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CORE Organic Deliverable 7.3– evaluation of pilot call

Ulrika Geber Manuela Kienegger Anita Silmbrod

Executive summary

The task of Work package 7 of the ERA-NET project CORE Organic is to initiate and coordinate the joint funding of transnational research projects in the area of organic food and farming from a pool of at least 9 million € by the end of the CORE Organic project. The main objective of Deliverable 7.3. is to evaluate the chosen funding procedures for the CORE Organic pilot call and models for joint funding collaboration. Basis for the evaluation were

- i. statistics on the results of the pilot call,
- ii. self-evaluation by management board members
- iii. results from a online questionnaire filled in by four target groups of the CORE Organic call: applicants, members of the evaluation expert panel, CORE Organic National Call Contact Persons (NCCP) and members of the CORE Organic Governing Board, and
- iv. experiences from other ERA-NET calls (survey and review on ERA-NETs)

Outcome of the CORE Organic Pilot Call

The CORE organic pilot call spent approx. 8.4 million € on research projects, comprising 4.7% of the total national budget spent on research in organic farming by the participating countries. However, the amount of money spent by individual CORE Organic partners differed between 0.1 and 23% of their national research budget for organic food and farming.

During the CORE organic pilot call, 36 eligible project applications were submitted to three research topics (Topic 1: “Animal disease and parasite management”, Topic 2: “Quality of organic food, health and safety” and Topic 3: “Innovative marketing strategies”). As a result, eight applications were accepted for funding. Based on the total number of applications, the rate of success was 22%.

Self-evaluation

A **self-evaluation** carried out by members of the management board (MB) meeting after the final selection of project proposals revealed that MB members had perceived the coordination and implementation of the call generally as good. However, they also saw room for improvement concerning details of the evaluation procedures, the transparency of the funding selection process and asked for more flexibility concerning the applied funding model.

Results of the online questionnaire

The general response to the **online questionnaire** was rather good as between 45 (NCCP) and 90% (expert panel members) of the individual target groups filled in the questionnaire. The evaluation of the funding procedures of the CORE Organic pilot call was done according to the different call phases (preparation, application, scientific evaluation, project selection and follow-up).

Preparatory phase

During the preparation phase, the funding model of the “virtual common pot funding” was chosen, as it allowed all CORE Organic partners to participate in the call, which was considered to be important by the majority of the Governing Board members.

Application phase

Answers to the questionnaire revealed that all target groups were mainly satisfied with the CORE Organic pilot call. This was particularly due to sufficiently high quality of information provided to the applicants though the website, a “Frequently Asked Question” section and the NCCPs, who usually managed to solve any problem arising. However, the functionality of the electronic application system was considered mainly poor.

Evaluation phase

The experts involved in the scientific evaluation procedures generally judged the quality of the supplied information and timing of the individual steps of the evaluation procedures (remote assessment and panel

meeting) to be of good quality. However, a preparatory information meeting prior to the expert panel meeting in order to discuss the evaluation criteria would have improved the overall procedure. The feedback to the applicants concerning the outcome of the scientific evaluation and the final selection of projects was considered to be very good or at least good by only half or the applicants, as many of them experienced a lack of information, especially when their project proposals were rejected.

Selection / funding phase

This phase was considered poor by more than half of the GB members, as a discrepancy to the scientific evaluation was perceived. This phase is seen to be the most critical one for future improvement.

Overall call procedures

The overall procedures were judged to be good by the GB members. Apart from the evident time constraint between the scientific evaluation and the GB meeting for final selection, the overall timing of the call was also considered to be good. The most critical parts of the call for future improvement were seen in the selection procedures and the application procedure suggesting a 2-step application procedure. Potential options for how to maintain the partner network without ERA-NET funding are also of crucial importance.

GB perspectives on strategic issues

CORE Organic plays a very important role for the participating organisations' internationalisation and addressing of strategic issues. In particular, the ability to compare research-funding mechanisms between countries is considered to be an added value. The majority of partners were motivated to participate in the call by general research aims such as improved research networks and scientific quality or coordination of knowledge production. Although a majority of GB partners prefer to use the virtual common pot model also for future calls, all partners were in favour of a development towards a true common pot funding model. As the GB members perceive the added value of CORE Organic as high, they are very much in favour of continuing the network beyond the end of CORE Organic, even without the funding by the ERA-NET scheme. Suggestions on how to improve the CORE Organic call procedure: are given for all call phases.

External assessment of the ERA-NET scheme in FP6

Comparison of the CORE Organic call with a survey on joint activities in individual ERA-NETs showed that problems encountered during the different call phases are comparable to those in other ERA-NETs. This is due to the evident learning-by-doing aspects in ERA-NETs, as participants of ERA-NET projects usually have no previous experience with the scheme.

Strategic issues and future cooperation

Strategic aims for the future have been established

- Increase of the research community in organic farming
- Exchange of information and experiences on funding mechanisms
- Coordination of knowledge production
- Strategic topic formulation

Goal conflicts

- Topic formulation: openly formulated vs. restricted calls
- Number of participating organisations: all vs. few funding institutions participating in a call
- Funding model: virtual pot vs. true common pot

Finally, lessons learned during the various call phases are discussed.



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1 Introduction

The ERA-NET CORE Organic started in October 2004 and will finish in September 2007. The overall objective of CORE Organic is to enhance quality, relevance and utilisation of resources in European research in organic food and farming and to establish a joint pool of at least 9 million €. The specific objectives are: to increase exchange of information and establish a common open web based archive; to coordinate existing research and integrate knowledge; to share and develop best practice for evaluating organic research; and to identify and coordinate future research.

In September 2006 a pilot call for proposals was launched with three topics:

1. Animal disease and parasite management, mainly focusing on preventive health and improving therapies to reduce reliance on antibiotics
2. Quality of organic food - health and safety
3. Innovative marketing strategies – identification of successful marketing methods, local markets

The main objective of this report is to evaluate the chosen funding procedures of the CORE Organic pilot call, but also to evaluate models for joint funding collaboration. The objective of sharing and developing best practice for evaluating organic research is outside the scope of this report (see CORE Organic Final report Del. 5.2, *Scientific evaluation of trans-national projects – Between credibility and national preferences*).

As a basis for the evaluation three different sources of information have been used, i.e.:

- i) data on the outcome of the call,
- ii) results from a questionnaire that was sent out to four target groups of the CORE Organic call (applicants, evaluation expert panel, CORE Organic National Call Contact Persons (NCCP) and CORE Organic Governing Board members (GB)) and
- iii) experiences from other ERA-NETs on joint calls (documents: Horvat M., Guy K., Demonto Barreto V., Engelbrecht J. Wilken R. 2006. *ERA-NET Review. The Report of the Expert Review Group*, December 2006, and DG RTD (Unit B1), 2007. *Survey on joint activities in individual ERA-NETs. Aggregated results with comments*, Winter 2006/2007).

The evaluation is carried out on the different phases of the call as well as overall and strategic issues. The final follow-up phase of the call is included but not evaluated, since it is still in progress.

2 Process description of the CORE Organic pilot call including all the preparatory steps

The implementation of the CORE Organic pilot call, which is the main task of Workpackage 7, can be divided into five distinct phases as well as some cross-cutting horizontal areas such as the evaluation of the CORE Organic pilot call (see Table 1).

Table 1 Overview of the different call phases:

Phase	Timeframe
Preparatory phase	June 2005- August 2006
Application phase	5 September 2006 – 1 December 2006
Scientific evaluation phase	December 2006 – February 2006
Selection of projects / funding decision phase	December 2006 – March 2007
Follow-up phase	March 2007 – September 2007 (end of CORE Organic pilot projects in 2010)
Cross-cutting horizontal issues	Throughout the CORE Organic pilot call

In the following the various activities carried out during each phase are outlined. A detailed description of the activities and the timeframe are found in Annex I.

Preparatory phase

The **preparatory phase** covered the following activities:

- development of a timeframe,
- a survey (by means of a questionnaire) on the possibilities and barriers in transnationally funded research among partners,
- the development of call documents (based on inputs from WP5 and WP6),
- a pre-announcement
- the adaptation of the Formas system for use as an electronic proposal submission system suitable for CORE Organic needs,

For a detailed description of activities see Annex I, Table a.

Application phase

The **application phase** covered the following activities:

- launch of the call
- publication of the call on the CORE Organic Homepage and also through various national media
- handling of inquiries by potential applicants on a national level
- establishment and update of internet tools (online discussion forum, FAQ section)

For a detailed description of activities see Annex I, Table b.

Scientific evaluation phase

The **scientific evaluation phase** covered the following activities:

- elaboration of evaluation criteria by WP5 (therefore not covered in this report)
- selection of independent experts
- elaboration of guidelines for the evaluation process
- drafting of a code of conduct and no conflict of interest declaration for peer reviewers
- elaboration of guidelines for the chair of the expert panel meeting
- remote assessment of research proposals by peer reviewers
- evaluation panel meeting
- reimbursement of panel members

For a detailed description of activities see Annex I, Table c.

Selection of projects / funding decision phase

The **selection of projects / funding decision phase** covered the following activities:

- national eligibility check
- information of Governing Board members about results on scientific evaluation
- national prioritisation of projects recommended for funding by evaluation experts
- final funding decision by the Governing Board members

For a detailed description of activities see Annex I, Table d.

Follow-up phase

The **follow-up of projects / funding decision phase** covered the following activities:

- feedback to applicants on the results of the scientific evaluation
- modification of certain project proposals
- draft of an annex to the contract specifying dates, mode of reporting and management structure of the project
- contract negotiations
- formulation of a cooperation agreement between CORE Organic partners
- launch of CORE Organic pilot projects
- kick-off meeting of transnational research cooperation in organic food and farming
- draft of templates for reporting
- monitoring of the projects

For a detailed description of activities see Annex I, Table e.

Cross-cutting horizontal areas

Concerning the **cross-cutting horizontal issues** the following activities were carried out:

- alignment of call procedures with WP5 and WP6
- differentiation of WP7 and WP5
- evaluation of the call phases by means of an on-line questionnaire

For a detailed description of activities see Annex I, Table f.

3 Output of CORE organic pilot call

The goal of CORE Organic pilot call was to jointly fund research from a pool of 9 million € which amounts to five percent of the total public financing of organic farming research in partner countries. This goal was very closely achieved with 8.8 million € spent on research projects.

Table 2. Assigned and final funding to CORE Organic research of individual CORE Organic partners

Partner	Amount of funding allocated to CORE Organic	Amount of funding to selected CORE Organic projects
DK	1 800 000	1 867 000
CH	300 000	830 000
DE	990 000	869 000
UK	300 000	276 000
FI	300 000	300 000
AT	990 000	1 081 000
SE	600 000	722 000
NO	1 080 000	1 196 000
NL	300 000	53 000
IT	1 200 000	1 193 000
FR	990 000	453 000
Total	8 850 000	8 841 000

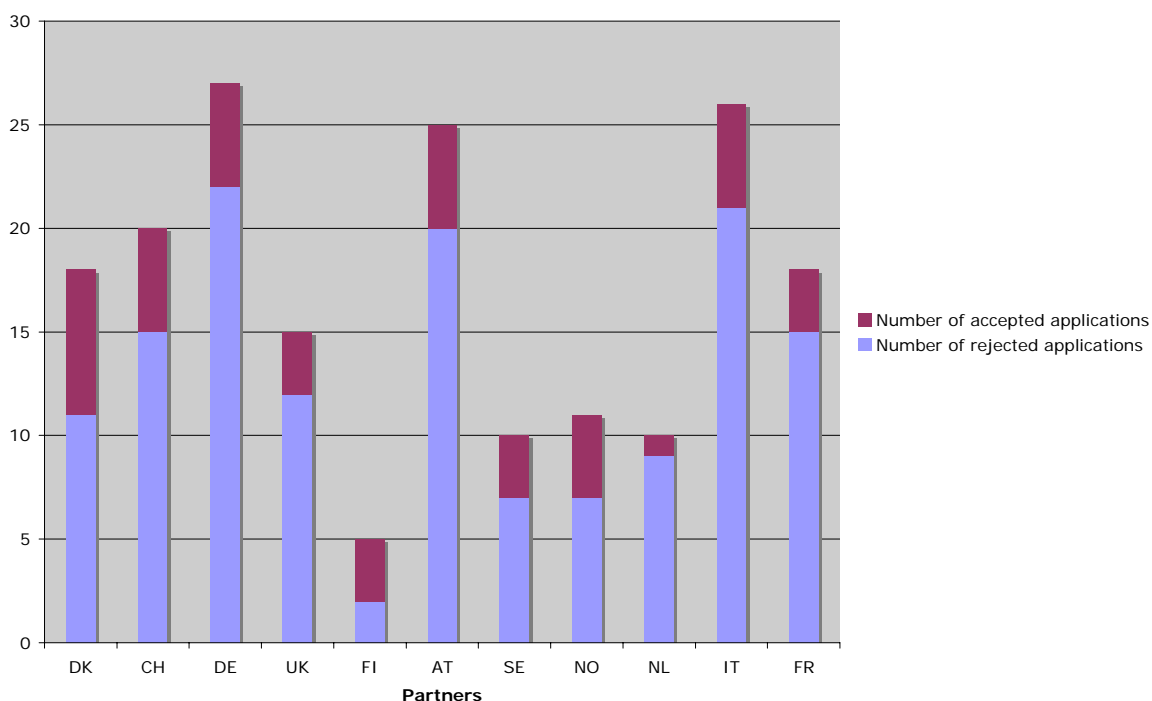
Six of the eleven partners funded less amount of research money than they primarily intended to contribute to the pilot call, while five partners increased funds in the selection phase see Table 2

In total, 36 eligible project applications were received. There were nine applications for each of topic 1 and 3, (“Animal disease and parasite management” and “Innovative marketing strategies”), while there were 18 applications on topic 2, (“Quality of organic food, health and safety”). This bias was probably due to the fact that there was no specific topic on crop production and many of the applications were focused on crop production in relation to product quality.

Eight applications were accepted for funding of which four in quality of organic food, health and safety with 56 percent of the total funds devoted to this call topic. Two applications were accepted in each of the call topics animal disease and parasite management and innovative marketing strategies, with 21 and 23 percent of total funds devoted to the respective topic.

Based on the total number of applications the rate of success was 22 percent, but there was a great variation in the success rate for the different countries. The success rate for Finnish applications was 60 percent, while it was 10 percent for Dutch applications (see Figure 1, for more details see also Deliverable 5.2).

Figure 1. Number of applications per partner country divided into applications accepted for funding and rejected applications



4 Evaluation

Oral reflection of pilot call

At a CORE Organic Management Board (MB) meeting at the end of April 2007, six weeks after the final selection of applications, an oral reflection was carried out on general impressions, positive and negative aspects and suggestions for improvements for future calls.

MB members expressed some critical remarks and suggested some improvements. However, the MB considered the coordination and the implementation of the call to be good.

Suggestions for improvements by MB during oral reflection in April 2007 are listed below:

- To maintain the quantitative ranking with scores given by the experts in order to allow a broader insight for the GB in the scientific evaluation process
- Funding selection process should be more transparent and coherent with scientific evaluation and funding mechanisms should be clearer.
- GB decision based on policy issues should be more transparent with clear criteria for funding selection
- More preparation time is necessary between scientific evaluation and GB decision
- More flexibility for funding e.g. a mixture of true common pot and virtual common pot is preferred. If a topic is of general interest more flexibility in project participation of partner countries could assure projects to run and be successful.
- More flexibility and differentiation in the time length of a project should be considered (1-3 years).
- National communication should be enforced
- Specific criteria should be amended to consider more specifically the needs of organic research
- More detailed project descriptions should be allowed
- The templates of the application forms should clearly include Milestones and Deliverables to be listed to be able to monitor the progress and fulfilment of the contract
- More detailed explanations should be given about the intention of the call prior to the CORE Organic pilot call deadline
- Expected project size should be indicated more precisely to applicants (small, medium, big)
- A true common pot funding of projects should be established for future joint calls

Questionnaire results from target groups

A questionnaire was electronically sent out at the end of May, about three months after the final selection of applications to four target groups. These were applicants of all eligible applications, expert panel members and the chairman of the expert panel, all National Call Contact Persons and, finally, GB members. Different sets of questions were used for the different target groups. Only the main applicant of each application received the questionnaire but was asked to forward it to all their co-applicants. Respondents were able to complete the questionnaire online on the CORE Organic homepage during approximately three weeks. The questionnaire was administrated and compiled by Signe H Poulsen and Claus Bo Andresen using software from *Relationwise*. The percentage of answers from especially expert panel and GB members was good, Table 3. We have chosen not to treat the material statistically, but to use it in an exploratory mode, searching for trends and trying to cover the perspectives of as many respondents as possible. For the target group applicants, percentages are sometimes presented, while a rate in brackets e.g. (5/6) indicates how many respondents in one of the other target groups gave a certain answer.

Table 3. Number of respondents in the various target groups and number of completed questionnaires

Target group	Number of respondents	Number of completed questionnaires	Percent of answers
Applicants	36 (185)	26	72 (14)
Expert panel and chair	10	9	90
NCCP	11	5	45
GB members	11	7	64

Numbers in brackets also include the co-applicants

Preparatory phase

The preparatory phase included a survey among CORE Organic partners – *WP7 Research funding and procurement procedures in CORE Organic partner organisations*. It dealt with possibilities and barriers in transnationally funded research based on an analysis of responses to a CORE Organic questionnaire. A virtual common pot¹ funding model was chosen since only three partners, according to the survey, were able to fund foreign researchers. Two of these partners also had most funding tied up in their national institutions. The

¹ A virtual common implies that national funders only fund research by national research institutions. A true common pot implies that national funders may fund research by any research institution participating in a call.

preparatory phase also included the formulation of topics for the call (WP6), which is outside the scope of this report. However, since formulation of call topics has had impacts on other phases of the call, views and comments are included when relevant. A call text and guidelines for applicants were formulated based on the call topics developed and on evaluation criteria earlier developed (by WP5).

The phase was evaluated by GB members and a majority (5/7) considered it important that all partners took part in the pilot call. This was reflected in the chosen funding model (virtual common pot) but also in the selection of call topics, which were broad enough to cover the least common ground of all partners. All GB members considered the final topics selected to address the most interesting topics. About half of GB members perceived a mix of prioritised national and common CORE Organic topics to be decisive for the final selection of topics. The procedure of GBs' final selection of topics was not clearly formalised, however, and a couple of GB members perceived that it was based on an open, arbitrary and spontaneous discussion in the GB.

Application phase

The application phase started with the launch of the call on 6 September 2007, when the call text and the call guidelines were available at the CORE Organic website. Information on FAQ and an online discussion forum for partner searches were also established at the homepage, although at a later stage. Direct inquiries from scientists on call procedures were handled by National Call Contact Persons (NCCP) and by the responsible Swedish partner, who acted as Call Coordinator.

The application phase is subdivided in information to applicants and application procedure. According to the questionnaire applicants, NCCP and GB members were mainly satisfied with the CORE Organic pilot call.

Support and information to applicants

The information provided to applicants concerning the CORE Organic call was considered sufficient or very good by applicants (81%). The NCCP played an important role to applicants, although their rating of NCCP quality varied. The applicants' problems were usually solved by NCCP or by the CORE Organic Call Coordinator.

The CORE Organic website was considered an important source of information especially the section on FAQ (applicants 77%, NCCP 5/5). The majority of applicants thought the quality of FAQ was sufficient.

An earlier setup of the FAQ with a faster and highlighted FAQ version update could have diminished some confusion due to differing information given to applicants from NCCP of different partner countries, as one of NCCP suggested. The differing eligibility criteria between partner countries concerning call topics (i.e. UK and NL) apparently also created confusion among applicants.

The CORE Organic discussion forum was of less importance to applicants and apparently few researchers used the opportunity to find partners through this forum. A majority of applicants (74%) did not consider finding project partners a problem as the organic farming research community is quite small and applicants are aware of potential research partners. One of NCCP commented however:

Applicants would ask me for partners rather than use the discussion forum; the discussion forum should have been established much earlier and even mentioned in the guidelines, as probably not all applicants seemed to be informed about the discussion forum.

NCCP were satisfied with the quality of their input and possibilities to solve applicants' difficulties during the application phase and NCCP perceived their communication was good with the national research community (5/5). There was a well functioning communication within the research community between national researchers or research groups.

Application procedures

Seventy one percent of the responses considered the information to applicants concerning call procedures as sufficient and 63% considered the procedures to be clear and transparent. However, due to a lack of full adaptation of the electronic application system for the CORE Organic Call, which resulted in e.g. remaining

irrelevant questions and information required in Swedish, almost half of applicants (44%) considered the functionality of the electronic system poor or rather poor.

Evaluation phase

The evaluation phase included the selection of three independent experts in each of the three call topics from a list of experts suggested by the CORE Organic Management Board (MB). The GB decided the final composition of the expert panel. The chair of the expert panel was suggested by the Call Coordinator and approved by the GB. The evaluation phase also comprised the individual remote assessment of all applications by all the experts (via the electronic system *FORMAS direct*) and a two days expert panel meeting in Stockholm. At the meeting all applications were individually presented by one of the experts, discussed and grouped into one of three ranking categories (first group of priority, second group of priority, not prioritised). During the meeting the final written statement i.e. scientific feedback to applicants, was also elaborated, based on prepared preliminary written statements by one expert for each application.

The quality (7/9) and timing (6/9) of the work performed during evaluation was of good quality, with provision of necessary information (7/9) and acceptable timing of information provided, as judged by experts and the chairman in the scientific evaluation expert panel. A first preparatory information meeting could have been useful in order to discuss common evaluation criteria, as suggested by one expert. Also, at first it was not clear to all experts that they were expected to review all applications of the call, i.e. also applications outside their area of expertise (since funding was not specifically assigned to each of the topics of the call). Due to this fact, the time for the experts to review all applications was considered to be rather short. The expert panel was throughout satisfied with the CORE Organic electronic system for evaluation of applications (7/9) and two experts even commented positively on the usefulness of the system. There was a lack of feedback to the expert panel on which projects were selected and finally received funding, which was commented on by one of the experts.

Scientific feedback

Applicants received the scientific feedback in written from the expert panel evaluation. The feedback was given after the final selection had been carried out of projects accepted for funding. The scientific feedback was considered very well or good by about half of the applicants (55%), but 34% of the applicants considered it rather poor or very poor. Applicants experienced a lack of information on the basis for rejection of funding as well as constructive suggestions on what to improve in future applications. Applicants would have wanted clearer information on the relation between the procedure of scientific evaluation and final selection and the implications of these. It is evident that the distinction between the scientific evaluation and the final selection procedure by CORE Organic partners was not all clear to applicants, creating frustration, especially among applicants with rejected but scientifically highly scored applications as indicated in the positive scientific feedback. One applicant commented:

We got a fair and good rating, but there was no further explanation of exactly why we did not get any funding

The timing and adequacy of the information provided to NCCP by the Call Coordinator regarding the evaluation was considered to be good (4/5). National Call Contact Persons considered the transparency of the evaluation procedure to be good (4/5), but one of NCCP commented the relation between scientific evaluation and the final selection:

...in general it {the transparency of evaluation procedure} was very good, except for the final funding decision by the GB; because of the latter it was difficult to give reasons to applicants why certain projects were finally funded and others not; it was unclear why projects were funded even when individual funding bodies rejected funding, although previously it was declared that such a situation would impede funding.

The quality and extent of the scientific evaluation with the written statement was satisfactory as a decision tool for the final selection, as judged by the majority of GB members (5/7).

Selection/funding phase

The final selection of research project to be funded by CORE Organic GB was made a week after the scientific evaluation was finalised. This was considered too short for the individual partners. Furthermore the selection phase was considered poor by more than half of GB members. The selection phase was also seen to be the most critical for future improvement (4/7). The final selection procedure was not optimal in relation to the scientific quality evaluated by the expert panel as many GB members commented.

To overcome this, GB members suggest more even funding between partners or more opportunity and room for negotiation concerning financing. A more formalised selection process with written documentation and feedback to applicants is preferable as suggested by one expert panel member.

GB members used the following criteria for the final selection of projects for funding: a) the relevance criteria set up by CORE Organic (formulated in the call documents), b) national priorities and c) important research topics for Organic Farming and Food systems in the presented order of importance.

The use of agreed relevance criteria was considered to be of major importance also for project selection in future calls. All GB members considered the selected applications to respond well with their organisations' policy needs.

Overall call procedure and timing of the different steps of the call

The quality of call procedures was good as judged by the GB members. One specific critique however, concerns the procedures being unsatisfactory adaptations of the procedures developed by the Swedish partner Formas, who administrated the call and especially the unsatisfactory adaptation of the application system *Formas Direct* which was used for the call (2/7).

In spite of a very tight time schedule (see phase description Annex I), timing was good concerning the different steps in the preparatory (5/5) and application phases (5/5) as judged by NCCP. There was short time between the collection of national research needs and the discussion and identification of common research topics within the CORE Organic ERA-Net, as one of NCCP comments. The overall time constraint of the call was most evident between the evaluation and selection phase (see above). Some partners started the selection procedure at national level before the finalisation of the scientific evaluation in order to carry out the national discussions in time for the GB meeting.

The most critical parts of the call for future improvement are the selection procedure, the application procedure suggesting a two-step application procedure, how to maintain the partner network without ERA-Net funding, but also more subtle issues such as the sense that there was a difference in commitment between partners as judged by GB members.

GB members' perspectives on strategic issues

Internationalisation and addressing of strategic issues

CORE Organic plays a very important role for the participating organisations' internationalisation and addressing of strategic issues (7/7). Apart from the benefits of the cooperation itself with faster and improved knowledge generation on organic farming issues, an added value is the ability to compare research funding mechanisms between countries. At national level CORE Organic may play a role as a driving force to increase the amount of funding to the area of organic farming and to maintain national funding programmes.

Partner motives to participate in the pilot call

There were a variety of motives for the partners to participate in the pilot call, such as

- importance of research topics,
- more value for spent money and
- the achievement of a critical mass of researchers.

The majority of partners were motivated by general research aims such as improved research networks and scientific quality or coordination of knowledge production, minimising duplication. Only two partners

formulated specific motives such as the choice of topics (i.e. market and quality issues) and a national deficit/scarcity of basic research in organic farming.

Financing model – virtual common pot or true common pot

GB members emphasised the ability for all partners to participate in the call without administrative or legal barriers, by choosing a virtual common pot model. This also resulted in a minimum of additional bureaucracy. The disadvantage is sub-optimisation of scientifically highest ranked applications (and applicants), due to specific countries' funding limitations. A certain amount of flexibility of the final amount of funding in the selection phase to overcome this sub-optimisation can be considered unclear and therefore a disadvantage as one GB member commented.

The advantages of a true common pot as judged by the GB members, is the possibility to follow the scientific evaluation and fund the highest ranked applications regardless of national funding limitations. Apart from the existing legal barriers, which make this true common pot model impossible for some partners to use in a short and medium-term perspective, an increased amount of bureaucracy and a true decrease of national sovereignty are other disadvantages also mentioned by GB members.

A majority of GB partners (5/7) prefer to use the virtual common pot model also for future calls in a short and medium-term perspective. Only two partners were clearly in favour of using the true common pot model. On the other hand within a possible future CORE Organic framework all partners were in favour of a development towards a true common pot model especially (2/7) if call topics were more focused and did not necessarily include all partners.

Distribution of funds on short or long term projects

A majority of partners preferred to finance only three-year projects or mainly three-year projects with a minor share of shorter projects. In general GB members were satisfied with the outcome of the call with only three-year projects being funded. Two GB members preferred an even distribution of funding of one-, two-, and three-year projects and therefore considered this aspect of the call outcome as rather poor.

Scope of possible future cooperation

GB members perceived the added value of CORE Organic as high and CORE Organic was considered to have added extra value to the organic food and farming research. The possibility to compare funding management in organic farming in different countries was lifted as well as the strategic role of ERA-NETs for such a small research area as organic farming. Even if ERA-NET is preferable, most GB members expressed the wish to continue networking also without ERA-NET funding.

Increased use of existing knowledge, synthesis of existing information and research user involvement were important complementary instruments to achieve CORE Organic goals to more than half of GB members (4/7). In line with this are also activities to widen the scope and learn from systems and solutions generated outside the organic farming and food systems, which was suggested by two GB members. Joint researcher training activities and the use of existing facilities were other suggestions.

There were different views on the scope of future calls. While a majority of GB members (4/7) preferred a more restricted call with specific topics, three members preferred a more openly formulated call. Partners could also agree to calls with a small number of partners prepared to substantially fund a specific topic. The scope of future calls could strategically promote interdisciplinary research and an opening of the organic farming research community (see also basis for final selection) as was suggested by one partner.

Basis for future selection of topics

National programmes, other policy documents and other input were ranked by the GB members in mentioned order of importance to form the basis for the topic selection of future calls. Other input could include e.g. documentation of important topics on a European level, researchers' input, transnational added value, documents from national and transnational stakeholder organisations, earlier preparatory documents for calls in the EU-framework, future national gap analysis, etc. There are, however, different views among CORE Organic partners on e.g. topic selection and some partners prefer a wider, less specific framework with the prospect to choose the most interesting (scientifically and politically) projects in the scientific evaluation and final selection phase.

Strategic criteria for project selection

As mentioned earlier, GB members considered the relevance criteria set up by CORE Organic to be treated as the most important criteria for future selection of applications, and secondly national priorities and important research topics for organic farming and food systems. Further measures need to be developed for the improvement of scientific quality and increased interdisciplinarity. This could be achieved by broadening the researcher resource base involving researchers in related areas (e.g. health, human nutrition, environment, and climate) outside the organic farming research community, which was suggested by two GB members.

Involvement of national researchers in transnational research

The involvement of national researchers was mainly successful as judged by GB members and NCCP. There was some doubt however (2 /5) mainly concerning the success of involving new national research actors on the transnational research arena and generating new transnational research groups with true research cooperation.

To improve national researcher involvement, different actions are suggested:

- to continue the CORE Organic network or a network in another framework and
- to launch additional calls on the basis of a common strategic agenda, with an interdisciplinary approach
- to offer follow-up and communication activities for ongoing CORE Organic research projects and to offer fora for interactions between the already involved and the not yet involved young researchers e.g. on international conferences.

Definition of national research policy and stakeholders

In order to identify grounds for any goal conflict between partners, GB members and NCCP were asked to define their national research policy and stakeholder/interest groups.

The national policy of organic food and farming research differed somewhat between partners, i.e. from a strong focus on applied research, solving problems specifically related to organic production to the integration of organic production problems with broader, sustainable development issues. There were no differences between GB members and NCCP in defining national policy.

There were only minor differences in how partners defined their different stakeholder groups. About half of GB members (4/7) defined their stakeholders as more or less all actors in the (organic) food chain, while the other half (3/7) defined it more narrowly or otherwise. Some of NCCP thought it difficult to define stakeholder groups or defined them as being small and scattered. NCCPs' stakeholder description also varied somewhat, from a food sector and consumer focus to a more production and processing industry oriented focus.

Suggestions on how to improve the CORE Organic call procedure

Suggestions on how to improve the CORE Organic call procedure involve several aspects that had not been implemented already in this pilot call partly due to the tight time schedule of the pilot call. These can be summarised as follows:

Preparatory phase

- The use of a two-step application procedure
- A formalised procedure to define call topics including common issues at European level and complex interdisciplinary problems, additional to the pooling of national programmes
- Full agreement on call topics (i.e. no particular national restrictions) among funding partners
- Assignment of funds to each individual call topic and/or allow for restricted calls with a smaller number of funding institutions
- Aim towards a more even funding between participating partners in the call
- More detailed information in call documents, e.g. national funding rules
- The use of Milestones and Deliverables in application documents

- Larger application document, with more space for project description (e.g. 4 to 6 pages only for the first step application draft and a larger more detailed, final project description in the second step)
- The involvement of all CORE Organic partners already early in the preparatory phase
- The early setup of a FAQ forum

Application phase

- The setup of a central contact point (e.g. call secretariat) or at least improved communication and information exchange between individual NCCP on FAQ
- The use of a fully adapted web-based application system

Evaluation phase

- If funding is assigned to each specific topic of the call, evaluation of experts is suggested to be restricted to the applications in the topic of their field of expertise,
- See also CORE Organic Final report Del. 5.2

Selection phase

- A formalised procedure including, discussion on selection of criteria and written selection feedback to applicants

Apart from this, more general suggestions were made by the respondents including e.g. the generation of road maps with set-up check points for call management, and the allocation of sufficient time for planning of the call to make space for continuous, follow-up, analysis and adjustments.

CORE Organic pilot call follow-up procedures

The follow-up phase was still under development when this report was written and there has been no evaluation of the follow-up of projects accepted for funding.

One applicant commented spontaneously in the questionnaire:

As a future project coordinator, I hope that there will be some supporting activities from the research funding bodies during the project period. e.g. a common web page, final conference to present project results, etc.

A kick-off meeting will be carried out in Vienna in September 2007 where the eight CORE Organic pilot projects are presented to a broader audience of organic farming research funding institutions.

A CORE Organic pilot contract has been developed as an Annex to the national contracts between each project partner and corresponding funding institution. It includes:

- Monitoring and communication by a Funding Body Management Board
- Requirement of scientific midterm and final project reporting
- A compulsory template with milestones and deliverables
- Upload of annual popular reports for dissemination through the created CORE Organic Pilot Project Website
- Uploading of information, results and reports to the Organic E-prints database

A Cooperation Agreement between the CORE Organic Funding bodies in order to tie them together in a network after the end of the CORE Organic project is also being elaborated.

However, it has been noticed that the Annex needs improvement in relation to harmonisation with national contracts. In relation to this harmonisation of national contracts needs further discussions.

5 External assessment of the ERA-NET scheme in FP6

In the following the results of an ERA-NET review and a survey on joint activities commissioned by the European Commission are summarised and findings on the procedures and concepts on transnational joint activities are compared to the CORE Organic pilot call. The two documents dealt with are:

- Horvat M., Guy K., Demonto Barreto V., Engelbrecht J. Wilken R. (2006): “ERA-NET Review 2006. The Report of the Expert Review Group, December 2006.”
- DG RTD (Unit B1) (2007): “Survey on joint activities in individual ERA-NETs. Aggregated results with comments. Winter 2006/2007.”

ERA-NET Review 2006 (Horvat et al. 2006)

Introduction

As at the end of FP6 some 70 ERA-NET projects were running, many of which have launched joint calls or even joint programmes, the Commission invited an Expert Group chaired by Manfred Horvath (Vienna University of Technology, Austria) to review the ERA-NET scheme, focusing in particular on strategic and policy related matters. The aim of the review was to reflect on the success or otherwise of the scheme, take stock of the lessons learned and make recommendations concerning future strategies and policies for implementations of future initiatives within FP7.

ERA-NET in Perspective

The ERA-NET scheme was launched in 2007 to encourage and improve networking of research activities in order to step up the cooperation and coordination of research activities carried out at national and regional level in the Member States and Associated States. Ultimately, all efforts should be directed towards the development of joint activities.

The scheme invited programme owners and programme managers to submit proposals for individual ERA-NETs in self-nominated topic areas. As a consequence, programme owners and programme managers were expected to establish networks among themselves and to pursue at least some of the elements of a four-step process including (the first two steps being mandatory for each ERA-NET):

- Step 1: the systematic exchange of information and good practices on existing programmes and activities
- Step 2: the identification and analysis of common strategic issues
- Step 3: the planning and development of joint activities between national and regional programmes
- Step 4: the implementation of joint trans-national activities, including joint calls and programmes

In total, the Commission selected 26 Specific Support Actions (SSAs) and 71 Coordination Actions (CAs) for funding, covering four ‘vertical’ areas (Industrial Technologies, Life Sciences, Environment and Energy, and Humanities and Social Sciences) and two cross-cutting, ‘horizontal’ areas (International Cooperation and Fundamental Research).

In FP7, the European Commission will continue to support the ERA-NET scheme, with either new ERA-NETs to follow the above mentioned four-step process or join in the new initiative, ERA-NET PLUS.

Achievements and Lessons Learned

The review covers achievements and lessons learned concerning relevance and appropriateness; goal attainment and impact; design, structure and composition; and implementation.

Relevance and Appropriateness

The ERA-NET scheme turned out to be a suitable tool for overcoming practical barriers on better coordination of national and regional research activities, and therefore supported the implementation of the European Research Area. The scheme was very helpful in facilitating mutual learning, the establishment of critical research masses in key areas and minimisation of unintended duplication and redundancy. The overwhelming response of programme owners and managers to the ERA-NET initiative also reflects the demand of such a scheme among the research policy community. Similarly, the research community also seemed to be satisfied by the new instrument as it managed to combine the advantages of national programmes with the benefits of international programmes. Consequently, the ERA-NET scheme can be considered to be a successful instrument for complementing existing mechanisms to facilitate transnational research. However, the experiences gained from the ERA-NET scheme within FP6 will still need a phase of consolidation in FP7.

Goal attainment and impact

There is considerable evidence that short-term goals could be achieved in the ERA-NET scheme, especially when it comes to practical barriers against transnational research funding, which could be overcome. The wide participation of programme owners and managers in the ERA-NET scheme demonstrated that the scheme seemed to be attractive to the stakeholders. The extensive participation of members of the research community in the joint calls also indicates a good acceptance of the funding initiative by the researchers. There is also clear evidence that mutual learning took place in all steps towards the implementation of joint activities.

Whether the ERA-NET scheme will be successful in the long run, will be demonstrated if the research community responds positively also to calls and programmes launched in the future and if research of high quality and relevance can be produced. In order to ensure the acceptance and success of ERA-NET it will be important to promote a greater awareness in the research community of the 'added value' associated with participation in ERA-NET activities. Furthermore, some of the institutional barriers still have to be overcome for ERA-NETs to make sure that transnational research activities can continue on a higher profile in national settings.

Design, structure and composition:

The review clearly revealed that the main design characteristics of ERA-NET were helpful in supporting the goals of the scheme:

- 1) the 'bottom-up' nature of the initiative was much appreciated by the main stakeholders
- 2) the use of Specific Support Actions as well as Coordination Actions allowed for the possibility of initial exploratory approaches
- 3) the adoption of a four-step process for participants was considered to be suitable for the first, experimental phase of ERA-NET
- 4) the flexible approach to the use of different funding regimes for joint calls encouraged participants both to join in and to explore ways of overcoming some of the practical barriers to the implementation of joint actions

The possibility for a wide range of stakeholders (programme owners and programme managers) also contributed to the overall success of ERA-NETs. This will also be crucial for the future development of the scheme, as the active involvement of programme owners and managers influences the perception of ministerial circles about the importance of transnational research activities. The 'bottom-up' approach concerning the development of the topics of the individual ERA-NETs allowed programme owners and managers to choose thematic areas among their national priorities rather than among the priorities identified for the Framework Programme.

Implementation

The procedures prior to the selection of an ERA-NET project (proposal submission, evaluation, contract negotiation, etc.) were widely appreciated by the participants, conceding that there is room for improvement on some minor issues.

Concerning the funding arrangement for joint actions, participants also appreciated the possibility to choose among several options (true common pot, virtual common pot and mixed mode funding models). This allowed for participation in joint activities, such as joint call, even when the barriers to cross-border funding were high.

Recommendations

The Expert Review Group gives numerous recommendations and examples for how to improve the funding scheme in the future, particularly with respect to continuing and developing the ERA-NET initiative in FP7. The Expert Review provides three sets of recommendations, mirroring three political levels:

- recommendations for the highest political level across the EU
- recommendations for the Commission services concerning activities within FP7
- recommendations addressing programme owners and programme managers as the main stakeholders within the ERA-NET scheme

The high-level recommendations mainly focus on the consolidation of the ERA-NET initiative in FP7 with a particular focus on the implementation of joint calls and joint programmes. This can be achieved by the Member States and Associated States by continuing to break down some of the remaining institutional barriers to the coordination of research initiatives; by developing clear strategies for the national involvement in ERA-NETs, and by a shared strategic vision of the role of ERA-NETs in the future development of the European Research Area, in order to avoid a newly created fragmentation due to thematic overlaps. It will be crucial whether the stakeholder community will manage to develop a structural and organisational framework based on the common strategic visions, in order to harmonise the procedures and practices across all joint calls and programmes launched by ERA-NETs.

Recommendations on the Commission level also involve the evolution of a common framework of rules and procedures for the launch of joint activities. This framework should develop into a strong ERA-NET 'brand name'. It will also be important for the Commission services to maintain an overview of ERA-NET developments to ensure synchronicity of the calls and synthesising of experiences and lessons learned. Concerning the participation in ERA-NETs, it should be restricted to programme owners and managers, with ministries being allowed to nominate external agents as representatives only in exceptional circumstances. The overall evaluation of the ERA-NET scheme should particularly focus on the added value, which the scheme brings to the research community and the degree to which transnational activities become embedded in national and regional policy considerations and practices.

Programme owners and managers are strongly recommended to pool all national / regional information in order to evolve a strategic overview of their country's involvement in ERA-NET activities; to play an active part in setting the strategic directions for individual ERA-NETs and contribute to the evolution of new guidelines for the implementation of ERA-NETs by sharing information on best practice.

Survey on joint activities in individual ERA-NETs

Introduction

In winter 2006/2007, a survey based on a questionnaire was carried out by DG RTD (Unit B1) on the joint activities undertaken by ERA-NETs (Coordinated Actions) funded by the European Commission (*Survey on joint activities in individual ERA-NETs. Aggregated results with comments*, Winter 2006/2007). The aim of the survey was to investigate to what extent ERA-NETs had gone beyond the mere exchange of information and analysis of common strategic issues (steps 1 & 2 of the model with four progressive "steps" towards closer cooperation; see above) and embarked on developing joint activities including joint calls for proposals, joint research programmes and joint pilot projects (step 4).

As coordinators of 70 out of 71 ERA-NETs answered the questionnaire, the information gathered systematically across all research areas covered by the ERA-NETs served as a basis to build up a coherent picture of the progress made by all ERA-NETs since the launch of the ERA-NET scheme in 2002. The ERA-NET project CORE Organic was launched in October 2004, which was approximately one year after the first ERA-NETs had started working in September 2003, and is therefore among the most advanced ERA-NETs, especially because it has already managed to implement a call and commission joint pilot projects. In the

following, procedures and concepts behind the CORE Organic pilot call will be compared with and placed into perspective to the overall picture of procedures and concepts applied by other ERA-NETs.

Overview of joint activities

Although the FP6 ERA-NET scheme did not impose to implement joint calls for proposals as minimum requirements on ERA-NET participants, the majority of ERA-NETs (40 out of 70) went beyond the minimum requirements and implemented joint research activities. When ERA-NETs had not undertaken any joint activities so far, the coordinators of most of these ERA-NETs (88%) see the predominant reason for that in the fact that their ERA-NET was not yet ready to undertake such an activity. However, it can be expected that most of these ERA-NETs will be able to set up joint research activities at a later stage, as it is often foreseen in the Description of Work.

- In total, 77 **joint calls** have already been implemented, launched or at least planned during the first three years of the ERA-NET scheme (until winter 2006/2007). In contrast to CORE Organic, some of the ERA-NETs have even managed to launch more than one call.
- Concerning the establishment of a **joint research programme**, CORE Organic is in line with the majority of the ERA-NETs (85%), as it has not set up such a programme. So far only 11 ERA-NETs have managed to launch or are currently preparing such a joint research programme. However, as the term “joint programme” is not clearly defined, very different initiatives are reported under this heading in the survey.
- A small share of ERA-NETs (13%) has carried out **joint pilot actions** without a prior call for proposals. Among those pilot actions were training courses for PhD students, workshops, bi- or trilateral projects to test cooperation procedures and establishment of databases. CORE Organic did not perform any of such joint actions. However, as part of WP2 (Task 2.6) the consortium partners established an open access archive for research publications on organic food and farming. An already existing archive (www.orgprints.org), which was originally a cooperation between only 3 CORE Organic partners was extended not only to include all other CORE Organic partners, but also opened up for input from countries outside the CORE Organic consortium. As a consequence, all relevant publications on organic food and farming can now be archived under one umbrella and mediated to a broader audience.

Description of joint calls

Total funding

At the time of the survey, a total of 500 Mio Euro was foreseen to be coordinated in joint calls launched in the years 2003-2007. As at that time data for 2007 were rather scarce, it can be expected that the total budget provided for calls will have risen considerably in the meantime. Although the amount of public funding for the individual joint calls varies greatly between 80,000 and 32.5 Mio Euro, 22 out of 54 joint calls (done, launched or planned) feed up to 5 Mio Euro into the funding pots, and 14 between 5 and 10 Mio Euro, as was done for the CORE Organic pilot call. In 18 calls, the call budget went well beyond 10 Mio. Euro.

While the majority of all calls done, launched or planned within the ERA-NET scheme so far were considered to be pilot calls (51%), a rather large proportion of 41% of calls is characterised as fully-fledged calls. When ERA-NETs launched already more than one call, the proportion of fully fledged calls increased considerably in comparison to the number of pilot calls, indicating that ERA-NETs start off with pilot calls to test procedures, but move then on to fully fledged calls.

The joint call of CORE Organic was also considered to be a pilot call. However, since all 11 ERA-NET partners took part in the call, which covered a total budget of about 8.3 Mio Euro, and with three-year funding period for projects, the call could equally be considered to be a fully fledged one rather than a pilot call.

ERA-NET partners participating in the joint call

Although usually not all ERA-NET partners participate in the joint call, in 19 calls out of 57 virtually all consortium partners took part in the call. In some cases, even research funders from associated members or non-members had contributed to the funding pot. This was not foreseen for the CORE Organic pilot call, though much effort was put in to have all consortium partners participate in the call. While the survey revealed

that legal and administrative issues are usually the main barriers against participating in a call (85%), the choice of the call topic is also often a decisive factor for whether an ERA-NET partner can take part in a call or not, as it is sometimes difficult to reach agreement on a common theme. Fifteen call coordinators (37%) identified the call topic as a reason for not all consortium partners being able to join the call. However, an equal share of them (44%) also thinks that some partners just prefer to observe the procedures first, before they eventually participate in a future call.

Research partners participating in the call

As a minimum, research partners from at least 2 or 3 different countries are usually required to team up for a research project, as was also the case with CORE Organic. In some instances, there was even a limitation of the number of research partners to a maximum of 4 or 5 participants per project. CORE Organic took a different approach by specifically encouraging applications with more than 3 participating countries. As a matter of fact, project proposals with a high number of research partners also need the support of a high number of funding organisations. Such an agreement can be rather difficult to achieve, as was demonstrated in the funding decision phase of CORE Organic. In 5 out of 8 highly qualified project proposals some of the relevant funding partners refused to provide the necessary funding, and therefore the proposals had to be modified and adopted to the limited funding.

Publication of the joint call

The most common procedure (45% of all respondents) for communicating the launch of the joint call is to have a common call announcement supplemented by national call specifications. The call announcement is often made by one partner (32%), combined with a spread of information on the national level. For this the ERA-NET homepages are usually the most important tool. The importance of the homepage as an information tool for the joint call was also indicated in the CORE Organic questionnaire. CORE Organic announced the launch of the pilot call as well as the call documents on its homepage. Furthermore, subscribers to the CORE Organic newsletter were also immediately informed on the publication of the call. On a national level, consortium partners used various communication channels to advertise the call.

Call procedures

In approximately half of all calls published, research proposals are submitted using a 1-step procedure. The survey showed that this type of procedure tended to be used particularly for calls with small budgets and individual grants, while the 2-step procedure was more common in larger calls. In general, 2-step procedures seem to gain more importance for future calls. The reason for CORE Organic to opt for the 1-step submission procedure is mainly due to the given time constraints, which did not allow for a 2-step procedure.

For both submission types the preferred procedure for the evaluation of the project proposals is to use an international expert group for peer-review (52% of calls with 1-step procedure and 56% of calls with 2-step procedure). While in calls with a 1-step submission procedure the national partner authority never selects alone which project to support, 22% do so in calls with 2-step procedures. However, in many cases, international peer-review and evaluation on the national level are combined during the whole process of proposal evaluation. The CORE Organic example with an international peer-review and subsequent negotiations between ERA-NET partners seems to be the predominant evaluation procedure. This is also true for each step of the 2-step procedure. From the survey there are indications that international peer review will gain even more importance in the future.

Funding models:

The virtual common pot model is the most common funding mode used by ERA-NETS so far. 64% of all calls (done, launched or planned) use a virtual common pot, 27% a true common pot and 9% a mixed mode for funding. In the latter funding model, a part of the budget is handled as a true common pot; the rest is used in a virtual common pot mode. Up to the date of the survey, 15 calls (within a total of 5 ERA-NETs) were launched using true common pots. Interestingly, despite the frequently uttered disadvantages of the virtual common pot model, the number of calls planned for the future with a true common pot does reveal a tendency towards more

virtual common pot calls in the future. In contrast, mixed mode funding seems to be the most promising tool for the future, as it embraces many of the benefits of the true common pot but needs a less demanding commitment. Similarly, Horvath *et al.* (2006) also favour the use of the mixed-mode scheme for ERA-NET PLUS over the true common pot model.

One of the major problems concerning the virtual common pot is that this funding mode might easily face funding gaps, which will lead to the rejection of scientifically highly ranked project proposals, due to a lack of funding from individual national research funders. Under such circumstances, ERA-NET partners usually try to find solutions on a case to case basis. In the majority of cases (43%) the national authorities in question tend to increase the national funding to cover the gap. If such an approach is not possible, either transnational transfer of funding to researchers from other countries might occur (in 7 calls, 30%) or the projects with insufficient funding are cancelled (in 8 calls, 35%). The survey showed that in two cases, the projects were implemented despite a lack of funding, but research partners who could not be funded were left out of the project consortium.

Concerning CORE Organic, in some cases funding gaps were remediated by an increase of the national research budget devoted to the ERA-NET; this was true for AT, CH, DK, FI, and SE. In other cases, project proposal were modified and the unfunded research teams excluded. This resulted in a final total funding that was less than originally allocated.

Concerning the rules regulating the funding, there are usually some common rules agreed on by all funding partners (70% of the joint calls). In many cases, these rules are complemented by national rules. This is particularly true for calls where virtual common pot funding is applied. With true common pot funding, only common rules are applied. In CORE Organic the common rules were those given in the call text and later on stated in Annex 1 to the contract. Whether project proposals were fit to the national rules was checked by means of an eligibility check prior to the scientific evaluation of the project proposals.

Implementation of ERA-NET calls vs. national calls:

While 59% of the respondents to the survey considered the implementation of the ERA-NET call not much more complex than national calls, 41% think the contrary. As the preparation of the joint call is seen to be among the most difficult and time-consuming elements of the call management, it is mainly respondents who are currently preparing a call, who think the ERA-NET call much more complex than the national call. Once the ERA-NET partners have gone beyond that preparation phase, they are much more optimistic about the ERA-NET call compared to the national call.

Motivations for addressing a particular area via a transnational call:

All reasons given by the EC for establishing the ERA-NET scheme are considered important motivations for the transnational call by the coordinators. Sharing competencies and associated work, achieving critical mass and access to expertise from specific countries are goals shared by most ERA-NET coordinators. The main motives for CORE Organic partners participating in the pilot call given in the questionnaire comprise importance of research topics, more value for money and achievement of a critical mass of researchers, the improvement of research networks and scientific quality or coordination of knowledge production.

Within the context of FP6, more than a third of the calls assessed in the survey cover topic areas that are considered to be not directly or at least not well addressed in FP6. Furthermore, Europeanization/transnationalisation of the national research system is considered to be a major motivator for two thirds of the joint calls (70%). Science and excellence driven research are also motivations for 57% of the calls.

6 Discussion

In order to clarify different strategies for further joint research cooperation the discussion has been divided into two sections: i) future aims to be fulfilled and ii) goal conflicts to handle.

Future aims to be fulfilled

Based on the different evaluations and taking into account experiences from other ERA-NETs four strategic aims have been identified. They are presented below without any order of priority.

Increase of research community in organic farming

Several partners express a wish to increase the organic farming research community. One aim with the CORE Organic joint call was to create a critical mass of researchers (from different partner countries) of the rather scattered and small organic food and farming research community. In this way funding organisations expected more efficient knowledge production/generation that is more value for spent money /funding.

An additional aim mentioned by some partners is to not only increase the organic farming research community by involving national researchers in organic farming, but also to complement or integrate it with researchers from adjacent research areas such as health, food quality, environment or climate. The goal with such an enrichment of complementary scientific competence would be an improved scientific quality of research but it could also improve the management in research of more complex interdisciplinary problems of organic food and farming systems in relation to sustainable development issues. Special activities in order to create fora for researchers from different fields to meet and interact would be needed to obtain such future integrated research applications.

Exchange of information and experiences on funding mechanisms

The prerequisite of ERA-NET projects, that partners are restricted to programme owners and managers, was appreciated by several CORE Organic partners. In the formed network, funding institutions were able to learn from different funding mechanisms and procedures in partner countries and exchange experiences. There was an interest among partners to maintain the created network in the future even outside an ERA-NET project, which should be possible to obtain.

Although most partners judged that virtual common pot funding was the most realistic in a short and medium-term perspective, they were also positive about a development towards true common pot funding or rather interpreted as mixed funding. One approach in this direction is restricted calls with only few partners.

Coordination of knowledge production

Coordination of knowledge production and avoidance of duplication was identified as an important outcome of CORE Organic GB. The thorough work in CORE Organic on screening research mechanisms, funding, programmes and ongoing research of organic food and farming systems in the partner countries is an important source of information to minimise duplication of knowledge production. To maintain the possibility to coordinate future knowledge production, the database Organic Eprint needs to be maintained and actively updated by CORE Organic partners. Agreement on maintenance and updating procedures of Organic Eprint need to be fulfilled before the end of the CORE Organic ERA-NET. A maintained network, with at least annual meetings will probably also be necessary in order to coordinate future national activities in food and organic farming research.

Strategic topic formulation – national and common topics

Some problems of the call application and selection phases were related to the earlier topic formulation. Partners prioritised the involvement of all partners in the CORE Organic pilot call and all national research needs of partners were pooled and negotiated in CORE Organic (WP6). A somewhat differing commitment between participating partners of the CORE Organic joint call could be noted, however, and was commented by one GB member. Partners also choose to devote substantially different amounts of funding to the joint call and selected projects.

The problem of topic formulation is also reported in other ERA-NETs (see *Survey on joint activities in individual ERA-NETs*) as 37 percent of partners who chose to not participate in ERA-Net calls referred to difficulties in reaching a common agreement on a common call theme.

As suggested in this report, CORE Organic partners should not be able to apply national restrictions on the topics of future joint calls. Apart from this, actions need to be taken to attract enough funding institutions. The joint calls should offer a solution to problems of generating research in prioritised areas at national level. Procedures for the formulation of additional strategic research need development and could possibly create a more even commitment for future joint calls. One aim of CORE Organic ERA-NET is to increase interdisciplinarity of research. This issue will be treated in the final report of work package 6 (CORE Organic ERA-NET Final report of work package 6, *Identification and prioritisation of collaborative R&D*), but is also related to call procedures. To obtain interdisciplinary research applications and consortia, a more complex problem formulation is needed already in the topics as commented by GB members. Common research needs on a European level need to be developed and the involvement of national and European stakeholders in the formulation of such research needs is suggested. The challenge is to formulate topics that are interesting enough for a sufficient number of funding institutions to allocate funds.

Goal conflicts

Openly formulated or restricted calls

There were different views between partners on topic formulation, some partners preferred restricted, narrowly formulated calls by funding institutions (with or without involvement of food chain stakeholders), i.e. top down formulated topics. Other partners argued for more openly formulated calls to let researchers formulate the most relevant research questions, i.e. bottom-up formulated topics. This probably reflects a true difference in research tradition between CORE Organic partners. One possibility to handle this difference is to open up for several joint calls with fewer participating partners.

All or few funding institution participating in calls

Partners judged it important that all CORE Organic partners took part in the CORE Organic pilot call, and enough partners were prepared to moderate their demands on chosen topics to obtain this. For future calls funding institutions can be expected to be more demanding on the choice of topic. With a smaller number of funding institutions, fewer funds will be assigned to the chosen topics. On the other hand, with fewer partners, agreement on funding model, more even funding or other means (i.e. mixed models) to facilitate the selection phase of applications will be easier.

Virtual common pot versus true common pot

The drawbacks of virtual common pot funding were evident in the CORE Organic pilot call. Due to virtual common pot effects and selection of topics there was not an optimum relation between the outcome of the scientific evaluation and the final selection of projects to be funded as commented by GB members, and there is a wish to work towards true common pot funding among partners in a long term perspective. As long as topic selection is only based on pooling of national programmes it could however be expected that true common pot funding could imply some negative effects on contextualisation and specific national relevance of individual research projects.

In the ERA-NET survey referred above there was no tendency towards an increased use of true common pot funding in the future. Mixed model funding is suggested as a suitable solution, with benefits in the selection phase, such as the possibility to use some part of the funding transnationally, but with mainly maintained national sovereignty. There are experiences from at least seven ERA-NET calls (see *Survey on joint activities in individual ERA-NETs*), where transnational transfer of funding occurred to close funding gaps in the selection phase.

Lessons learned – recommendations bridging to future cooperation

Timing of call procedures

The CORE Organic ERA-NET budget was less than primarily planned for and there was a shortage of time during the whole call process, especially during, evaluation and selection phases. But also the important preparatory phase with topic selection, suffered from time pressure. Other ERA-NET experiences show that the implementation of the call was considered much more complex than national calls by 41 percent of ERA-NETs and the preparation of the call was regarded by some as the most difficult and time consuming element of organising a joint call. A time frame for future calls is suggested, Table 4, to meet the need of sufficient time for planning of the call and to make space for continuous, follow-up, analysis and adjustments.

The set-up of a call secretariat (avoiding increased bureaucracy) for future calls would simplify planning of call phases.

Table 4. Suggested time frame for future calls

Call phase	Time period				
Preparatory phase	8 months				
Application phase		3 months			
Evaluation phase			4 months		
Selection phase				1 month	
Contract and funding phase					4 months
Total call procedure					20 months

Procedure for topic formulation

A crucial aspect for future topic formulation is to reach a shared view among partners on strategic research issues. This could be obtained by applying methods and tools used for rational decision making, and open up for common research needs both within and outside existing national research programmes.

Two-step procedure

Experiences from other ERA-NETs are that a two-step procedure is used for larger calls with project durations of several years. The reason for choosing a one-step procedure in the CORE organic pilot call was entirely due to time constraints.

Communication and information to applicants

Applicants' evaluation of the pilot call shows the importance of fast and clear information throughout the call process. Communication channels and information including the early setup of homepage, FAQ and information on the call concerning national restrictions and assigned funding to high quality scientific and selection feedback need further planning and coordination in future calls.

Procedure for final selection

The final selection procedure needs to be clearly defined before hand and fully understood by all partners as well as all applicants when the call is launched. The use of mixed models for funding could tighten the relation between scientific evaluation and final selection.

Maintenance of future network

CORE Organic partners want to maintain the created network of funding institutions and most of them were interested even without support through ERA-NET funding. A Task Force was implemented in September 2006 and will generate a set of suggestions for possibilities for future cooperation. The legal formalisation of the bridging to a future network will be through a legal Cooperation Agreement. Apart from these actions the following bridging activities are suggested:

- Formation of a working group for the follow-up of a possible new ERA-NET application in 2009, i.e. based on suggestions by the Task Force
- Annual CORE Organic GB/MB meeting with rotating responsibility/coordination
- Planned CORE Organic MB satellite meetings on targeted international conferences 2007 to 2010
- Final CORE Organic project conference September 2010

Budgetary issues

The earlier formed Task Force will also suggest a budget for activities until June 2010, including, e.g.

- follow-up activities,
- maintenance of the network,
- ERA-Net application work and
- a worst case scenario without ERA-Net funding, where joint call procedures need to be fully financed by partners

Preparatory Phase – detailed description

Table a. List of activities carried out during the preparatory phase of the pilot call.

16 Jun. 2005:	<u>Workpackage 7</u> was officially <u>launched</u> at the Management Board meeting in Alnarp, Sweden. During this meeting, the tasks and deliverables of the workpackage were defined, upcoming actions were suggested and a preliminary timeframe for the implementation of the call was drawn up. Furthermore, the following concepts were discussed: top-down vs. bottom-up theme research initiation, programme and project, basic vs. applied research, age structure of scientists, time schedule for application, formal and informal barriers for participation in the call.
Jun. – Oct. 2005:	A <u>draft questionnaire</u> for a survey on national research funding and procurement procedures was prepared.
12 Oct. 2005:	During the Governing Board meeting in Brussels, Belgium, three <u>models for a joint research programme</u> with different levels of coordination were outlined and discussed in relation to the individual partners' ability to participate. Furthermore, the draft questionnaire was presented.
Oct. – Nov. 2005:	The <u>final questionnaire</u> (“WP7 Research funding and procurement procedures in CORE Organic partner organisations”), dealing with the possibilities and barriers in transnationally funded research was commonly prepared and sent out to all partners. A preliminary <u>analysis of the responses</u> to the questionnaire was carried out.
Nov. 2005:	During the process of preparations for a joint call for proposals an <u>update of the timeframe</u> in accordance with the activities of WP5 and WP6 proved to be necessary.
13 Dec. 2005:	The preliminary results of the questionnaire were presented at the Governing Board meeting in Brussels, Belgium. D 7.1 Agreement on a range of procedures for Transnational funding.
Dec. 2005 – May 2006:	A <u>framework for guidelines for applicants</u> to the CORE Organic pilot call was prepared.
Feb. 2006:	An <u>overview of call procedures</u> (procurement routes, funding models, management and monitoring) of various ERA-NETs was compiled as a basis for further decision on call procedures for CORE Organic.
3 March 2006:	A model for research funding and procurement procedures in CORE Organic Partner organisations was presented and discussed at the Management Board meeting in Florence, Italy. It was decided that the evaluation procedure will be conducted in a one-stage process based on output from WP5.
16 May 2006:	The framework for guidelines for applicants was presented at the Governing Board Meeting in Bonn, Germany D 7.2 Creation of joint funding collaboration with a pool of at least 3 million €per year. Agreement on common funding with all partners.
May 2006:	On the national level, a <u>pre-announcement</u> of the call was sent out to the scientific community informing them on the call topics and the envisaged call dates.
May – Sept. 2006:	<u>Call documents</u> (Call text, Guidelines for Applicants) were prepared. The documents were based on the identified and prioritised research topics developed by WP6 and the evaluation criteria developed by WP5.
21 Aug. 2006:	Call documents were presented and approved at the Governing Board meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Application phase – detailed description

Table b. List of activities carried out during the application phase of the pilot call.

5 Sept. 2005:	The call documents (call text and guideline for the applicants) were uploaded to the CORE Organic homepage and the <u>call was officially launched</u> . Subscribers to the CORE Organic Newsletter received a newsletter specifying details of the call.
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5 Sept. – 1 Dec. 2005:	The call coordinator and previously identified national call contact persons in all CORE Organic countries <u>responded to inquiries</u> concerning the call.
Sept. 2005:	The CORE Organic <u>pilot call was also published</u> by the individual partners <u>through various national media</u> .
Sept. – Dec. 2005:	A <u>discussion forum</u> was established on the CORE Organic homepage to facilitate the search for research partners for applicants. Furthermore, a section with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) was set up on the CORE Organic homepage and regularly updated.

Scientific evaluation phase – detailed description

Table c. List of activities carried out during the scientific evaluation phase of the pilot call.

May – Sept. 2006:	<u>Evaluation criteria compiled</u> by WP5 were incorporated into the call documents.
Sept. – Dec. 2006:	CORE Organic partners were asked to nominate competent experts for each of the three call topics to act as peer reviewers.
Oct. – Nov. 2006:	A <u>document on the code of conduct</u> with a declaration of confidentiality and no conflict of interest was drawn up for the evaluation experts to be signed.
Nov. – Dec. 2006:	<u>Guidelines for evaluation of applications</u> within the framework of the CORE Organic pilot call were formulated.
Dec. 2006:	<u>Independent experts were selected</u> from the pool of nominated experts by the Call Coordinator and the list of experts was approved by the Governing Board (by email). The selected evaluation <u>experts were instructed</u> on how to use the remote assessment tool (FORMAS direct). Rapporteurs for each individual application were selected among the experts for the panel meeting.
Jan. 2007:	The evaluation experts carried out the <u>remote assessment</u> and scored the project proposals individually.
Feb. 2007:	<u>Guidelines for the chair of the expert panel</u> were formulated and handed over to him.
Feb. 2007:	The panel meeting at FORMAS, Stockholm, Sweden was organised.
19-20 Feb. 2007:	During the <u>expert panel meeting</u> , the experts discussed the scientific quality of the project proposals according to the given evaluation criteria, formulated statements corresponding to the evaluation criteria as a basis for further classification and classified the project proposals into three different priority groups.
March 2007:	Participants of the <u>expert panel</u> were <u>reimbursed</u> for the travel expenditures.

Selection of projects / funding decision phase – detailed description

Table d. List of activities carried out during the selection of project / funding decision phase of the pilot call.

Dec. 2006:	Representatives of the CORE Organic partner organisations checked if <u>applicants were eligible</u> according to the regulations of their national funding agencies.
Feb. 2007:	<u>Governing Board members were informed about the results</u> of the scientific evaluation and asked to decide on <u>national priorities</u> among the project proposals recommended for funding by the scientific evaluators.
Feb. 2007:	The Governing Board members <u>assessed the relevance criteria</u> .
1-2 Mar. 2007:	The Governing Board members <u>selected projects for funding</u> .

Follow-up phase – detailed description

Table e. List of activities carried out during the follow-up phase of the pilot call.

Mar. 2007:	All main applicants to the CORE Organic pilot call received written <u>feed back on the results</u> of the scientific evaluation and whether their research proposal would be funded by the relevant CORE Organic funding bodies or not. They also obtained the statement on the project proposal that was produced during the expert panel meeting.
Mar. –Apr. 2007:	CORE Organic pilot <u>project coordinators adapted project proposals</u> in case individual project partners were not allocated funds by their national research funding bodies' und re-submitted modified proposal to the Call Coordinator.
23-24 Apr. 2007:	During the Management Board meeting in London, UK, it was <u>decided to prepare a cooperation agreement</u> between CORE Organic partners to ensure cooperation of the funding bodies until the CORE Organic pilot projects will be completed in 2010 for monitoring and reporting reasons.
Apr. – Sept. 2007:	CORE Organic funding bodies <u>draw up a cooperation agreement</u> .
Apr. – Sept. 2007:	A <u>kick-off meeting</u> of transnational research cooperation in organic food and farming is <u>organised</u> .
May 2007:	An “ <u>Annex 1</u> ” to national contracts was drafted in order to compile relevant roles and responsibilities of pilot project partners and national funding bodies.
May – July 2007:	CORE Organic pilot project partners negotiated their <u>funding contract</u> with their national funding bodies.
15 Jun. 2007:	On 15 June 2007, the CORE Organic <u>pilot projects start</u> officially.
Jun. 2007:	The <u>CORE Organic Funding Body Management Boards are established</u> for each of the individual CORE Organic pilot projects.
Jun. 2007 – 2010:	Pilot projects are carried out and monitored by respective CORE Organic funding bodies.
13-14 Sept. 2007:	The <u>kick-off meeting</u> of transnational research cooperation in organic food and farming takes place.

Cross cutting horizontal areas – detailed description

Table f. List of activities carried out for cross-cutting horizontal areas of the pilot call.

May 2006 - Sept. 2007:	As topics covered in WP5 (evaluation criteria) and WP6 (call topics) formed a basis for the call procedures, it was decisive to <u>adjust alignment</u> and avoid overlapping at any time
May – Jun. 2007:	Together with WP5 partners, an <u>on-line questionnaire was developed</u> in order to survey the perception of the different call phases by Governing Board members, national call contact persons, the expert evaluation panel and the applicants.
23 May 2007:	The <u>questionnaire was uploaded to the CORE Organic homepage</u> and the target groups were asked to fill it in.
Jun. – Sept. 2007:	The <u>results of the questionnaire were analysed</u> and interpreted. Conclusions were drawn and <u>suggestions for a future call management</u> made.

Appendix II

Questionnaires for WP7.3 Final report

The questionnaire is based on CORE Organic MB meeting group work 070423 (see below in this document) and earlier work in WP7.

Each target group (Applicants including co-applicants, national call contact persons, evaluation expert panel and panel chair, GB members) receives a link to a specific questionnaire at the CORE webpage. The questionnaires were edited with a questionnaire software.

CORE Organic pilot call applicants and co-applicants

The work programme of the CORE Organic ERA-Net foresees an evaluation of the CORE Organic pilot call. Consequently, applicants and co-applicants are asked to comment on the processes and procedures of the CORE Organic pilot call by filling in a questionnaire. Your feedback will be highly appreciated as it will provide insight into whether the information flow and the procedures applied worked well or will need improvement to provide a sound basis for the establishment of future transnational research programmes which also take into account the currently existing differences between individual national application procedures.

In order to get as broad a feedback as possible, we kindly ask you to forward this email to all your co-applicants as well, so that they can also complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire can be completed online using the following link

www.espub.net/rss/survey.aspx?ID=f8224c4b5ba0b09028ac2bc25b67ffc4. Please answer the questions by 5 June. Should you have any questions concerning the questionnaire, please contact Ulrika Geber (Ulrika.Geber@cul.slu.se) or Thomas Alföldi (thomas.alfoldi@fibl.org).

7.3 Questionnaire for applicants (leaders of all consortia and co-applicants)

Your information is valuable due to the importance of functioning information flows and procedures to establish future transnational research programmes under the existing differences of national application procedures
1. How did you perceive the information provided by CORE Organic before the call was launched?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> sufficient 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather insufficient 4 <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Comments and suggestions:
2. How do you judge the importance and the quality of the following <u>information sources</u> regarding the CORE organic pilot call?
2.1. The CORE Organic website
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
c) Comments and suggestions:
2.2. The CORE Organic discussion forum
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
c) Comments and suggestions:
2.3. The frequently asked questions (FAQ) at the CORE Organic website
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
c) Comments and suggestions:
2.4. The CORE organic newsletter
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
c) Comments:
2.5. The function of the National Call contact person
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
c) Comments and suggestions:

2.6. Other researchers (i.e. sources from outside national research networks)
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
c) Comments and suggestions:
2.7. Other sources of information:
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
c) Please specify what source of information:
3. How do you judge the information provided concerning CORE Organic pilot call procedure during the application period after the call was launched?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> sufficient 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather insufficient 4 <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Comments and suggestions:
4. How do you judge the CORE Organic pilot call procedure regarding clearness and transparency?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> sufficient 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather insufficient 4 <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Comments and suggestions:
5. How do you judge finding application partners and to set up a consortium?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very easy 2 <input type="checkbox"/> easy 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather difficult 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very difficult 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Comments and suggestions:
6. How do you judge the functionality of (i.e. accessibility and ease to use) the CORE Organic pilot call electronic system for applying (<i>Formas direct</i>)?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Comments and suggestions:
7. How do you judge the quality of the scientific feedback on your proposal in the statement from the expert panel?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Comments and suggestions:
8. Any other comment or suggestion regarding the CORE organic pilot call:

CORE Organic pilot call expert panel and panel chairman

The work programme of the CORE Organic ERA-Net foresees an evaluation of the CORE Organic pilot call. Consequently, pilot call expert panel members and the panel chairman are asked to comment on the processes and procedures of the CORE Organic pilot call by filling in a questionnaire. Your feedback will be highly appreciated as it will help to analyse the quality of the procedures applied and provide a sound basis for the establishment of future transnational research programmes which take into account the currently existing differences between individual national evaluation procedures.

The questionnaire can be completed online using the following link www.espub.net/rss/survey.aspx?ID=b12a403f83abb48d17e6df35e191a4e8. Please answer the questions by 5 June. Should you have any questions concerning the questionnaire, please contact Ulrika Geber (Ulrika.Geber@cul.slu.se) or Thomas Alföldi (thomas.alfoldi@fibl.org).

7.3 Questionnaire for the expert panel and panel chairman

Your information is valuable due to the importance of functioning high quality procedures to establish future transnational research programmes under the existing differences of national evaluation procedures
1. How do you judge the quality of the work performed during the various phases of the evaluation procedure?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Comments and suggestions:
2. How do you judge the provision of information necessary for the evaluation?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Comments and suggestions:
3. How do you judge the timing of provided information before the actual evaluation started?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Comments and suggestions:
4. How do you judge the timing of different steps in the evaluation?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Comments and suggestions:
5. How do you judge the functionality of (i.e. accessibility and ease to use) the CORE Organic electronic system for evaluation of applications (Formas review)?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> don't know
b) Comments and suggestions:
6. Any other comment or suggestion to improve the evaluation procedure?

National Call Contact Persons

As part of the evaluation of WP7.3 and 5.2 CORE Organic National Call Contact Persons are asked to comment on the CORE Organic pilot call in order to identify possible improvements at the national scale and in the communication between national call contact persons and the call coordination

The questionnaire can be completed online using the following link
www.espub.net/rss/survey.aspx?ID=eec05b3d053ed8e94ff0104729e039eb.

Please answer the questions by **5 June**.

Should you have any questions concerning the questionnaire, please contact Ulrika Geber (Ulrika.Geber@cul.slu.se) or Thomas Alföldi (thomas.alfoldi@fibl.org).

7.3. Questionnaire for the national call contact persons

The information is valuable in order to identify possible improvements at the national scale and in the communication between national call contact persons and the call coordination.
Preparatory phase
1. How do you judge your own input during this phase?
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
c) Comments and suggestions to what would have been needed to improve your own input:
1.1. How do you judge the possibilities to solve difficulties?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather insufficient 4 <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Comments on what would have been needed to improve your own input?
2. How do you judge the timing of different steps in the preparatory phase?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Comments and suggestions:
Application phase
3. How do you judge your own input during this phase?
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
c) Comments and suggestions to what would have been needed to improve your own input:
3.1. How do you judge the possibilities to solve difficulties?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather insufficient 4 <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Comments on what would have been needed to improve your own input?
4. How do you judge the timing of different steps in the application phase?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Comments and suggestions:
5. How do you perceive communication between you as a NCCP and the national research community?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> sufficient 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather insufficient 4 <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Comments and suggestions:
6. How do you perceive communication between national individual national researchers or research groups?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> sufficient 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather insufficient 4 <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Comments and suggestions:
7. How do you judge the importance and the quality of the following information sources regarding the CORE organic pilot call?
7.1. The CORE Organic website
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
c) Comments and suggestions:
7.2. The CORE Organic discussion forum
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
c) Comments and suggestions:
7.3. The "FAQ" at the CORE Organic website
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment

c) Comments and suggestions:
7.4. The CORE organic newsletter
a) Importance: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
c) Comments and suggestions:
Evaluation phase
8. How do you judge the timing and adequacy of the information provided to you regarding the evaluation?
a) Timing: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Adequacy: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
c) Comments and suggestions:
9. How do you judge the transparency of the evaluation procedure?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Comments and suggestions:
General strategic issues
10. Suggestions on how to improve the CORE Organic call procedures:
11. As a CORE Organic partner – how would you shortly describe your national organic farming and food research policy concerning aim and final goals?
12. As a CORE Organic partner – how would you define your national stakeholders/interest groups?
13. An aim of CORE Organic is to involve nationally active researchers in transnational projects.
13.1. Do you consider the CORE Organic pilot call to have succeeded with this task?
13.2. Do you have suggestions on how to improve this generation of new transnational research groups?

CORE Organic Governing Board

The work programme of the CORE Organic ERA-Net foresees an evaluation of the CORE Organic pilot call. Consequently, CORE Organic Governing Board members are asked to comment on the CORE Organic pilot call and on strategic issues concerning possible future cooperation.

The questionnaire can be completed online using the following link

www.espub.net/rss/survey.aspx?ID=0aabb712f004bb5fe67472b4f392cc33. Please answer the questions by 5 June. Should you have any questions concerning the questionnaire, please contact Ulrika Geber (Ulrika.Geber@cul.slu.se) or Thomas Alföldi (thomas.alfoldi@fibl.org).

7.3. Questionnaire for CORE Organic Governing Board members (as representatives for the national funding partner with mandate to take strategic decisions on international cooperation issues)

1. How do you judge the quality of the call procedures?
a) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Comments and suggestions:
2. How do you perceive the implementation of the call as compared to your national calls?
a) Comments:
3. What part(s) of the call procedure would you consider the most critical to improve in a future CORE Organic research funding cooperation?
a) Comments and suggestions
Preparatory phase
4. What advantages and disadvantages do you see with the virtual pot model
5. What advantages and disadvantages do you see with the common pot model
6. Which funding model does your organisation prefer and why?
7. Within a future CORE Organic framework – would it be possible for your organisation to open for common pot models, e.g. on certain focused topics?
8. How do you judge the optimal distribution between one to three year research projects
a) one year projects <input type="checkbox"/> %; two year projects <input type="checkbox"/> %; three year projects <input type="checkbox"/> % (should sum to 100%)
9. What did you perceive as forming the basis for the final topic formulation of the pilot call?
10. What do you think should form the basis for the topic formulation (possible to mark more than one box)?
a) <input type="checkbox"/> national programmes
b) <input type="checkbox"/> other policy documents
c) <input type="checkbox"/> other input, please give examples
11. How do you judge the ability of the final topics selected to address the most important topics
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
Application phase
12. How do you perceive the fact that all applications were based on financing for three to four years?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
Selection phase
13. How do you judge the timing between the different steps in the selection phase (i.e. scientific evaluation and selection by CORE Organic GB)?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
14. Which were the prioritized goals for your organisation to participate in the pilot call (mark one or more boxes and score with decreasing priority from 1 to 4) ?
a) <input type="checkbox"/> important research topics
b) <input type="checkbox"/> achievement of critical mass of researchers
c) <input type="checkbox"/> more value for money
d) <input type="checkbox"/> others, please give examples:
15. What criteria did you use to select among the applications?
a) <input type="checkbox"/> important research topics for Organic Farming and Food systems
b) <input type="checkbox"/> national priorities
c) <input type="checkbox"/> relevance criteria set up by CORE Organic (see evaluation criteria C1-C2)
d) <input type="checkbox"/> others, please give examples:
16. What criteria do you think should be the basis for the selection?
a) <input type="checkbox"/> important research topics for OFF

b) <input type="checkbox"/> national priorities
c) <input type="checkbox"/> relevance criteria set up by CORE Organic (see evaluation criteria C1-C2)
d) <input type="checkbox"/> others, please give examples:
17. How do you judge the information from the scientific evaluation for the selection decision?
a) Extent: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> sufficient 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather insufficient 4 <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Quality: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
General strategic issues
18. As a CORE Organic partner – how would you shortly describe your national organic farming and food research policy as relates to aim and final goals?
19. As a CORE Organic partner – how would you define your national stakeholders/interest groups?
20. What reasons motivated the participation of your organisation in the joint call, in order to launch a specific type of projects that you want to foster in the topics selected?
21. How well did accepted applications of the CORE Organic pilot call respond to your organisations policy needs?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very good 2 <input type="checkbox"/> good 3 <input type="checkbox"/> rather poor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> very poor 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
22. What role/importance does CORE Organic play for the internationalisation and to address strategic issues of organic farming research in your own funding organisation?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Please, specify different roles you identify:
23. How do you judge the importance of all partners taking part in the pilot call
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
24. How do you perceive the scope of possible future calls (mark one or more boxes and score with decreasing priority from 1 to 4)?
a) <input type="checkbox"/> restricted specified topics
b) <input type="checkbox"/> more openly formulated calls
c) <input type="checkbox"/> small number of partners involved
d) <input type="checkbox"/> others, please give examples:
e) <input type="checkbox"/> no future calls are foreseen
25. What other instruments do you consider important for OFF apart from generation of scientific knowledge by research-driven projects:
a) <input type="checkbox"/> increased use of existing knowledge
b) <input type="checkbox"/> synthesis of existing information
c) <input type="checkbox"/> research user involvement in the research process
d) <input type="checkbox"/> others, please give examples:
26. How do you judge the importance of other instruments than research projects to achieve CORE Organic goals?
a) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> very important 2 <input type="checkbox"/> important 3 <input type="checkbox"/> minor 4 <input type="checkbox"/> not important 5 <input type="checkbox"/> no comment
b) Comments and suggestions:
27.
28. How do you judge the added value of the CORE organic ERA-Net structure?
29. Do you perceive CORE Organic ERA-Net to have added extra value to the Organic farming and Food systems research?
30. Do you think your organisation would be interested in future cooperation also without ERA-Net or other EU-funding?
31. An aim of CORE Organic is to involve nationally active researchers in transnational projects.
a) Do you consider the CORE Organic pilot call to have succeeded with this task?
b) Do you have suggestions on how to improve this generation of new transnational research groups?

