Coordination of nationally funded research activities for the further development of the European Research Area in the field of aeronautics and air transport

Europe must be in a position to take full advantage of the predicted significant growth in air transport by 2020. A state-of-the-art air transport industry is a prerequisite for the EU to maintain its position as a world leader. In order to prepare for this, AirTN was created to establish synergies between aeronautic stakeholders both throughout Europe and third countries.

Aeronautics and Air Transport belong to the largest and most important industries in the EU, not only in terms of the transportation of people and goods, but also for European manufacturing as a whole. The air transport industry in Europe currently employs over 3 million people and is predicted to grow significantly until 2020. So if Europe is going to expand its aeronautics industry, it needs to be supported by strong research and development capabilities in all areas as well as modern infrastructure, and supply chain operations, whilst addressing customer and passengers’ needs.

Growth and competitiveness are important objectives along with sustainable development and addressing environmental goals. So EU Member States must pinpoint opportunities for collaboration on activities that they would not have otherwise undertaken independently. The Aeronautics ERA-NET AirTN-FP7 is a consortium of 23 partners from 16 EU Member States and Switzerland, which came together to enhance Europe’s aviation industry to prepare for future expansion and competitive success. The initiative first received support under the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6). Continued support under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) allows further developing collaborations between the involved Member States.

A wealth of expertise for aeronautics

One of AirTN’s foremost goals is to create a better awareness of the research development mechanisms that already exist in Europe such as ACARE (Advisory Council for Aeronautics Research in Europe), ACARE was set up in 2001 to create a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) for all European aeronautics stakeholders, and GARTEUR (Group for Aeronautical Research and Technology in Europe), was established to drive forward aeronautics research collaboration in Europe.

In FP6 AirTN has successfully established and maintained an extensive network of European aeronautics stakeholder groups that include ACARE, GARTEUR, universities, research institutes, manufacturers and airports.

AirTN works with the Joint Technology Initiative “Clean Sky”, the Single European Sky ATM Research Joint Undertaking (SESAR), the European Transport National Contact Point Alliance (ETNA), EUROCONTROL (European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation) and other European aeronautics initiatives.

The AirTN-FP7 members have a wide range of expertise including extensive knowledge of funding programmes, best practice and solid links with industry and the research base. Many of them have also developed strong links with aeronautics industries and government agencies in third countries, which provides a good opportunity to secure links with foreign markets.

Several new Member States (EU-12) are involved in AirTN-FP7 as well as smaller countries that do not have a major aeronautics industry.
Opening the channels of communication

AirTN supports the implementation of the ACARE’s Strategic Research Agenda for aeronautics, which is the focal point for aeronautics research programmes in Europe. It also supports EU activities implementing a coordinated air traffic management throughout Europe such as Europe’s ‘Single European Sky’ initiative for an integrated European air transport management.

The main objectives of AirTN-FP7 are to strengthen the links across Europe to avoid duplication of effort, and increase the global competitiveness of the industry. It is essential that Europe makes the best use of its skills and research abilities to tackle societal challenges, such as safety, security and environmentally sustainable air transport.

Synergies will be improved through the encouragement of joint research activities between Member States and with third countries to create a strong foundation for future R&D cooperation. Information exchange and best practice will also lead to more effective networking.

Work Programme AirTN-FP7

Five Work Packages address the following main activities:

WP1 covers the overall management and coordination of the network activities.

WP2 performs the information collection on existing research programmes and identifies possible research topics for joint activities. It will provide an updated inventory of aeronautical research infrastructures in various European countries and an analysis of corresponding investment policies, priorities and mechanisms. It will work on processes for implementing joint activities.

WP3 is responsible for the development of documentation and processes for implementing joint activities. It aims to maximise the added value for those participating in joint activities. WP 3 will provide best practice information to member/associated states aiming to set up joint activities or joint research programmes.

WP4 aims to prepare AirTN-FP7 for transnational programmes by developing schemes and procedures, and also to provide plans and facilities for the network with the possibility of becoming sustainable post EC funding. These aims will be further supported by multinational pilot actions, joint activities and joint calls.

WP5 addresses the dissemination including the pro-active integration of the results from the AirTN-FP7 activities that are released to the public. The public website is used to actively promote the activities of AirTN-FP7 to all relevant stakeholders in aeronautics.

The aim of special fora is to bring together specialists from all over Europe to deepen topics of general interest and to disseminate European policy and results from existing European and national projects throughout the EU Member States. AirTN will organise a conference for the dissemination of results addressing also representatives of other ERA-NETs and other interested parties.

Competition in the aeronautics industry worldwide will continue to be fierce and new technology is developing all the time. AirTN-FP7 will create increased trust between the countries involved which will lead to enhanced communication and collaboration and contribute to fostering a truly innovative aeronautics industry in Europe.

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www.cordis.europa.eu/fp7/coordination

Directorate-General for Research: Coordination of Research Activities