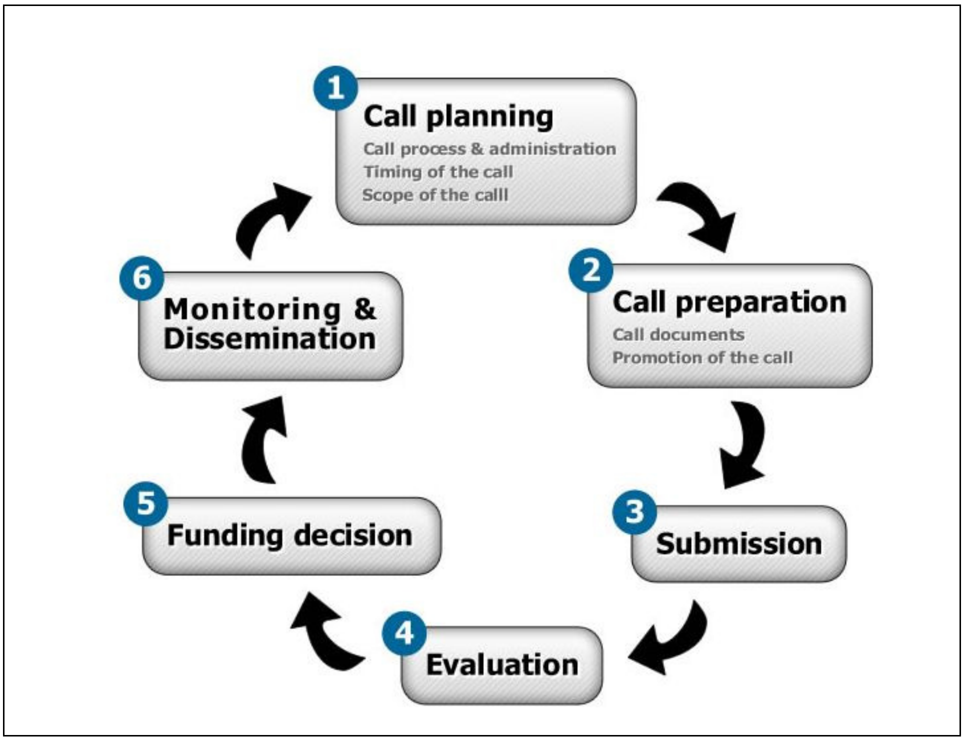
Manual for call implementation



Objectives of the manual

This is the print version of the online manual which is found on NETWATCH. Please note that this version does not replace the online version, as it does not contain any cross references or templates.

The central goal of this manual is to provide the ERA-NET community with a sound basis for the implementation of transnational calls for proposals.

You will find practical examples and templates in the online version.

These optional descriptions, recommendations and guidelines are based on experiences and realistic scenarios, provided as an interactive compilation of modules which reflect the different phases in the planning and operation of joint calls.

The contents are based on past and ongoing ERA-NETs and have proven useful for specific purposes. The documents may be used as blueprints, references or inspiration for future joint call activities.

There is no doubt that the ERA-NET instrument is suitable for flexible use; consequently material provided here may be appropriate for various scenarios and constellations whereas less appropriate for various other scenarios and constellations.

All information is based on the input from ERA-NET coordinators. This compilation was developed by ERA-LEARN to simplify and standardise the execution of joint calls as much as possible.

This draft was compiled by ERA-LEARN during 2009. We invite you to check, test and comment and provide us with feedback. An updated version is expected for April 2010.

Please send your comments and specific input on ERA-LEARN content to **era-learn-feedback@ffg.at**

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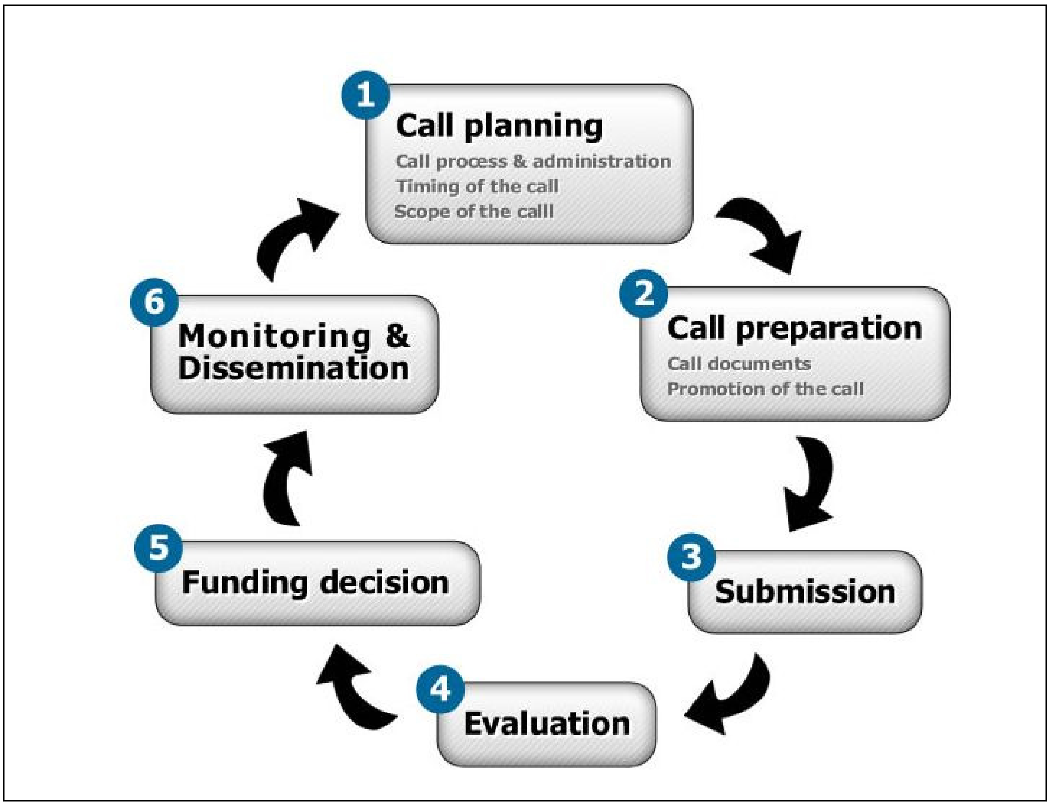
1. Call Planning



1.1 Call process & administration

1.1.1 Call administration

One of the first steps before preparing a joint call will be the definition and implementation of the basic structures for call management. An operational unit will be responsible for the practical management of the call.

It has proven useful to install a "call secretariat" as a central office which organises the operative steps involved in the call administration.
If the joint call is carried out under a specific Work Package (WP) in your ERA-NET it will be appropriate to put the WP leader in charge of the call secretariat. Depending on the experience and expected workload this call secretariat could be assisted by the coordinator and representatives from funding partners that are participating in the call.

The workload of the call secretariat needs to be concisely defined and thoroughly planned in advance, assuring the strict functionality which applicants expect from a funding body even if the consortium is not a formally established legal entity.

The usual workload will also include follow-up activities and covers all or parts of the following duties:

- prepare the necessary **call documents**
- provide the required programme information & promote the call
- provide a system for **submission of proposals** and distribution to funding organisations
- coordinate the **evaluation of proposals**
- prepare a **system for monitoring the call implementation**
- prepare a **system for monitoring the funded projects**

1.1.2 Overall time frame

In order to agree on a common workable frame at the ERA-NET level the partners have to match their programme timelines, considering the following issues:

- Legal constraints (minimum time required by national/regional law for each phase of the call).
- Operational constraints of programme managers (minimum time required for performing each of the single tasks)
- National/regional programme schedules
- Expected number of proposals and the time required to manage the workload
- Evaluation procedures are the most influencing operational and legal factors on the call timeline
- Timing of funding decisions

The resulting minimum time frame is the basis for a definite schedule to be further elaborated during the preparation phase.

1.1.3 Submission of proposals

The partners in the call have to establish a method for collecting proposals from the applicants and for distributing the submitted proposals to the respective funding organisations.
Options for such ***proposal submission systems are*** in place.
It is a core task of the call secretariat to operate the submission system smoothly.

1.1.4 Evaluation of proposals

The partners in the call have to agree on a method for selecting proposals for funding.
Options and potential scenarios for the ***evaluation phase*** are described ***in this manual.***

1.1.5 Funding mode

All programme owners participating in a joint call have to agree on a way to fund successful transnational proposals.
The question of which funding mode to apply for funding transnational projects is a central issue of every call. The final decision for a funding mode that is used in a specific call will depend on the partners in the ERA-NET consortium and the respective flexibility of national programmes. It has strong implications on the necessary ***evaluation system*** and its required outcome, and often also on the funding contract and funding administration.

The following categories can be distinguished:

○ **Real common pot**

The **real common pot**, in which countries pool their national contributions to a common and centrally administered call budget. This provides funding for successful proposals irrespective of the applicant's nationality and results in transnational flows of funding (funding crosses borders). Funding for the positively evaluated projects is ensured within the framework of the agreed overall budget. The individual projects to be funded are evaluated and selected by experts nominated by the consortium (the required outcome of the evaluation is a ***joint ranking list***. Mostly used in ERA-NETs focused on basic science, where the sole criterion for evaluation is scientific excellence, but if necessary supplemented by additional criteria, for example for knowledge transfer-related projects. This funding mode allows following the ranking list by avoiding the risk of any mismatch between national funding contributions and requested budgets for successful proposals. The real common pot requires a system to administer the distribution of funds at the ERA-NET level.

○ **Virtual common pot**

The **virtual common pot** (or distributed common pot), in which countries and regions pay for their own participants and which does not involve trans-national flows of national funding. This mode is the most frequently used option so far. This type of common pot does actually not establish a joint budget to finance the selected individual projects, but is based on national / regional contributions. Even though the virtual common pot involves a jointly coordinated call, this call must be accompanied by national / regional calls for proposals and/or is based an open national / regional program. Each country will fund its own national project partners in successful proposals and covers its own administrative effort. The advantage of this funding scheme is that program owners agree far more easily to contribute call budgets and the often observed willingness to raise national / regional budget limits, if the initially committed funding is not sufficient to fund the successful proposals. A range of evaluation outcomes is possible, e.g. funding categories (fund – fund if budget available – do not fund) up to a ***joint ranking list***.

- **Mixed mode**

The **mixed mode** is a blend of the above-described types of funding and requires a joint ranking list as the evaluation result. It aims to ensure that the selection of proposals can follow the ranking list while maintaining to a large extent the 'fair return' principle. Parts of the call budget are reserved for a "real common pot" which allows compensating mismatch between national funding contributions and requested budgets for successful proposals when following the rankling list. This funding mode is most common with ERA-NET Plus actions (see below). The countries / regions participating in a joint call contribute national/regional funds to a centrally coordinated budget in keeping with the funding requirements of their own national applicants who have been successful in the call. Generally, an agreement must be reached regarding the administrative procedures (e.g. cost of the secretariat).

Each of the funding modes requires an adequate **distribution of funding**. Usually, the real common pot is distributed centrally and the virtual common pot by the single partners. The same applies for the two separate shares of the mixed common pot.

ERA-NET plus actions have to use at least a mixed mode which complies with the requirements for joint proposals evaluation, ranking and selection in order to be able to benefit from the top-up funding of the European Union.

An analysis of experience with various funding modes will be provided.

1.1.6 Financial commitment

Reliable commitments of all participating funding organisations are crucial factors for a smooth operation and a successful call administration.
Budgets must be secured before the call is launched. It would be a major problem if partners dropped out of a running call, so this is to be avoided.
Key partners in a call should commit an adequate budget in order to enable a reasonable success rate.

Commitment of ERA-NET partners
It is up to each programme owner to decide on the respective financial contribution to a call.
The written financial commitment from each of the partner organisations (programme owners) is recommended.

Budgets should be reasonable with respect to the expected submissions.

All partners must consider the availability of their committed funds in regard to the jointly agreed timeline, i.e. the budget availability of the national / regional programmes must be connected to the ERA-NET call. Flexible funds will be a welcome feature.
A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is a suitable instrument for collecting written commitments.

1.1.7 Funding decision

Before a call is launched it has to be clear how decisions will be taken to finally fund any successful proposal.
All call partners need to have full transparency of the decision making process in order to avoid any complications or surprises during the call execution.
The evaluation process will at the end produce a list of proposals suitable for funding, leaving the actual funding decisions as the final step.

The following scenarios can be distinguished:

a) **Common centralised decision**: formal decision making is based on the (binding) ranking list provided by the evaluation panel or body.

b) **Common centralised recommendation & decentralised funding decisions:** in many cases the final step is not taken jointly by the call partners but individually by the national/regional programme owners. The outcome of the evaluation process at the ERA-NET level is a jointly agreed list of proposals that are recommended for funding. The panel or body that produces the common list of proposals suitable for funding or ranking list issues a **recommendation** to the decision makers at the national/regional level. The national/regional funding organisations are invited to respect these recommendations and transform the recommended proposals into funded projects.
This requires a setting which enables a reliable implementation of the common recommendations, which should be binding agreements for the final funding decisions. Any contradicting decisions at the national/regional level should be avoided. Thus, the final decisions should be restricted to a formal character as much as possible.
This setting has to arrange for all substantial national/regional inputs at the earliest possible stage, in any case before the call partners agree on the common list of recommended projects. Unilateral revisions of the ranking list will cause major confusion.

1.1.8 Start of funded projects

The earliest possible starting date of any successful proposal will depend on the final funding decisions on funding of all transnational project partners involved.

In the case of decentralised funding decisions the decision making process of every single partner influences the overall coordination of project enrolment.
A large discrepancy between the deadline of the ERA-NET call and the corresponding national/regional funding decision will cause delays in the start of successful proposals.

It is therefore necessary to know the procedures and timing of the involved national/regional programmes throughout the ERA-NET consortium and make them fully transparent.
The ERA-NET partners should then arrange for timely decisions within their joint call time frame to allow for a quick start and release of funds for the transnational projects.
In addition other formal aspects should be known and effectively administered, such as the necessity of a consortium agreement prior to signing a contract and/or transferring of instalments.

1.1.9 Monitoring of funded projects & call implementation

The first follow-up activity of a joint call is the monitoring of project efforts and results. Setting up a monitoring system is often a task of the call secretariat.
In addition, ERA-NET partners can agree on the implementation of systems for common transnational monitoring, distinguishing between the management and the monitoring of funded projects and monitoring of the call impact.

a) monitoring of funded projects.
While there will be procedures for reporting and monitoring at the national/regional levels, it is up to the ERA-NET partners to agree on common parameters for joint monitoring at the ERA-NET level, or, as currently most often used, to collate national monitoring results for a joint monitoring at the ERA-NET level.
Even if the monitoring of funded projects starts only at the end of the a call it is necessary to identify the targets and indicators in advance as this may affect the method and details for collecting information from the applicants already at the time of submitting proposals.
Details on monitoring of projects are described in the online manual.

b) monitoring of call implementation
It is unlikely that any involved national/regional programme will routinely cover this aspect. However, especially for ERA-NET that are planning more than one call it is recommended to analyse the efforts and feed the acquired knowledge (“lessons learned”) back into the execution of future calls.

This type of monitoring can be done decentralised by the national/regional organisations or centralised by the call secretariat applying online questionnaires, telephone interviews or other methods.
These monitoring activities must target:

- analysing of internal call procedures
- optimising call management
- implementation of user-friendly systems
- creating a reasonable and attractive funding instrument for the target group

Details on monitoring of projects are described in the online manual.

1.1.10 Administrative conditions and necessary documents

A final important step in framing a call is the confirmation of commitment of all call partners.
A well established instrument for that purpose is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which describes the targeted cooperation of funding organisations. It summarises the chosen call procedures including the methods for selecting and funding successful proposals. Partners formally accept these procedures and declare their commitment.
The nature of the document may vary and even the degree of liability is variable. It may range from a fully elaborated legal document to a simple set of commonly agreed minutes of a telephone conference.

A sample MoU may contain all or a selection of the following items:

- purpose of the MoU & duration of the cooperation
- governance of the call
- method for evaluating & selecting proposals
- funding mode, budgetary commitment, funding decisions

1.2 Timing of the call

1.2.1 Call schedule

The overall time frame of a call is determined by the steps involved in the assessment of the overall time frame.
The following milestones need to be arranged:

- launch of call
- 1st deadline (if 2-stage procedure)
- availability of eligibility checks & evaluation results 1st stage
- feedback to applicants and invitation to 2nd stage
- 2nd deadline (or the only one if 1-stage procedure)

- availability of eligibility checks & evaluation results 2nd stage
- availability of ranking list / recommendations
- dates of funding decisions
- any meeting required for the call execution

1- or 2-stage procedures

Particular impact on the time frame arises from the choice between 1- or 2-stage procedures: your call process may involve 2 steps (pre-proposal and full proposal) or simply one (full proposal). In either case, there will only be **one single deadline for applications**: At pre-proposal stage (for 2 stage procedure) or at proposal-stage (for 1 step procedure).

1st stage (optional)

The first step is usually introduced to submit/receive a pre-proposal in order to keep efforts low for both applicants and agencies. Based on the pre-proposal, funding programmes sort non-eligible applicants out. The call partners agree on a list of consortia that are invited to the 2nd stage.

2nd stage or the only one (mandatory)

The 2nd stage (or the only one) is mandatory. Full proposals and national/regional funding applications (if necessary) are submitted/received. Proposals are evaluated against the published criteria according to the agreed evaluation procedures.

Apart from being a legal requirement for many national/regional programmes, a 2-stage procedure provides the funding organisations with a filtering function for limiting the number of full-proposals to be dealt with and for increasing the overall proposal quality. A 2-stage procedure also facilitates input from the national/regional programmes at an early stage in the overall workflow.
A 1-stage procedure however will reduce the total time frame, despite relatively high efforts imposed on proposals that are finally rejected.

1.2.2 Overlaps with other calls

The timing of a call will have to take into account other calls aiming at similar or even the same targets. Similarities may occur in respect to:

- eligible organisations
- participating countries
- thematic focus
- other focus (e.g. SMEs)
- minimum size of consortia

1. The planning of the timeline does not need any specific coordination between and among calls if the targets of your ERA-NET call are quite specific.
2. An overlap of the corresponding phases of different calls shall be avoided if the targets are clearly overlapping to a large extent. In this case the applicants will interpret these as similar calls and base their choice for a particular call on their own criteria. The same target group may however appreciate continuous options for submitting their proposals, therefore a call may benefit from being in antiphase with a similar call.
3. On the other hand an overlap of the time frame with other calls may even be desirable in order to avoid double submissions or double funding. The added value of this strategy could be the most adequate allocation of proposals or even a re-routing of proposals received in the "wrong" call to the correct one.

One aspect of call planning in which mutual influence of calls cannot be considered is the agreement on a time frame before the data of other calls become available.
The planning of call time frame usually requires trade-offs between the partners involved, and any later change of this time frame may be a step back in the process.
Forward planning and a timely entry into the NETWATCH call calendar database are encouraged and may contribute to avoid such problems in the future.

1.2.3 Fine tuning of call milestones

Apart from boundary conditions imposed by the funding programmes, various issues need to be considered when deciding on the milestones. These include the effective promotion to the target group, the setting up of adequate project consortia, or holiday periods.
Typical examples for positioning call milestones are given below.

	Call X	Call Y	Call Z
launch	15.12.2007	02.03.2009	
interval (days)	75	65	
1st deadline (if 2 stage procedure)	28.02.2008	06.05.2009	
interval (days)	11	14	
availability of eligibility checks & evaluation results 1st stage	10.03.2008	20.05.2009	
feedback to applicants & invitation to 2nd stage	11.03.2008	28.01.1900	
interval (days)	49	51	
2nd deadline (or the only one if 1 stage procedure)	28.04.2008	10.07.2009	
interval (days)	50	95	
availability of eligibility checks & evaluation results 2nd stage	17.06.2008	13.10.2009	
dates of funding decisions	01.09.2008	01.11.2009	
start of funded projects	02.09.2008	02.11.2009	
total time frame (days)	110	160	

Useful tools for fixing exact dates include interactive calendars such as
http://holidaycalendar.swisspost.com/en/index.html

1.2.4 Plan necessary meetings

The administration of a call will necessarily require the exchange of information among partners, such as the results of national/regional eligibility checks, the monitoring of funded projects or similar.
This can be done through web-based proposal management tools and/or personal meetings (physical or telephone/video conferences). Experience shows that personal meetings are still a relatively efficient way of reaching agreements, especially for large ERA-NET consortia.

Communication could be required at the following call milestones:

- eligibility checks at the programme level
- agree on evaluation results after the 1st stage of a call and invite consortia to 2nd stage
- agree on evaluation results after the 2nd stage and issue ranking list or list of recommended proposals
- monitoring of call implementation
- monitoring of funded projects

The meetings are ideally planned already during the setting up of the time frame in order to ensure the availability of all call participants.
Between the milestones, communication will be established through email, telephone and/or web-based tools.

1.2.5 NETWATCH call calendar

The NETWATCH call calendar contains dates and scope of calls launched by ERA-NETs and is placed on the public part of NETWATCH. It is available to the RTD community and provides an interactive display of calls (including calls that are planned but not yet launched) with respect to timing, topics and participating countries. Thus, it is a promotion tool for your call and its use is highly recommended.
However the calendar can only display data that are actively provided by the ERA-NETs. They are also responsible for the accuracy of the information.
In any case the calendar can only provide basic information, complemented by links to the individual ERA-NET websites where further details should be available.
The call calendar will also provide basic data on the call scope, such as target groups and targeted projects.

1.3 Scope of the call

1.3.1 Method for definition of scope

A clear definition of the scope will be helpful for ERA-NET partners as well as for applicants. The RTD community will appreciate transparency of invited topics, eligible consortia and targeted projects.
A common understanding of the scope is essential for applicants as well as funding organisations. Especially if not everything will be supported by all partners, i.e. only parts of a call can be supported at national/regional level, it is necessary to clarify the details.

Quite often there will be a trade-off between a common focus and the number of funding programmes that can support a specific target.
A narrow scope of a call will usually mean that only a limited number of funding programmes will fit into it. A wider scope on the other hand will fit to a larger number of programmes but will also attract a larger number of submissions including also a number of proposals that are not very specific.

Various methods of defining the scope of a call have been applied in different ERA-NETs, including:

- Matching of individual national/regional programme priorities with European strategies and common targets at ERA-NET level
- Exploiting existing documents on research priorities such as the strategic research agenda (SRA) of one or more technology platforms (ETP)
  A list of ETP can be found here (http://cordis.europa.eu/technology-platforms/). Especially for calls targeting applied RTD projects a close cooperation will support the target group through an adequate choice of topics and appropriate timing of calls.
- Joint programming board composed of experts in the field
  In addition to ETPs a group of international experts exchanging views and visions may also be helpful for designing the call.
- Analysis of previous calls and response from target groups
  The target group may have shown preferences for specific areas in previous calls, which will be worth exploring in detail.

1.3.2 Overlaps of topics with other calls

Again the overlap with other calls needs to be checked in order to provide the target group with a clear setting.

The full set of call features has to be taken into account when considering the overlap of calls. This includes the targeted type of projects.

Possibilities to check the thematic focus of other calls include:

- Cordis (http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm)
- NETWATCH call calendar
- FP7 National Contact Points (http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html)

1.3.3 Identification of target groups and potential applicants

Critical mass of applicants available

It is important to anticipate the potential of applicants interested in your call in order to design the workflow and time frame accordingly.

Important partner countries on board

In many ERA-NET calls it has proven unproductive to launch calls without the European key players on board. Experience has shown that partnering of applicants often works via these key players, and it may therefore be helpful to include major partners/countries in the call before launching it.

Analysis of response to previous calls

If you are not designing your first ERA-NET call, the analysis of previous calls is helpful in determining the call topic, since you rely on information how previous calls have been received by applicants. Questionnaires can be spread to stakeholders.

1.3.4 Definition of targeted projects

Before launching a call the call partners have to agree on the type of projects that will be supported. Clarification and transparency on what is eligible will avoid misunderstandings also on the part of the applicants.

Eligibility criteria

Basically, eligibility criteria are necessary to assure equal formal conditions for all applicants.

Phases of research

The call partners will define which type of research will be addressed. The choice between basic and applied RTD will naturally emerge from the focus of participating programmes.

In the case of applied RTD particular attention should be paid to the question of **commercialisation** of project results. It needs to be clarified to the applicants if the participation of industry partners is a requirement at ERA-NET level and/or at national/regional levels.
The choice of the **funding mode** may depend on the phases of research that are supported in the call.

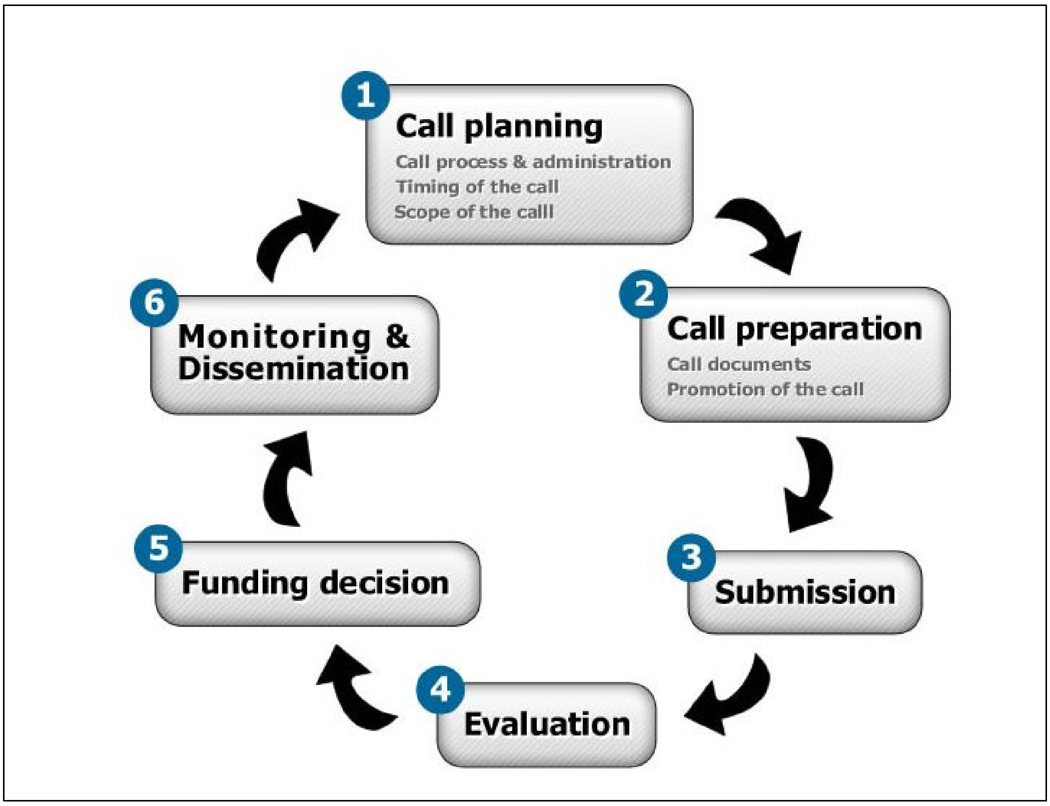
Size of consortia

The minimum size (number of partners) of eligible consortia has a decisive function in your calls. It has been shown that small consortia are a preferred constellation for ERA-NET calls, which bridges the gap between pure national schemes and programmes which require larger consortia, for example FP7.

Duration of projects

When deciding on the eligible duration of projects the call partners should take into account the follow-up activities, such as the monitoring of funded projects.
In particular it has to be clarified how any activities beyond the duration of the ERA-NET or ERA-NET PLUS contract will be carried out and how the necessary resources will be secured, because in no case can funding money from an ERA-NET project be set aside for monitoring activities after the project end.

2. Call Preparation



2.1 Call documents

2.1.1 Supporting documents

For implementing a call several documents must be prepared and the call must finally be promoted efficiently. Below you will find a short description of these documents and promotion tools; an exhaustive toolbox for most of these items is available online.

1) Call announcement, call text (national/regional or ERA-NET level)

The call announcement is a brief description of the basic call parameters, including participating countries, eligible applicants, dates, deadlines, call scope & title, description of projects and consortia to apply, and criteria against which the projects will be evaluated.

The call announcement will be published at the ERA-NET level and may also be necessary at the national level (if a parallel national call has to be launched). It is a binding document.

The call text may be a simple flyer or a longer document supporting the call announcement with more specific details of the above mentioned kind of information. Usually this instrument is used at both ERA-NET and national/regional levels to further explain to the applicants which projects are expected, when they have to be submitted, and how they will be evaluated.

2) Guidelines for applicants

The guidelines for applicants contain all information concerning the call and detailed descriptions so that (in the best case) no queries arise.

3) FAQ

Although questions should be avoided by thoroughly drafted guidelines, there will often be queries from applicants. A collection of frequently asked questions (FAQ) is a tool for providing answers to major concerns or apparently poorly defined and/or ambiguously expressed sections of your guidelines, or general answers to the call. FAQ serve as a general documentation at the ERA-NET level and help avoid misinterpretations and diverging answers at the national/regional level.

FAQ may be helpful for improving the call implementation.

4) Proposal Forms

It is important to be explicit in the guidelines about the formal procedure for submission: how many forms have to be submitted at the ERA-NET level and/or at the national/regional level, and who has to submit which document.

Applicants will submit their proposal in forms provided by your ERA-NET. Usually these forms can be downloaded from the website provided by the call secretariat.

In these forms you request all data from the applicants which you need to have available for the selection process and follow-up activities.

You are advised to define the full set of required information well in advance, because it will be difficult to collect any information at a later stage. Follow-up activities such as statistical analysis and monitoring have to be taken into account.

Concerning a standard format, a preliminary analysis has shown that there are some variations in the degree of detail that is used in the proposal forms:

calls that are targeting basic research appear to use rather simple forms indicating the requested information but not necessarily work package structures, accompanied by separate documents for financial details

on the other hand, ERA-NETs that are targeting applied RTD projects seem to have more detailed templates including work package structures and commercial aspects such as exploitation strategies. More sophisticated templates may even contain macros for extracting these data into a database.

5) Feedback letters

Applicants will appreciate a harmonized feedback during the process.

This will start with the submission (confirmation of receipt). After each round of evaluations the call secretariat is advised to communicate results, recommendations or invitations to consortia or coordinators.

In all these letters you should precisely explain to which extent the information is binding, since the ERA-NET as such is not necessarily taking any formal decisions.

6) Evaluation checklist & reporting forms

This list of criteria has to be mutually agreed among partners and will be applied at the ERA-NET level. Usually this list is also published in the guidelines; however, you also can publish only larger domains of criteria (while the detailed sub criteria are a working tool for evaluators and experts).

Evaluation reporting forms are designed for collecting results from the evaluators; ideally, they are provided in a form that makes easy to create a result table. The design will depend on the chosen evaluation process.

7) Guidelines for evaluation

A document providing evaluators and experts with the necessary information (criteria, thresholds, dates and deadlines) to perform their task. They will depend on the **evaluation process**.

8) Description of evaluation meeting

Depending on your **evaluation process**, you must plan and describe how the meeting of evaluators is organized.

9) Non disclosure agreement NDA

All information contained in a proposal is confidential. Usually, program managers have already signed a NDA, but if external experts / evaluators are involved, you should supply a form they can sign.

2.1.2 Check content of call announcement for coherence with the call documents

As soon as all documents have been drafted they must be checked for coherence and soundness. Call documents (guidelines, proposal form etc.) must reflect the call targets outlined in the announcement. The following issues need to be checked:

- Programme priorities
- Target group
- Countries involved
- Call budget
- Consortium description
- Role in the project
- Commercialization
- Transnational added value
- Excellence
- Innovation
- Duration
- Fit to scope
- Compliance with the call topic

2.2 Promotion of the call:

2.2.1 Introduction /Background

ERA-NET Joint Call publication can typically be carried out as follows:

1. By common call announcement supplemented by national/regional call specifications;
2. By call announcement made by one partner or the ERA-NET call secretariat for all participants;
3. By each funding organisation separately;

The recent European Commission FP6 ERA-NET Study [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/coordination/library_en.html] illustrates the breakdown of these methodologies (see TABLE) with the majority relying on either a common Call announcement or a Call announcement made on behalf of all participants by one partner or by the Call secretariat. Call publication by each country separately tended to have occurred a) in early Calls or b) had been supplemented by common Call announcements later.

TABLE (status 12/2008)

How is the Call published?	No. of Calls
By each country separately	18
Common call announcement supplemented by national call specifications	59
Call announcement made by one partner or ERA-NET secretariat for all participants	28
Other	11
Of a total of 106 ERA-NET Calls varying from pilot to fully fledged	

Typical Call Promotion activities therefore have been reviewed and sorted into the following categories:

- ERA-NET specific activities
- National / regional activities
- Promotion via target group

Each category should be considered in the context of relevance to any new Call Promotion activity.

CHECKLIST for CALL PROMOTION

You will need to have all or a selection of the following available at CALL LAUNCH

- Call announcement: call text, flyer, website, email format
- List of participating countries and information on national/regional programmes
- Guidelines for applicants
- FAQs

2.2.2 ERA-NET Specific Activities

- Some ERA-NETs provide maximum prominence to Call announcements by positioning them on specific 'Call for Research' pages on the ERA-NET website. These are used to host information about the Calls and to link to information about the various projects already funded or underway.

- The Common call announcement published on the ERA-NET website will include a short descriptive text with details of the countries participating and the deadlines for proposal submission. It will provide links to the Call brochure and further information.

- The Call flyer (brochure) includes a description of the ERA-NET, the benefits of participation in the Call, the Call focus, eligibility to participate and details of the procedure and evaluation with Call deadlines. Funding agency and further information links will be provided.

- ERA-NET newsletters are routinely published on the website and targeted to subscribers. Newsletters may be used to report scientific workshops and/or Joint Call research projects. They typically reiterate the aim of the ERA-NET, provide some background information e.g. relating to strategy and highlight the number of national research funding organizations involved.

- Press releases are surprisingly few and typically utilise the Call brochure information. They may however provide a context to the current Call e.g. in relation to plans for future Calls.

- As the projects develop Success stories of previous Calls and information on existing projects are actively disseminated to fulfil the needs of the ERA-NET project teams as well as the ERA-NET itself. The Success stories generally include details of the participating partners by institution and country as well as the contact information for the coordinator.

2.2.3 National Activities

In most ERA-NETs the common Call announcement is made by one partner or the ERA-NET secretariat for all participants (as described under ERA-NET Specific Activities). This announcement is supplemented by the activities of the participating agencies in their local networks.

- Web-based activity will vary according to national requirements. Where a participant country has a clearly identified National Programme Website it will include Call related topics within the programme description with launch date, total volume of funding, duration and collaborative arrangements nationally within the format governed by the local provider. The Call announcement will typically appear as a News item. Countries without e.g. specific theme-focused programmes will typically also announce the Call under News.

- The Call announcement published on the National Programme Website will include comments specific to the national funding allocation, a local contact point and details of any local events. It may refer to the submission procedure at national and international levels and will highlight local deadlines.

- The local contact for the ERA-NET usually includes a remit for both national and international activities in a given thematic area. This relationship governs the 'targeting' of potential applicants at national level and usually points to the application of a National Mailing List to the ERA-NET Call. The mailing list is managed by a nominated Programme Owner and it is cross-referenced with national and FP7 databases at regular intervals.
N.B. Regular updates through the mailing list can include pre-marketing of the Call, an important step in raising awareness of the opportunity in a targeted manner.

- National Events targeted to relevant audiences can be used as the forum for policy discussions, for dissemination of information of the European Commission / the European Research Area, and for dissemination of project outcomes. National Conferences/Fairs will also provide opportunities for ERA-NET exposure at e.g. high-profile annual events targeting indigenous technology sectors. Benefits include the contextualisation of the ERA-NET Call in keynote speeches and the opportunity to network with multiple national and international peers.

- The decision to participate in the ERA-NET Call will be based on client needs. These will be determined most efficiently one-to-one by Individual Consulting. Programme owners will typically have in-house processes and structures to increase the effectiveness of their organisations in delivering effective services for clients. These may include organisational support for ERA-NET partner searches.

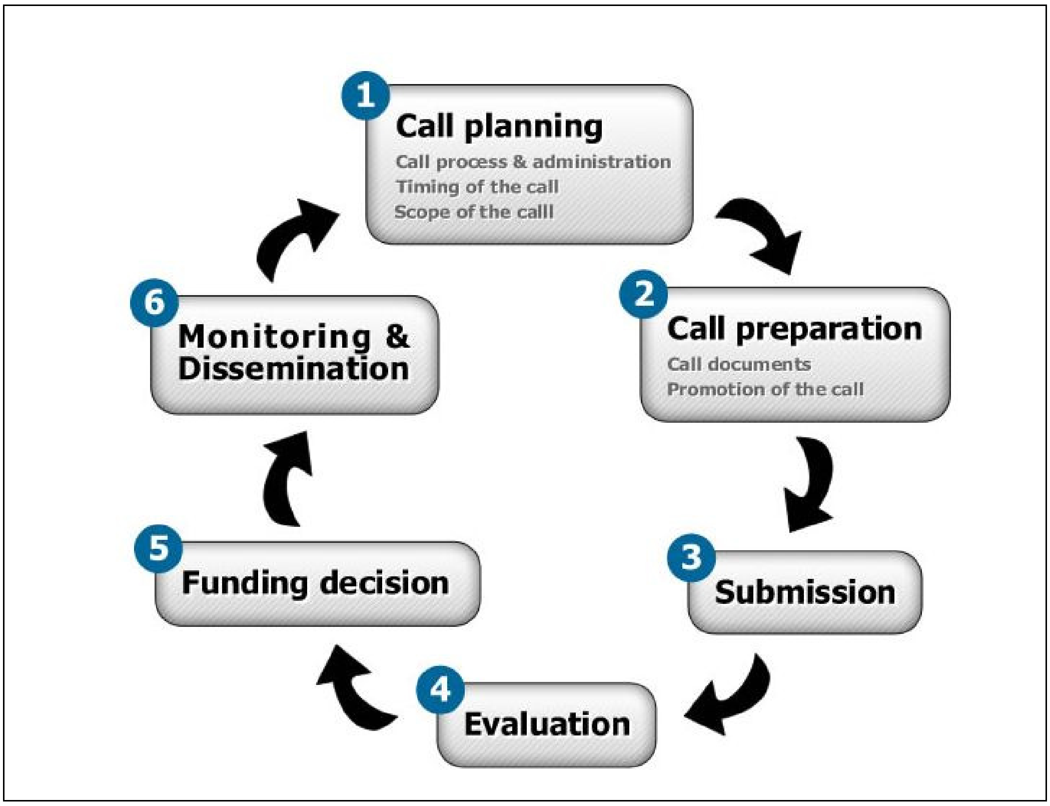
2.2.4 Promotion via target group

- There are multiple opportunities to publicise ERA-NET Calls at European level given the plethora of ongoing ERA, FP7 and related activities. Web-based routes will include CORDIS, relevant European Technology Platforms and other relevant ERA-NET websites. While the promotion through the CORDIS database will position the Call in the context of European funding opportunities in general, the European Technology Platform will involve promotion through the RTD community itself.

- The new NETWATCH web portal will be another route for exploitation here. Current plans include a Call Calendar which will be a core element in the transparency of Call Promotion.

- Call announcement to European and international level bodies/networks will include presentation or exhibition at international meetings and conferences as well as publication in major European journals, including the Official Journal of the European Union.

3. Submission



3.1.1 Submission of pre-/full proposals

There are several methods to implement proposal submission, ranging from ***hard copies*** or ***discs*** to ***electronic versions*** which are sent to either agencies (***decentralised***) or a single office (***centralised***). The most appropriate submission system of your ERA-NET will depend on your project goals, i.e. whether your focus is on other joint activities than calls and your ERA-NET will (eventually) launch one single call or whether your focus is on launching several joint calls.

1. Proposal as hard copy

In case you envisage only a single call and/or if you expect only few proposals per call, you can avoid deploying efforts and resources in establishing complex submission systems since there are several good practice examples how proposals can be submitted:

- Applicants can submit hard copies (alternatively files on CD-ROM) by surface mail to the agencies involved. You must make sure, however, that single applicants of a consortium submit identical copies of their proposal.
- Alternatively, proposals may be sent to a central office with the advantage of having all data collected on a single site. The office must then further distribute the proposals to the agencies/evaluators.

- A first step towards electronic proposal submission would be submitting files by e-mail, in either of the described ways. In any case, you must make sure that security/confidentiality issues are considered (e.g. registered mail/secure website).

Compliance of submission with cut-off date and call closure time must be checked.

2. Electronic proposal

In case you focus on joint calls you are recommended to go for a fully developed (though still easy enough to implement) solution, which is a centralised ***electronic submission system (ESS)***. The following description of function and suggestions are based on research of ESS of existing ERA-NETs having experience in calls.

- **Functional ESS requirements:**

The main function is the proposal upload. An ESS must be hosted at a secure site and should allow access for authorized users only.

An average ESS is expected to handle easily 20-100 proposals with 5-15 partners involved in the call.

Many currently implemented ESS offer additional functions such as:

- automatically generated notification to applicants,
- download of the proposals by respective funding organisations, thus providing a distribution function of proposals
- Information-hub with restricted access only for authorised individuals, which is mainly used for evaluation purposes, but also for monitoring.
- Automatically generated call statistics.

- **Technical requirements:**
  - A safe site to upload proposals, including the function of automatically generated notifications to applicants
  - A selectively accessible data-hub for various purposes (evaluation, project follow up and monitoring [if a system is in place])

- **System provenience**

Most ESS in place have been developed and are being maintained by a consortium member. Most are hosted at the ERA-NET webpage or on that of an agency (the other ones being hosted by subcontractors). Often the ESS is derived or adapted from a submission system already in use for national/regional calls; sometimes the system development has been subcontracted.

An analysis has shown that currently applied ESS are highly recommended by their users but hardly available for commercial use. Instead, the participation of the provider as part of the ERA-NET consortium would be required. The majority of ERA-NETs considers their system convenient for agencies and applicants, respectively.

Apparently, the establishment of an ESS system or the adoption of an existing system did not bring about difficulties for any of the ERA-NETs, and individual systems have been developed repeatedly with almost the same functions.

Frequent providers for ESS include NWO (NL), DLR, PTJ and VDI/VDE-IT (all DE), Innobasque (ES).

- **Recommendation**

• There is a quite uniform common standard of ESS in place in those ERA-NETs that launch calls. There is no indication that establishing an ESS with the above requirements and specifications was difficult to reach (technically) nor expensive. Developing or adapting an ESS appears to be no major issue in implementing different call procedures.

• Apparently many ERA-NETs found access to an existing ESS through one of the consortium members because of the availability of a system within the agency of this partner or because of the involvement of this partner in another ERA-NET.

• Most probably one of the consortium partners will have access / institutional bonds to an ESS, which is likely to be adaptable to individual needs of your ERA-NET. There are few systems commercially available, mostly in ERA-NETs where the system runs independently from an agency, or where the development has been subcontracted. However, it could be more convenient to subcontract a technician who can produce a tailor-made system to the specific needs of your ERA-NET.

3.1.2 Submission of national/regional funding application forms (if required)

Usually a common proposal of the project partners is submitted by the consortium coordinator to the central ERA-NET call secretariat. This proposal will be evaluated according to the ERA-NET evaluation system in place.

It might be required that, for legal reasons, one or more of the involved agencies require an additional, separate national/regional application. This may be the same proposal but as a signed hard copy, or a short online application in the national language, or an additional form etc.

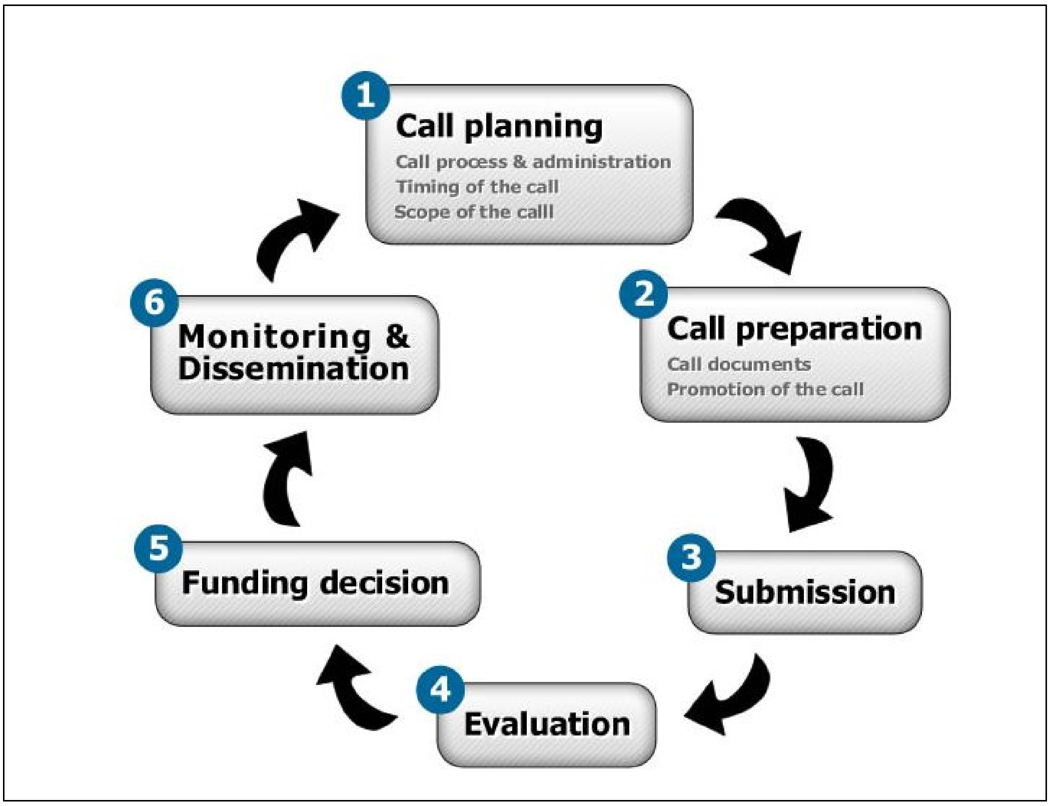
These national/regional requirements should be explicitly stated in the “guidelines for applicants”.

3.1.3 Distribution of submitted proposals to involved funding organisations

All submitted proposals must eventually forwarded to the evaluators, usually either via the involved funding organisations or directly to the evaluator panel, depending on your evaluation system in place.

All ESS developed by different ERA-NETs so far have implemented an upload and download page (“selectively accessible data-hub”), where evaluators can download proposals and upload evaluation results.

4. Evaluation



4.1.1 Introduction

The large variety of procedures already in use by ERA-NETs makes it a challenging task to identify common standards for the evaluation & selection of transnationalRTD projects, because the choice of applicable and appropriate procedures may depend on the individual setting, e.g. basic research or applied research, the chosen funding mode or national programme requirements.
In any case the overall target of the evaluation must be the selection and funding of the best proposals through transparent systems that are convenient for funding organisations and applicants.

You will find detailed descriptions and material that has proven valuable in various cases. Consideration needs to be given to

- call launched by ERA-NET or ERA-NET PLUS ?
- 1 stage call or 2 stage call ?
- final outcome of evaluation: common funding decision or joint recommendation ?
- the assessment against national rules –how to include national requirements ?
- one common proposal form or separate national/regional funding application ?
- evaluation criteria

- the scope of eligibility checks
- methods for the selection of experts
- appropriate evaluation forms
- appropriate evaluation meetings
- alignment of evaluation with available budgets
- the further processing of evaluation results

From a technical point of view, the complete life cycle of a call should be taken into account including submission, evaluation, funding and reporting. Automatic handling of proposals can be easily achieved by expanding the functionality of an electronic submission tool to an evaluation and monitoring instrument.

4.1.2 Results of evaluation process

The most appropriate evaluation procedures will be chosen depending on the **type of the expected evaluation result**.

It makes a big difference if the evaluators are purely concerned with compiling a list of proposals suitable for funding (i.e. **outcome is a recommendation** to the decision makers, which proposals are worth being funded, possibly without any ranking of proposals) or if they are also concerned with ranking the proposals according to their quality (i.e. **outcome is a binding ranking list**).

It is of central importance to know at which stage the **criteria** imposed by **national** / **regional programmes** are taken into account. Experience shows that it is preferable to collect decisive input from the individual programmes as early as possible and to carry on at a collective level in order to have a **smooth and coherent progress** later in the evaluation phase.

When the call partners select the most appropriate call design it has to be taken into account that there may not be the full choice available, especially in the case of the ERA-NET PLUS instrument which brings about a number of **formal requirements** (such as a 2 stage procedure and at least a mixed funding mode).

4.1.3 Procedures

ERA-NETs have already implemented more than 100 joint calls. Various procedures have been selected by the participating funding organisations, each tailored to specific constellations and targets, such as a focus on basic research or applied research. In the case of ERA-NET PLUS calls, there are also specific requirements imposed by the EC that need to be accomodated.

Irrespective of the chosen workflow, a typical evaluation includes the following items:

a) **Basic tasks to be done during the evaluation**

1.) check eligibility
2.) perform evaluation (project quality)
3.) compile, match and agree on results
4.) communication to applicants

b) **Basic elements to carry out the evaluation**

1.) full proposals (+ optional pre-proposals)
2.) evaluators
3.) resources
4.) Evaluation meeting

c) **Basic Modalities and conditions**

1.) Requirements on process design and required outcome
2.) determine the amount of flexibility
3.) define conflict of interest
4.) evaluation scores or other systems
5.) national requirements (criteria)
6.) ERA-NET criteria

The most appropriate workflow will be selected with respect to the following questions:

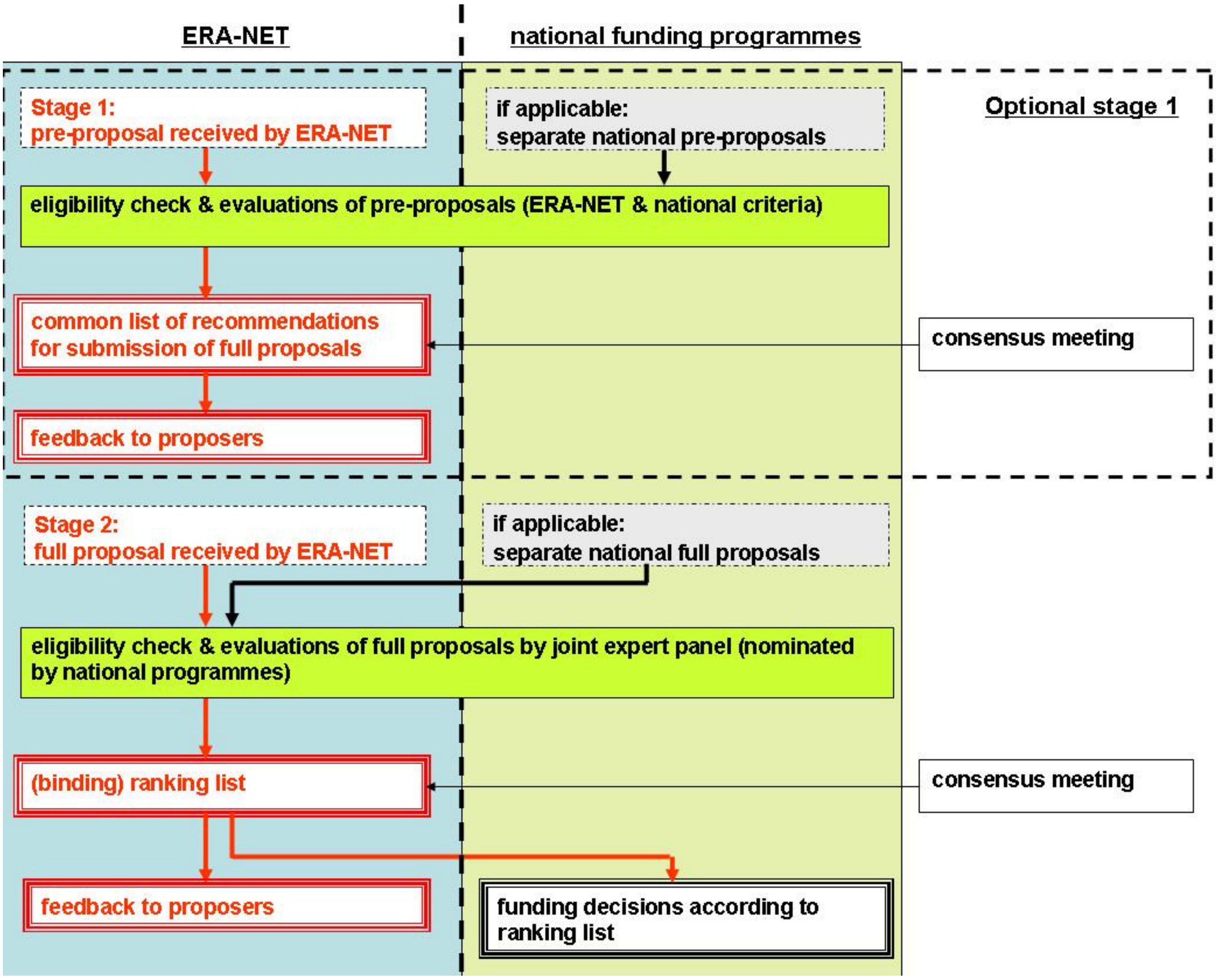
- call launched by ERA-NET or ERA-NET PLUS ? (virtual pot, real common pot, mixed mode)
- targeted project type ? (basic or applied science)
- targeted outcome of evaluation phase ? (categories vs. ranking of proposals)
- 1 stage call or 2 stage call ? (optional vs legal constraints)
- method for integrating assessment against national rules into the overall evaluation ? (where to place)
- criteria which cannot be assessed by external evaluators ? (how assessed and where to place)

While it is not possible in the frame of this manual to describe all possible concepts of running an evaluation it is possible to identify some of the most common procedures.

Scenario A:

Evaluation carried out by common expert panel

This is the most used evaluation system for reaching a joint ranking list (usually in the basic sciences where expertise is obtained by external peers) and complies with the rules of EC for ERA-NET PLUS. It is completely appropriate to use this system for all real pot models, too, and usually involves direct results by the evaluation panel.



More details coming soon.

Scenario B:

Evaluation carried out by national programmes

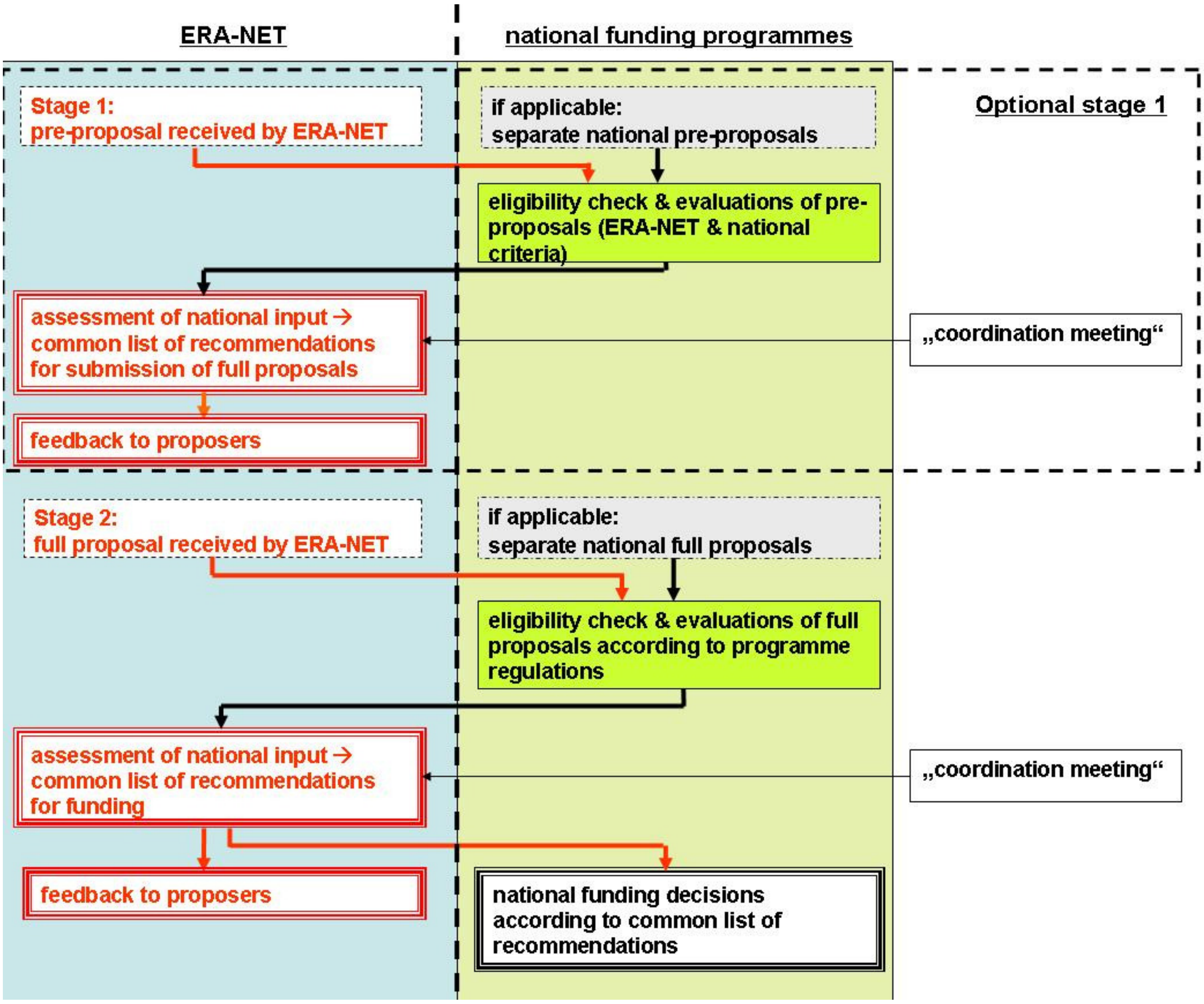
This is a less sophisticated but best practice model for all calls applying the virtual common pot model. It is usually used in the applied sciences where expertise is obtained by the use of agencies´ internal resources (in-house evaluators) and has clear benefits for the assessment of the viability of projects since national agencies have access and internal knowledge of the applicants. It must involve the matching of expert's views.

Steps involved:

- appoint evaluators
- scores or other systems
- eligibility check
- optional:
- assessment of pre-proposals (stage 1)
- method for compiling results

- elaboration of the invitations to stage 2
- assessment of full proposals
- method for compiling results
- elaboration of the final list of proposals recommended for funding
- communication of result to coordinators

The graphical description of the workflow illustrates how the responsibility may be moving between national levels and the ERA-NET:



- **Appoint evaluators:**

National programmes will have either in-house experts or their pool of external experts available. In addition it will be possible to access the EC database.

- **Scores or other categories**

Allocating scores to criteria will lead to a clear ranking list of proposals according to their total scores.

However it may be preferable to come up with a system instead which leaves room for some flexibility, e.g. categories such as "'suitable for funding" vs. "not suitable for funding", a colour code (green-yellow-red) or similar.

A categorisation will allow the funding of some (but maybe not all) of the good proposals according to the availability of funding and is therefore appropriate for the virtual common pot model. Funding can thus be optimally distributed to projects with good quality.

On the contrary, ranking lists usually imply that the best ranked projects are funded and are thus rather subject to real common pot models (see scenario A).

- **Eligibility check:**

The check of formal eligibility of proposals with respect to the ERA-NET call criteria could either a) be done by the call secretariat before the actual evaluation or b) be part of the national assessment. In addition the eligibility with respect to national programme criteria will be assessed as part of the overall evaluation.
It has proven fruitful to do it the way b) for two reasons: balanced efforts across the consortium (as not only the secretariat is involved, which usually is not too familiar with all national requirements) and timely rejection of non-suitable proposals (less effort for evaluation and quicker information to applicants). Non-eligible proposals will be rejected and this decision will be communicated to the call secretariat and the call partners.

- **Optional: Assessment of pre-proposals (= stage 1 in case of 2 stage process):**

A pre-proposal phase enables the funding organisations to identify consortia that are unlikely to succeed in the full proposal stage.
Possible handling of the pre-proposal assessment:

- simple eligibility check or
- evaluation of proposal quality (including eligibility)

Even with limited details available in the pre-proposal it will be possible to assess the scientific and technical excellence and innovation, the quality of consortia and the (economic) potential of applicants to reach the project goals, which is particularly essential in terms of financial viability in the case of applied RTD projects. It needs to be agreed if the pre-proposal assessment results in a definite yes/no decision or if there is some room for flexibility with respect to potential improvements towards the full proposal stage, ie. if consortia should be allowed to stage 2 despite any major problems. In particular it needs to be clear how to proceed if one of the involved funding organisations is unlikely to support their applicants. This consideration is not applicable in a real common pot model.

- **Optional: Compiling results of pre-proposal assessment**

The call secretariat collects the outcome of the assessment by the national programmes and communicates this to all call partners.

For each proposal, all funding organisations involved should agree if a consortium should be invited to stage 2 or not, in accordance with the ERA-NET goals. It needs to be clarified in advance how to deal with diverging national results, and how recommendations / decisions are made. Usually, a meeting (physical or virtual) is scheduled.

- **Optional: Feedback to applicants and invitations to stage 2**

Applicants will appreciate quick feedback. Invitations can be sent to successful consortia and should include any requirements and recommendations for stage 2. Non-successful applicants should also receive clear feedback from the ERA-NET. The FP concept of single communication to the proposal coordinator has proven very suitable and is recommended. Templates are provided.

It will be helpful to arrange for a comprehensive collection of background information available among the call partners. This will ensure coherent communication of the ERA-NET with individual applicants.

- **Assessment of full proposals (and national funding applications, if applicable)**

The full proposal forms contain the complete project information. This is the common basis for both centralised and decentralised evaluations organised by the call partners. It is therefore strongly recommended to provide a joint ERA-NET proposal form.

In addition, national funding organisations may have to insist on separate national application forms according to programme requirements.

Full proposals (and national applications, if required) will be evaluated following either national procedures, which can include in-house evaluations, or as well procedures involving external experts and/or panels. Eligibility is checked as well.

- **Method for compiling results**

The call secretariat collects the outcome of the assessment by the evaluators and communicates the results to all call partners.

For each proposal, all funding organisations involved have to agree if a proposal should be rejected or recommended for funding. In this process, it may be necessary to explain the individual national results in detail. This agreement is reached following discussions in a “evaluation meeting” which could be a personal meeting, a telephone or video conference or a virtual meeting via an intranet, but is usually a physical one.

- **Elaboration of the final list of proposals recommended for funding**

The consortium finally assembles a list of proposals which are recommended for funding by the ERA-NET.

All proposals on this list have the support of all funding organisations involved and budget is secured. This list is forwarded to the decision makers (programme owners) and is considered the ultimate binding basis for the national funding decisions.

- **Communication of result to coordinators**

As soon as the ERA-NET has issued the final outcome of the evaluation to the decision makers, all individual programmes will take their funding decisions. Since this process will vary from country to country due to decision making dates it has proven useful to inform the applicants about the end of the ERA-NET process. This letter shall inform about the fact that all further steps are taken at the national level and leaves all communication duties to the national organisations according to their regulations. Templates are provided.

4.1.4 Criteria

Evaluation criteria applied in a Joint Call should be based on the standard criteria used by the participating national and regional funding programmes or other transnational instruments such as FP7, including transnational aspects.

The ERA-NET will have to decide which criteria to use at which stage, when to implement a formal eligibility check and how to carry out a comprehensive evaluation which comprises national/regional as well as transnational views. Depending on the selected workflow (e.g. 1 stage or 2 stage call) different sets of the criteria may be applied at different stages.

The publication of criteria and thresholds (if applicable) will increase the transparency of the evaluation process. A list of criteria should be a basic part of “guidelines for applicants”.

In case of evaluating proposals from ERA-NET PLUS calls, the use of FP7 criteria is obligatory.

Check of Formal Eligibility:

The eligibility check will take into account 2 aspects:

- Are the involved partners formally eligible according to Joint Call criteria ?
- Are the involved partners formally eligible according to the respective funding programmes ?

Eligibility criteria could include:

- submission of all requested documents in time ?
- application form filled in correctly ?
- project structure eligible (size and structure of consortium, duration and costs of project) ?
- (thematic) focus of proposal within scope of call (including respective national/regional priorities) ?
- same proposal submitted to other calls as well ?

Evaluation of project quality:

Eligible applications/projects will be assessed against defined criteria. Criteria will be measured through scores or other system (e.g. categories / colour code). Any different weighting of criteria must be published.

When coming to a conclusion it could be worth while (especially in stage 1 of a 2 stage process) distinguishing between deficits which can be corrected and definitive shortcomings.

Generally, evaluation criteria will depend on the scope of the call and the targeted projects.

The most common criteria sets include the

*** 3 main FP7 criteria (scientific and technical quality, implementation and impact),**

*** sub criteria that depend on the respective call, and**

*** criteria for the transnational benefit.**

Examples for such criteria are:

- scientific (technical) excellence and targeted innovation
- feasibility of the proposal described by a detailed work plan

Example: Is the project description adequate to obtain the desired results (objectives, resources, deliverables)?

- ressources/implementation

Example: Is the cost calculation reasonable and well balanced?

- quality of the consortium & management

Example: Are the partners experienced and well qualified? Why is this combination of partners most suitable for carrying out the project ? Is the management structure adequate? Is the partnership well-balanced ? Is it necessary to perform the project at transnational level?

- impact: exploitation of results, dissemination

Example: Is there a clear exploitation strategy? How will results be published (in case of basic science) ? Is the expected project outcome sufficiently close to the market (in case of applied RTD) ? Economic impact for each partner?

- Transnational benefit & added value

Example: How does each partner benefit from the proposed transnational cooperation ? Medium- to long-term advantages? Handling of IPR issues?

Respecting the transnational nature of Joint Calls the added value / transnational benefit should be of high priority.

4.1.5 Forms and documents

Several documents must be prepared before the evaluation can be carried out. Below you will find a short description of these documents with an exhaustive toolbox for most of these items. Their design will depend on the chosen evaluation process.

Guidelines for evaluators

This document provides evaluators and experts with the necessary information about the evaluation (process, criteria, thresholds, dates and deadlines) to perform their task. If scoring of criteria is involved the guidelines shall include instructions for allocating scores.

Non-disclosure agreement (NDA)

All information contained in a proposal is confidential. Usually, employees of funding organisations have already signed a NDA, but if external experts / evaluators are involved, it is recommended to supply a form they can sign.

The evaluators have to confirm that there is no “conflict of interest”. A clear definition of such a conflict is required.

Checklists of evaluation criteria

This list of criteria has to be mutually agreed among partners and will be applied at the ERA-NET level. Larger domains of criteria may be broken down into detailed sub criteria.

Usually this list is also published in the guidelines for applicants.

Individual Evaluation reporting form

Evaluation reporting forms are designed for collecting results from the evaluators; ideally, they are provided in a form that makes it easy to create a result table.

Evaluation results (scores, yes/no decision) will be accompanied by detailed comments explaining the evaluator’s conclusion.

Deadlines for returning the complete results shall be highlighted on the form.

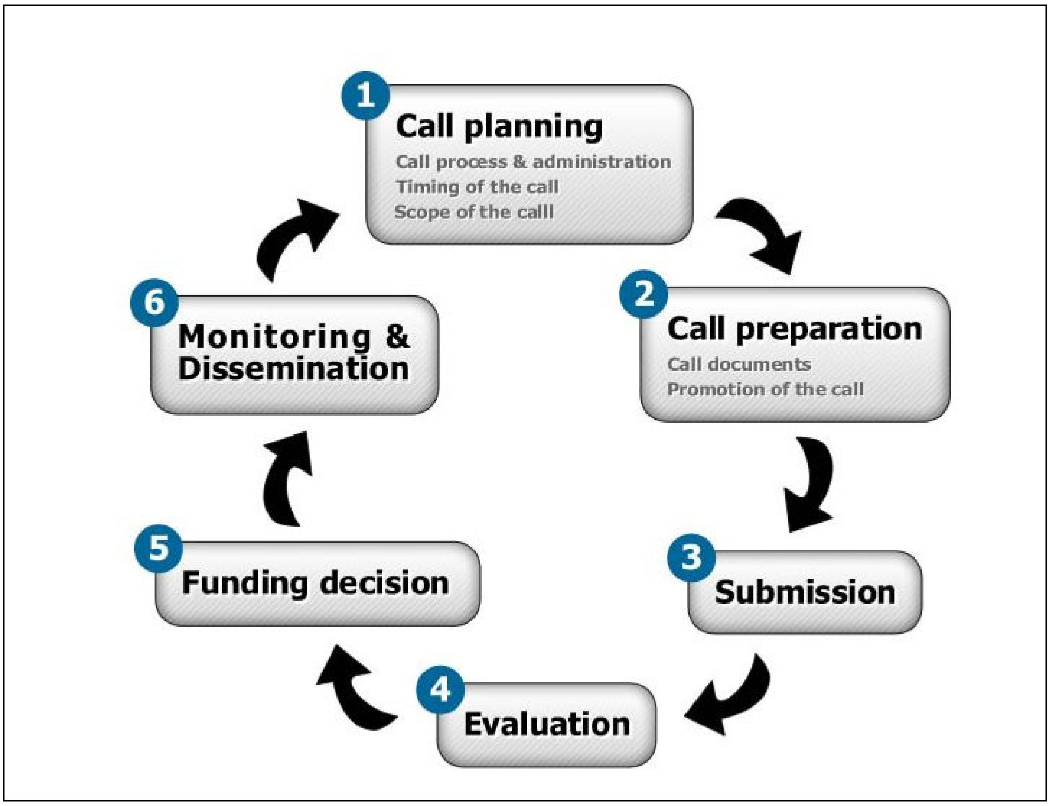
Summary report

A summary report compiles the individual evaluation results.

Consensus report

The final outcome of the evaluation, i.e. a list of proposals that shall receive funding, is accompanied by the consensus report, which lists the common decisions and justifications.

5. Funding decisions



5.1.1 Introduction

From the programme managing point of view the starting of projects is the next step after evaluation. The funding decisions, concluding the contracts and the instalments of funds will lead to launch the projects.

An effective operation will therefore be a marker for the quality of the respective ERA-NET (as perceived by applicants).

5.1.2 Funding decisions

National/regional decisions generally follow internal regulations except for cases in which the ERA-NET has commissioned this task to a joint panel (usually if a real common pot model is applied). The fact that cross border collaboration between nationally funded projects is facilitated forms the important deviation from this internal regulation. A coordinated project start within a common time frame is crucial to allow effective trans-national collaboration.

The national/regional funding decision of each program owner is the required input for ERA-NETs applying the virtual common pot model. Usually, each national/regional program has an internal board of decision makers in charge to officially approve the funding of projects recommended by evaluators. Decisions should follow in strict consent with the results of the joint evaluation and the jointly made recommendation of projects. An excellent communication within all ERA NET partners, an open use of information about national decisions and a timely execution of the process are necessary to control the activities and to start the projects and their research activities in an appropriate manner.

For ERA-NETs applying a real common pot or mixed mode model operated by a central call secretariat the required input of national/regional program owners is the formal transfer of decision making to the decision making panel of the ERA-NET, and assignment of freedom to operate the following process to the call secretariat. In this case the decision making is the result of the panel meeting and no further coordination of decisions is necessary.

5.1.3 Challenges of national contract preparation

In the case of a virtual common pot, separate contracts are concluded by the single agencies. Each agency should therefore see for an efficient and timely contract preparation. In order to reach a maximum of harmonization between the different national funding rules and procedures, the agencies should achieve agreement on the following points – in consistence with their applicable national provisions preferably before the process starts: (i) agreed (usually identical) duration for the participation of all participants, (ii) requirements for additional joint reporting, (iii) rules for IPR distribution and the exploitation of results - usually established in a consortium agreement, and (iv) the binding necessity of a consortium agreement for contracting.

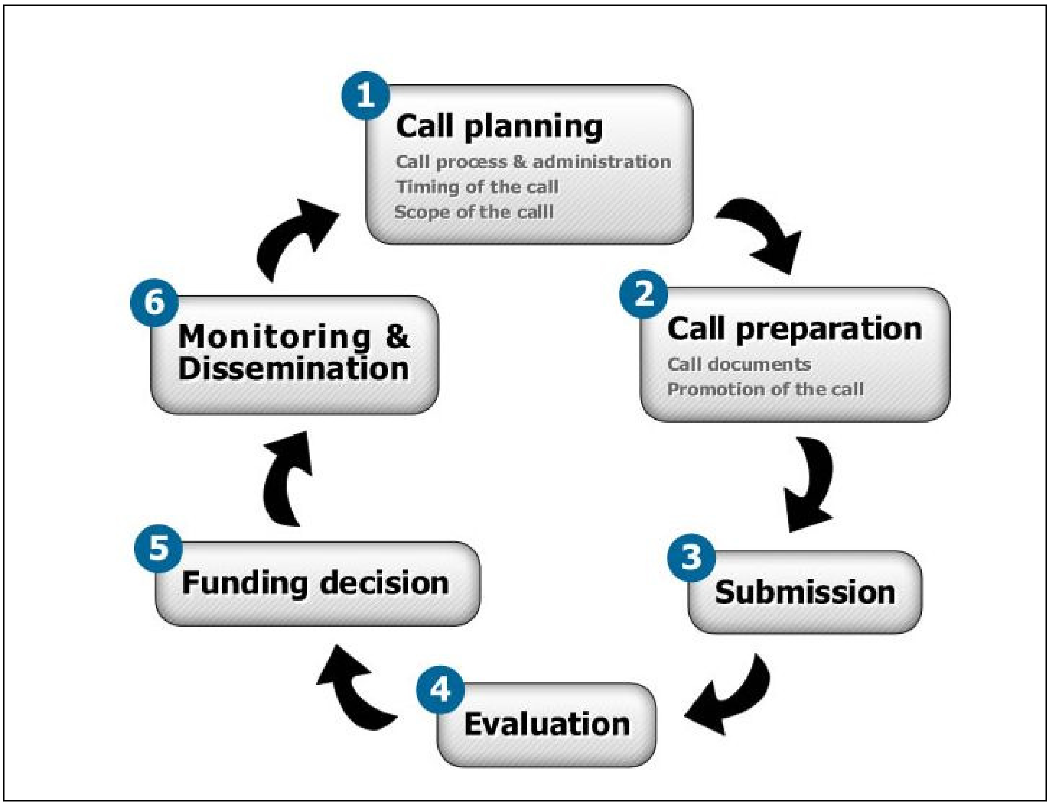
In the case of Real Common Pots (or the joint funds of a mixed mode), the contracts for individual project participants are exclusively based on jointly agreed provisions of the ERA-NET, and the contracts are concluded accordingly by the secretariat.

5.1.4 Distribution and monitoring of funds

In the virtual common pot model funds are usually provided directly by the respective national/regional agency to successful applicants. Consequently, monitoring of funds, too, is effected by the agencies in this direct inter-relationship. For trans-national project cooperation it is important that all involved project partners will receive their funds at project start, as the delay in funding one partner might cause the delay of the project and thus involves the other partners. To assure a quick release of funds is part of the agencies' commitment to the ERA-NET.

In the case of a Real Common Pot the programme owners provide the agreed financial contribution to the central secretariat. Funds are then distributed to the respective projects and the project is monitored by the secretariat. In the case of a mixed mode, program managers provide the financial contribution directly to the successful project partners from their respective countries - plus the maximum funding contribution of joint funds agreed between the partners to the call secretariat. Joint funds are subject to monitoring by the call secretariat, which surveys the proper use of joint funds in projects that have been assigned joint funds. In the mixed mode model, the call secretariat could also host the entire monitoring process. In addition to joint funds, agencies have to provide a joint budget that covers the cost for the secretariat.

6. Monitoring & Dissemination



6.1.1 Monitoring of funded projects

Making a system for common reporting and monitoring of the projects financed by joint calls may be a challenging task. Each participating funding agency will have their specific reporting and monitoring requirements. In order to gather information on the progress and the final outcome of the project as a whole, there is a need for common reporting from the project in addition to eventual national reporting from each project participant to its national funding agency.

The common reporting and the national reporting should be coordinated as much as possible to the benefit for the project participants.

This can be achieved by collecting indicators at ERA-NET level and comparing these indicators with information that is already collected routinely at the national/regional levels.

In the last years an impressive variety of successful ERA-NET call procedures have been established. However, only a few ERA-NETs have developed systems for common reporting from the projects financed from the joint calls.

These guidelines are intended to be a help for ERA-NETs in setting up a system for common reporting of the projects. In the preparation of the guidelines, we have gathered information from ERA-NET coordinators on the reporting systems already in use. In the online toolbox there will be lists of indicators and templates for periodical and final reporting from projects financed by joint calls. These templates can be used by ERA-NETs, or adapted to fit your specific needs.

A system of common reporting must be seen in relation to what is required as national reporting by the different funding agencies participating in the joint call. Double reporting and increase of bureaucratic burdens for the project participants should be avoided as much as possible. The funding mode chosen for the joint call will have an important impact on how the reporting and monitoring system for the call can be made.

If a common reporting system comes in addition to national reporting, it is important that the common reporting and monitoring focuses in particular on the added value of the cooperation in the project, and with a strong emphasis on the total outcome if the national reporting is focusing on each project partner's work. Indicators of this added value of cooperation may vary according to what kind of research is supported. The importance of this added value of cooperation is reflected in the example templates in the online toolbox ERA-NETs may want to modify this to their specific needs by using its own indicators.

Most of the joint calls in ERA-NETs have so far been funded according to the principles of virtual common pot .As all project partners in the financed projects will have separate contracts with their national or regional funding agencies, progress reports and final reports from each project partner to their funding agency will be a part of the obligations in the contracts. These separate reports will often cover only parts of the total project, often related to the specific tasks that each project participant is doing in the project. In order to monitor the progress and final outcome of the project as a whole, there is a need for systems of common reporting also for joint calls with distributed pots/virtual common pots. Some ERA-NETs have such common reporting in place, in addition to the national reporting from each project participant to their respective funding agency.

For joint calls where there is only one contract – between the project coordinator and the ERA-NET secretariat or call coordinator – the reporting will be common for the whole project. This will be the case for joint calls with real common pot, but also calls with mixed mode can have such a system. That means that the participating funding agencies will leave the task of collecting reports to a call secretariat acting on their behalf.

Common reporting and monitoring should take into account the requirements in the participating funding agencies. If a common reporting and monitoring system can include all requirements of all participating funding agencies, in principle a common system could replace the national systems. The information requested will in most cases be very similar from all participating funding agencies, and possibilities of making one single reporting system that covers the needs of all the participating funding agencies should be explored. If such a total integration is not possible, parts of the common reports, such as Publishable Abstract and Publishable Summary, can be used by each partner in their national reporting. In order to make the reporting easier for the project participants, an annex to the reporting template explaining the reporting requirements of each can be prepared by the ERA-NET.

Harmonisation of reporting and monitoring requirements should not be restricted to ERA-NETs and national systems. Many of the participants in projects financed by joint calls in ERA-NETs will also be participants in FP7 projects, or will be participating in such projects at a later stage. There may be good reasons to work for harmonisation also with the FP7 reporting and monitoring system. The reporting and monitoring requirements accepted by the Commission should be sufficient for most of the participating funding agencies. Harmonization with FP7 requirement will also ensure easier access to comparable statistics in ERA. Finally – when an ERA-NET evolves into ERA-NET+ or other kind of joint programming including Commission R&D funding - the FP7 requirements will have to be fulfilled. It is consequently rational to establish common reporting systems which at a minimum meet FP7 reporting requirements.

Common reporting of jointly funded projects will be of benefit for all the participating funding agencies in an ERA-NET. Common reporting will give documentation of the outcome of successful projects and demonstrate that participation in joint calls will give good value for money.

Setting up a system for common monitoring and reporting has also a cost aspect. One of the agencies in the ERA-NET will collect and analyse the reports on behalf of the whole ERA-NET. As long as the ERA-NET is a project with funding from the Framework Programme, the cost of common reporting should be included in the cost of running the ERA-NET. The coordinator of the ERA-NET, or a joint secretariat or call coordinator, should have a budget that cover these costs. In many cases, the projects financed by joint calls in an ERA-NET will run after the funding of the ERA-NET project has ended. Provisions for securing a budget for the secretariat functions after the ending of the EC-funded ERA-NET project should be included in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or other legal text, where the partners in the ERA-NET agree on how these costs shall be paid for.

6.1.2 Analysing and optimising call procedures

(coming soon)

6.1.3 Call results

At the end of a call it will be a standard task to perform a statistical analysis of results.

Investigations will include:

- Number of submitted proposals (stage 1 & 2)
- Number of applicants involved
- Number of funded projects and overall success rate
- Total costs and requested (or accepted) funding
- Number of proposals (projects) per funding programme, per region, per country
- Number of project coordinators per funding programme, per region, per country
- Average number of applicants per consortium
- Average number of regions/countries per consortium
- Response to thematic sub-topics
- Composition of consortia in terms of organisation type (e.g. SME, IND, RES, HE)
- Requested (or accepted) funding per participating programme, per region, per country
- Transnational networking of applicants –who cooperates with who ?

At a later stage the call results may also be analysed with respect to the impact that has been achieved. It will be necessary to establish specific indicators.

6.1.4 Dissemination

Disseminating the results of a transnational call will highlight the main parameters to potential future applicants, thus supporting the promotion of future calls. In addition, results may also be helpful when trying to enhance the commitment from programme owners. It may be useful to compare the results to effects of other instruments in the field.

Apart from statistics explaining the interest from the RTD community as well as the budget invested, the publication of successful projects ("success stories") (to a certain degree of detail) will increase the transparency of the ERA-NET. Success stories may also be a valuable illustration of the call scope especially to newcomers.

Dissemination channels could be the similar to the ones for promoting a call.