

**Recommendations on interaction and collaboration
between ERA-NETs, European research policy platforms and
national research and innovation authorities**

Deliverable 4.5



Executive Summary

The context for European research and research programming has changed considerably in the last decade. The launch of Horizon 2020 has added to the dynamics of the environment as experienced by national programme managers and their European networks. We have the new ERA-NET Cofund instrument. There are less funds in many countries, and stronger push towards working across sectors and disciplines, along value chains, and with stakeholders. As such, these are all driving forces behind increasing the interactions and collaborations. Also, these developments cause a shift for the ERA-NETs from strategic, analytical and networking activities towards a focus on call implementation.

Both on a national and European level, reduction of administrative burdens, and costs, as well as an overall rationalisation of funding are seen already. Sharper choices on participation in networks and calls are expected in the coming years. ERA-NETs can synergise their calls for cost-efficiency and better service to the scientific community. In PLATFORM the networks can pursue this collectively. PLATFORM also fosters explorations towards aligning research from different nations e.g. by collaborative programmes between ERA-NETs involving more countries, funders, disciplines and/or sectors. Also commitment from new member states is important. Opportunities for increasing their participation in the ERA-NETs should be investigated more.

Recommendations to increase interaction and collaboration include strengthening the connections between bioeconomy ERA-NETs and various European policy platforms. These are the Horizon 2020 Programme Committees, the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR), the Bioeconomy Panel, the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC), and, for those with overlapping focus, the JPI on agriculture, food security and climate change (FACCE-JPI, the European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD), the European Innovation Partnership initiatives (EIPs), and the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). As a result the ERA-NETs can contribute more to strategy and policy, and the mentioned policy platforms can contribute more to coordination among national programmes including call implementation.

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1 Introduction

In this report PLATFORM provides recommendations on interaction and collaboration between bioeconomy ERA-NETs, European research policy platforms and national research and innovation authorities. The overall ambition is to improve exchange and coordination between ERA-NETs and European research policy platforms within the bioeconomy environment including national funding organisations.

The paper is divided into four parts. Part one describes briefly the context of the Knowledge Based Bio-Economy (KBBE) relevant ERA-NETs. Part two identifies the relevant European research policy platforms and explores how the ERA-NET Actions may contribute to the work of these actors. Part three discuss the issue of increasing funding by contributions from national research and innovation programs. The general conclusions of the paper are summed up in part four.

This paper constitutes deliverable 4.5 in PLATFORM and is of Work Package 4 on Common Vision and Strategy. The main objective of this work package is to define the strategic position and dimension of ERA-NETs within the European Research Area (ERA) and to provide recommendations for high impact cooperation and collaboration of ERA-NETs with other actors in the bioeconomy.

2 The changed context of bioeconomy ERA-NETS

In this chapter the general context of the ERA-NETs is described, with special reference to the ERA-NETs in the bioeconomy area . This context has been significantly altered due to the recent launch of Horizon 2020 and the national budgetary and political terms.

2.1 Horizon 2020

Launched in 2014 Horizon 2020 is the most ambitious Framework Programme at this date. The goal of Horizon 2020 is to ensure that Europe produces world-class science, removes barriers to innovation and makes it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation. Horizon 2020 is the financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union; the Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness. Horizon 2020 has a stronger push to innovation, the aims of tackling societal challenges, multi-actor approach and policy coherence.

2.2 Cofund - new objectives for ERA-NETS

ERA-NETs under Horizon 2020 will be implemented by using a specific, new type of action; the ERA-NET Cofund. The Cofund scheme co-funds a single joint call for trans-national proposals. In addition the consortium may decide to launch other joint activities including other joint calls without Union co-funding. No costs for activities related to the preparation, implementation and follow-up of the co-funded call are eligible. The consortium may however choose to use part of the Union contribution to support their activities as long as the corresponding costs are not declared as eligible and the Union contribution does not exceed 33% of partners' funding of trans-national projects and unit costs for additional activities.

The new ERA-NET Cofund schema shifts the attention from the more strategic, analytical and networking activities in the previous ERA-NETs to focus more on call implementation. The more strategic, analytical and networking activities are still an option, but is considered as additional activities and is only funded by the European Commission (EC) by the Unit Costs. This will imply that the overall funding from the EC to administration is expected to be reduced in the future.

2.3 Changed national context

In addition to the changed context of Horizon 2020 the national context has changed. In general the national context has changed on three main parameters; budgetary issues and financial crisis, policy strategies and international collaboration portfolios and coherence with national policies.

The financial crisis has a major impact on the budgetary situation in the national funding systems. Even though the economy is recovering in different parts of Europe, the national budgets are still crippled as a result of the crisis. This makes investments in research and development and allocation of funds and resources to ERA-NETs more difficult. The national policy strategies are increasingly focusing on the bioeconomy as a central element on the national initiatives and investments in growth, job creation and as solutions on big societal challenges. This makes the Knowledge Based Bio-Economy (KBBE) ERA-NETs more interesting. In addition the approach of the national funding agencies is changed. Earlier the national funding agencies applied a bottom up approach when deciding on participation in new ERA-NETs. The decision on participation was mainly a result of the level of interest from e.g. national universities or companies. However due to the amount of KBBE ERA-NETs and other international initiatives (e.g. JPI's and bilateral collaborations) many national funding agencies are now applying a more strategic top down approach in coherence with the national policies.

3 Foresights, common vision and identification of strategic issues requiring joint actions

In this chapter relevant European research policy platforms are described and possible contribution from the KBBE ERA-NETs to these actors explored. The following European research policy platforms relevant to the KBBE ERA-NETs have been identified:

- The Programme Committees
- The Standing Committee on Agricultural Research
- The Bioeconomy Panel
- The European Research Area and Innovation Committee
- The European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development
- The European Innovation Platforms

3.1 Programme Committees

Horizon 2020 will be implemented by the EC assisted by Programme Committees. Compared to the Seventh Framework Programme, Horizon 2020 Programme Committees are to play a more strategic role. Discussions on strategic planning and ensuring links to nationally funded activities will be an essential part of their work. Another core task is to provide opinions on the work programmes. In total 14 Programme Committees are

established. The Programme Committee *“Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Marine, Maritime and Inland Water Research, and the Bioeconomy”* is considered the most relevant Programme Committee in area of the KBBE.

In Horizon 2020 the EC works with bi-annual Work Programmes. The Work Programmes define the topics of the research and innovation calls. These topics are discussed and approved by the Programme Committees. The Work Programmes are developed in four phases:

1. In the first phase the DG for Research and Innovation determines the overall areas of the work programmes.
2. In the second phase external stakeholders (i.e. EIPs) are asked to deliver input to the work programmes within the determined overall areas.
3. In the third phase DG R&I verifies the link with earlier framework programmes, coordinates the work programmes within the EC and presents the draft of the work programmes.
4. In the fourth phase the draft of the work programmes is discussed and finally adopted by the member states.

To the existing bioeconomy relevant ERA-NETs, and to those who like to initiate a new ERA-NET, the most obvious channel to deliver input to the Programme Committees is through the national authorities. The members of Programme Committees are delegates of and experts mandated by national governments. As such the member states are represented in the Programme Committees. The opportunity for stakeholders to influence the Work Programmes primary takes place in phase one and three. In the first phase the member states are invited to provide input to the EC and in phase three the member states are invited to propose changes in the draft of the Work Programmes. The national delegates in the Programme Committees are often supported by national contact points and national sounding board meetings are organised to consult with stakeholders from academia, enterprises, and (inter)national networks. Hence the opportunity of the KBBE ERA-NETs to influence the Work Programmes through the national funding agencies are most obvious in phase one and three.

3.2 The Standing Committee on Agricultural Research

To address new challenges in agricultural research (e.g. the new Common Agricultural Policy, CAP) the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) works to a wider definition of agricultural research, and looks beyond the narrow aspects of research relating to production and encompass the so called ‘fork-to-farm’ concept, emphasizing research for sustainable agriculture, and including biodiversity and rural development. The SCAR assists the EC, other institutions and the Member States by providing an assessment of the relevance of the topics, advice on research priority setting at the European level and on related actions that would provide better coordination of support for evidence based policy making into the future. The SCAR focuses on the following initiatives:

- Foresight process
- Common Research Agenda

The SCAR approaches the prioritization of research topics for further collaboration, through the establishment of Collaborative Working Groups (CWGs) and Strategic Working Groups (SWGs). The intention of the CWG’s is often to develop into future ERA-NETs while the SWG’s seeks to develop long-term policy goals. Since 2005, more than 20 CWGs/SWGs have been set up by European countries. Eight of these became ERA-NETs (Table 1).

Table 1. Development of ERA-NETs from SCAR CWG's

Name	Acronym	Coordinator	Launch date
Sustainable food production for wealth, welfare and health	SUSFOOD	Denmark	6/5/2010
Agriculture and Sustainable Development	RURAGRI	France	21/11/2006
ICT and Robotics in Agro-Food Industries	ICT-AGRI	Denmark	1/9/2005
Relevant Issues for Mediterranean Agriculture	ARIMNet	France	2/12/2005
Animal Health	EMIDA	United Kingdom	8/12/2005
Animal Health and Welfare	ANIHWA	United Kingdom	8/12/2005
IPM for the reduction of pesticide risks and use	IPM	France	13/5/2011
Forest value chain in the light of climate change	SUMFOREST	Austria and Germany	1/1/2014

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/research/agriculture/scar/groups_en.htm

To this date SCAR has proven a significant actor in the overall development of KBBE ERA-NETs. This is due to the ability of SCAR to launch new ERA-NETs and to the fact that a number of members of SCAR at different levels are involved in the work of ERA-NETs – either as coordinators or partners. This facilitates the necessary collaboration between SCAR and the ERA-NETs and improves the impact of the SCAR on the ERA-NET scheme and vice versa. The personal overlap between the members of the SCAR and the participants of the KBBE ERA-NETs enables the coordination between the KBBE ERA-NETs and the SCAR.

3.3 The Bioeconomy Panel

The Bioeconomy Panel was launched in September 2013. Like KBBE ERA-NETs the Bioeconomy Panel also works on the development and implementation of a European research policy related to the KBBE. The panel's aim is to take a holistic viewpoint of the bioeconomy and build bridges between the different policy areas, sectors and stakeholders to ensure its coherent development. The panel has 30 members representing industry, scientific communities, public administrations and civil society. The creation of the panel is an important element of the European Commission's bioeconomy strategy and action plan.

The Bioeconomy Panel is expected to collaborate with similar actors within the areas of the bioeconomy including SCAR, the nordic bioeconomy panel and the KBBE ERA-NETs and one of the main objectives is to strengthen and not duplicate the work of other actors within the KBBE area. As such the coordination with the KBBE ERA-NETs is a prime concern for the panel. To address this some of the members are also involved in the KBBE ERA-NETs as either coordinators or partners. This provides the KBBE ERA-NETs with a possibility to coordinate activities with the Bioeconomy Panel.

3.4 European Research Area and Innovation Committee

The European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) is a strategic policy advisory committee whose principal mission is to provide timely strategic input to the Council, the Commission and Member States on research and innovation issues that are relevant to the development of the ERA. The ERAC provides advices on a number of issues including the development of an ERA Framework or the relationship between the ERA and Horizon 2020. This position as advisor on key elements of research and innovations issues relevant to the development of the ERA (e.g. the link between ERA and Horizon 2020 and ERA related groups and instruments) will continue.

The members of ERAC are representatives from the Member States. This implies that the representatives from the national funding agencies involved in KBBE ERA-NETs are organizationally connected to the members ERAC. This enables the coordination between the ERA-NETs and ERAC.

3.5 European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development

The European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD) is a permanent informal policy coordination platform between the European Commission, Member States of the European Union, Switzerland and Norway. The goal of EIARD is to promote and implement coherent European policies at international, regional and sub-regional levels in order to increase the impact of agricultural research for development on poverty reduction, food security and sustainable management of natural resources in developing countries. EIARD is implemented by a European Coordination Group and a smaller Working Group, which ensures the continuing activities of EIARD. EIARD launches working groups and ad hoc task forces, who prepare draft reports and positions on specific issues.

3.6 European Innovation Platforms

European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) are a new approach to EU research and innovation. EIPs are challenge-driven, focusing on societal benefits and a rapid modernisation of the associated sectors and markets. EIPs act across the whole research and innovation chain, bringing together all relevant actors at EU, national and regional levels. It is the objective of EIPs to better coordinate existing instruments and initiatives and complement them with new actions where necessary. EIPs build upon relevant existing tools and actions and integrate them into a single coherent policy framework.

EIPs should increase the impact of actions funded under Horizon 2020 by linking them to a broader strategy. The EIPs will provide systematic input on a continuous basis during the implementation of Horizon 2020. EIPs contribute to the definition of priorities in the annual Work Programmes of Horizon 2020, through the Strategic Implementation Plans and also through experience gained during the implementation of different actions under the EIPs. As such EIPs possess a significant role in the implementation of Horizon 2020.

EIP-AGRI: Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability

To the KBBE ERA-NETs, the agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI) constitutes the most interesting EIP. EIP-AGRI was launched in February 2012 and aims to foster a competitive and sustainable agriculture and forestry sector. EIP-AGRI will contribute to ensuring a steady supply of food, feed and biomaterials, both existing and new ones, sustainable management of the essential natural resources on which farming depends, and working in harmony with the environment. For achieving this aim, the EIP-AGRI tries to build bridges between research and practice (farmers, businesses, advisory services, NGOs, etc).

It is the aim of EIP-AGRI to collaborate with other actors and stakeholders in the field. This gives the ERA-NETs a possibility to engage in dialogue with the EIP. In addition the EIP-AGRI has invited SCAR to assist the EIP through contributing to the development of innovative Horizon 2020 instruments and providing advice through a dedicated working group on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems. As already explained in section 3.2 the personal overlap between the members of the KBBE ERA-NETs and the members of SCAR makes coordination between SCAR and the ERA-NETs possible. In addition this overlap will make it possible for the KBBE ERA-NETs to provide input to EIP-AGRI. This overlap could be facilitated in the EIP-AGRI focus groups.

Some of the KBBE ERA-NETs are collaborating with the EIP-AGRI focus groups, which provides input to the EIP-AGRI. This could provide an interesting option for other ERA-NETs.

In addition to the EIP's the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC's) might prove interesting for the KBBE ERA-NETs. The KIC's aim at a large agenda covering the entire innovation chain. The KIC's are covering specific research fields, e.g. Climate-KIC. The work conducted in ERA-NETs could feed into the work in the KIC's.

4 Increased funding by contributions from national Research and Innovation programmes

Commitment from national funding agencies in terms of funding of joint calls and activities conducted in ERA-NETs will continue to pose a significant issue. To be able to further align the national research and innovation programs, a stronger and more committed support from the national funding agencies is required. In addition the development of self-sustainable ERA-NETs attracts increasing attention from the EC. This objective will increase the need for more commitment from national funding agencies in terms of cash or in kind contribution to the implementation of the joint activities and joint calls in ERA-NETs. However the financial cut downs in governmental budgets across Europe has made the future commitment from national funding agencies more insecure.

As such the question of raising additional national commitment to the KBBE ERA-NETs is critical. Especially five questions need to be addressed, if the commitment from national funding agencies is to increase:

- Self-sustainability
- Joint calls among KBBE ERA-NETs and other funding organisations
- Synchronizations of ERA-NET calls
- New Member States and Associated Countries
- Impact

4.1 Self-sustainability

The question of self-sustainability will continue to pose a significant challenge to ERA-NETs. As described in 2.3 the future EC funding to the organisation of the ERA-NETs is expected to decline and the possibility of extensions of the current and future ERA-NETs is implausible. As such the networks will have to develop self-sustainable solutions.

For some topics it may be considered not needed to sustain a network of programme owners and funders after the ERA-NET project has ended. This may be the case when the topic is part of a larger topic for which a network has been created. For example MARIFISH did not continue but a new, larger scoped network ERA-SEAS had been formed in the meantime. Evolvement in an area may be another reason to have another set of ERA-NETs than a decade ago. When new technologies or approaches come up an ERA-NET can boost development, and it may be acceptable to discontinue or seriously re-direct an old ERA-NET.

For most ERA-NETs however, the topic and challenges therein ask for continued collaboration among countries while the EC support (CSA grant) is ending after a few years. When moving to a more self-sustainable organisation, the regulation of the partners and the consortium, which was provided by the EC contractual

obligations in the Grant Agreement, is missing. Hence the question of clear internal management and regulation becomes more eminent. To address this issue the “internal rules of the ERA-NET” should be clarified in the Memorandum of Understanding or Terms of Reference adopted by all the partners. These documents set out how the ERA-NET will operate. Its purpose is to establish an agreed framework for mutual cooperation between the members of the consortium and strengthen the commitment made by partners. In addition they set out the basic ideas and approaches for the joint calls defining the type of call, financing model, and decision making procedures.

In general 3 models for continuation of an ERA-NET can be identified:

- Model 1: Self-sustained network, possibly with joining forces with other networks
- Model 2: Horizon 2020 ERA-NET Cofund
- Model 3: Transform or merge into another network type, e.g. a JPI

In Model 1 the ERA-NET decides to continue as such. In its development it could increase coordination with other initiatives, or join forces with other networks e.g. other ERA-NETs with a similar or adjacent scientific scope and overall objectives. The required resources could be reached by alternative solution such as in kind payment, member fee or rotating secretariat. This will provide leverage in terms of shared management procedures and experience. In short the administrative burden of the future activities of the ERA-NET is spread out on several networks. One example of this model is the ERA-NET EUPHRESCO, who joined forces with the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) in 2013, to be able to develop a self-sustainable network.

In Model 2 the consortium decides to apply the EC for an ERA-NET Cofund. The contractual regulation from the EC will apply to the ERA-NET.

In Model 3 the consortium decides to stop the ERA-NET as it was, and instead, to transform, or merge with other partners, into another type of network. An example is the formation of JPI Climate while the ERA-NET CIRCLE is out-phased. Many partners of the CIRCLE consortium are also their countries’ representative in the JPI Climate initiative, and the scope and aims of JPI Climate build on the CIRCLE’s work. JPI’s are considered as evident umbrella’s to coordinate various implementation activities addressing societal grand challenges and ERA-NET calls can be used as an instrument to compile resources around prioritized research themes. Existing ERA-NETs on topics in line with the goals and strategy of a JPI are of interest here. The organizational resources of the JPI will provide the necessary infrastructure to continue the activities of the ERA-NET.

The pros and cons of each model are described in Table 2.

4.2 Joint calls among ERA-NETs and other funding organisations

The financial constraints among the national funding agencies imply that the prioritization of commitment to the different KBBE ERA-NETs in terms of funding of joint calls and implementation of joint activities is becoming more urgent. The overall administrative costs of the national funding agencies are among other related to the total number of ERA-NETs the funders participate in. As such the administrative costs of the national funding agencies increase with the number of ERA-NETs they participate in – if all other factors are constant. Hence the relative administrative costs of the national funding agencies will decline in conjunction with a reduction of the participation in the total number of ERA-NETs - depending on the tasks conducted by the individual partner. As such the national funding agencies might decide to prioritize among the KBBE ERA-NETs and reduce the

participation of the number of ERA-NETs. This will lead to fewer partners in the ERA-NETs but possible a larger commitment to the remaining joint calls of the individual partners.

However this development may slow the process of alignment of the national research programs. The ERA-NET scheme aligns national research programs in narrow defined research fields but across large bodies of funding authorities in Europe. Even though the total budget allocated for the joint calls might be unchanged the reduction of the number of partners in each individual ERA-NET will reduce the impact of the alignment of the national research programs in terms of commitment to the common Strategic Research Agenda and implementation of joint calls. To sum up, the alignment conducted in each individual ERA-NET will have less impact in terms of the number of national funding agencies targeted.

Table 2: Pros and cons on ERA-NET sustainability model

Model	Self-sustaining network, independent of EC	Horizon 2020 ERA-NET Cofund	Transformed or merged into a JPI
	Possibly with joining forces with other networks (Several different models possible; in kind payment, fee, rotating secretariat)		
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No binding EU rules More flexibility, i.e. possibility to broaden or narrow scope Further links to countries outside EU can be established Policy focus even after EC-period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional funds to calls and more focus on calls Legal framework Simple model – coordination more simple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Umbrella-effect of JPI No binding EU rules More flexibility, i.e. possibility to broaden or narrow scope Further links to countries outside EU can be established Policy focus even after EC-period
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners must spend national budgets or in kind resources on coordination activities Difficult to motivate partners with limited budgets Risk that some partners may stop No possibility to “sanction” partners who doesn’t fulfil tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative demands in writing proposal for the Commission No networking activities Binding ranking list – no flexibility in changing order due to funding the proposals with the most impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners must spend national budgets or in kind resources on coordination activities Partners must be able to finance future activities Difficult to keep motivation among partners with limited budgets
Demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-kind contribution or fees Agreement of a MoU/Letter of Intent Agreement of scope, ToR and Call Handbook Agreement of a work plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources must be found for writing the proposal Writing proposal for the EC For bioeconomy area it must be integrated into the H2020 SC2 WP. Programme Committee must agree, – information/lobby work for PC and for bodies that are consulted e.g. SCAR, FACCE (for SC2), Advisory Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-kind contribution or fees Agreement of a MoU/Letter of Intent – must be in line with that of FACCE Agreement of scope, ToR and Call Handbook Agreement of a work plan – must be in line with that of the JPI

One way of addressing this issue is to implement joint calls among the different ERA-NETs with a broad scope that addresses the combined areas of the ERA-NETs that work together. This will broaden the alignment in terms of the number of national funding agencies committed to the individual ERA-NET call. The question of joint calls was addressed in the PLATFORM Deliverable 4.1 *“Recommendations on collaboration among ERA-NETs with possible coordinated calls”*. This report concludes that on a general basis the KBBE ERA-NETs regard joint calls as an interesting option for the KBBE ERA-NETs, and several of the KBBE ERA-NETs states, that they would be interested in implementing joint calls in collaboration with other KBBE ERA-NETs. However the experiences with joint calls among the KBBE ERA-NETs are limited. This implies that the possible procedures for implementation of joint calls among KBBE ERA-NETs should be explored. It should also be noted that only in the case of a broader scope of the call more funding from more organisations is anticipated. ERA-NETs may also work together to address a topic that is cross-cutting the scopes of two networks. In such case a call between two ERA-NETs would give maybe just a few extra countries that could potentially join the call in comparison with a call of the one or the other ERA-NET. And countries that have to be picky because of budgetary reason on what ERA-NET to be involved in will have even more difficulty when it comes to allocating substantial budgets for calls.

ERA-NETs outside the KBBE might also prove a valuable option as potential partners in joint calls. On a general basis other scientific fields (e.g. energy or health) are better funded and supported by the EC and Horizon 2020. This makes ERA-NETs outside the KBBE an interesting option as possible partners with KBBE ERA-NETs.

In addition to the joint calls between ERA-NETs, other options for joint calls exist. In 2013 the ERA-NET Biodiversa launched a joint call with FACCE-JPI and the ERA-NET ICT-AGRI is launching a joint call with the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) Future Internet. Due to the similarities between the scientific scope of ICT-AGRI and the overall ambitions of the PPP the implementation of the joint call was possible. Joint calls between ERA-NETs and other funding organisations such as PPPs might prove an additional source of funding for current or future ERA-NETs.

4.3 Synchronization of ERA-NET calls

In addition the commitment from national funding agencies is challenged by the lack of synchronisation of calls. Some of the national funding procedures are governed by yearly procedures with fixed launch dates for national calls. This implies that the national procedures for allocating funds for project funding are fixed in predetermined schedules for some of the national funding agencies.

However the time and schedule of the transnational calls differ from one individual ERA-NET to the next. The ERA-NETs kick off at different dates, schedule calls at different dates and some of them experience delays. As such the ERA-NET calls each have their own time schedule of launch, proposal due dates, evaluation, selection, granting and start of projects. A quick glance on some of the FP7 KBBE ERA-NETs confirms this picture (Table 3).

The fact that the calls of the ERA-NETs are scattered over the year complicates the commitment of some of the national funding agencies. It can prove a complicated task for the national funding agencies to allocate funds for joint calls in ERA-NETs when the calls are launched out of sync with the process for allocation of funds for national research projects.

Table 3: ERA-NETs call launch

Name	Call launch 2011	Call launch 2012	Call launch 2013
Anihwa		September	September
BiodivERsA 2	November	November	
CAPTIA			June
COFASP			December
Core Organic 2	October	June	
ERA ARD		March	
ERA-CAPS		November	
ERA IB 2		March	February
ERA SynBio			May
Euro Trans Bio	October	October	October
ICT AGRI		March	
RURAGRI		September	
Seas-era		April	
SUSFOOD			February

Source: Bioeconomy ERA-NET Actions. European Research Area Networks of the 6th and 7th Framework Programmes

A better coordination and synchronization of the launch of the calls of the KBBE ERA-NETs will provide the national funding agencies with the necessary transparency and predictability on coming joint calls. This will reduce the administrative costs of the ERA-NETs and might smooth the funding decisions from the national funding agencies and as such increase the commitment from the national funding agencies. Better synchronization of the ERA-NET calls requires coordination, support and commitment to implement such decisions. Within the Platform of bioeconomy ERA-NETs the networks could inform each other timely on calls being prepared, and arrange for synchronised time schedules throughout the bioeconomy domain. Furthermore, FACCE-JPI, addressing the grand challenges at the intersection of agriculture, food security and climate change, and having an overall ambition to provide coordination in this research area appears an obvious choice as a coordinating umbrella for activities, including Cofund calls, to implement its strategic research agenda.

However it is the responsibility of each individual ERA-NET to implement its tasks as described in the Grant Agreement, including the launch of calls. As such the commitment from the individual ERA-NET to a synchronization or better coordination of the calls with other networks should be on a voluntary basis through a non-contractual Memorandum of Understanding. Networks such as the Platform of bioeconomy ERA-NETs, SCAR, and FACCE-JPI, can facilitate the necessary discussions and thus contribute to a better coordination of the work conducted in ERA-NETs in their areas.

With the new ERA-NET COFUND instrument the synchronization of the ERA-NET calls should be easier to facilitate. This is due to the fact that the timing and schedule of co funded calls are more limited due to the regulation from the EC, which is expected to establish limits on the timing of the launch of the co funded calls.

4.4 New Member States and Associated Countries

Even though the ERA-NET scheme is open for all members of the European Union and Associated Countries the majority of participation is concentrated in Member States located in the western part of Europe. The newly included central and eastern countries are underrepresented in ERA-NETs. This underrepresentation constitutes two issues for the networks.

First of all the overall ambition of the ERA-NET scheme is to align the national research programs and foster the development of the ERA across Europe. The overall political, scientific and societal issues addressed in the KBBE ERA-NETs are common issues across Europe. As such, to successfully reach the objectives of the ERA-NETs all parts of Europe should take part in the KBBE ERA-NETs.

Second, the new Member States may prove a valuable source of funding of the ERA-NETs in the current situation, where the allocation of funds to the KBBE ERA-NETs from the national funding agencies in the western part of Europe is challenged. This is a complex issue. When it comes to funding it is more complex than just the total amount. When evaluating funding it has to be looked in the context of how many and which countries participate and how large the contributions are relative to the national investments in that specific research topic are. So if there is a network starting with only western European countries that do a first call of a certain budget, and in a second call those countries reduce their budget but new Member States join and the total funding volume is therefore the same as in the first call, this gives the applicants in the second call more possible partners, but less funding and hence from the viewpoint of the research community of the countries that participated from the start the second call is less attractive. However, for the whole ERA-NET initiative, the legitimacy can be maintained in case declining funds from some countries are made up for by increasing funds from newcomers. As such a successful integration of the national research and innovation authorities of the new member states into the KBBE ERA-NETs can provide the ERA-NETs with the necessary commitment and funding to continue the process towards alignment.

The EU new Member States are currently still underrepresented in ERA-NETs. Causes may be of cultural, financial, institutional or political nature. The ERA aims to contribute to inclusiveness and thus the matter of participation is of relevance. The considerations, causes and solutions to the underrepresentation of the new member states in the KBBE ERA-NETs should be investigated. This work is considered an integral part of PLATFORM2.

4.5 Impact

Management of ERA-NETs constitutes transnational activities which imply that compared to national programmes it may be more complicated due to the different cultures, languages and the geographic distance between the participants. As such the costs of running ERA-NETs often require more resources for management than national programs. Since the launch of FP6 the EC and the national funding agencies have contributed significant resources to the ERA-NETs. This significant contribution and the alleged relative high management costs of ERA-NETs lead to a claim to clarify the added value of ERA-NETs from the EC and national funding authorities. The financial constraints on European funding agencies due to the financial crisis actualize this question further. To be able to attract future funding from national funding agencies and the EC the added value of the ERA-NETs needs to be clarified.

To address this issue, the question of monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment has been given increasingly attention. ERA-LEARN made a conceptual framework to analyse call organisation, including assessment of the cost-benefit. A tool for self-assessment is available for all ERA-NETs. PLATFORM organised a workshop for the bioeconomy relevant ERA-NETs on this issue and discussed results of impact assessments in its Annual Meetings. Furthermore, FACCE-JPI has adopted a monitoring and evaluation framework that will frame the future monitoring and evaluation of this JPI, its joint actions (e.g. Knowledge Hub MACSUR) and the funded projects of its joint calls.

A common monitoring and evaluation framework will provide the ERA-NETs with the possibility to assess the added value of the activities across the ERA-NETs. This will make it possible to compare the results and activities among the different ERA-NETs and provide the necessary information on, how to develop the most efficient management procedures and to what extent the joint actions of the ERA-NETs have contributed to the development of the ERA. PLATFORM made an initial analysis of the impact of bioeconomy ERA-NETs (Report '*Cost benefit analysis of KBBE ERA-NETs* ', Deliverable 3.2). Further work on a broader set of indicators than only calls has started and will be deepened in PLATFORM2, in collaboration with the successor of ERA-LEARN.

It is evident that the monitoring, evaluation and impact assessments will take an even more significant part in raising future funding for bioeconomy ERA-NETs – both from national funders and the EC. Monitoring and evaluation is now part of the work conducted in the majority of recent launched bioeconomy ERA-NETs. However a successful implementation of a *common* monitoring and evaluation framework for the bioeconomy ERA-NETs requires collection of data from each individual ERA-NET, and as such additional work conducted by the actors. Hence the adoption of a common monitoring and evaluation framework should be on a voluntary basis.

5 Conclusions

This paper has explored the possibilities of the KBBE ERA-NETs to facilitate increasing collaboration with European research policy platforms within the bioeconomy environment including national funding organisations. The context of the KBBE ERA-NETs has changed considerably due to the launch of Horizon 2020 and the ERA-NET Cofund instrument. This shifts attention from the more strategic, analytical and networking activities in the previous ERA-NETs to focus more on call implementation. This will imply that the overall funding from the EC to administration is expected to be reduced in the future. Hence the benefit of increasing collaboration between KBBE ERA-NETs and European policy platforms and funding agencies is increasing.

This paper describes European policy platforms, which in the bioeconomy domain have contributed to the identification of strategic issues requiring joint actions and will continue to pose a significant influence on the KBBE ERA-NETs. These include the Programme Committees, SCAR, the Bioeconomy Panel, ERAC, EIARD and EIP AGRI. The KBBE ERA-NETs do not hold an official position as advisor to these policy platforms. However through PLATFORM the ERA-NETs have a common voice, can do surveys and make analyses, and give recommendations that overarch the work of the individual networks such as on instruments, requirements for successful operation, possible lines and rationale for collaboration with other type of networks and common framework for operation. Furthermore, there exist a number of personal overlaps between the partners of the KBBE ERA-NETs and some of these policy platforms, e.g. SCAR or the Bioeconomy Panel. This connects the KBBE ERA-NETs directly with these actors. Other policy platforms consist of representatives from the national funding organizations from the member states (e.g. ERAC and the Programme Committees). In this way some of the partners of the KBBE ERA-NETs are directly represented in these policy platforms. To sum up, the activities of PLATFORM in which the ERA-NETs are networked and that assesses common matters, plus the personal overlap of some of the members of the identified policy platforms and the KBBE ERA-NETs and the direct representation of the funding organizations in other policy platforms makes it possible for the KBBE ERA-NET to deliver input to these policy platforms.

To continue the alignment of the national research programs, a stronger and more committed support from the national funding agencies is required. The commitment from the national funding agencies to the ERA-NETs

is challenged by the overall financial cut downs in governmental budgets, and the high management costs of the ERA-NETs compared to national programmes.

To reduce the overall administrative burdens the national funding agencies might decide to prioritise between the different ERA-NETs and reduce the commitment to fewer individual ERA-NETs. However, the scarcity for research funds is the first problem. If the funds for research are on a sufficient level and the fraction for international collaboration is on a good level, then implementation of joint calls with broad topics between the KBBE ERA-NETs would accommodate this development and enhance the alignment. However the experiences with joint calls among ERA-NETs are limited and possible implementation procedures should be explored. This will provide the ERA-NETs with the necessary tools and experience to effectively implement joint calls.

Another way to increase the national commitment to the KBBE ERA-NETs is to synchronize calls. In some national funding agencies the decision procedures for allocation of funding to ERA-NET calls are governed by yearly budgetary procedures. However the ERA-NET calls are scattered across the year and it can prove a complicated task to allocate national funding to ERA-NET calls launched out of sync with the national funding procedures. A better coordination and synchronization of the launch of the calls of the KBBE ERA-NETs will provide the national funding agencies with the more transparency and predictability on coming joint calls. This might reduce the administrative cost of national funding agencies and as such increase the commitment of the national funding agencies. PLATFORM and FACCE-JPI could facilitate the synchronization and the KBBE ERA-NETs could participate on a voluntary basis.

Another issue is the underrepresentation of new eastern Member States in the KBBE ERA-NETs. Integration of new Member States into the community of KBBE ERA-NET is a vital part of the overall alignment and can increase the future legitimacy and impact. To be able to increase the commitment from new Member States the causes and solutions to the issue should be investigated.

Finally the high management costs of ERA-NETs are justified by the added value of the ERA-NETs. However to be able to attract additional commitment from funding agencies this added value should be further clarified. A common monitoring and evaluation framework among the KBBE ERA-NETs will provide the networks and the funding agencies with the possibility to assess the added value of the calls and other activities across the KBBE ERA-NETs and implement more efficient management procedures. However the adoption of a common monitoring and evaluation framework by the ERA-NETs should be adopted on a voluntary basis.