

Alignment of national programmes

Chair: Federico Cinquepalmi, JPI Urban Europe Governing Board

Key note speakers: Paola Clerici Maestosi, Vice-chair of the JPI Urban Europe Governing Board, ENEA; Diana López-Falcón, JPI More Years Better Life, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research

Organizer/Rapporteur: Paul Erian, AIT

Joint Programming aims at coordinating research efforts, policies and resources among Member States through an alignment of programmes, priorities, activities towards a common Strategic Research Agenda, so to tackle grand societal challenges more effectively. Coordinating funding committed nationally, brings to important gains in terms of joint vision, better exploitation and efficiency of resources for research in key priority areas. The JPI Urban Europe is developing a comprehensive approach to alignment, based on consistent strategy and a portfolio of instruments, so to foster a major cooperation and coordination of research on urban issues.

The workshop has been conceived as an occasion to exchange approaches and methodologies, as well as benefiting from lesson learnt, thanks to the contribution to the discussion offered by the JPI FACCE and More Years, Better Life and the ERALEARN 2020 project, invited to present their experience.

Federico Cinquepalmi (representative of the Governing Board) introduced the meeting, emphasizing the importance of alignment to the extent of the implementation of the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda.

Paola Clerici Maestosi presented the results of the alignment process so far achieved within the JPI Urban Europe, illustrating the methodological approach. Main messages outlined are:

- Alignment is a process that relies on a reciprocal knowledge and therefore requires means (tools) and places (fora) to share information about national programmes, activities, priorities in urban research
- Alignment shall aim at bridging differences (things that divide) and build on similarities (things that join)
- Alignment needs a continuous exchange among Funding Agencies, and therefore mapping activities and tools are part of the process
- In the case of urban research, aiming at crossing borders among disciplines so to approach urban issue from a trans-disciplinary and holistic viewpoint, alignment is a far more engaging process, with multiple goals, different actors to involve, many research areas to address. Therefore it requires a strategy based on alignment pathways that encompass a set of actions to be implemented on a variable geometry scheme
- The JPI UE is moving towards a strategy of alignment based on a variable geometry: different pathways have been designed so far and will be finalized according to the SRIA.

Pablo Aller Moran described the approach to alignment in FACCE –JPI as a three-step process anchored to the Strategic Research Agenda and based on:

- Development of a Common Vision with long term objectives: How cooperation and coordination of research at EU level can address combined challenges
- Translate it into a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA): Establishing medium to long-term research needs and objectives

- SRA implementation: identifying and exchanging information; joint foresight and technology assessment; joint research activities/modalities, etc.

Pablo pointed out the relevance of the biannual Implementation Plan as then main means of alignment. FACCE-JPI Implementation Plan 2015-2016 is based on:

1. Alignment of existing national research
- Knowledge Hub on experimental climate change studies on crop and grassland systems
- Thematic Annual Programming Network: gather national funders to discuss major national research programmes, with the objective to align them
2. Co-funding: ERA-NET on Agricultural greenhouse gas research
3. Explore: Exploratory workshops

Diana López-Falcón presented the data mapping activity carried out in JPI More Years, Better Life, as a pillar of their alignment strategy. The data-mapping project seeks to map the range of data sources on ageing at the European and national levels, examine whether there are major gaps in the available data infrastructure, as well as provide statistical agencies with user-driven feedback on standard data sources. It provides scientists and policy-makers with a comprehensive overview of where to find appropriate data for cross-disciplinary approaches. The data project also helps to inform the development of the JPI's Strategic Research Agenda, and any calls or research proposals that follow from it, by identifying relevant sources, helping avoid repetition of work by individual projects, and ensuring that research proposals are well informed about possible data sources.

Luciano Catani reported some of the results of the ERALEARN 2020 activities related to monitoring and assessment of the various existing P2P networks (including the JPIs). In particular, one of the main objective of the ERALEARN 2020 is to assess and benchmark current approaches to alignment and explore options for new modalities that will better align national and/or regional activities under common research agendas, so to increase effectiveness of joint programming activities.

Main messages arising from the ERALEARN work are:

- There is no common definition of what 'alignment' means. There are a variety of definitions, approaches and tools
- Alignment is not only about organizing joint calls for research: Can be achieved via various (joint) actions
- Different actions are often complementary to each other. Some can be conducted in parallel (launch of joint call + sharing of research infrastructure)
- Successful alignment combines "bottom-up" (researchers, RPO) & "top-down" actions (Ministry, RFO)
- Key barrier at operational level are: inter-operability of national rules for funding & executing research

In the final wrap-up some key messages have been pointed out and put forward to the alignment process for the JPI UE:

- Alignment is a long term process and requires commitment from the Member States and Funding Agencies
- Alignment actions must consider the entire research programming cycle and spread across it with different actions/modalities
- Alignment shall involve institutional actors at different levels but also research and stakeholder and open to the cities