERA-NET

SERIES IV

**Networking of national
research programmes
in the European Research Area**

SERIES IV



SUPPORT FOR THE COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES

PROJECT SYNOPSES



The European Research Area jigsaw

Bringing together national programmes into the bigger EU picture

The ERA-NET scheme is a highly innovative component of the European Union's €19.2 billion Sixth Research Framework Programme (2002-2006). Uniquely, it provides support for the **transnational networking and coordination of national and regional research programmes**. The scheme's participants are, therefore, programme managers working in national ministries and funding agencies, and not universities or enterprises.

Durable transnational collaboration and coordination

Aimed at national and regional programme funders and programme managers, the ERA-NET scheme is designed to encourage the creation of close, long-term links between national research programmes with shared goals. It will contribute to the creation of the European Research Area by facilitating practical initiatives to coordinate regional, national and European research programmes in specific fields, and to pool fragmented human and financial resources in order to improve both the efficiency and the effectiveness of Europe's research efforts.

In the short term, most ERA-NETs will approach such collaboration step by step – for example, through exercises to map current research funding programmes, and through regular workshops designed to improve mutual understanding and trust. This will make it possible to identify gaps, overlaps and possible synergies and will, in most cases, lead to the rapid spread of best practice in proposal evaluation and other aspects of programme management, providing a sound basis for experimental joint activities. Ultimately, ERA-NETs are expected to lead to collaboration of major significance, including the strategic planning and design of joint research programmes, the reciprocal opening of national research programmes to researchers from other member countries, and the launch of fully transnational programmes jointly funded by more than one country.

Network development

Networks of national programme managers that already have a sufficiently large and active transnational membership to begin practical collaboration can launch the **implementation phase** of their ERA-NET immediately. Implementation phases of up to five years are supported by Coordination Actions (CAs), where Community financial contribution takes the form of a grant to the budget up to a maximum of €3 million, representing a reimbursement of up to 100% of the eligible costs incurred by the contractors in the coordination, training and management of the consortium activities undertaken by the ERA-NET.

On the other hand, networks which still lack this critical mass may carry out an initial **preparatory phase** of up to 12 months. This has been supported by a Specific Support Action (SSA) where Community financial contribution takes the form of a grant to the budget up to a maximum of 200 000, representing a reimbursement of up to 100% of the eligible costs incurred by the contractors, on the basis of genuine co-financing. SSAs focus on the recruitment of new network members and the joint planning of their ERA-NET, leading to the production of a proposal for a follow-up implementation phase as a Coordination Action.

Under neither arrangement does the Commission provide any funding for research carried out within the national programmes that make up the ERA-NET, which must continue to fund such research themselves.

ERA-NETs – adding value to European Research

Many cultural, political and administrative barriers stand in the way of the coordination of national research programmes. But within specific fields its potential benefits are only too clear to programme managers. With often too little national funding at their disposal to make as large an impact as they would like in these critical sectors, managers are, nonetheless, frustrated to see the research that they fund nationally not to have the right critical mass or being duplicated in other countries.

The **open call for proposals** published by the European Commission in December 2002 received an extremely positive response, with 229 proposals involving 2003 participants submitted. A total of €182.72 million has been allocated to the ERA-NET scheme for the duration of FP6. As the selected ERA-NETs featured in this folder clearly show, many ministries, research councils and agencies responsible for the funding and management of national and regional research programmes are eager to secure, for their own programmes, the benefits of transnational coordination. Already, they are actively expanding their ERA-NETs in order to achieve critical mass in their targeted fields, and to maximise the potential for fruitful synergies.

Perspectives for the future

Given its considerable success in FP6, the Commission is proposing to continue and to expand the ERA-NET Scheme. Existing projects will be encouraged to go further and ERA-NET consortia could be enlarged to include new partners. Please visit the following websites for more information: <http://www.cordis.lu/coordination/home.html> and http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/index_en.cfm?p=9_eranet.

ERA-NET is a new scheme designed to support the long-lasting coordination of European research programmes across national boundaries, aimed at the funders and managers of national and regional research programmes. The ERA-NET scheme represents a significant step towards the creation of a fully functioning European Research Area.

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http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/index_en.cfm?p=9_eranet

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Systems biology comes of age

“ *This is the first time that Europe’s systems biology is working so closely together with major national funding programmes.* ”

Challenge to tradition

Systems biology is still a new idea and challenges the traditional divides between scientific disciplines. It is a highly innovative area lying at the intersection of molecular biology, engineering sciences, mathematics, information technology and systems sciences. It also challenges the funding mechanisms. Only five EU countries have dedicated programmes for systems biology, although others support some aspects of it through more traditional channels. It is this fragmentation of support that the ERASysBio project means to address.

Elsewhere in the world, a lot of money is being put into systems biology. The United States, as world leader in the field, already has three major support networks in place as well as many other research programmes. Canada and Japan also support major research efforts.

The ERASysBio Coordination Action springs from a Specific Support Action (SSA) that has already laid the foundations of this new network. It brings together funding agencies from 12 countries including Israel and Russia. Associate partners Spain, Luxembourg and Switzerland are expected to join later. It will build not only on national programmes in systems biology but also upon several European efforts springing from EUREKA, the European Science Foundation, the European Molecular Biology Laboratory and several other EU-supported projects.

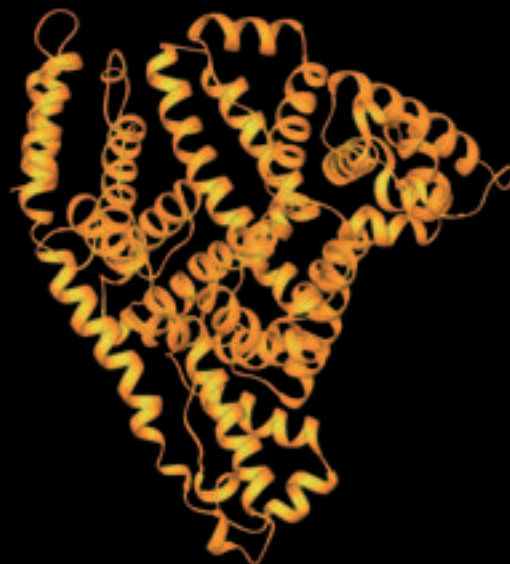
Systems biology is an emerging interdisciplinary science based on the computer modelling of biological systems from single cells up to complete organisms. It incorporates insights and methods from molecular biology, engineering sciences, mathematics, information technology and systems sciences. ERASysBio will bring together funding agencies in 12 countries to coordinate their national research programmes in systems biology, and to agree on a common four-year European research agenda with joint activities. This rapidly growing area is likely to be of strategic importance in the future, offering many innovative applications in biomedicine and industry.

Complexity has always been a defining characteristic of life sciences. While physicists and engineers have been working with computer models of physical systems from atoms to galaxies for several decades, biological modelling has, until now, been hampered by the sheer complexity of living organisms. Two advances have changed that. One is the rapid increase in computing power that can now begin to capture the complexity of biological systems that were formerly out of reach; and the second is the torrent of data from genome-related projects, putting fundamental biology on a quantitative footing. The result is an emerging discipline known variously as predictive biology, computational biology, theoretical biology or biocomputing, but more generally as systems biology.

The aim of systems biology is to arrive at a holistic understanding of cells, organs, complete organisms and biological processes, e.g. cell death, transformation or differentiation by building computer models. The models aim to accurately predict the behaviour of biological systems, for example, from the behaviour of the molecules of which it is composed.



Coordination Action ERASysBio



Full title:

Towards a European Research Area for systems biology – a transnational funding initiative to support the convergence of life sciences with information technology and systems sciences

Research field:

Computational biology; systems engineering; informatics; mathematics

Co-ordinator:

Germany: Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, PTJ

Partners:

- Austria: Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture
- Belgium: National Fund for Scientific Research
- Finland: Academy of Finland
- France: National Centre for Scientific Research
- Germany: Federal Ministry of Education and Research
- Israel: Israel Science Foundation
- Italy: Autonomous Province of Trento
- The Netherlands: Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
- Norway: Research Council of Norway
- Russia: Russian Foundation for Basic Research
- Slovenia: Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology
- United Kingdom: Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council

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website: www.fz-juelich.de/ptj/

Project site:

www.erasysbio.eu

Duration:

37 months

EC funding:

€2 950 000

Project reference:

CA 023212

“ *The aim of EraSysBio will be to build a sustainable basis for a European-wide systems biology community outlasting the ERA-NET itself.* ”

Agenda for research

The first step will be to collect information about the projects and programmes under way in the 12 partner countries and their plans for the future. Next, the partners will draft a research agenda in systems biology for the period 2006-2008 outlining topics of common interest and potential for future collaboration. Once an agreed agenda is in place, the partners will start to pave the way for new transnational funding initiatives by setting up the appropriate contractual arrangements and a joint funding scheme. A web-based service to help students and researchers set up exchanges will be provided through the existing European Researchers Mobility Portal. A public information campaign will be developed at the same time. Finally, the project will manage, with national agencies, two series of synchronised funding rounds. A pilot one

on the systems biology of micro-organisms has already been launched at the end of 2005. A further one will focus on topics yet to be decided. Networking will be promoted by partnering and brokerage events. By the end of the three-year ERASysBio several research projects should be under way. Systems biology will have obvious applications in medicine, such as in the rational design of pharmaceuticals, especially those involving several different molecular targets. It will also help in the development of drugs specific to small groups of people or even individuals, made possible by new insights from genome research. Outside medicine, systems biology is likely to have a big impact on agriculture and biotechnology. It is expected to be a major contributor to Europe's industrial future.

Coping with climate change

“ Our common vision of the next four years allows us to move forward into the integration of our national climate impact and adaptation research agendas. ”

While climate change is now widely acknowledged to be a global problem, research into its impact tends to be undertaken at a national level. CIRCLE – Climate Impact Research Coordination for a Larger Europe – is an ERA-NET to coordinate Europe’s national research programmes on the impact of climate change. By evaluating specific issues, the ERA-NET will enable the research programmes to be aligned, leading to various options for collaborative research and increasing their impact.

It is vital to predict the possible impact of climate change. Rising temperatures are melting glacier and polar ice, diverting ocean currents, and shifting climatic zones. Weather patterns are changing, and extreme events like hurricanes, floods and droughts, ignoring national frontiers, become more frequent and intense. Agricultural land-use and residential patterns will change, and energy consumption for heating or cooling buildings will increase. Every European is likely to be affected in some way or another. The EU needs information on a Europe-wide scale to formulate policy on adapting to the impacts of changing climatic conditions. CIRCLE is gathering information in these areas for all the EU Member States. Its main aim is to coordinate European research on the impact of, and adaptation to climate change, to help decision-makers at national and European levels to design effective and economic strategies. This clear focus excludes any attempt to mitigate the effects of climate change, like the Kyoto Protocol, as adaptation is needed regardless of developments on greenhouse gases. CIRCLE will interact on impact and adaptation issues with key institutions such as the IPCC (International Panel for Climate Change) and the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change).

Choosing the way

Different regions face different problems: in a low-lying coastal area, researchers are looking at the effect of rising sea levels, while in high mountain areas, melting glaciers that increase the risk of mass movements will attract attention. Some institutes are carrying out numerical modelling of climate patterns, while others are looking at the social and economic impact of change. Coordinated information about these national research programmes will enable each partner to learn from the others, to avoid duplication. CIRCLE is organised into four activities to integrate what is already being done at the national level and to take it forward as a unified effort. The first is learning from each other – CIRCLE requires an interdisciplinary approach to integrate indicators of climate change. Indeed, the study of environmental impacts on human health do not only concern climatology. For example, as far as the effects of heat waves and possible spread of vector-borne diseases are concerned, meteorology, hydrology, biology, soil sciences, marine sciences and forestry, building technologies, sociology and medicine also come into play. Learning will involve the exchange of knowledge and experiences on national programmes, their areas of focus, and their scientific and management practices. This leads to planning – defining tangible ways for the national programmes to support each other on specific issues. It should then be possible



Coordination Action CIRCLE



“ A dynamic field of research like global change needs permanent feedbacks and updates as well as a trusting partnership to create a long- and far-ranging co-operation. ”

Full title:

Climate Impact Research
Coordination for a Larger Europe

Research field:

Impact of and adaptation to
climate change

Co-ordinator:

Austria: Federal Environment Agency

Partners:

- Austria: Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture
- Belgium: Federal Public Planning Service for Science Policy
- Finland: Academy of Finland
- Finland: Finnish Environment Institute
- France: Agence de l'Environnement et de Maîtrise de l'Énergie
- France: Ministère de l'Écologie et du Développement Durable
- Germany: German Aerospace Centre- Projektträger (DLR-PJT)
- Germany: Federal Ministry of Education and Research
- Hungary: Ministry for Environment and Water Management
- Israel: Ministry of the Environment
- Italy: Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio
- The Netherlands: Foundation for Climate Change and Spatial Planning
- Norway: Research Council of Norway
- Portugal: Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT)
- Sweden: Swedish Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning
- Sweden: Swedish Environment Protection Agency

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Duration:

48 months

EC funding:

€2 765 999

Project reference:

CA 026058

to set up working links by connecting the national programmes for their mutual benefit. The fourth and major strand is to fulfil the means of an ERA-NET by establishing transnational research programmes and joint calls for proposals.

Four down, four across

These strands will be complemented by four cross-sectional activities – project coordination, establishing a platform for continued coordination after CIRCLE has ended, and supporting the establishment of groups within the consortium which want to address similar issues, such as Mediterranean countries, Nordic countries, Continental central and eastern Europe, mountainous countries and Atlantic coastal

countries. Finally, CIRCLE will develop an active, targeted approach to disseminating its information and experience.

When the ERA-NET ends in 2009, ideally all the relevant national research programmes of the EU, Associated States and any future new Member States will be part of the forum set up by CIRCLE. The facility for systematic assessment and adaptation to climate change in Europe will complement FP7 and subsequent EU research Framework Programmes. This may lead to a larger-scale Article 169 initiative, contributing substantially to the European Research Area, and supplementing international initiatives like the IPCC and UNFCCC regimes. From 2013, CIRCLE envisages becoming the key European platform in this area.

Risks under control

“For the first time, we are able to join forces of a number of leading funding and research organisations to coordinate funding of occupational safety and health research in Europe.”

The workplace is an ever-changing environment, as new technologies, materials and working practices emerge. Change can bring risks, which must be continually assessed to allow them to be controlled and to ensure that people can work productively and safely. The NEW-OSH-ERA project is building a much-needed European dimension into the assessment of new and emerging risks in the workplace. Employees and working practices are increasingly moving across national boundaries as the EU expands and nations work ever-more closely together. It is vital for research on occupational health and safety to develop a similar transnational presence.

When we consider occupational safety and health (OSH) we tend to think about workplace accidents and the dangers of chemicals that employees may be exposed to. These are certainly important aspects in this field, but OSH also involves many more subtle considerations, such as office ventilation, workplace design, comfort facilities and exposure to stress. Understanding the associations between the quality of the working environment, the health and well-being of workers, and their consequent productivity is a vital part of sustaining and developing the modern economy. That is what OSH research is all about.

New factors to be added to the OSH equation are emerging constantly. They include novel carcinogenic and sensitising chemicals, nanoparticles and bio-hazards posed by the steady growth of technology. These new and emerging risks must be assessed through continual research. Until now, however, there has been insufficient coordination of this research across Europe, which is an unsatisfactory situation for nations that are supposed to be working together to face global challenges and opportunities.

The partners in the New and Emerging Risks in Occupational Safety and Health Coordination Action (NEW-OSH-ERA) believe that, until now, the promotion of OSH risk

research has not received appropriate support in the science and technology policies or research programmes of the EU. They say that national research programmes in the field are fragmented and do not collaborate across borders. The partners plan to tackle this problem by promoting a coherent and connected approach that will bring a new pan-European dimension to OSH risk research, which is essential for the development of a truly integrated workplace and market.

Strategic objectives

The project consortium includes 18 leading public agencies, ministries and organisations responsible for OSH research from ten EU Member States. The partners have wide experience in funding or managing OSH research in close collaboration with stakeholders from science, economy, and society at large. They have devised a work programme centred on the following three strategic objectives:

- Promoting communication and collaboration between national programme managers and institutions, and facilitating collective strategic coalitions across national frontiers.
- Increasing awareness of the importance of research into new and emerging risks in OSH and working to strengthen the impact of this research on EU and national policy-making.
- Promoting synergistic and coordinated research and research management efforts that will advance understanding of the effect of the quality of working environments on productivity.



Coordination Action NEW-OSH-ERA

Full title:

New and Emerging Risks in Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) – anticipating and dealing with change in the workplace through coordination of OSH risk research (NEW-OSH-ERA)

Research field:

Occupational Safety and Health

Co-ordinator:

Finland: Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

Partners:

- Finland: Finnish Work Environment Fund, Työsuojelurahasto
- Finland: Finnish Ministry for Social Affairs and Health
- Germany: Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
- Poland: Central Institute for Labour Protection – National Research Institute
- Germany: Federal Ministry of Education and Research
- Germany: Hauptverband der gewerblichen Berufsgenossenschaften
- Denmark: National Institute of Occupational Health
- Belgium: Federale Overheidsdienst Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg
- Italy: Istituto Superiore per la Prevenzione e la Sicurezza del Lavoro
- Sweden: National Institute for Working Life
- Hungary: Fodor József National Center for Public Health
- Spain: European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
- Greece: Hellenic Institute for Occupational Health & Safety
- Greece: Ministry of Employment and Social Protection
- Germany: Ministry of Economics and Labour
- Italy: Ministry of Health
- Poland: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour

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Duration:

48 months

EC funding:

€2 598 415

Project reference:

CA 026045



“ *In the long run, the fruits of this undertaking will be important building blocks paving the way to the true establishment of a European Research Area.* ”

Making a lasting impact

Work will begin with an information-exchange phase. This will assess the state of the art of European research activities concerning new and emerging risks in OSH. In the next phase, the partners will come up with definite strategies for future co-operation, taking account of complementarities between national programmes, gaps in existing research, and new opportunities and requirements. Phase three will involve the actual implementation of joint activities addressing priorities that the partners have identified. This will include preparing the foundations for sustainable co-operation that can continue beyond the duration of this specific project. The final phase will bring joint calls for project proposals, and the selection of specific proposals to be supported.

The lasting impact of NEW-OSH-ERA should be to bring a new dynamism to OSH research in Europe, and leave in place a network to keep European research efforts linked together in future. It should mean that, for the first time, key issues promoting the health and well-being of the European workforce will be coordinated at programme level. By supporting improvements in the quality of the work environment, NEW-OSH-ERA has the potential to make a major contribution to promoting European growth and innovation in the years ahead.



green power from sunlight

“ PV-ERA-NET partners expect that the existing national and regional programmes will be strengthened at national and European levels by creating a durable connection to EC programmes, industry and other organisations as well as neighbouring technology areas. ”

PV-ERA-NET is a network of national and regional research programmes in the field of solar photovoltaic (PV) technology. Electricity from solar PV panels is a young technology with great potential as a clean and secure renewable energy source. It already offers competitive products in niche markets and is being promoted by a fast-growing industry. The high level of national photovoltaic research reflects its importance to Europe's long-term energy strategy. Research coordination will improve performance and cut costs so that PV can be more widely adopted. PV-ERA-NET brings together key players in this sector to share information, define best practice and make joint research more effective.

The European Union's energy strategy aims to generate 12% of Europe's energy needs from renewable sources by 2010. Renewable energy sources offer many benefits such as cutting greenhouse gas emissions and making Europe less dependent on imported energy and less vulnerable to supply disruptions. For these reasons there is increasing research into improving the performance and cost-effectiveness of renewable but intermittent sources such as wind power and photovoltaic solar energy.


In photovoltaic cells, light is converted into electrical energy through the photovoltaic effect – incident light generates an electric current. PV cells can be connected in flat solar panels that may be free-standing, attached to roofs or integrated into building walls. The electricity they produce from sunlight can supply remote monitoring stations, individual buildings or be fed into the national grid. With no moving parts and emission-free during operation, PV energy provides clean, cheap and low-maintenance power, once the initial investment in the solar panel has been made.

While PV panels offer a competitive supply in a growing number of applications, they remain relatively expensive. Much research is under way into improving conversion technologies, power storage, materials and

manufacturing methods, so that this renewable source can find a wide and sustainable market.

Position of power

PV-ERA-NET links 20 national and regional photovoltaic research programmes run by ministries, energy agencies and research councils in 12 European countries. Its overall objective is to strengthen Europe's position in PV technology through increasing co-operation and coordination of these fragmented research efforts. PV research receives some €100 million in funding annually from national programmes which, with regional programmes, account for over 75% of total European funding in this field. The European research community is active and strong in photovoltaic research with leading positions in a wide range of relevant technologies. However, as the sector advances, the initial diversity of approaches now needs a higher level of co-operation. The PV-ERA-NET network exchanges information in a structured way across the European Research Area (ERA) on PV programme management approaches and styles. This information indicates best practice in programme design and implementation. It also shows where there are synergies, gaps and overlaps between different programmes. PV-ERA-NET will



Coordination Action PV-ERA-NET

Full title:

Networking and integration of national and regional programmes in the field of photovoltaic (PV) solar energy research and technological development (RTD) in the European Research Area (ERA)

Research field:

Renewable energy sources

Co-ordinator:

Germany: Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Projektträger ETN

Partners:

- Austria: Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology
- Austria: Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG)
- Belgium: Ministry of Flanders, Science and Innovation Administration
- Denmark: Danish Energy Authority (ENS)
- France: French Agency for Environment and Energy Management (ADEME)
- Germany: North Rhine-Westphalia, Ministry of Science and Research
- Germany: North Rhine-Westphalia, Ministry of Energy, Transport and Spatial Planning
- Germany: Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Projektträger Jülich (federal)
- Greece: General Secretariat for Research and Technology, Ministry of Development
- Greece: Centre for Renewable Energy Sources
- Spain: Ministry of Education and Science
- Sweden: Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (Formas)
- Sweden: Swedish Energy Agency
- Switzerland: Swiss Federal Office of Energy
- Switzerland: NET Nowak Energy & Technology Ltd
- The Netherlands: SenterNovem
- Poland: Ministry of Education and Science
- United Kingdom: Department of Trade and Industry

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Duration:

48 months

EC funding:

€2 626 000

Project reference:

CA 011814



“By appropriate communication and interaction, PV-ERA-NET will ultimately contribute to strengthen the position of the European PV-RTD and market in a worldwide context.”

define common approaches and set up pilot joint activities. Where administrative, financial and legal obstacles impede closer co-operation, it will try to see how these factors can be overcome.

The network focuses on important enabling issues: integrating activities to reach a critical mass in specific RTD issues, including technology transfer in research programme design, and keeping in touch with related technology sectors such as nanotechnology and photochemistry. It also takes account of production and application issues, such as large-scale grid interconnection, building codes and technical standards.

Substantial impacts

PV-ERA-NET is adding value to national and regional research programmes, to the benefit of the entire ERA. The accumulation of human and knowledge resources through co-operation should advance Europe's leading position in PV technologies. The network will support Europe in gaining and maintaining the innovative, leading expertise to exploit this promising renewable resource, thereby creating energy, services and jobs.

Coordination in the social sciences

“ *The NORFACE consortium is looking forward to learning from the experience of the pilot programme to gain knowledge for the planning and implementation of the Transnational Research Programme opening in 2008.* ”

NORFACE sets out to develop a lasting partnership between 12 national agencies responsible for funding research in the social sciences. The aim is to encourage transnational research coordination – intensive communication and analysis of national systems will pave the way for national agencies to work together and achieve convergence. Participating agencies will develop common strategies for areas such as the setting of research priorities and project evaluation, leading to jointly funded transnational research programmes in specific social science disciplines. The ultimate aim will be to extend this level of co-operation to other European countries and scientific disciplines, thus making a substantial contribution to the European Research Area.

The 12 national agencies together provide over €500m a year in support to social science research. NORFACE builds on the success already achieved by the co-operation between social science research funding bodies in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the UK. NORFACE began in 2004 with Iceland and Ireland joining the five others and, 18 months later, the relevant agencies from Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovenia all joined the project. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada became a NORFACE associate partner at the same time.

Shared responsibility

The primary objective of NORFACE is to develop a durable partnership for research funding policy and practice between 12 participants, raising the standards of research activity and encouraging transnational programme co-operation. The network addresses the “fragmentation, isolation and compartmentalisation of national research efforts” highlighted by the European Commission in its 2000 Communication on the European Research Area (ERA), resolving the problems of cross-border application of human and financial resources. Every NORFACE member organisation has a place both on the joint

management team and on the executive network board – such shared decision-making will mark a significant step towards the convergence of European research.

Stepping up a level

The project’s three-stage work plan will encourage new degrees of co-operation. The first stage will be to improve understanding, communication and trust between the participants, with exchanges among programme managers and the creation of a NORFACE website on which to publish findings. The network is conducting comparative analyses of the partner organisations, their evaluation and peer review systems, priority setting and gender equality, and knowledge transfer mechanisms. The participation of ethnic minorities and the effects of language differences on international research co-operation will be a particular focus. It is vital to ensure that the use of an imposed common language in cross-border research does not restrict any partner country. Secondly, the systematic exchange of information and identification of best practices will be the basis for NORFACE’s strategic planning. Tasks include an analysis of the legal barriers to cross-border research funding, a process of strategic planning, and the agreement of common methodologies



Coordination Action NORFACE



“ *The ERA-NET scheme has provided an opportunity for research funding agencies to develop new mechanisms for co-operation, creating new contacts and new experiences of working together.* ”

Full title:

New Opportunities for Research Funding Co-operation in Europe – A Strategy for Social Sciences

Research field:

Social science

Co-ordinator:

Finland: Academy of Finland

Partners:

- Denmark: Danish Research Agency, Research Council for Social Sciences
- Estonia: Estonian Research Foundation
- Germany: German Research Foundation
- Iceland: Icelandic Centre for Research
- Ireland: Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences
- The Netherlands: Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
- Norway: Research Council of Norway
- Portugal: Foundation for Science and Technology
- Slovenia: Slovenian Research Agency
- Sweden: Swedish Research Council
- United Kingdom: Economic and Social Research Council

Associate partner:

Canada: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

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Duration:

5 years

EC funding:

€3 295 450

Project reference:

CA 510205

to manage joint research programmes.

The network will also investigate how to improve the mobility of PhD students and postdoctoral researchers between participating countries, and develop common policies for research infrastructures such as databases.

The third stage is the launch of a new, joint co-operative research programme, following two pilot studies. A common framework will be needed for assessment and decision-making on research proposals. This must be clear and open, building on existing best national practice, and with the potential both to encourage work of high quality and originality and to support future innovation and socio-economic development. NORFACE will also seek partners from other countries; eventually becoming the basis for a transnational network of research councils that can live on in variable compositions for different forms of co-operation after the lifespan of NORFACE.

Not just social

NORFACE involves at least a quarter of the staff at the 12 partner organisations – raising awareness about the European context of national social science research. A proportion of their combined funding will be devoted to joint activities and programmes, enabling them to avoid duplication of projects and investment.

NORFACE has even larger ambitions. It is building a close partnership between national research agencies with significantly different structures, budgets and missions, and covers research programmes involving a broad range of scientific disciplines. It will act as a test bed for the ERA-NET scheme, and pave the way for co-operation between funding agencies in other fields. It will also be a major building block of the European Research Area.

networking water resource management

“By improving the knowledge transfer amongst stakeholders in charge of Integrated Water Resources Management, IWRM.Net will enable us to work on synergies between research needs and policy.”

Water is the key to life, and the European Union recognises this through its Water Framework Directive.

The Directive is an all-encompassing attempt to protect and manage Europe’s water resources in a sustainable way. However, its integration into national legislation has presented policy-makers and water resource managers with a new set of research challenges. Now, an ERA-NET project called IWRM.Net – Towards a European-wide exchange Network for research efforts on Integrated Water Resources Management – is looking to establish lasting relationships that will boost the impact of R&D in this sector.

The EU’s Water Framework Directive, which was adopted in December 2000, lays down a variety of objectives to be achieved by 2015. The aim is to improve the quality of surface, ground and coastal waters – and to safeguard the continent’s precious water-based eco-systems. The Directive includes measures to strengthen water resource management and to tackle pollution and harmful emissions. However, it has brought with it a new set of research needs that must be addressed by the likes of water resource managers and regulatory bodies. For example, the legislation requires the development of a new set of biological reference conditions for different water types. What is more, the Directive’s all-embracing nature brings new research demands in areas such as economics, resource monitoring, water governance, pollution control, etc. All of this will impact on the myriad of European, national and regional research programmes that relate to water resources management.

Groundwork

This ERA-NET project has detailed work packages to ensure it fulfils its objectives. The project harnesses the work of a smaller ERA-NET initiative (a Specific Support Action – SSA) which examined the feasibility of developing a network at European level. The SSA carried out a study in 13 countries, analysing 60 national- and government-funded research programmes. The study revealed that the Water Framework Directive was indeed having a significant effect on the content and direction of these programmes, and pointed to the need for a more consistent, long-term scientific approach to integrated water resources management. IWRM.Net brings together 17 partners from 14 countries – plus a number of observers. The project aims to develop into a networking tool for national and regional research programmes which will help managers to improve their working methods through exchanging good practice and by developing new shared methods and tools.



Coordination Action IWRM.NET

Full title:

Towards a Europe-wide exchange Network for integrating research efforts on Integrated Water Resources Management

Research field:

Integrated Water Resources Management

Co-ordinator:

France: Office International de l'Eau

Partners:

- Germany: Programme Management Organisation Research Centre Karlsruhe
- Austria: Umweltbundesamt
- United Kingdom: Scotland & Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research
- France: Ministère de l'Ecologie et du Développement Durable
- The Netherlands: Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management, Institute for Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment
- United Kingdom: Environment Agency of England and Wales
- Belgium: Centre Environnement – University of Liège
- Finland: Finnish Environment Institute
- Greece: National Technical University of Athens
- Hungary: General Directorate for Environment, Nature and Water
- Latvia: Latvian Council of Science
- Portugal: Foundation for Science and Technology
- Romania: Ministry of Environment and Water Management
- Sweden: Swedish Environment Protection Agency
- Spain: Ministerio de Educacion y Ciencia
- France: Association pour le Développement de l'Enseignement et des Recherches auprès des Universités, des Centres de Recherche et des Entreprises d'Aquitaine

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60 months

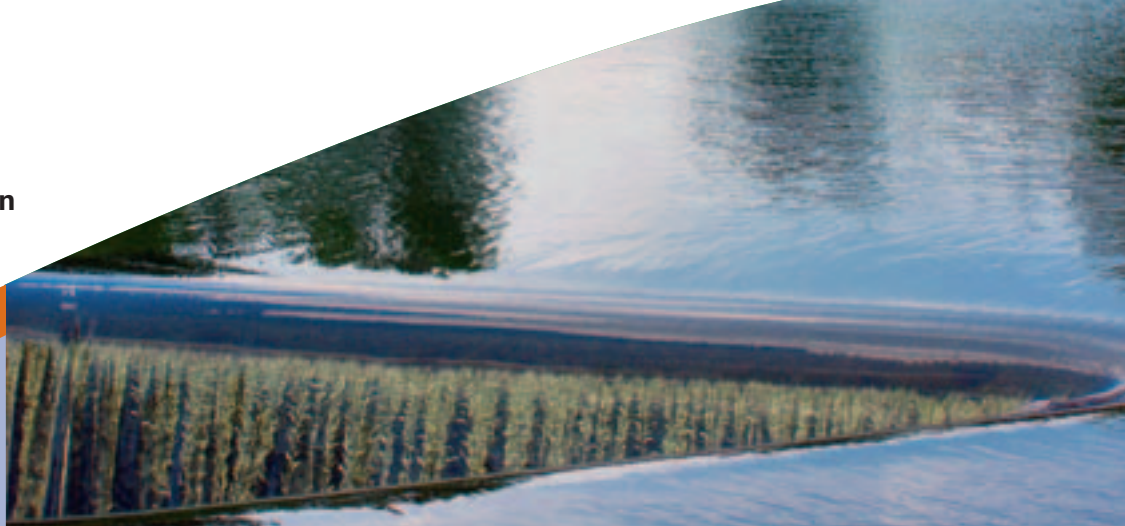
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“ IWRM.Net will tackle the WFD implementation by defining research programmes and allowing the formulation of needs through a bottom-up approach. ”

Shared vision

IWRM.Net will examine integrated water resources management issues and identify both short-term and long-term research needs. It also hopes to improve the public's understanding of the need for research in this area and to promote interdisciplinary activities across Europe. To ensure the project has a lasting impact, the partners have agreed a shared vision for what IWRM.Net should offer by 2010. It should be:

- A privileged source of knowledge for integrated water resource management research in Europe, especially as it relates to the Framework Directive;
- A forum for the future development and coordination of research needs;
- An important communications link between researchers, policy-makers and managers;
- A body that can bring together researchers and funders from different countries so that they can work on joint research activities; and
- A place to exchange best practice.

To realise its vision, the project will analyse the sector's future research needs, develop joint, transnational activities and bring together bodies that work in the same research areas. This could mean forming clusters so that researchers can work in areas of shared interest, or the development of full-blown common research programmes. IWRM.Net will, of course, actively develop ways of assisting researchers and policy-developers with handling the research demands of the Water Framework Directive. These actions should help the project to drive better mutual recognition of national and regional research and cut down on overlaps and duplication of effort. And true to the European Research Area's goals, the project will attempt to generate activities at the European scale which could tap into the EU's Framework Programmes for research. Bearing in mind the Directive's all-embracing nature and the new requirements for a Europe-wide approach to research for water resources management, the network promises to be a timely way to foster cohesion between the many different organisations and agencies in this sector.

