

**Strengthening the foundations of the  
European Research Area**

*11. Support for the coordination of  
national, regional and European  
activities in the field of research and  
innovation*

**Work Programme**

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## **11.1 Introduction**

The objectives of Community action under the first part of "Strengthening the foundations of the European Research Area" is to contribute to the creation of the European Research Area by stimulating and supporting programme coordination and joint activities conducted at national or regional level, as well as among European organisations, and thus help to develop the common knowledge base necessary for the coherent development of policies. These activities may be in any scientific and technological area, including in the thematic priority areas.

## **11.2 Objectives, Structure, and Overall Approach**

### **11.2.1 Coordination of national activities**

The objectives are to encourage and support initiatives undertaken by several countries, in areas of common strategic interest, to develop synergy between their existing activities through coordination of their implementation, mutual opening and mutual access to research results, as well as to define and implement joint activities.

To reach these objectives, several types of actions will be supported :

- ***the ERA-NET Scheme***: the objective of the ERA-NET scheme is to step up the cooperation and coordination of research activities carried out at national or regional level in the Member States and Associated States through:
  - the networking of research activities conducted at national or regional level, and
  - the mutual opening of national and regional research programmes.

The scheme will contribute to making a reality of the European Research Area by improving the coherence and coordination across Europe of such research programmes. The scheme will also enable national systems to take on tasks collectively that they would not have been able to tackle independently.

Both networking and mutual opening require a progressive approach. The ERA-NET scheme therefore has a long-term perspective that must also allow for the different way that research is organised in different Member States and Associated States.

- ***schemes developed in European cooperation frameworks: in particular the EUROCORES collaborative scheme of the European Science Foundation (ESF).***
- ***the development of an integrated information system***: the Commission intends to support the development of an integrated information system that will facilitate the provision and exchange of information on national or regional research policies, programmes and activities.

## 11.2.2 Coordination at European level

The objective is to enhance the complementarity and synergy between Community actions undertaken under the Framework Programme and those of other European scientific cooperation organisations, such as COST, EUREKA and thematic international organisations, as well as among these organisations themselves. Through increased coordination and collaboration the various European cooperation frameworks will contribute more effectively to the overall coherence of European research efforts and the establishment of a European Research Area. Community participation in international activities can be supported in duly justified cases.

## 11.3 Technical Content

### 11.3.1 Coordination of national activities

#### *11.3.1.1 ERA-NET scheme*

The ERA-NET scheme will be implemented through a bottom-up approach in the sense of giving no preference to one specific research topic over another. Coordination activities under this scheme may be carried out in the **whole field of science and technology**, including the social and human sciences<sup>1</sup>.

Activities developed within the ERA-NET scheme consist of the networking of research activities carried out at national or regional level, including mutual opening of research programmes.

"Research activities carried out at national or regional level" should be understood either as full research and innovation programmes, or parts of such programmes or similar initiatives. Such activities should have both the following characteristics:

- a) strategically planned and executed at national or regional level;
- b) financed or managed by national or regional public bodies or structures closely related to or mandated by public authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> The specific programme "Integrating and strengthening the European Research Area" gives the following examples of topics that could be supported :

– health: health of key population groups; major diseases and disorders (e.g. cancer, diabetes and diabetes-related diseases, degenerative diseases of the nervous system, psychiatric diseases, cardiovascular diseases, hepatitis, allergies, visual impairment, infectious diseases), rare diseases; alternative or non-conventional medicine; and major diseases linked to poverty in developing countries; palliative care; activities involved will be implemented, for instance, through coordination of research and comparative studies, development of European databases and interdisciplinary networks, exchange of clinical practice and coordination of clinical trials.

– biotechnology: non-health and non-food applications.

– environment: urban environment (including sustainable urban development and cultural heritage, including, for example, ecosite concepts); marine environment and land/soil management; seismic risk.

– energy: new generation power plants ("near-zero-emission"), energy storage, transport and distribution.

To advance the process of better European cooperation between research activities carried out at national or regional level, the ERA-NET scheme will allow for a progressive approach. As such, an ERA-NET may contain an evolving set of activities, starting with increasing mutual knowledge through information exchange among policy makers and managers of similar scientific areas, and expected to lead step-wise to stronger forms of cooperation and coordination.

ERA-NET activities should be related to coordination activities developed by programme managers and for this reason should not be directly related to specific scientific projects or to the work of individual scientists.

#### Networking of research activities carried out at national and regional level and mutual opening

Networking activities may involve many levels of cooperation and coordination under a step by step perspective and depending on the degree of maturity of the network. An ERA-NET should be designed in such a way that the foreseen coordination is ambitious in the sense that it will cover at least the two first steps described below [(i) and (ii)] and will lead to concrete deliverables.

##### (i) *Systematic exchange of information and good practice*

The goal of such an activity is to improve communication, to develop better mutual knowledge and trust-building through a mutual learning process, systematic exchange of information and good practice among programme makers and among managers of similar scientific and technological areas.

“Information” should be understood as information on national and regional research and innovation activities such as national and regional programmes, funded projects, research priorities, evaluation practices, organisation and management.

Possible mechanisms for promoting the exchange of information are:

- fora of research programme makers and programme managers;
- short-term exchanges of programme managers;
- benchmarking and dissemination of good practice;
- development and use of electronic communication tools, including the use of common portals.

##### (ii) *Strategic activities*

The following types of strategic activities could be developed by programme makers and managers of national or regional research activities:

- development of mutual complementarities between the programmes of the ERA-NET partners;
- identification and analysis of research activities carried out by different programmes that have similar goals and that could lead to the design of future multinational schemes;

- identification and analysis of practical networking activities and mutual opening mechanisms;
- identification and analysis of barriers that hinder transnational cooperation activities such as, for example, administrative and legal barriers;
- identification of new opportunities and gaps in research and stimulation of new interdisciplinary work on the basis of technology assessment and foresight analysis carried out at regional, national and European level;
- design of common evaluation systems.

(iii) *Implementation of joint activities*

Based on such strategic activities, ERA-NETs could establish the following joint activities:

- A posteriori clustering of nationally or regionally funded research projects

In order to cluster a posteriori national or regional research projects, programme managers will define activities to achieve this purpose. This could involve the identification and the selection of projects and the organisation of activities such as workshops and working groups among scientists involved in the nationally funded research projects. Such activities should have programmatic objectives that go beyond a simple exchange of scientific information between researchers.

- The systematic use of multinational evaluation procedures

In the long term, this measure could contribute to the integration of multinational evaluation in national or regional research systems (covering proposal, project and programme evaluation). This could involve the identification of common evaluation criteria and methods.

- Joint training activities

Developing joint training schemes or activities such as co-supervised theses and international PhD schemes could be envisaged, provided that they are an integral part of a wider cooperation in research.

- Mutual opening of facilities or laboratories

Developing a scheme to facilitate mutual access to facilities or laboratories in one country for scientists from another.

(iv) *Transnational research activities*

A stronger form of networking would consist of implementing a programme of transnational research activities. This could imply setting up a common strategy, a joint work programme, common calls for proposals, a common multinational evaluation and a common plan for dissemination of results or experiences. In this case, projects submitted to a joint call for proposals should involve at least two teams from two different countries. A posteriori clustering of selected projects should also be done if possible.

In this context, several possibilities could be envisaged:

- a) Each country or region would pay for the participation of its own researchers and research activities.
- b) The implementation of a programme of transnational research activities entails transnational flows of national funding. Two approaches are possible:
  - a country pays for participation of other countries' researchers or research teams on the basis of mutually agreed conditions;
  - countries pool funds in order to finance projects resulting from a joint call for proposals, according to commonly agreed evaluation criteria.

#### Management of an ERA-NET

Given the long-term nature of the cooperation inside an ERA-NET, the partners will be advised to establish a "coherent management framework", with dedicated staff, to coordinate their activities and to ensure a continuity of operation. Management tasks could include:

- scientific and administrative management of the activities of the ERA-NET, including communication with the Commission and reporting;
- development of strategic activities;
- launching, implementing and following up joint research activities;
- ensuring that high standards of scientific excellence are maintained throughout the activities of the ERA-NET;
- ensuring that gender equality is promoted within the ERA-NET.

#### ***11.3.1.2 Activities undertaken through European cooperation frameworks***

Activities undertaken through European frameworks will be supported, in particular the EUROCORES collaborative scheme of the European Science Foundation (ESF).

The ESF has 70 members in 27 countries. Its EUROCORES scheme is aimed at providing an effective and efficient need-driven collaboration mechanism at a multinational level within Europe, which can be responsive to the emerging priorities of national funding agencies and their analogues within the European Science Foundation membership. It builds on existing national structures and maximises their value through collaboration while leaving funding 'ownership' with the national agencies.

#### ***11.3.1.3 Development of an integrated information system***

The development of an integrated information system will be supported, to facilitate access to information on national or regional research policies, programmes and activities. The main goal of the system will be to provide electronic access to information about Member and Associated States' research policies via national or regional sources of information which are already available, but not necessarily accessible. Mutual compatibility between different information systems developed by

the Commission will also be ensured, in particular with the "platform for the monitoring of industrial R&D activities in Europe" (see section 12.3.4). A plug-in facility should wherever possible allow access to the integrated information system. The target audience will include: firstly policy-makers, programmes managers, public and private research organisations; secondly a wide range of institutions and researchers with interests in the field.

The integrated information system will be designed on the basis of the results of the feasibility study carried out for the Commission in 2001. Further to the recommendations of this study and discussions in the framework of the High Level Group (HLG) for "Benchmarking of national RTD policies, mapping of S&T excellence and networking of national RTD programmes" (23 March 2002 and 16 July 2002), and CREST (24 May 2002), the integrated information system will take the form of an "added value hub", offering more than a simple portal, but costing less than a centralised database. The "added value hub" system will make it possible to access a detailed meta-structure and meta-data on distributed sources, in a consistent format. It will also provide sophisticated search, fusion, analysis and presentation tools. It will be an effective and user-friendly system, which is flexible enough to adapt to future needs.

The following operational structures are foreseen: CORDIS will develop and host the central point of access, around which the "added value hub" will be developed. The participating Member and Associated States will, through nominated local agents, be responsible for providing and validating the content of the hub (key information about their policies and programmes, plus links to relevant national/ regional websites). A steering committee representing Member and Associated States will provide political guidance. A co-ordinating organisation will be responsible for managing the whole system.

#### ***11.3.1.4 Types of instruments to be used***

Coordination actions and specific support actions, two instruments of the Sixth Framework Programme, together with dedicated grants will be used to implement the programme as reflected by the indicative financial breakdown (point 11.5.4).

- *Coordination actions (CAs)* are intended to be used for implementing ERA-NET proposals. The financial support from the Community will be limited to the costs of the additional activities undertaken to implement the ERA-NET. No support will be provided for the research activities themselves, for which the members of the ERA-NET will be expected to use their own resources. Community funding for an ERA-NET could be as high as 3 M€ In exceptional cases, for example if several fields of research are covered by a single ERA-NET, a greater contribution could be envisaged. Each ERA-NET should last sufficiently long to have a durable impact on the research programmes involved. Duration of up to 5 years may be envisaged.
- *Specific support actions (SSAs)* will be used to support preparatory actions aimed at developing future ERA-NET proposals, as well as for activities undertaken through European cooperation frameworks (e.g.



EUROCORES). In addition, specific support actions may be used to set up fora aimed at strengthening cooperation at a strategic level between managers of major national research organisations.

Specific support actions should have a limited scope and may involve conferences, seminars, studies and analyses, working groups and expert groups, operational support and dissemination, information and communication activities, or a combination of these, as appropriate in each case. Community funding could be as high as 200,000€ for a duration of one year and will exceed 200,000 € only in exceptional cases.

Specific support actions may also provide an excellent tool to encourage and facilitate the participation of organisations from the candidate countries in the ERA-NET scheme.

Calls for tender will be used, in particular for the development of the integrated information system.

### **11.3.2 Coordination at European-level**

#### ***11.3.2.1 Scientific and technological cooperation activities carried out in COST***

COST is a long-standing bottom-up mechanism that facilitates coordination and exchanges between nationally funded scientists and research teams in a variety of research fields. In order for COST to continue to fulfil its intergovernmental role and to ensure a cost-effective contribution to research coordination within the European Research Area, its management arrangements are being adapted to the new context. This will entail the establishment by COST member countries of an appropriate organisation to which financial support may then be granted under this programme (through a contract to be concluded between the Commission and the organisation).

Reinforced coordination among the activities of the European Science Foundation, COST and the Framework Programme will also be sought in areas of common interest.

#### ***11.3.2.2 Strengthened coordination with EUREKA***

The specific programme will support coordination activities aimed at increasing synergy and complementarity between EUREKA and the Framework Programme in areas of common interest. The Community is a member of EUREKA.

The following activities are foreseen:

- creating and strengthening synergies between the Framework Programme and EUREKA in order to carry out large-scale projects across the full spectrum of the research and innovation cycle. The European Investment Bank could be closely associated to such actions;
- bringing together information and assistance networks in support of research and innovation in SMEs (technology transfer, access to funding, intellectual property);

Some joint events for mutual exchange of information, project stimulation (“brokerage events”) as well as to support the work of the joint technical groups could be developed.

### ***11.3.2.3 Collaboration and joint initiatives of specialised European scientific cooperation organisations such as CERN, ESA, ESO, ENO, EMBL, ESRF, ILL).***

With regard to thematic European organisations, such as CERN, ESA, ESO, ENO, EMBL, ESRF, ILL<sup>2</sup>, the Community will encourage and support specific initiatives aimed at strengthening the coherence and synergies between its own activities and those undertaken by these European organisations, in particular through the development of joint approaches and actions on issues of common interest.

## **11.4 Links to other Research Topics**

Since the development of coordination activities relates to different research topics, clear links with all other parts of the Framework Programme will be established.

It has to be noted that coordination activities similar to the ones covered by the ERA-NET scheme on topics addressed by the priority thematic areas of part I of the Specific Programme “Integrating and strengthening the European Research Area” may also be supported by the priority thematic areas themselves.

## **11.5 Implementation Plan and related Issues**

### **11.5.1 Timetable and indicative budget for 2003**

#### ***11.5.1.1 ERA-NET***

An open call inviting proposals for ERA-NET activities (coordination actions and specific support actions) on a bottom-up basis, will be published in the Official Journal on the 17 December 2002. The first closure (cut-off) date will be 3 June 2003 with an indicative budget of 24 M€ From March 2004 there will be a intermediary closure (cut-off) date roughly every six months up to October 2005.

Ongoing ERA-NET projects willing to enlarge subsequently the scope of their activities and/or their partnership will be allowed to submit a supplementary proposal at any of the foreseen closure (cut-off) dates.

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<sup>2</sup> CERN: European Organisation for Nuclear Research; ESA: European Space Agency; ESO: European Southern Observatory; ENO: European Northern Observatory; EMBL: European Molecular Biology Laboratory; ESRF: European Synchrotron Radiation Facility; ILL: Laue-Langevin Institute.

#### ***11.5.1.2 Activities undertaken through European cooperation frameworks (e.g. EUROCORES)***

A grant of up to 20 million € will be provided to the European Science Foundation in order to support the implementation of the EUROCORES scheme, corresponding approximately to 20 EUROCOREs, each EUROCORE benefiting of no more than [1] M€ The grant will be the subject of a contract (specific support action) between the Commission and the European Science Foundation. The grant will be disbursed on the basis of eligible costs defined in the contract.

#### ***11.5.1.3 Development of an integrated information system***

The provisional budget foreseen for the development of the integrated information system is 10 M€ to be executed mainly via calls for tender.

#### ***11.5.1.4 COST***

The grant to COST will be at least 50 M€ and up to 80 M€ as specified in annex II of the specific programme "Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area". This grant will be paid on the basis of a contract between the Commission and a legal entity identified by COST as its implementing agency and communicated to the Commission by the Secretary-General of the Council.

#### ***11.5.1.5 EUREKA***

Funding from the Commission, within this part of the specific programme, consists primarily of approximately 2 M€ for the Community's membership fee of EUREKA for the duration of the Framework Programme.

### **11.5.2 Special conditions for participation in the ERA-NET scheme**

The participants in the ERA-NET scheme will be:

- public bodies responsible for financing or managing research activities carried out at national or regional level;
- other national or regional bodies that finance or manage such research activities, such as research associations, private research and innovation organisations, and charities;
- bodies operating at European level that include as part of their mission the pan-European coordination of nationally-funded research.

#### ***Coordination actions***

For ERA-NET coordination actions, the minimum number of participants has been set at three independent legal entities managing publicly funded national or regional programmes, established in different Member States or Associated States, of which at least two shall be Member States or Associated candidate countries.

In addition, a single participant such as an European Economic Interest Group (EEIG) or any legal entity established in a Member State or Associated State according to its national law and which is made up of independent legal entities managing publicly funded national or regional programmes from at least three different Member States or Associated States, of which at least two shall be a Member State or Associated candidate country, may be the sole participant in an ERA-NET.

It has to be emphasised that preference will be given to ERA-NET actions involving a more substantial number of Member States or Associated States than the minimum legally number required of three in order to obtain a significant structuring effect at European level.

On top of the minimum number of participants legally required for an ERA-NET, legal entities such as charities or other private organisations which also manage research programmes that are strategically planned and executed at national or regional level, may participate and receive Community funding.

### ***Specific support actions***

For ERA-NETs specific support actions, the minimum number of participants is one of the above mentioned participants.

### **11.5.3 Type of evaluation procedure for the ERA-NET scheme**

The evaluation of proposals will involve a single stage submission procedure.

The criteria applicable to coordination actions and specific support actions, which are the two instruments for the implementation of the ERA-NET scheme, are described in annex.

To supplement the criteria applicable to coordination actions and provided for in annex B of the workprogramme, three complementary items will be added for the evaluation of ERA-NET proposals:

- Quality of coordination
  - the management should be supported by a suitable governance structure involving the participating organisations at an appropriate level.
- Potential impact
  - the participants should be the key actors within their national or regional research systems.
  - the ERA-NET activities should lay the foundations for a durable cooperation between the partners involved.

The evaluation procedure will be described in the Commission's evaluation manual.

#### 11.5.4 Indicative financial breakdown for 2003

<i>Coordination of national activities</i>	<i>2003 (M€)</i>
ERA-NET (CAs and SSAs)	24
EUROCORES (grant)	20
Info system (Call for Tender)	5
<b>SUB-TOTAL 1</b>	<b>49</b>

<i>Coordination at European level</i>	<i>2003 (M€)</i>
COST (grant)	12-16
EUREKA (membership)	0.5
Other	0.5
<b>SUB-TOTAL 2</b>	<b>13-17</b>

<i>Other activities to support the implementation of the programme</i>	<b>3</b>
<b>SUB-TOTAL 3</b>	

<b>SUPPORT FOR ALL COORDINATION ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>65-69 M€</b>
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## **11.6 Call Information for the open call of the ERA-NET Scheme**

- 1) **Specific programme**: Integrating and strengthening the foundations of the European Research Area.
- 2) **Thematic priority/Domain**: Support for coordination activities.
- 3) **Call title**: Supporting the cooperation and the coordination of research activities carried out at national or regional level (ERA-NET Scheme).
- 4) **Call identifier**: ERA-NET/1/CA-SSA.
- 5) **Date of publication**<sup>3</sup>: 17 December 2002.
- 6) **Closure date(s)**<sup>4</sup>: 03.06.2003, 02.03.2004, 05.10.2004, 02.03.2005 and 04.10.2005, at 17:00 (Brussels local time).
- 7) **Total indicative budget**: 24 Million € in 2003. Indicative budgets for the closure dates of 2004, 2005 and 2006 will be given in the relevant updates of the work programme.

Instrument <sup>5</sup>	€(millions)
CA and SSA	24

### 8) **Area & instruments**:

<b><u>Area</u></b>	<b><u>Instruments</u></b>
See sections 11.3.1.1, 11.3.1.4 and 11.5.1.1	CA and SSA

### 9) **Minimum number of participants**<sup>6</sup>:

<b><u>Instrument</u></b>	<b><u>Minimum</u></b>
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<sup>3</sup> The director-general responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior or after the envisaged date of publication.

<sup>4</sup> Where the envisaged date of publication is either advanced or delayed, closure date(s) will be adjusted automatically in the published call for proposals.

<sup>5</sup> STREP = Specific targeted research project; CA = Coordination action; SSA = Specific support action.

<sup>6</sup> MS = Member States of the EU; AS (incl. ACC) = Associated States; ACC: Associated candidate countries.

Any legal entity established in a Member State or Associated State and which is made up of the requested number of participant may be the sole participant in an indirect action.

	<b><u>number</u></b>
CA	3 independent legal entities from 3 different MS or AS, with at least 2 MS or ACC
SSA	1 legal entity from 1 MS or AS

10) **Restriction to participation**: The minimum number of participants must include only:

- public bodies responsible for financing or managing research activities carried out at national or regional level;
- other national or regional organisations that finance or manage such research activities;
- bodies operating at European level that include as part of their mission the pan-European coordination of nationally-funded research.

Other legal entities such as charities or other private organisations, which also manage research programmes that are strategically planned and executed at national or regional level, may participate without restriction in addition to the minimum number of participants.

11) **Consortium agreement**: Participants in RTD actions resulting from this call are not required to conclude a consortium agreement.

12) **Evaluation procedure**:

- the evaluation will follow a single stage procedure.
- proposals will not be evaluated anonymously.

13) **Evaluation criteria**:

- see Annex B of the work programme for the applicable criteria (including their individual weights and thresholds and the overall threshold) per instrument.
- in addition, for coordination actions, 3 complementary items will be added in 2 of the 6 applicable criteria in accordance with section 11.5.3 of the work programme:

<b><u>Instrument</u></b>	<b><u>Criteria</u></b>	<b><u>Complementary items</u></b>
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Coordination actions	Quality of coordination	- the management should be supported by a suitable governance structure involving the participating organisations at an appropriate level.
	Potential impact	- the participants should be the key actors within their national or regional research systems.
		- the ERA-NET activities should lay the foundations for a durable cooperation between the partners involved.

14) **Indicative evaluation and selection delays:**

- evaluation results: estimated to be available within 2 months after the closure date.
- contract signature : it is estimated that the first contracts related to this call will come into force 6 months after the closure date.