

ERA-LEARN Webinar on Widening in Partnerships - Summary report

28 April 2021

This document summarises the ERA-LEARN webinar on Widening in Partnerships, 28 April 2021.

Summary

The webinar took place on April 28th, 2021, and it was organized to present best practices related to enhancing Widening Countries' participation in partnership initiatives and to discuss challenges and opportunities facing Widening Countries in the upcoming Horizon Europe (HE) Partnerships.

The webinar attendees were welcomed by Stefan Weiers, EC representative for Widening, ERA & Research Infrastructure Programming, and Roland Brandenburg, ERA-LEARN coordinator. Stefan Weiers introduced the new list of Widening Countries and presented the supporting measures in the new HE Framework Programme. This was followed by statistics referring to Widening Countries' performance in ERA-NET and EJP Cofund partnerships that were presented by Roland Brandenburg.

Widening Countries in Horizon Europe

Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and all Associated Countries with equivalent characteristics in terms of R&I performance and the Outermost Regions (defined in Art. 349 TFEU).

(source: [Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022, 11. Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area](#))

The webinar was organized in two main sessions. The first session included a series of presentations on the following issues:

- mechanisms introduced in ERA-NET and EJP Cofund actions in order to support Widening Countries participation in different stages of implementation. This was based on the ERA-LEARN Inclusiveness Report (Malwina Gębalska, National Science Centre, Poland, CHANSE coordinator, ERA-LEARN);
- Support measures in the HE for Widening Countries in relation to European Partnerships, including the adoption of geographical balance as a new selection criterion

and a hop-on mechanism allowing researchers from Widening Countries to join granted projects. (Katarzyna Walczyk-Matuszyk, National Contact Point, National Centre for Research and Development, Poland, NCP_WIDE.NET coordinator);

- JPI Urban Europe's example of approach to Widening Countries presenting guidelines on how to enhance participation of this group of countries in future partnerships (Margit Noll, Austrian Research Promotion Agency, JPI Urban Europe, Chair of the Management Board);
- Actions supporting Widening Countries that are implemented in ERA-NET Cofund calls for proposals increasing the number of funded projects with participations from these countries (Živilė Ruželė, Lithuanian Research Council).

The presentations are available [here](#).

The second session was dedicated to a panel discussion between ERA-NET Cofund and future European Partnerships coordinators and the representative of the European Commission.

Panel discussion participants:

Margit Noll, Austrian Research Promotion Agency, JPI Urban Europe, Chair of the Management Board; Maria Leek, EC RTD.G.4, Policy Officer, Common Missions and Partnerships Service; Mathieu Girerd, French National Research Agency, CHIST-ERA coordinator; Patriq Fagerstedt, Swedish Research Council, JPIAMR Secretariat.

Key messages from the panel discussion:

- Several Partnerships use measures to support Widening and less performing countries' participation both at the call and programme level. This results in increased participation of this group of countries. It is important that a portfolio of widening/inclusiveness measures is introduced at different stages of the partnership cycle¹.
- Widening Countries should take every effort to actively support Partnership coordinators in implementing Widening actions, e.g. advocate for these actions when co-designing partnerships and promote these actions in national research communities.
- Flexibility in using different funding tools by Widening Countries is also recommended. Apart from call for proposals which are most popular funding tools in ERA-NET Cofund actions, some partnerships also implement funding opportunities for building international research networks or internships for early career scholars. These type of actions can support capacity building in less performing countries. Widening Countries, however, often resign from participating in these funding opportunities, if these actions are not part of their usual funding portfolio.
- Widening Countries should strive to secure adequate funds for their research communities participating in funding opportunities. Low national contributions to

¹ Please refer to [ERA LEARN report on inclusiveness in European R&I Partnerships](#).

partnerships discourage researchers from applying to the calls for proposals organized by partnerships. In addition, Widening Countries should also invest more resources (human resources, in-kind contribution) in partnerships. Exploitation of ESIF funds is also recommended.

- Creating and maintaining connection with research communities from Widening Countries is of paramount importance to their success in calls for proposals. Involving funding partners from Widening Countries in shaping call topics of is needed. Raising awareness and training is also recommended in order to attract more applicants and improve the quality of applications. Moreover, the national funders in the Widening Countries should offer incentives for researchers to apply for partnership calls.
- There is a need for closer involvement of Widening Countries both in the co-funded calls and other activities, such as policy- or impact- targeted actions at both the trans-national and national levels.
- Increasing awareness of national stakeholders and triggering alignment across national R&I policies and priorities is crucial for achieving ambitious and sustainable goals. Complementarity and synergies between national funding programmes and partnership goals should be aimed at in order to apply a long-term perspective in pursuing national policies and priorities by Widening Countries. Collaboration between different stakeholders on national level is recommended.
- The EC Horizon Europe introduces a new principle of openness and transparency in the set of criteria for evaluating new partnerships. According to this principle partnerships should demonstrate openness towards all relevant partners and stakeholders already in the process of the programme design and remain open to newcomers and interested parties throughout its lifetime. Openness should also translate into actions widely promoting the partnership and its results among a broad range of relevant stakeholders groups.
- The EC also plans to introduce a monitoring and reporting system for the new partnerships on a biannual basis including a small number of common indicators. Partnerships will be requested to provide data to inform the common indicators along with their own partnership-specific indicators to assist with the preparation of the first biannual report.

Further Information

Please consult [ERA-LEARN report on inclusiveness in European R&I partnerships](#).

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