



Managing calls efficiently and effectively in bioeconomy ERA-NETs

Call officers of European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs) on bioeconomy relevant themes met at a two-day master class in Brussels. They shared knowledge and experiences and collectively provided recommendations for future ERA-NET calls. Through such mutual learning activities the European PLATFORM initiative aims to improve the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of call management.

The main outcome of the discussions at the master class confirmed the key result of a broad survey performed among the ERA-NETs: sufficient flexibility and pragmatism in the evaluation and selection process are of key importance for transnational calls. This would foster a larger impact of the investment provided through national funds and EC top-up funding on building the ERA.



Specific recommendations were given concerning call organisation, support tools, proposal evaluation and ranking, project selection and negotiation, funding and joint project monitoring. They include:

Call, evaluation and ranking of applications

- Transparent communication of national regulations regarding eligibility is required for applicants.
- Clear communication and transparency by national funding organisations about funding ceilings and the type of project costs they expect to fund are important.
- There is absolute need for a clear Code of Conduct on Conflicts of Interest regarding scientific experts.
- There is absolute need for clear instructions to external reviewers and review panel on the selection criteria and about scoring.
- A rebuttal step, after review of full proposals and before the review panel meeting, adds value to the quality of assessment and transparency.
- The possibility of access to the expert database of the EU Commission Services for ERA-NETs should become better known.



Selection of recommended applications and funding decision

- Ranking in barrels instead of a prescriptive ranking list should be considered for transnational calls with distributed pots as it allows optimising the use of available funding and it avoids the artificial hierarchy among proposals of similar quality.

Project negotiation

- Avoidance of any cut-back of project budget during funding negotiations is considered best practice, as long as the funding requests are appropriate and considered necessary.
- Any revised proposal should be re-evaluated by (part of) the review panel.

Joint project monitoring

- Project progress monitoring at the transnational level is beneficial as it is an indicator for the performance of the consortium as a whole.
- The development of a database with key project information for all projects granted within the calls of all ERA-NETs is recommended.

Read more in the full report 'Best practices and recommendations for effective and cost-efficient call management in bioeconomy related ERA-NETs'.

This paper constitutes Deliverable 3.1 of PLATFORM and is part of the work package Mutual Learning. The main objective of this work package is to create an open learning environment that facilitates sharing good practice and experience between bioeconomy ERA-NET actors, as well as relevant JPIs and SCAR Working Groups. The results address important items for the success of the activities of ERA-NETs individually and their compiled impact on the bioeconomy. All reports can be found on the website:

www.era-platform.eu

About the European Bioeconomy and ERA-NETs

The transition towards a bioeconomy, and the potential of research and innovation to produce 'more and better-quality', contributes to square the circle of ensuring food security, reducing the carbon footprint, recycling natural resources, and new jobs and competitiveness. The European Commission and more and more Member States capitalise on the bioeconomy aiming to secure a competitive food market and to optimise primary production in a global context and in a sustainable way.

More than 30 European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs) in the bioeconomy sectors have been funded under FP6 and FP7. Through coordination and collaboration between national research programmes, these networks contribute to meeting the challenges Europe faces on the path towards a sustainable bioeconomy, be it in the area of agriculture, forestry or the marine, and on topics ranging from biotechnologies, application of ICT and robotics, organic food and farming, forest-based materials, statutory plant health, rural development, infectious diseases of livestock, or plant sciences.

PLATFORM, the FP7 project 'Platform of Knowledge Based Bioeconomy Relevant ERA-NETs' offers mutual learning and networking opportunities to the ERA-NET actors and has developed into a robust forum for funders and programme managers. PLATFORM facilitates increased coordination and cooperation among the networks, for maximising synergies and rationalisation in the area of the bioeconomy.