

Participant viewpoint on research funding cooperation



This folder (Deliverable 2.6) outlines the user satisfaction among programme representatives and researchers, who have participated in trans-national research funding activities under the umbrella of ERA-NET TRANSPORT.

The main conclusions amongst partners that have been involved in setting up or performing trans-national research funding cooperation under the umbrella of ERA-NET TRANSPORT (ENT) is that they are satisfied with the quality of the results achieved.

Best evaluated aspects of the trans-national funding initiatives from both programme representatives and researchers are:

- Professionalism
- Focused research
- Exchange of knowledge and networking
- Simple procedures

Programme representatives and researchers would join future trans-national research funding initiatives under ENT.

Programme representatives involved in trans-national funding activities consider that it has been worth pooling resources. They will participate in future ENT activities of their interest, if funding is secured from the start of the process.

Researchers will also apply and participate again in ENT initiated research projects. Several follow up research activities have been developed and new networks of programme representatives and researchers have been created adding value to future ENT activities.

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MAIN CONCLUSION

The majority of programme owners, managers and researchers that have participated in an ERA-NET TRANSPORT (ENT) funding activity are happy with the quality of the results achieved.

As part of ENT activities (Task 2.2) a questionnaire to map the experiences of taking part in a trans-national funding initiative under the umbrella of ENT was sent to:

- 21 programme owners and programme managers from eight different countries, all having experience of pooling research funds in an ENT initiated action
- 61 researchers that had received funding through a ENT trans-national funding initiative

The results presented are based on the replies from:

- 15 programme representatives, covering 7 different trans-national funding initiatives
- 18 researchers, also representing 7 different trans-national funding initiatives
- More information about ENT and related funding initiatives can be found on page 8.

The following aspects of ENT cooperation activities have been evaluated best in the questionnaire from both programme representatives and researchers:

- **Professionalism among partners** – essential for developing and carrying out joint actions
- **Research is addressing policy questions and yielding useful technologies** – through focused research topics of common importance
- **Exchange of knowledge and networking** – main pillars for future transport research coordination
- **Simple procedures** – well defined cooperation processes with recommended procedures and personal support

There is, however, room for improvement to ensure a smoother and more targeted process of setting up trans-national research funding initiatives. These process recommendations are continuously being amended and improved to support coming trans-national funding activities.

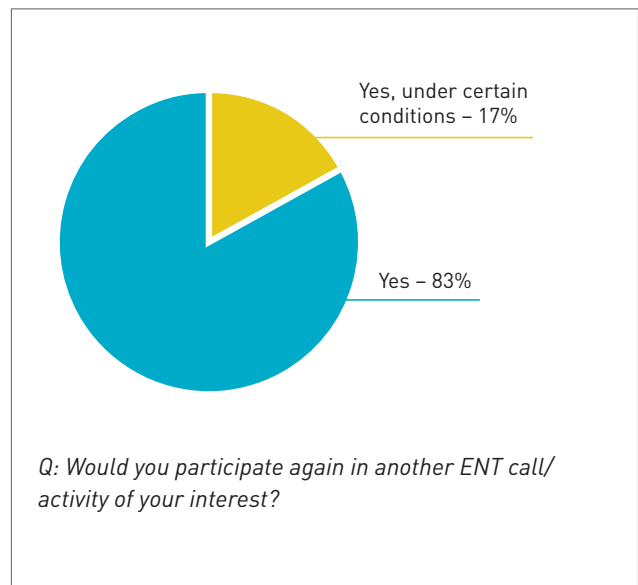
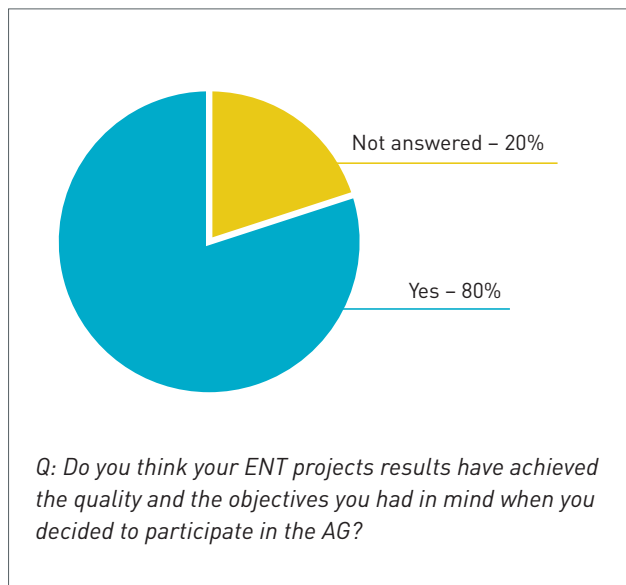
The specific recommendations are:

- Continue developing the cooperation procedures and learn from those joint actions that have had the best results
- Get commitment and clear mandates from the participating programme representatives right from the start

- Develop a framework for having annual or biannual input for proposals for cooperation actions
- Work to establish a harmonised policy and funding framework for trans-national funding cooperation
- Work for larger funding pots for trans-national cooperation. More funding is needed to increase the interest of the researchers and thus to yield stronger actions and better results
- Increase support of dissemination aspects in the joint actions. ENT could organise yearly seminars, where project results can be presented and discussed between involved programme representatives and researchers

Five out of six programme representatives consider that the project results obtained have achieved the foreseen quality and objectives

All researchers would participate in future ENT research funding activities



PROGRAMME REPRESENTATIVE'S OPINION ON ENT COOPERATION ACTIVITIES

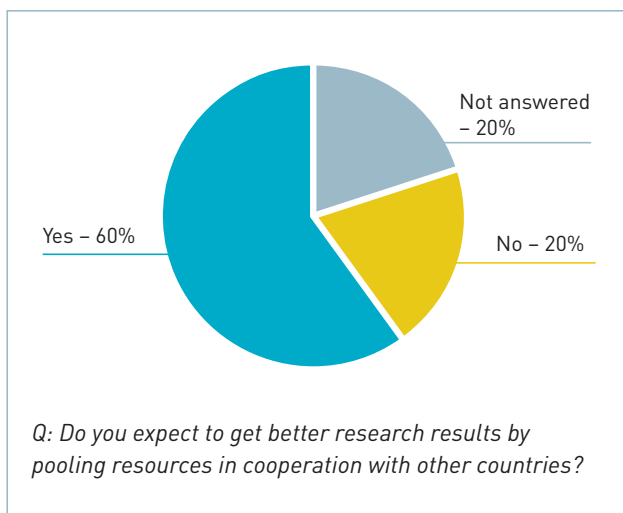
It is a challenge to set up and carry out ambitious trans-national research funding collaborations. Although national research programmes to a large extent have similar priorities and objectives, national differences and cultures still exist.

The programme representatives are overall satisfied with their participation in ENT activities:

- 80% consider that there have been benefits from complementary skills of the researchers
- 50% consider that critical mass funding budgets was achieved
- 60% consider that the objective of developing common approaches with other countries was also achieved

The best rated aspects of cooperating in ENT are exchange of experiences and the good support from ENT.

Six out of ten programme representatives expects to get better research results by pooling resources



Nine out of ten programme representatives will participate in future ENT transport research funding initiatives.

However for more than half of them some conditions have to be present, which is related to getting a clear commitment of national funding available for the theme before entering into cooperation.

SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions to improve coming funding initiatives:

- Clear funding commitment from all involved countries at the start of the action
- Find areas where cooperation exists; this makes the progress easier
- Clear mandates for programme representatives to decide on topics and funding
- Further ENT support for dissemination activities

Opinions on the formal process

According to the participating programme representatives, the timing of the process of setting up a trans-national cooperation action is quite well defined and the overall opinion is that programme owners and managers could reach the deadlines without important problems.

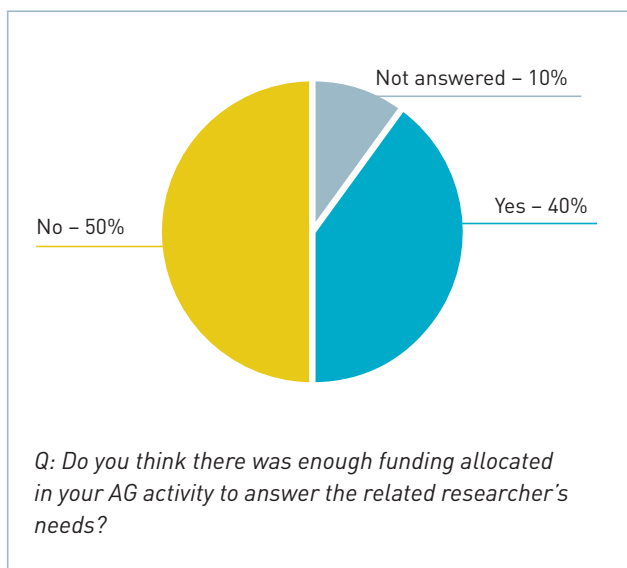
The majority of the programme representatives find the duration of the different operational phases adequate. Most participants experienced no major difficulties during the preparation and launching of the joint call. Only the phase of finding partners (i.e. other programme representatives) seems to have been complicated.

Efficient procedures

In comparison to other trans-national RTD funding initiatives on transport, ENT funding initiatives are considered quite well organised. It seems that there is less administrative and legislative workload than in other programmes. The main challenge is typically related to the differences between the national legislations, which is an inherent part of trans-national cooperation.

Furthermore, the provision of tools to enable contacts between researchers and programme representatives from other countries seems to be one of the strong points of ENT. However, some programme representatives highlight the need for further support for dissemination activities.

More funding volume would improve results



Most participants consider that the amount of national funding for trans-national calls was not sufficient, which has to be taken into account by the programme representatives themselves. As stated; sufficient funding is needed to attract researchers and to obtain good results.

Cooperation benefits

According to the programme representatives clear benefits have been achieved by participating. Important benefits through trans-national funding cooperation can be obtained if cooperation actions are well organised and implemented as they are in ENT. The participating programme representatives also state that better results have been achieved by pooling resources, thus making the trans-national effort worth while.

RESEARCHER'S OPINION ON ENT COOPERATION ACTIVITIES

Fragmentation of research activities throughout Europe and the lack of a framework to stimulate trans-national research collaboration is a serious problem that has been highlighted repeatedly by the European Commission.

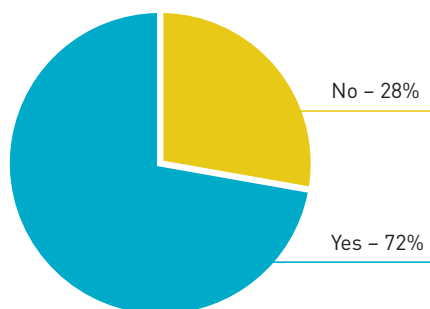
Coordination and cooperation of national and regional research policies and programmes is needed in order to overcome these weaknesses. This will contribute to the European Research Area and will allow researchers throughout Europe to collaborate and to improve both the efficiency and the effectiveness of Europe's research efforts.

It is important that researchers feel comfortable when applying for trans-national calls and funding activities in order for them to participate.

The researchers are generally positive on the ENT process and with the quality of their project results. Most of the researchers would apply and participate in future ENT activities of their field of interest.

Researchers evaluate positively the focus-oriented or focused research that has been executed in ENT. And they recommend carrying on along this path.

The standards of the researcher's are often met



Q: Do you think your ENT project has achieved the quality and the objectives you had in mind when you decided to participate?

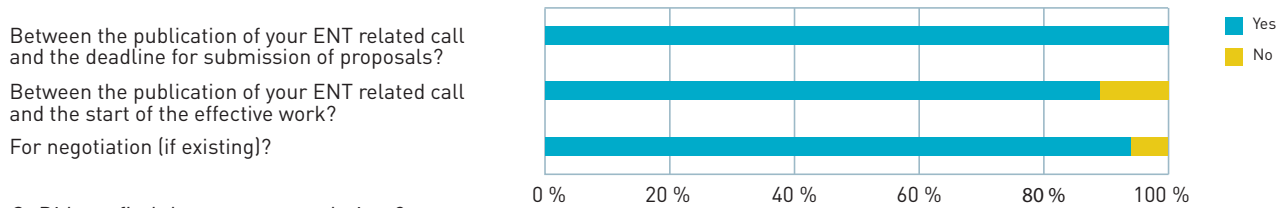
Several other positive aspects of ENT research funding initiatives have been highlighted by participating researchers.

At the top of the list is:

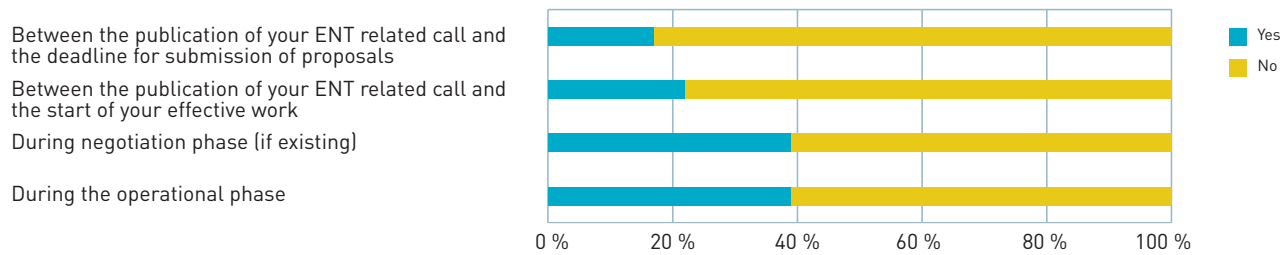
- The growing importance given to international cooperation. There is a strong consciousness that the future has to go through a shared effort between the different countries

Other positive aspects from the viewpoint of the researchers include:

- The relatively simple administrative procedures. Coordinating the national legislations is the main complication whereas ENT internal administrative workload is considered to be relatively lean by most of the researchers
- ENT professionalism. It is very important to have a professional team to develop the process (establish calls, evaluation process, support to researchers) and professional researchers and organisations
- Interesting topics, focused research, future perspectives



Q: Did you find there was enough time?



Q: Did you find difficulties during the different phases of your ENT call?

Opinions on the formal process

Both the timing and the structure of trans-national calls in ENT seem to be quite well defined according to most of the participating researchers.

Compared to other funding initiatives, strong points of ENT include that ENT offers an easier way to contact researchers from other countries with similar research objectives and that ENT funding initiative involve less administrative and legislative work load. These aspects are very important for making ENT funding initiatives attractive to researchers.

Cooperation benefits

ENT funding initiatives are evaluated very positively by the researchers. Having international research networks is one of the main pillars for future transport research programme coordination.

Cooperation programmes like ENT give researchers the tools and the opportunities to get in contact with other researchers and to cooperate.

The fact that follow-up research activities are being developed based on ENT activities is very important, since it means that the resources are being used wisely.

SUGGESTIONS:

Suggestions to improve coming funding initiatives from the viewpoints of the researchers

- Incorporate kick-off meetings in the ENT procedures
- Define follow-up meetings, e.g. every 6–12 months
- Facilitate continuous communication and exchange of information
- Facilitate dissemination activities

Trans-national transport research funding cooperation in ERA-NET TRANSPORT (ENT) is organised in thematic Action Groups (AGs). Seven AGs had in 2007 reached a threshold value offering added information for the evaluation presented.

Action Groups included in this evaluation

- ENT2b: Intelligent logistics, Freight transport
- ENT5: Maritime safety – SURSHIP
- ENT12: Tracking and tracing of dangerous goods
- ENT13: Safety and security across modes
- ENT14: Demographic changes – Keep Moving
- ENT15: Sleepiness at the wheel
- ENT16: Intermodal freight transport

Recent activities in ERA-NET TRANSPORT

Trans-national research funding cooperation under ERA-NET TRANSPORT is ongoing with more and larger cooperation actions currently being initiated and implemented. New and emerging funding initiatives include (as of January 2011):

- ENT17: SURPRICE – Sustainable mobility through road user charging
- ENT18: Climate-friendly freight network
- ENT19: Electric-mobility
- ENT20: Road safety
- ENT21: Railway research
- ENT22: Stepping stones
- ERA-NET Plus, Electromobility+, a large scale European funding cooperation on Electromobility

In total the 11 trans-national funding initiatives represent research activities for about 30 million Euros (again – as of January 2011). The development and alignment of recommended procedures and support actions are continuously improved based on lessons learned from the trans-national actions.

ERA-NET TRANSPORT in short

ERA-NET TRANSPORT brings together programme owners and managers of national transport research programmes from twelve countries, representing an annual public funding volume of around 300 million Euros. The vision behind ENT is to supplement and enrich national and regional transport research programmes through trans-national cooperation. ENT is based on the principles of:

- Voluntary participation
- Variable geometry of cooperation actions
- Acceptance of national and regional sovereignty
- Openness to new partners

Since 2003, ERA-NET TRANSPORT has facilitated several successful and valuable cooperation actions among national transport research programmes. The existing framework for trans-national transport research cooperation is presently being developed by:

- Having more intensive and comprehensive cooperation actions between national research programmes with focus on joint calls and joint programmes
- Increasing the information and knowledge base of the network and enhancing cohesion among the network partners
- Streamlining support measures to ensure smoother processes both nationally and trans-nationally
- Developing the cooperation between national research programmes and EC research support schemes
- Actively contributing to the development of the European Transport Research Area
- Broadening the geographical scope by including more European countries and regions in ERA-NET TRANSPORT

Further information about ENT and recent activities is available at: www.transport-era.net

The results in this folder is based on a monitoring report "Evaluation of the outcome of the ENT Action Group Activities" (Del. 2.2) written by ENT partner CEDEX, Spain. The folder outlines the main results stemming from trans-national research funding co-operation initiated under the umbrella of ERA-NET TRANSPORT (ENT), focusing on cooperation actions initiated before the end of 2007.