

ACADEMY OF FINLAND GUIDELINES FOR ERA-NETs

2008

The ERA-NET guidelines 2008 have been formulated in accordance with policy lines defined in the Academy of Finland International Strategy 2007-2015 and its implementation document. The guidelines also serve as a handbook for Academy officials involved in ERA-NET activities, and are thus part of the Academy's quality management system. In addition, the guidelines serve as a basis for the examination of the performance objectives for the Academy's international activities from the viewpoint of the performance prism.

ACADEMY OF FINLAND

Guidelines for ERA-NETs

1 ERA-NETs build networks between research and research funding agencies

EU Sixth Framework Programme (FP6)

The ERA-NET scheme was introduced in FP6 (2002–2006) as an instrument contributing to the building of the European Research Area (ERA). ERA-NETs consist of thematic research programmes of several countries or of horizontally and regionally important themes. By networking research and technology programmes of different countries, the aim is on the European level to increase cooperation and coordination of national and regional research programmes and projects. Research funding cooperation in Europe is extended and strengthened through the participation of national and regional R&D funding agencies in ERA-NETs. A more broad-based cooperation among researchers and funding agencies is a means to counteract the current scattered structure of research funding in Europe and to generate research-specific added value. Participation in ERA-NETs creates new opportunities of cooperation and poses new challenges to funding agencies.

The EU provides funding to cover the ERA-NET coordination and administration costs of the ERA-NET activities of national agencies funding research programmes. The research cooperation and joint calls of transnational research programmes resulting from this cooperation receive funding through the participating funding agencies' own research budgets.

The ERA-NET scheme is open to collaborative initiatives in any research field or discipline. An ERA-NET network may include a number of activities to increase international cooperation and coordination. A key activity of ERA-NETs is to plan and design pan-European research programmes and projects. This may involve the planning and coordination of cooperation as well as removing obstacles to cooperation regarding

- application processes
- review practices
- the administration and management of research programmes
- common and jointly used infrastructures
- databases and portals
- cooperation between authorities.

The key tasks of the ERA-NETs include the mapping of best administrative practices and funding schemes for research programmes. This facilitates the creation of joint practices between funding agencies in different European countries, which also in the long run contributes to the spread of similar working methods in these agencies.

ERA-NET activities contribute to increasing the competences of research funding agency staff with special knowledge of international collaboration, which will enhance the cooperation between European research funding agencies. ERA-NET pro-

jects provide a good tool for finding potential funding partners as well as for mapping and adopting well-functioning and well-established practices.

EU Seventh Framework Programme (FP7)

The EU Seventh Framework Programme (2007–2013) continues cooperation within the ERA-NET scheme. Within the FP7 thematic programmes, calls are opened with a view to establishing new ERA-NET networks or to strengthening existing ERA-NET networks established within the FP6.

Joint research programmes may be launched

- in ERA-NET networks established within FP6 funded by national funding agencies taking part in them,
- as ERA-NET Plus projects with the Commission's financial support to a common fund created between national programmes for the purpose of a joint call for proposals, and
- as so-called Article 169 programmes, where the EU and Member States may provide equal amounts of funding.

In the ERA-NET Plus instrument, the Commission and the national funding agencies participating in an ERA-NET network jointly provide funding (the Commission may provide up to 20–30% of the total funding), which can be used to fund a joint transnational research programme. This instrument promotes and further supports the participation of new Member States in jointly funded programmes. The number of ERA-NET Plus projects is expected to be quite limited.

In addition, on the basis of the ERA-NET networks established within FP6, a few Article 169 programmes will be developed and launched within FP7, in which the goal is to achieve long-term funding cooperation and a deeper level of integration with regard to national research programmes. In these, the EU may cover a substantial part of the research costs.

EU funding for jointly-funded research programmes is a way to encourage the interest among national funding agencies to participate in research programmes that will be launched as a result of ERA-NET cooperation. This poses new challenges to cooperation between funding agencies as regards science policy, administration and culture. However, the funding from the Commission is not a solution and the development of international cooperation shall not be based on it, but the networks established within the ERA-NETs shall be used and funding cooperation between national actors be established (cf. joint programming).

FP6 and FP7 ERA-NET cooperation and the Academy of Finland: participation and conditions

The Academy of Finland is an experienced actor in bilateral and multilateral international research programme cooperation. Collaborative programmes have been implemented, for example, in the form of joint calls, joint review processes as well as through funding for joint projects. There are no legislative obstacles for the Academy's joint funding of research abroad. Thus, from the very start, the Academy has

been well prepared for increased, broad-based and diverse programme cooperation, which is the target of the ERA-NET scheme.

ERA-NETs provide European research funding agencies with an opportunity to network. Cooperation between funding agencies has expanded and encompasses different personnel categories. ERA-NETs increase staff knowledge of the European research and innovation environment as well as of research funding agencies in other countries, their structures, instruments and activities.

Since 2004, the Academy has gained wide experience in ERA-NET cooperation. The Academy took part in a total of 16 ERA-NET networks launched within FP6. Many of the Academy's national research programmes (both ongoing and those being launched) have been linked to ERA-NET collaborative networks (see Appendix 1)

The Academy's Research Councils, when joining the ERA-NET network, were prepared in their budgets to fund joint international calls launched within the framework of ERA-NETs. Finnish research groups actively participated in the calls that were opened and also had success in them. Thus, the target set for the ERA-NETs to network national research activities with a view to creating, and later on, to reinforcing the European Research Area was achieved in that respect. With the introduction of FP7, a new challenge was faced by all European ERA-NET actors, that is, how to arrange the activities after the ERA-NETs.

Joint programming and FP8

The forthcoming Eight Framework Programme is expected to be based on four pillars: 1) European Research Council, ERC, 2) Researcher mobility, 3) Research infrastructures, and 4) Thematic programmes arising from societal needs. The focus will shift from project funding to programme funding. Coordination of research programmes and joint programmes will be strengthened in future. Finland shall influence the objectives and contents of future programmes and participate in and coordinate programmes that are of importance to Finland.

Networking and launching joint programmes on the European level is still in its infancy. Political consensus of the significance of research and development work for the future of Europe is widely recognised; the crises and changes that threaten Europe and the whole world call for joint efforts. The Commission has therefore proposed that research programme networks or jointly funded programmes shall be particularly important in the future ERA. In early 2008, the Commission published a communication entitled "*Towards Joint Programming of Research*", which opened an active EU debate on the issue. *Joint programming* stresses the importance of strategic cooperation among national actors in research programme funding.

Networking and opening up of programmes has also been extended to cover other than traditional research and technology programmes within the framework programmes. Networks have been established and joint research programmes have been launched through ERA-NETs as cooperation of national funding agencies. Likewise, some ERA-NET Plus projects have been launched through joint funding from national funding agencies and the Commission. INCO-NETs focus on entering into dialogue between the EU and third countries.

The cooperation forms of the European Science Foundation (ESF) will also be developed to contribute to networking and opening up international programmes (Forward Looks and EUROCORES). Also, on the Nordic level, various programmes (e.g. NORIA-net) will boost regional cooperation.

The benefits gained from ERA-NETs have been seen both nationally and internationally. The benefits range from gathering knowledge and know-how (access to knowledge of different research teams and programmes, learning to manage research programmes and new funding instruments, to improve the visibility of a certain discipline etc.) to the benefits of funding (a national budget is always smaller than a common budget) and to the benefits related to researcher resources (attaining critical mass, increased researcher mobility, access by researchers to multinational programmes) or to themes that are so extensive that no single country has the resources to research them. National actors may naturally sign, for example, bilateral or trilateral cooperation agreements with research funding agencies of different countries with a view to establishing research programme cooperation.

Finnish ERA-NET cooperation

At the national level, ERA-NET activities are coordinated and developed through cooperation between the Academy and Tekes, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation. In FP6, the Academy and Tekes together acted as the national contact point responsible for the ERA-NET instrument and also arranged national ERA-NET events for all Finnish organisations involved in ERA-NET networks. This was a means to network ERA-NET actors in Finland, making it possible for them to exchange experiences and discuss different forms of collaboration.

Within FP7, ERA-NETs no longer constitute a programme of their own, and accordingly, no national responsibility organ has been appointed. Both the Academy and Tekes are involved in their own ERA-NETs, some of which are also common to both. They cooperate, for example, in the preparation of joint international calls launched within ERA-NETs. Also, the Academy and Tekes annually arrange joint events with a view to increasing exchange of information. Besides Tekes and the Academy, also other Finnish actors participating in ERA-NETs are invited to attend these events.

2 The basis for the Academy of Finland guidelines plan for ERA-NETs

2.1 Academy of Finland International Strategy (2008)

The Academy's International Strategy for 2008–2015 includes, for instance, the following policy lines:

“Finnish research has to compete ever harder as it strives to maintain its position in the production and application of new research knowledge. The world's leading scientific powers will retain their lead in the coming years. New emerging scientific powers will significantly step up their research effort, and developing countries, too, will gain an increasingly prominent role in the future. One of the tools in the bid to change the power relations within the international research system is to invest further strengthening of the European Research Area.

The Academy of Finland works to develop research programmes in close collaboration with national and international funding bodies with a view to enhancing their impact and further reinforcing Finland's areas of scientific strength.

The Academy contributes to those ERA-NETs that benefit Finnish research, that support the Academy's strategic objectives and that promote the development and internationalisation of Finnish and European research. The Academy carefully weighs the advantages of participation in ERA-NETs and avoids overlap in the start-up of national and international programmes."

2.2 Academy of Finland's strategic objectives for ERA-NETs and participation criteria

The implementation document of the Academy of Finland International Strategy 2008–2015 states:

"International research programmes (ERA-NET Plus, Article 169, forthcoming European programmes, EUROCORES etc.) shall be joined selectively with a view to gaining synergy benefits but avoiding overlaps. The practices of these programmes shall be followed and adequate funding set aside (allowing for sufficient flexibility in terms of quantity and implementation).

All new research programmes shall be consistently internationalised (e.g. ERA-NET, NORIA-net, collaboration based on bilateral agreements etc.).

Adequate resources shall be allocated for international collaboration. Studies shall be conducted to determine the feasibility of extending ongoing programmes and opening several calls with a view to enhancing the impact of international cooperation.

[...]

An active effort shall be made to involve the non-European countries identified by the Academy as priority partners into ERA-NET and other networks."

In accordance with these strategy lines, the Academy will use ERA-NETs primarily as a tool for the long-term internationalisation of its research programmes. The Academy seeks to be proactive and serve as coordinator in international research programme cooperation focusing on projects that will generate added value to Finland and applying the know-how it has gained for the benefit of both Finnish research and the further strengthening of the European Research Area.

The common-pot funding mechanism has not been introduced as widely as originally expected. It is a funding mechanism in which funding agencies participating in a research programme launched within the ERA-NET network allocate their funding to a common 'fund', from which funding is granted, according to jointly agreed principles and administrative procedures, to projects selected to take part in the programme. In the development of genuine jointly funded programmes, this is, however, a key element, and the Academy supports its realisation in cases when the common-pot use can be expected to advantage and benefit joint programmes and the research community.

The Academy also supports the use of the 'Open Funding System' that has been proposed, among others, to be applied to new ESF EUROCORES programmes. In accordance with this principle, in addition to originally earmarked national funding, the participating agencies commit themselves to funding all highest-rated projects that should be funded on the basis of the total volume of the programme.

Agencies should also be prepared to cover the administrative costs of new research funding organisations possibly established on the bases of new ERA-NETs, without jeopardising the sufficient amount of funding to be earmarked for research.

In applying these principles, the role gained by the Academy as a reliable and esteemed cooperation partner will be further promoted and the Academy's visibility in international cooperation will increase.

2.3 Handling of ERA-NET initiatives and decision-making at the Academy on joining ERA-NETs

The criteria and objectives of participation vary between different ERA-NET networks. ERA-NETs may be targeted at establishing a network related to a discipline or a research field and a research programme arising from this network, or at stepping up cooperation with third countries, for instance. Besides launching totally new ERA-NET networks, regarding some ERA-NETs agencies may want to continue already established cooperation within a new ERA-NET network or an ERA-NET Plus project by expanding and further deepening cooperation.

The concrete form of ERA-NET initiatives varies, and the Academy receives them through different channels. It is important at an early stage to inform the Administration Office and the Research Councils of pending initiatives. The Programme Unit is responsible for the implementation of the Academy's research programme strategy and the ERA-NET guidelines, together with the Research Councils and other units of the Academy's Administration Office.

The Academy of Finland's objectives in participation in ERA-NET projects include:

- internationalisation of Finnish research and research environments;
- strengthening the level and diversity of Finnish research in areas that are important to science and/or society, where the number of Finnish researchers is low ('dead zones') and which have not as of yet reached an international level;
- establishing new joint research funding mechanisms;
- active participation in the European science policy debate and contributing to the development of European science policy;
- preparing for jointly funded research programmes on the European level in strategic focus areas;
- establishing collaboration contacts with other European research funding agencies and laying the foundation for future bilateral and multilateral joint projects;
- joint use of research infrastructures; and
- bench-marking of instruments of management, implementation and coordination of research programmes.

When considering the Academy's participation in ERA-NET cooperation and preparation of an application, it is important to assess the benefits of participation, at both the national and Academy level. The need of the Academy's own (particularly personnel) resources and the possibilities to implement the project shall be assessed realistically. In this assessment, answers to the following questions, for example, shall be investigated:

- Which long-term strategic objectives of the Academy/Research Council does the participation in the ERA-NET support?
- What benefits can the ERA-NET project be expected to offer to the Finnish research community/Finnish society/Europe and thus Finland as a whole (e.g. raising the level of research)?
- What special benefit and added value does the ERA-NET project generate for existing or future research programmes or other related actions?
- How does the ERA-NET promote and support cooperation with other national R&D funding agencies and/or programmes?
- How does the ERA-NET promote European and other international cooperation between research funding agencies?
- Most ERA-NET projects aim to plan a joint research programme. How does this affect the Academy's plans for future research programmes?

In the preparatory stages when participation in an ERA-NET initiative is assessed one can – and one must – distinguish between two aspects, the **science policy assessment** and the **administrative assessment**. In the science policy assessment, participation in the ERA-Net is considered in terms of the above mentioned questions. The administrative assessment involves taking into account the commitment of the Academy's responsible administrative unit and calculating the resources and costs as well as defining the staff and the responsible unit participating in the project. Both these assessments shall be carried out at the soonest possible after the Academy has received the initiative.

In the event that a decision is taken after the assessment to continue preparations for participation in the planning of the ERA-NET initiative, the initiative is presented to the respective Research Council/s and the Council/s make/s the strategic decision with justification on whether it/they commit/s itself/themselves to further planning the ERA-NET initiative or not. In this connection, it is important that the Research Council is prepared to fund a research programme that possibly results from this ERA-NET network. The Steering Committee of the research programme also presents its view on the initiative, particularly in cases when it links to the research programme or its theme. At this stage, the task of the working group (TUTOR) planning the Academy's research programmes is to form an opinion on how the proposed ERA-NET initiative ties in with the Academy's research programme and/or already existing ERA-NET cooperation.

The ERA-NETs launched within FP6 have now ended or are being completed or have entered or are entering their next stage. Some of these ERA-NETs are preparing either a new ERA-NET application or an ERA-NET Plus application. When participating in the next ERA-NET stages, the Research Councils and the Administration Office shall consider what new opportunities the continued and/or new-form participation has to offer to the Academy and the Finnish scientific community and what kinds of re-

quirements and expectations (personnel and financial resources) it poses to the Academy. When discussing this at the Academy, Appendix 3 (Planning ERA-NET participation) can be used where applicable. In this connection, a decision shall also be made on which unit shall be responsible for the continuing ERA-NET and how much personnel resources can be allocated for it.

The Academy's Vice President (Administration) makes the decision on and signs the application worth up to 1,000,000 euros, and if the amount to be applied for from the Academy is higher, the decision is made by the Academy's President.

2.4 Preparation and funding of research programmes resulting from ERA-NETs

Normally, the objective of the ERA-NETs is to plan and implement a joint research programme. It is therefore important at an early stage to calculate the volume of funding that will be required and to plan which budget years the funding will concern.

The Academy of Finland works to develop research programmes in close cooperation with international and national funding agencies with a view to enhancing their impact and further reinforcing Finland's areas of scientific strength. The Academy contributes to those international networks that benefit Finnish research, that support the Academy's strategic objectives and that promote the development and internationalisation of Finnish and European research. The Academy carefully weighs the advantages of participation in ERA-NETs and avoids overlaps in the start-up of national and international programmes. The Academy's Research Councils make their own priorities and strategic choices regarding their international activities.

In connection with long-term operating and financial planning, the Research Councils, the Research Council Units and the Programme Unit shall, together with the Vice President (Research), annually check the needs for funding arising from ERA-NETs and incorporate them into the financial planning documents. The TUTOR team shall deal with the issue when preparing a proposal for Academy programmes. In accordance with the Academy's International Strategy, sufficiently flexible research funding shall be allocated for international cooperation, which involves both the amount of funding and the realisation of funding (allocation of funding to those years when funding is actually needed). For example, the decision on the year of funding cannot be made unilaterally, but the timetables of the international programme shall be taken into account and it must be possible to schedule, if necessary, the Academy's funding in a flexible way according to the needs of the joint international research programme.

At the programme planning stage, the mandate to also negotiate the launching of international cooperation within research programmes provided by the Academy Board facilitates the charting and launching of international cooperation opportunities. The mandate allows for planning of the programme design and specification, negotiating the programme funding and thus improves readiness to joint transnational programme calls and funding cooperation, without being a procedure to be negotiated and funded separately and separate of research programme work.

2.5 Agreements connected to ERA-NETs and Academy staff responsibilities in ERA-NET cooperation

At the stage when the ERA-NET project coordinator is negotiating with the Commission, it is vital to carefully monitor possible changes to the Academy's funding share and the Academy's tasks. If it appears that the negotiations will lead to considerable changes, participation should be reconsidered. The Academy's representatives in the administrative bodies of the launched ERA-NETs shall at an early stage request that funding issues be discussed and that indicative budgets and funding plans be set up as well as inform the Academy and the Research Council responsible for the research theme in question.

The ERA-NET contract with the Commission is signed by the same decision-maker who decided on the applying for money (see above), on presentation by the responsible official.

A copy of all ERA-NET applications and contracts shall be forwarded to the Programme Unit, which is responsible for maintaining a database and archive for the ERA-NETs in which the Academy is involved. The key documents available in electronic format shall be saved in the document management system DocMan.

When the Academy acts as the coordinator in an ERA-NET application, the other participants are required to submit letters of intent by which they commit themselves to participating in the ERA-NET in the agreed way after funding is provided by the EU.

A consortium agreement should be drawn up for all ERA-NETs in which the Academy participates. This agreement is an approval of the administrative structure of the ERA-NET's collaborative network and other important administrative issues. It is desirable that the participants agree on a draft consortium agreement already at the application phase.

The participating funding agencies shall sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for each research programme resulting from an ERA-NET. The MoU shall include an agreement on the administrative procedures, the application and review process, follow-up, coordination and funding.

Annexes:

Annex 1. FP6 ERA-NET networks in which the Academy participated

Annex 2. Scheme for the processing of a new ERA-NET initiative

Annex 3. 'Planning ERA-NET participation' Form, incl. resources plan

Annex 1

FP6 ERA-NET networks in which the Academy participated

ERA-NETs coordinated by the Academy of Finland:

BONUS (for the Baltic Sea Science – Network Funding Agencies), 2004–2007,
Programme Manager Kaisa Kononen (coordinated as from 15 Dec 2007 by BONUS EEIG)

NORFACE (New Opportunities for Research Funding Co-operation in Europe – A Strategy for
Social Sciences), 2004–2008, Programme Manager Eili Ervelä-Myrreen

ERA-NETs in which the Academy is a partner:

CIRCLE (Climate Impact Research Coordination within a Larger Europe), 2005–2009, Unit Di-
rector Laura Raaska

CO-REACH (Co-ordination of Research between Europe and China), 2005–2009,
Unit Director Ritva Dammert

ERA-AGE (European Research Area in Ageing Research), 2004–2007,
Senior Science Adviser Anna-Liisa Kauppila

ERA Neuron (Europe's Neural Network)
Programme Manager Mika Tirronen

ERA-CHEMISTRY (Implementation of joint bottom-up European programmes in chemistry),
2004–2006, Science Adviser Sanna Carlsson

ERA-PG (European Research Area Plant Genomics), 2004–2007,
Senior Science Adviser Leila Häkkinen

ERA-SAGE (European Research Area on Societal Aspects of Genomics), 2005–2010,
Programme Manager Mika Tirronen – The project ends in 2008

HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area), 2005–2009,
Science Adviser Kustaa Multamäki

MarinERA, (National and regional marine RTD activities in Europe), 2004–2008,
Programme Manager Tuula Aarnio

MATERA, (Material Science and Engineering in Europe), 2005–2009,
Programme Manager Anssi Mälkki

NanoSci-ERA (NanoScience in the European Research Area), 2005–2008,
Programme Manager Anssi Mälkki

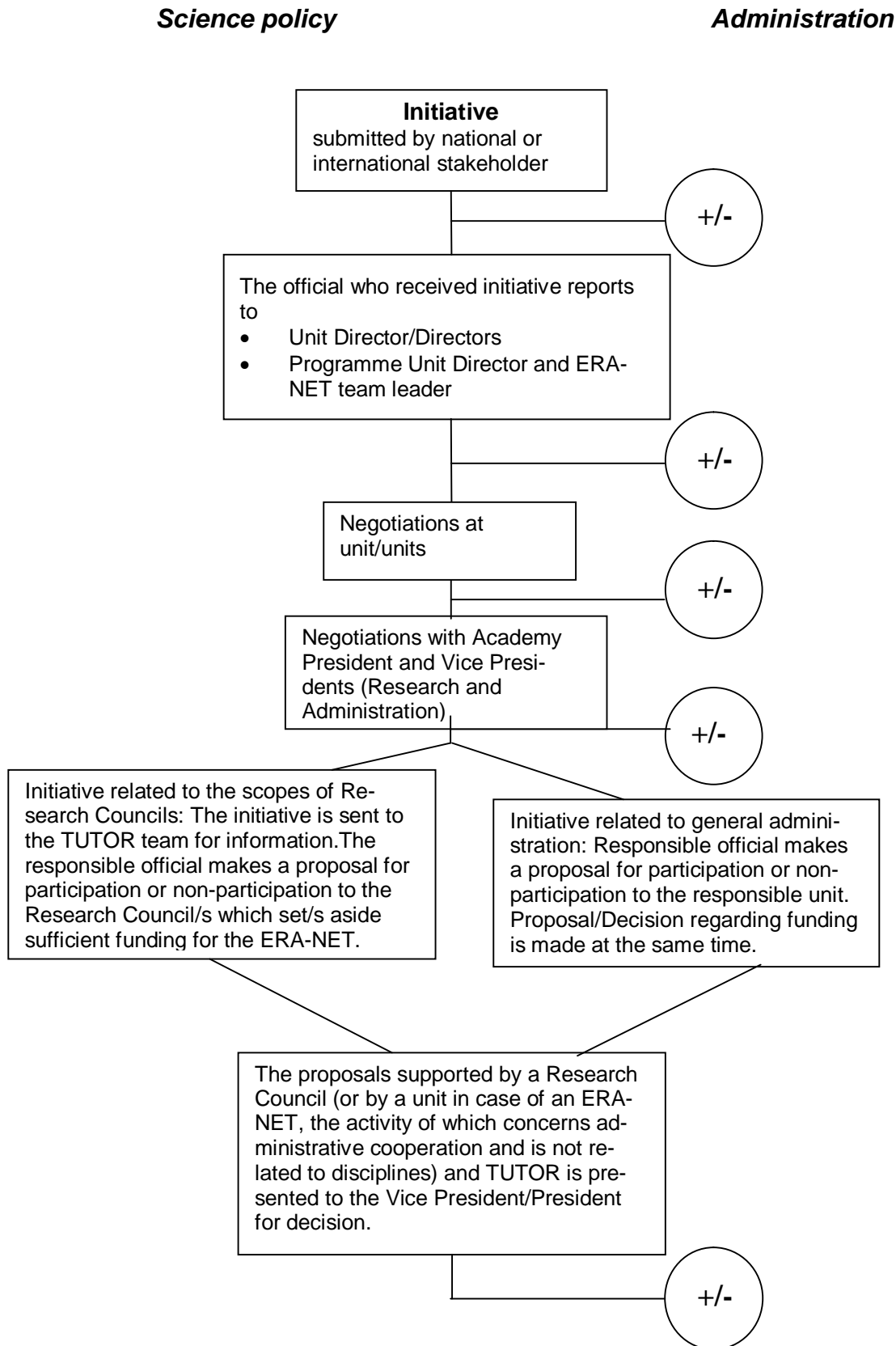
Pathogenomics (Trans-European cooperation and coordination of genome sequencing func-
tional genomics of human-pathogenic microorganisms), 2004–2009,
Programme Manager Sirpa Nuotio

ERASysBio, (Towards a European Research Area for Systems Biology), 2006–2009,
Programme Manager Merja Kärkkäinen

WoodWisdom-Net (Networking and Integration of National Programmes in the Area of Wood
Material Science), 2004–2007,
Senior Science Adviser Leila Häkkinen

Annex 2

Scheme for processing a new ERA-NET initiative. Also applicable to ERA-NET continuation projects and ERA-NET Plus projects



ACADEMY OF FINLAND
Form for planning ERA-NET participation

Annex 3 / (1)

Title and abbreviation of ERA-NET:
Related Academy research programme or other activity:
ERA- NET phase: New ERA-NET/continuation of ongoing ERA-NET/ ERA-NET Plus
Presenting official:
Reviewer: BY/KY/LT/TT/Administration Office **Date:**
Assessment: Shall participate /shall not participate /shall participate provided that ...
Decision-maker, decision and date:

Justification for participation in the ERA-NET
(or for not participating) (max. ½ page):

1 National benefits (benefits for Finland/the Academy from the project)

- a. Which long-term strategic objectives of the Academy does the participation in the ERA-NET support?
- b. What benefits can the ERA-NET project be expected to offer to the Finnish researcher community/Finnish society?
- c. What specific benefits does the ERA-NET project generate for existing or planned research programmes or other related activities?
- d. How does the ERA-NET promote and support cooperation with other national R&D funding agencies (Tekes, ministries etc.) and/or programmes?
- e. How does the ERA-NET promote European and other international funding cooperation?
- f. Most ERA-NET projects plan to implement a joint research programme. How does this affect the Academy's future research programmes?

2 Other participants (Finnish, EU and non-EU organisations) as well as their role (coordinator, partner, etc) in the ERA-NET

3 The Academy's task and responsibilities in the ERA-NET

Short description of the ERA-NET (max. ½ page):

- 1 Objectives**
- 2 Contents**
- 3 Duration and EU funding for the entire ERA-NET and as regards the Academy**

Background information:

- 1 Where has the initiative come from?**
- 2 To whom has the initiative been submitted?**
- 3 Which organisations are involved in the planning?**

Resources plan

Annex 3 / (2)**ERA-NET resources plan (excl. research costs)**

	Person-years		EUR	
	EU covers	AF cost	EU covers	AF cost
Salaries total				
New fixed-term personnel to be hired for the project				
Personnel at the Research, Programme or International Relations Units				
Support units (Administration, Service, Finance Administration and Communications Unit)				
Travels				
Equipment				
Subcontracting				
VAT <i>(NB! All VAT expenses in the project are costs to be covered by the Academy of Finland)</i>				
Other costs				
Overhead				
Total				

When necessary, please contact the Administration Unit or the Finance Administration Unit for more information.