



Coordination of national environment and
health research programmes

ERA-ENVHEALTH



Report on the management and scientific evaluation issues encountered during the first call



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Report on the management and scientific evaluation issues encountered during the first call

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1 Abbreviations and definitions

ABBREVIATIONS

- AFSSET:** French Agency for Environmental and Occupational Health Safety, France
- EEH:** ERA-ENVHEALTH project
- E&H:** environment and health
- ERA-NET:** The ERA-NET scheme is one of the principal means for the EC's 7th Framework Programme to support the co-operation and co-ordination of research activities carried out at national or regional levels. The scheme aims at strengthening the European Research Area (ERA).
- FP7:** 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission, a major public funding initiative for research and technological development in the EU
- NERC:** Natural Environment Research Council, UK
- VROM:** Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, the Netherlands

DEFINITIONS

Funding models¹:

Real common pot:	In the real common pot model, countries pool funds enabling the trans-national flows of funds as all researchers are funded only based on their success in the proposal evaluation.
Virtual common pot:	The virtual common pot enables countries and regions to pay for their own participants and there are no trans-national flows of national funding.
Mixed mode:	To answer occasional challenges arising from the use of the virtual common pot model, the mixed-mode was created to allow countries to pay for their own researchers and, occasionally, to pay for other countries' researchers.

¹ Netwatch: http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/index.cfm/static/mapping_2009.html#1_2



Approaches:

Letter/Expression of interest (EOI):	The organisation requesting an EOI may need to collect some additional information beforehand, such as the willingness and interest of the target group to participate in a call for proposals or tender; the terms and conditions of their participation; the amount of financial support participants would need to realise the goals, the number of interested teams, etc. At the same time, the EOI enables the eventual shortlisting of the most appropriate candidates.
Call for proposal (CFP):	The announcement defines the goals of the project in a general way, and specifies the framework of implementation of the objectives. The system is quite flexible with regards to the approach to understand and answer the needs. In general, the funding of a call for proposals takes the form of a grant. Calls for proposals are limited to a contribution to certain costs incurred by the beneficiary and forbid any profit. In general, the consortium has the ownership of the results, for example in the form of IPR (notwithstanding any specific requirements set out in the grant agreement as to the use and accessibility of the results).
Tendering:	The needs in terms of results are clearly defined, and the way to reach them is elaborated in cooperation with the selected consortium and the tenderer (the party ordering the work). A tender is used often for public procurement. A tender consists of the payment of a market price for results provided or services rendered. In most cases, the results of a tender will be owned by the tenderer.



2 Executive summary

ERA-ENVHEALTH is a network of 16 public research funding organisations from 10 European countries supporting scientific research in the field of environment and health. It was funded as an ERA-NET project under the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. It aims to network its partner organisations to develop sustainable collaboration in research funding, policy and practice, thereby creating added value in high quality environment and health research across national boundaries.

One of the activities of ERA-ENVHEALTH has been the organisation of a **first targeted call** for transnational research on the human health impacts of environmental change, funded by AFSSET (French), VROM (Dutch) and NERC (UK) partners. The theme for this first call was "Health vulnerability resulting from future climate change impacts on soil-water ecosystems, land use and water resources at regional scale".

Through its **evaluation**, the first call aims to provide recommendations for future transnational calls for research, and in particular for the design of a second joint call in the framework of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project. This evaluation concentrates on management and scientific evaluation issues encountered during the first call. The results are summarised in the present report.

The evaluation **tools** used for the assessment of the 1st call were based on a set of evaluation questions. The Term of References of the evaluation defined a list of questions, which have been gathered and reformulated into evaluation questions and judgement criteria. The evaluation questions were then ranked by the members of the Evaluation Steering Committee, formed by members of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project, members of the ERA-ENVHEALTH external advisory committee and the financing organisations.

The main information sources for the data collection process were: Analysis of documents and interviews with stakeholders, including an on-line questionnaire for the non-selected project holders. In addition, a benchmark study was carried out using the same tools (interviews and desk study). In total, 22 interviews took place, of which 4 face-to-face and 18 telephone discussions.

Based on the documents and interviews, the logical framework of the call (the objective tree, the impact diagram and the theory of action) was reconstructed. Assessing the links between these elements through the qualitative analysis provided better insight in the expectations and satisfaction of the stakeholders.

The **main findings** of the evaluation concerned, in first place, the procedural framework of the call. Some elements were unanimously found as positive, such as the functioning of the *Call Secretariat* with the support of the National Focal Points.



The *text of the call* was described as exhaustive, containing all the necessary elements for the submission of an eligible and good quality proposal.

The *selection process* was well established and enabled to choose the best projects in terms of scientific excellence, interdisciplinarity, novelty and project management. However, the policy orientation of the projects could be enhanced by requiring the involvement of the policy-makers in the realisation of the projects and by targeting the dissemination and use of the results. The composition and performance of the evaluation committee was highly appreciated, but at the same time the specific scientific expertise of the external peer reviewers were in some cases found to be not fully adapted to the special and interdisciplinary research fields.

Some *activities prior to the launch of the call* were found to be highly important for the smooth running of the process. These issues were confirmed by the benchmark study. First of all, the objectives of the financing organisations should be clearly expressed. In order to launch a common call, the goals of the policy oriented organisations have to be harmonised with those of the research financing bodies. This can concern issues such as the financing framework (tendering or call for proposals), or the type of research (applied or fundamental). Secondly, the definition of the research area targeted by the call should include all stakeholders in order to satisfy the needs of all users. And last but not least, the financing framework should be defined and formalised by a commitment document, such as a Memorandum of Understanding.

The *research activities* (and thereby the results) of the two selected and financed projects are currently underway. Programme managers consider that these scientific results will bring answers to some policy questions in terms of risk assessment of climate change impact on human health, with a special focus on pathogens on one hand, and on soil-water ecosystem changes related to organic contamination at a regional scale on the other hand.

The conclusions and recommendations of the report include elements highlighted by the benchmark study, in addition to the findings of the evaluation of the 1st call for proposals. As a general conclusion, all the project holders and stakeholders agree that the ERA-NET scheme is a good tool to finance transnational research projects, and an innovation between the national and European levels of research financing schemes. The transnational programmes target this niche, and provide appropriate support by applying the principles of subsidiarity. The added value of transnational calls in terms of project size was highlighted, as well as the synergic aspect of the budget: financiers provide some available funds and have access to all research results. With regards to the management, the call secretariat was mentioned as being essential for the efficient implementation of the calls.

Some *common difficulties* can also be identified in almost all ERA-NETs. The most important one was the setting up of a real common pot; as a matter of fact, mostly virtual common pots or mixed-mode pots exist. The “funders’ agreement” was



mentioned as a serious bottleneck in the cooperation in several calls. National agendas and strategies should be taken into account; therefore the definition of the research scope was also identified as a key point. The focus should be brought on applied research and less on fundamental research to answer financiers (policy-makers) needs. A limited number of financing partners (max 4-6) can ease the choice of topics and the definition of the financing rules. Finally, the dissemination of results was also stated as a key issue; however its execution is usually left to the research teams, and depends on the researchers.

As a **general recommendation** for a next call based on the findings of the present evaluation and completed by the benchmark study, a special framework was defined, using the 'A la carte' method. This framework allows the matching of several dimensions related to the call:

- *Choice of the research topic*
- *Number of partners financing a selected research area*
- *Financing approach (call for proposals or tendering)*

A strategic plan or an umbrella action plan can be elaborated jointly with all the involved stakeholders, defining the main research fields, and indicating, as much as possible, a schedule related to the different research areas or axes.

Based on this action plan, specific targeted calls can be launched for one of the axes depending on: the interested partners, the budget they can make available, and the objectives they express relating to the research results. The targeted calls can be launched one after the other or in parallel. The financing approach for the call can follow either the tendering type, or the call for proposals type, depending on the urgency and the specificity of the research results needed. The scheme has the advantage of providing a well elaborated framework, established by all the ERA-ENVHEALTH partners, and allows for a maximum of flexibility.

The stakeholder interviews and the discussions during the Evaluation Steering Committee meetings brought attention to the involvement and coordinating **role of the European Commission** regarding the calls through ERA-NET projects.

Programme managers and policy-makers expressed their needs to be informed about the existing research results in order to avoid double-financing. The issue is even more relevant, considering the continually narrowed national budgets for research and the economic crisis. This financial burden can be overcome with transnational calls by financing areas where no other financial resources are available. The willingness of the EC to harmonise research financing at the EU level is underpinned by the launch of the NETWATCH² website, collecting information on ERA-NETs. For instance, a guideline³ and an exhaustive checklist⁴ can be found in

² <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/>

³ http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/static/eralearn/manual_printable.pdf

⁴ ERA-LEARN checklist, Version Feb 2010. 2: http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/static/eralearn/checklist_printable.pdf



order to share experiences with the already accomplished calls⁵. However, ERA-NETs are funded as research projects and the question of their sustainability and the longevity of their call financing activities is raised, the continued funding of a secretariat being necessary.

⁵ <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/index.cfm/static/eralearn/overview.html>



3 Evaluation objectives and methodology

3.1 Objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation of the first call aims to provide recommendations for future transnational calls for research, and in particular for the design a second joint call in the framework of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project.

The evaluation of the call is a two-stage process. This *first part* of the evaluation is conducted on the first call before the launch of the second call. It concentrates on the management and scientific evaluation issues encountered during the first call. The results are summarised in the present report. The *second part* of the evaluation will concentrate on an impact assessment.

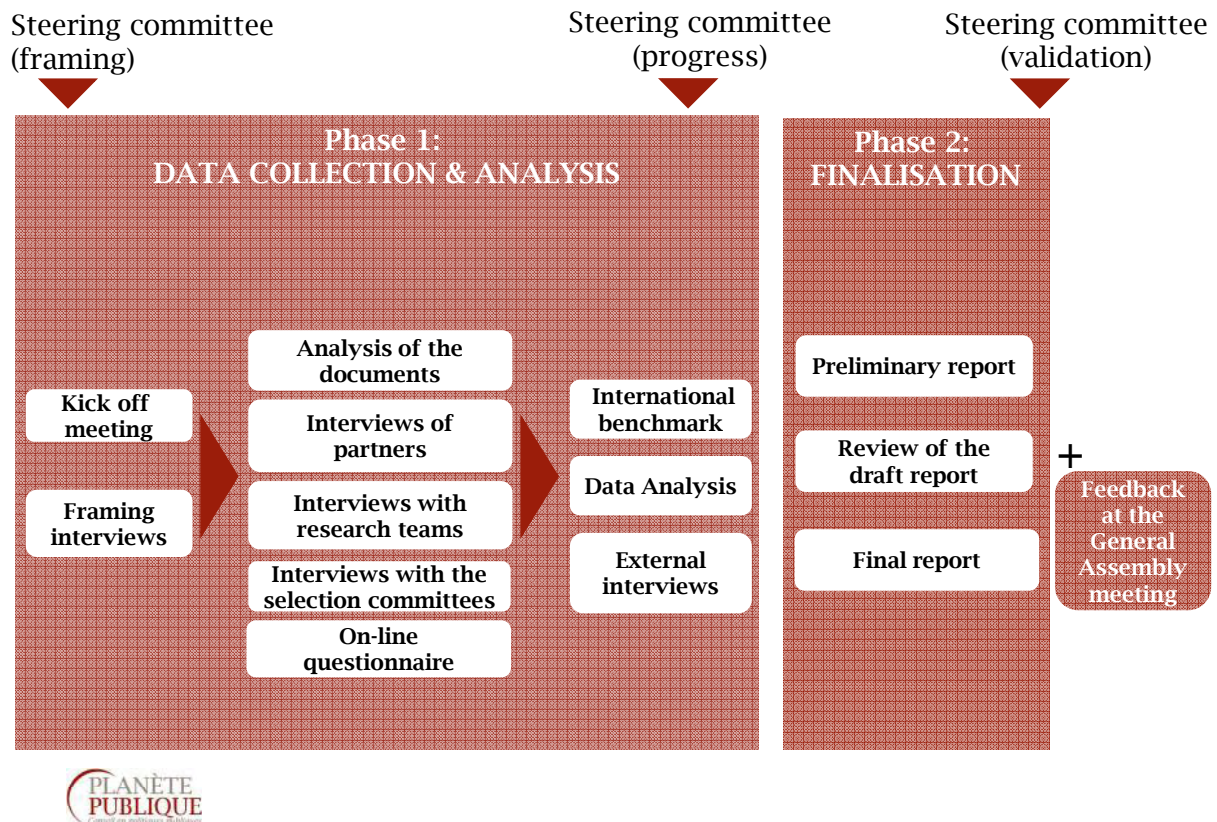
It is important to highlight that the first call is being evaluated two years after the launch of the call. Some of the stakeholders were not able to remember every detail, or were not available to share their experiences. In parallel, the selected and financed research projects are still underway, and not much can be said on their results, the dissemination of results and the use of the results. Finally, the nature of the evaluation of the call allows for a stronger qualitative analysis rather than a quantitative assessment.

Detailed description of the evaluation objectives is added in Annex 8.1.

The methodology of the present assessment is shown in Figure 1:



Figure 1. The evaluation process



3.2 Presentation of the tools

The Terms of References for the evaluation of the 1st call for proposals defined a list of questions, which have been regrouped and reformulated into evaluation questions and judgement criteria (see chapter 3.3). The evaluation questions were then ranked by the members of the Evaluation Steering Committee. The objective of the evaluation was to answer these evaluation questions by using different evaluation tools:

1. Analysis of documents
2. Interviews with stakeholders
3. Questionnaire
4. Benchmark study



Analysis of documents

Documents were provided by AFSSET regarding the ERA-ENVHEALTH project and its 1st call for projects on one hand, and on the other hand by collecting information on the internet concerning the benchmark study. Studying the documents is threefold: to understand the logic of the actions, to characterise the stakeholders and their relationships, and finally to describe the process. The list of documents used is presented in Annex 8.10.

Interviews with stakeholders

The first step was the identification of the stakeholders concerned by the call. In addition to the assessment of their satisfaction with the call, the evaluation investigates also the main motivations and objectives of the different stakeholders, which do not necessarily overlap.

The stakeholders involved in the process are defined as follows:

- Policy-makers or decision-makers: decision-makers of the EEH participating countries' public administrations, willing to use the research results of the financed research projects for evidence-based policy decisions.
- Programme managers: managers of research financing programmes of the research financing organisations.
- Financing partners: EEH members, who made available and pooled their financial resources for the launch of the 1st call for proposals.
- EEH partners: members of ERA-ENVHEALTH, who are not participating financially in the 1st call for proposals.
- External advisory committee: external experts, helping the EEH project by giving scientific and strategic advice. The committee is composed of members of organisations which foster the development and implementation of environment and health action plans, promote exchange of information and capacity building in environment and health and who are dependent upon an efficient utilisation of research results (end-users, academics, NGOs, etc.) in order to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the project.
- Beneficiaries: researchers targeted by the 1st call.

The roles of the stakeholders involved in the call are not always completely separate. One can be part of several stakeholder groups, depending on the situation or issue raised (AFSSET is considered as a programme manager and policy-making body at the same time, NERC represents a research financing organisation, in contrast to the partner unit from VROM, which acts as a more or less purely policy-making body).

Four face-to-face discussions and 18 phone interviews were carried out (22 in total); each of them took at least one hour. In some cases (around 20 % of the contacted



stakeholders), the organisation and the actual interview were more difficult than expected. This can be explained by the two-year gap between the launch of the call and the interviews.

The exhaustive list of interviewees is shown in Annex 8.2.

On-line questionnaire

An on-line questionnaire was elaborated for all the non-selected project holders who had responded to the 1st call for projects. The lead applicants as well as the scientific coordinators of the projects were solicited to answer. After several e-mail requests, 2 out of 8 participants answered. This lack of interest can be explained by two main reasons: first, the holders of the non-selected projects could feel some disappointment towards the call. Secondly, the elapsed time reduced the already low level of interest. This limited number of responses reduces the quality of the data gathered through this questionnaire.

International benchmark

The goal was to compare the EEH call to other ERA-NETs and other similar programmes. The choice of the benchmark was made according to the topic of research, the process, the participating countries and the public bodies responsible for the topic. ERA-NETs were studied⁶ and the SKEP project was investigated in more depth through desk research and several phone interviews. In addition, the NETWATCH database⁷ was used, and some studies from the European Commission⁸ and the Finnish Environment Institute⁹ were analysed.

3.3 Evaluation questions, judgement criteria

The objective of the use of *evaluation questions* is to structure the data collection work and to design the evaluation report. They are used to facilitate the learning interactions (formative approach) on one hand, and on the other hand, they are used to frame the judgement of the experiment as a whole (summative approach). Questions are mainly directly derived from the logical framework of the intervention.

⁶ Non exhaustive list, see the documents used in Annex 8.10: SKEP website and documents (e.g.: A comparison of European and North American approaches to the management and communication of environmental research, Decision making, Selection, etc), SNOWMAN call evaluation report, BONUS cook book, other ERA-NET websites, etc.

⁷ NETWATCH is a European Commission information platform on transnational R&D programme collaboration, with a current focus on the ERA-NET scheme. It provides information on Joint Calls, and gives analysis and evidence of the impact of programme collaboration and describes their scope and results. It also supports mutual learning among transnational programme networks. More information can be found on the website launched in February 2010 by IPTS: <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/>

⁸ ERA expert group report (2008), ERA Partnership 2008 Initiatives, ERA-NETs on Stage (Annual ERA-NET Event report), FP6 ERA-NET Study (June 2009) - Summary of the Impact Assessment Study of the ERA-NET scheme under the Sixth Framework Programme, Optimising research programmes and priorities, Report of the ERA Expert Group (2008), The ERA new Perspectives: Green Paper (2007)

⁹ Analysis of ERA-Net experiences and recommendations for good practices, Finnish Environment Institute (2009)



The evaluator, after reformulation and aggregation of the evaluation questions into core questions, developed the specific evaluation tools, such as questionnaires and interview guidelines for face-to-face and phone interviews.

Judgement criteria were used to facilitate responding to the evaluation questions. The purpose of their use was to improve transparency by making the judgement explicit. They helped structure the answers to the questions formulated. One or more judgement criteria were derived from each question.¹⁰

The table in Annex 8.3 summarises the evaluation questions, core questions and the related judgement criteria, which were selected based on the ranking of the Evaluation Steering Committee members.

¹⁰ European Commission EuropeAid evaluation methodology and tools,
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/methods/mth_cri_en.htm



4 Presentation of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project

4.1 The ERA-ENVHEALTH project and the first call for projects

ERA-ENVHEALTH aims to network its partner organisations to develop a lasting collaboration in research funding, policy and practice, thereby creating added value in high quality environment and health research across national boundaries. One of the activities of ERA-ENVHEALTH is the organisation of a first targeted call for transnational research on the human health impacts of environmental change, funded by AFSSET, VROM and NERC.

ERA-ENVHEALTH is a **network** of 16 public research funding organisations from 10 European countries supporting scientific research in the field of environment and health. The network is funded as an ERA-NET project under the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development.

4.2 Objectives of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project and the 1st call

The objectives of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project are, on one hand, to develop an effective coordination mechanism in order to finance environment and health related research projects and on the other hand, to support evidence-based policy-making through the enhanced use of research results, in particular those of the co-funded research projects.¹¹

In order to define the scope of the evaluation, the logical framework of the project or programme should be set. In the evaluation context, diagrams were used to reconstruct this intervention logic. The reconstructed logic was shaped into logical diagrams (or logical trees)¹²:

- First, the stated objectives had to be described and prioritised → **objectives tree**
- Then the intended impacts were demonstrated following a classification of priorities → **impacts diagram**
- Finally, the diagram of action was developed illustrating the logical link between the activities and the defined goals → **diagram of actions**

¹¹ Aims and objectives from the project site:

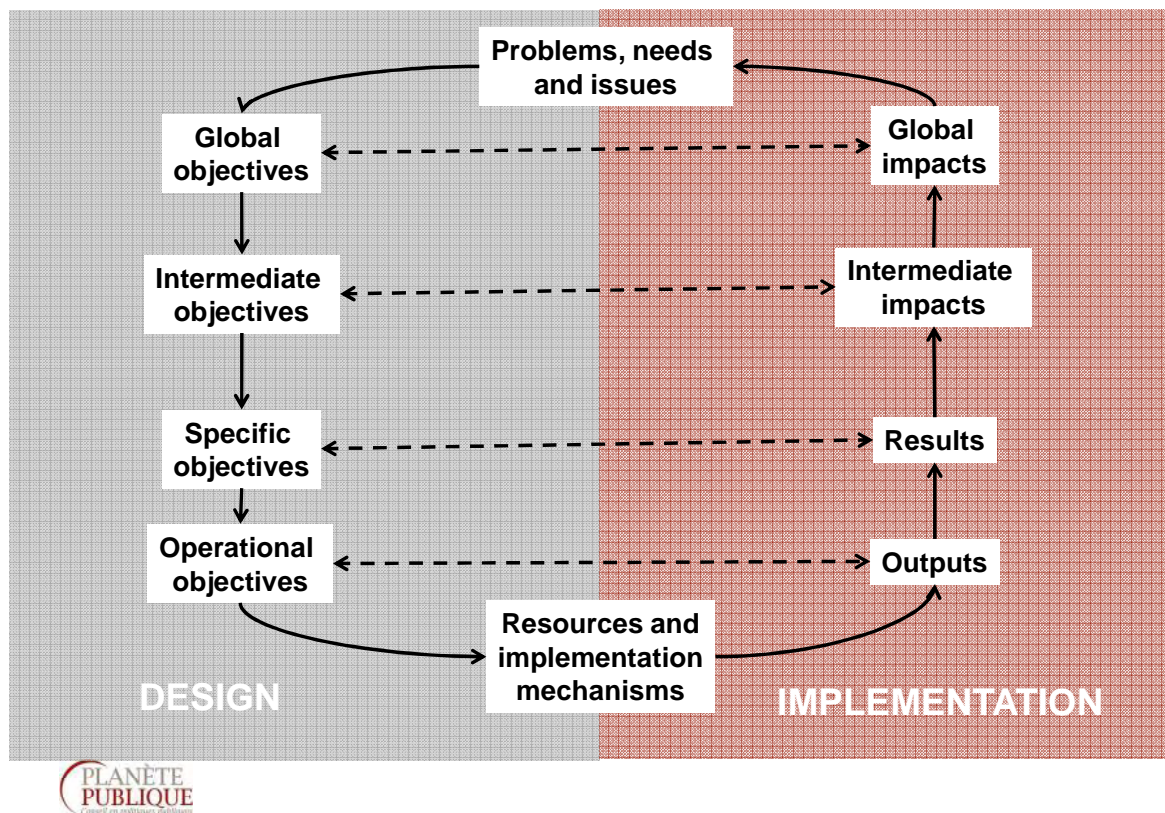
<http://www.era-envhealth.eu/servlet/KBaseShow?sort=-1&cid=23174&m=3&catid=23177>

¹² European Commission EuroAid evaluation methodology and tools,

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/tools/too_obj_som_en.htm

The objectives are classified, from the general ones to the intermediary and finally the most specific ones. The classification of impacts obviously follows an inverse order as shown in Figure 2:

Figure 2. Scheme of programme design and implementation, classification of objectives and effects

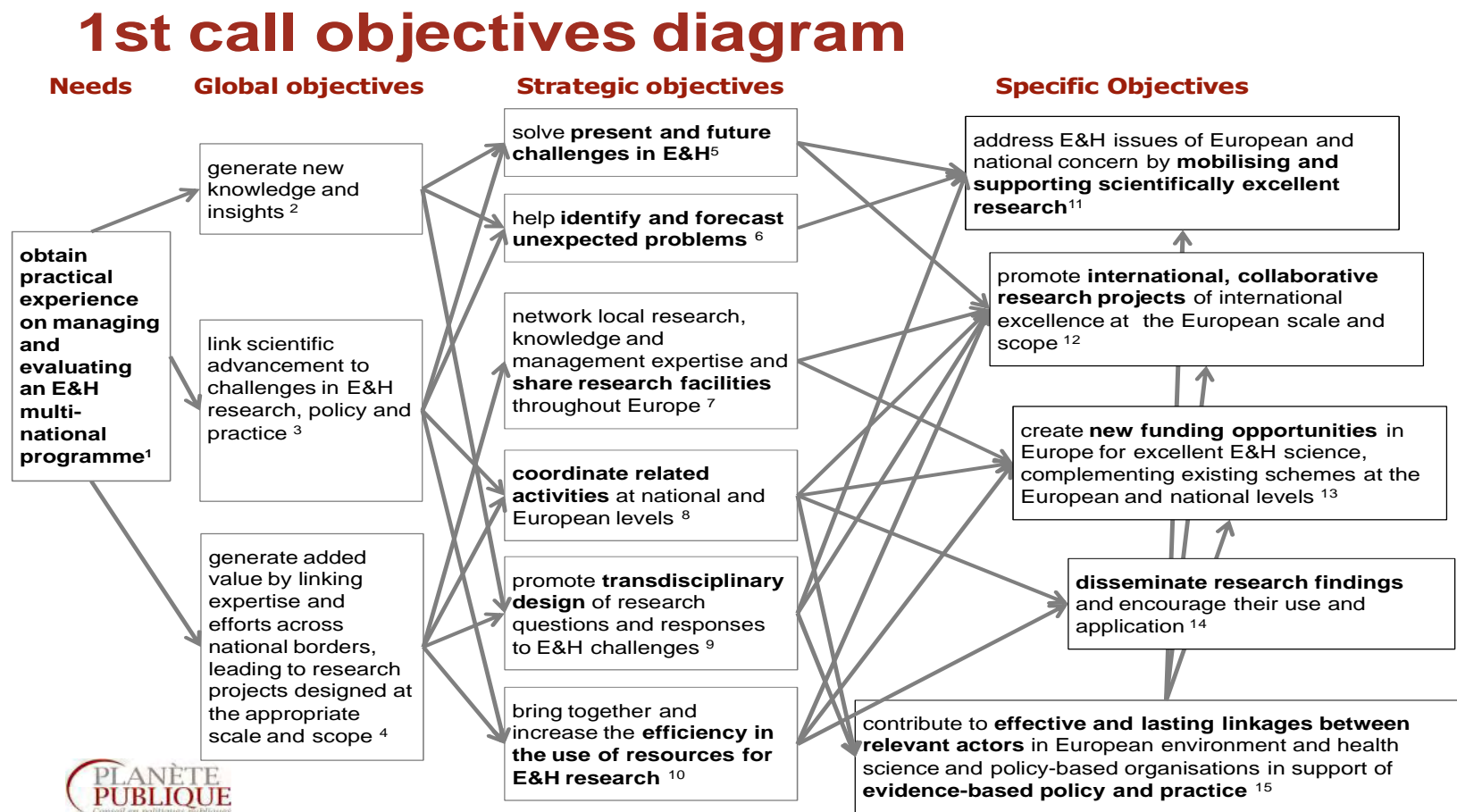


The **objectives diagram** shows the *aims and operational objectives* targeted by the programme. It illustrates the objectives classified from the global to detailed operational level. Logical links are represented in general from the broader objectives to the more specific ones, and, in some cases, links between the same levels of objectives can be established as well.

In this case, the objectives of the overall ERA-ENVHEALTH project have to be distinguished from the objectives of the transnational call for research proposals. The scope of the present evaluation is limited to the call. However, the objectives of the call, as part of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project should cover ideas for the overall project objectives. For this reason, the objectives tree of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project (see in Annex 8.4), as well as the one related to call for projects (Figure 3) were elaborated.



Figure 3. Objectives diagram of the 1st call for research proposals



See the references for each objective in Annex 8.6.



As demonstrated in the diagram above (Figure 3), this joint call aimed to allow the best researchers across Europe to link up with their peers in ways different from those currently possible within the available European and national funding schemes. The call for projects addressed present and future challenges in the field of environment and health. The funders intended to create new possibilities to network local research, knowledge and management expertise and share research facilities throughout Europe through the call. An increase of efficiency in the use of resources for environment and health research was expected. At the same time, transnationality and interdisciplinarity were considered highly important for the projects, by promoting new and hopefully sustainable collaborations between research teams.¹³

The identified *main goals* are:

- Create enhanced cooperation between the research fields of environment and health (**interdisciplinarity**).
- Allow the financing of research projects of international excellence at the **European scale and scope** (address the common climate change and health issues through common solutions).
- Facilitate the (effective and lasting) **cooperation** of research teams on a **transnational** level.
- Provide **decision-makers** with appropriate information (research results) in support of evidence-based policy and practice in the area of climate change and health on the national and European levels.
- Create and test a new funding scheme (**pilot process**).¹³

Impact logic

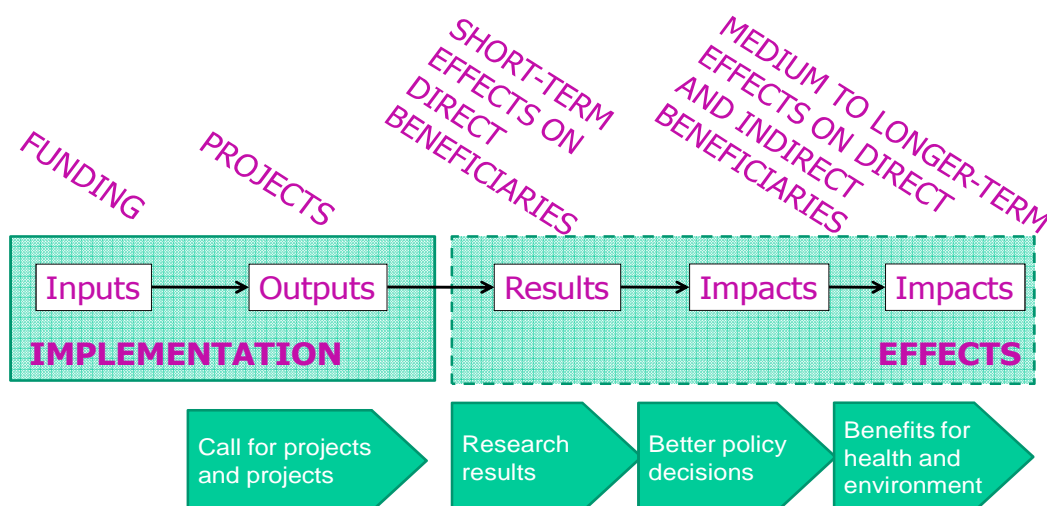
The *impact diagram* displays the classification of the outputs (financed research projects and research results), outcomes (short-term effects on direct beneficiaries) and impacts (medium- and long-term effects on both direct and indirect beneficiaries) of what is intended from the implementation of the objectives system, as represented in Figure 4. Each level of impact matches with a level of objectives. They can be defined as:

- Output: direct result of the actions, result of the operational objectives.
- Outcome: result for the beneficiaries of the output. Corresponds to specific objectives.
- Specific and intermediate impacts: realisation of the specific and intermediate objectives.
- Global impact: matches with the global objectives.

¹³ 'Description of Work' of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project (17th DOW 23-09-08)

The illustration of how to match these impact levels with the impacts of the 1st call is given in Figure 4:

Figure 4. Scheme of impacts



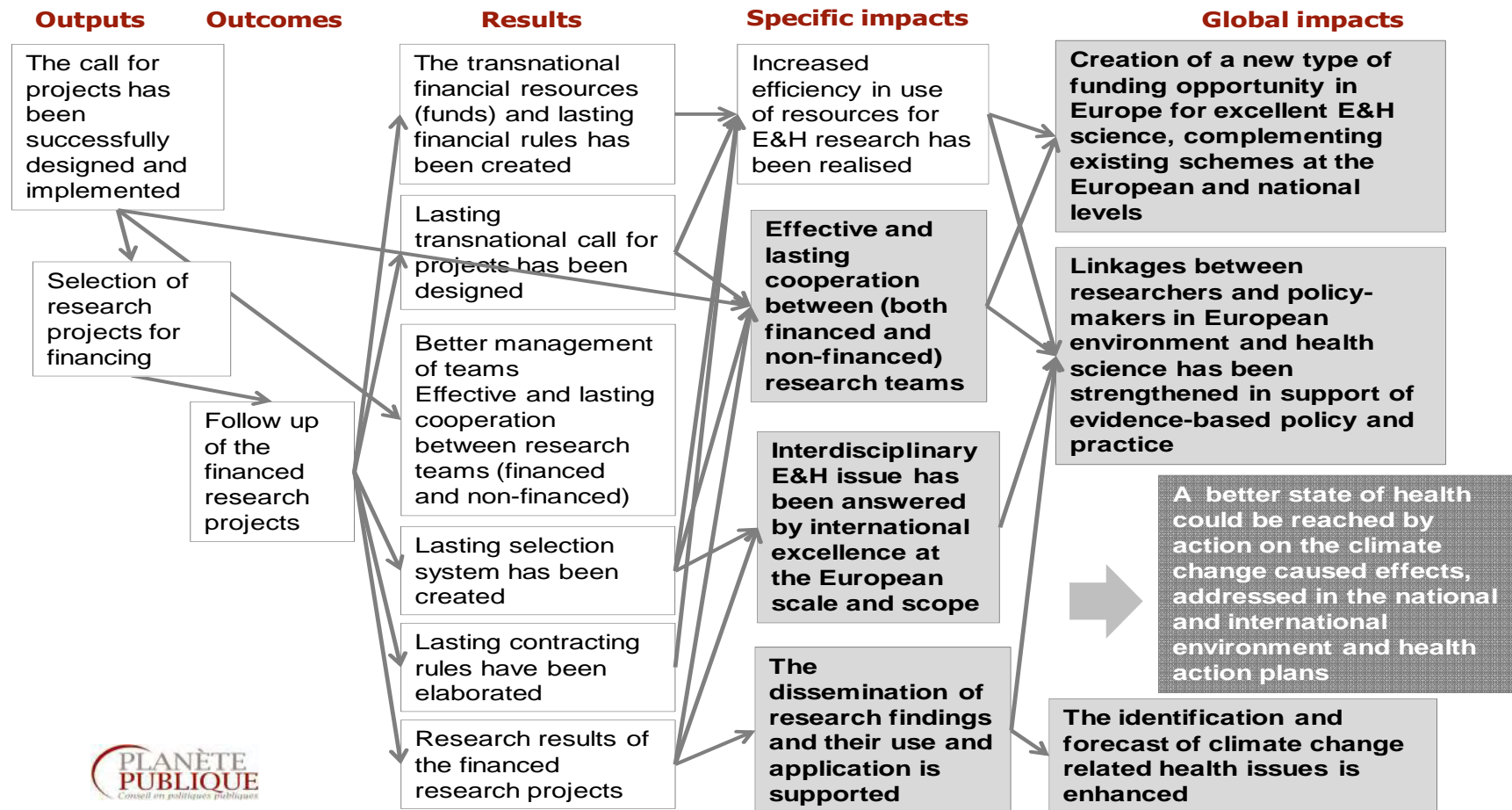
The intended *impacts* of the call are:

- **On the short-term**, the selected projects are achieved.
- **On the medium-term**, the financed research results allow for better policy-making in the field of environment and health.
- **On the long-term**, existing funding opportunities are complemented at the European and national levels.
- The efficiency of the use of resources for environment and health research is increased.
- Research projects of international excellence are implemented by effective and lasting research cooperation.
- A better state of health could be reached by action on the climate change caused effects, addressed in the national and international environment and health action plans.

These mentioned impacts were classified from the immediate to the long run ones, and represented in a structured way (Figure 5). The diagram was completed with logical links between the impacts, demonstrating the extent to which the realisation of the given goal was enhanced by the previous ones.



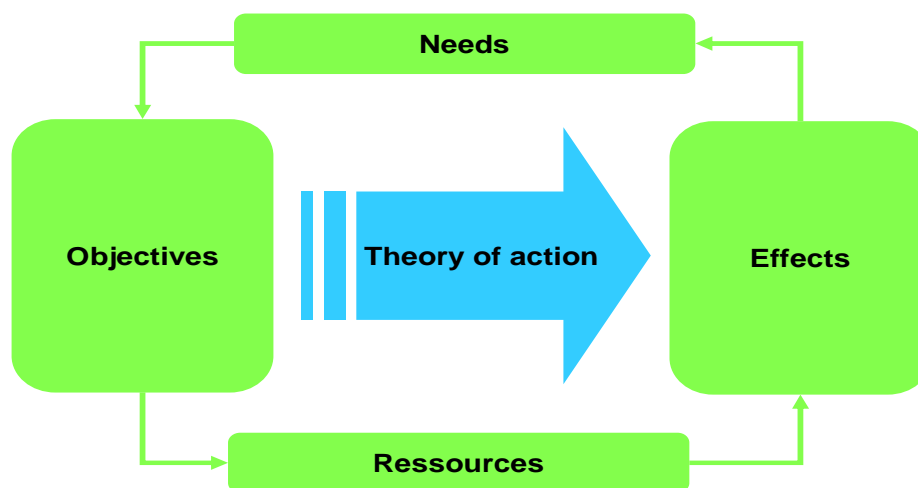
Figure 5. Diagram of impacts of the 1st call for projects of ERA-ENVHEALTH



Theory of action of the 1st call for projects

The **theory of action** highlights the *way* in which the measures or actions of the programme are expected to act in order to reach the goals, by defining the objectives-impacts causality relationship.

Figure 6. Theory of action



Four types of *causality* are identified¹⁴:

- **Linear**: the known cause and the public action mechanically lead to an expected effect.
- **Circular**: the cause is known, but the public action leads to several effects.
- **Recursive**: the impact of several, unpredictable individual decisions is relatively predictable.
- **Irreversible**: the impact of the action is non-reversible in the future. For example closing of a factory due to the local economical policy.

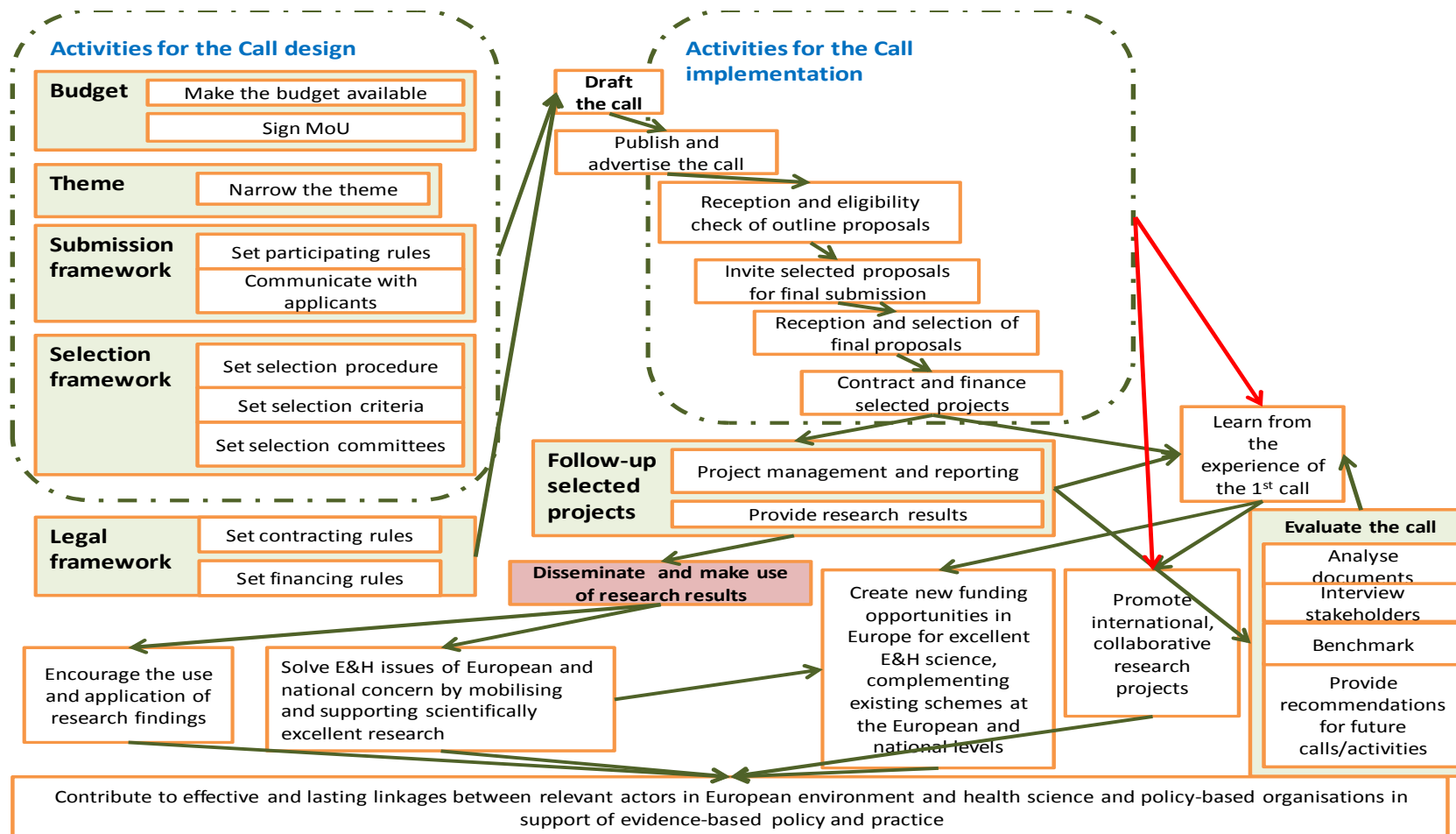
The causality relationship of the objectives-effects in the case of the call for projects of ERA-ENVHEALTH was more likely to be a *circular* type. Some effects of the call were not predictable, such as the eventual competition of the transnational call with national research financing systems, or the eventual composition and proposition of projects of “free rider” research teams.

The actions linking the impacts are represented in Figure 7:

¹⁴ Marielle Berriet-Sollic, Denis Lepicier, Claire Tourmen, Pauline Landel (AgroSup Dijon – CESAER): Analyse des politiques publiques : quels apports à l'évaluation? ; Presentation at 9^{èmes} Journées Françaises de l'Evaluation Marseille, 11 & 12 Juin 2009; Société Française d'Evaluation



Figure 7. Actions and impacts of the 1st call for research proposals





5 Procedural description and analysis of the 1st call

The section summarise the activities related to the design and implementation of the call, comparing the differences in the practice of the three financing organisations. The activities can be divided into two main groups:

- The actions taken before the launch of the call under the category of “Call design”: includes the important preparatory steps allowing the launch and realisation of the call, but they are not necessarily carried out before the announcement of the call.
- The 2nd group of activities is related to the implementation of the call.

The scheme of the actions is represented in Figure 7.

The financing partners had to deal with differences in their normal processes and harmonise their activities in the framework of this transnational call. The following Table 1 shows the constraints met by the partners:

Table 1. Comparison of the 3 financing organisations

Aspects and/or Restrictions	NERC	AFSET	VROM
Topic	Exclusively environment	Environment AND Health, risk assessment	Soil and water
Financing rules	Only UK participants	No restriction	No restriction
Availability of the money	OK	OK	Available, but not in the partner unit
Spending restriction	Quinquennial resources, to be spent before the following March	Resource annual, to be spent before December of the same year	Occasional. This time it was possible to spend only after October of the same year
Starting rules of the selected projects	6 months to decide on the start of the project from the reception of notification letter	To be defined in the financing contract	n.a.



Budget

Make the budget available

For this call a total amount of € 3M was provisionally reserved by the participating partner organisations, AFSSET, VROM and NERC (about 1M€ for each funding partner). The final distribution of the funding depended on the proposals selected. The partner unit from VROM had to solve some internal organisational issues related to the availability of the money after the launch of the call (the budget was dedicated to another unit), and their part of the budget became disposable in spring 2010.

Sign the Memorandum of Understanding

Once the agreement between the financing parties was set, the partners decided to sign a commitment document, in order to ensure their engagement. A Memorandum of Understanding was endorsed first by AFSSET in March 2008, NERC in December 2008 and finally VROM in April 2010.

Scientific theme

The selection of the research area of the call was an iterative process, starting with the preparation of a first ERA-NET proposal submitted in 2005. The partners agreed to launch a call in the field of health and environment, and defined four main areas at a meeting in March 2007 for the second proposal submission:

- climate change
- indoor air quality
- children's health
- cost-benefits analysis

out of which climate change came as a priority. In September of the same year, the partners decided to launch the call outside of the ERA-NET framework due to budget reduction requirements by the European Commission during the contracting negotiation, and to the fact that the money was available for 2008 and had to be spent soon.

They decided to involve external experts to define a narrower scientific scope of the call. Based on the three financing partners' decision, the 1st call was finally launched out of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project in April 2008 on the topic of ***Health vulnerability resulting from future climate change impacts on soil-water ecosystems, land use and water resources at regional scale***. The Commission signed the ERA-ENVHEALTH contract in December 2008.

Funding

In principle, each participant in a supported project was funded by (and contracted with) its national organisation participating in the call. NERC could only finance the subprojects or teams based in the UK, through one contract. AFSSET and VROM



could share the funding of the remaining teams after a bilateral decision. The funding partners attempted to ensure that the top-ranked proposals were funded to the maximum extent possible. Eligible costs were governed by national regulations.¹⁵

The ERA-ENVHEALTH 1st call for proposal used the virtual common pot. It could have been possible to change to the mixed-mode pot financing with the budget left after the selection of the 2 financed projects. From the side of AFSSET and VROM no organisational constraints were expressed against the financing of teams with different nationalities. At the same time the general observation is that decision-makers and budget owners prefer to see the support of their own countries' teams.

Call management

A joint Steering Committee was composed of one mandated representative from each partner participating in the call. The Steering Committee was responsible for the practical implementation of the call and was assisted in this task by the Call Secretariat. The Call Secretariat consisted of delegated staff from those partners in the ERA-ENVHEALTH network funding the call coordinated by NERC. The secretariat was responsible for organising the procedure and for all communication with the applicants. Each participating partner indicated a national contact person, whom the applicants could contact to enable an effective implementation of the call (taking national rules and procedures into account, as for example the eligible costs).¹⁶

Procedure for proposal submission

The application process had two stages:

- The first stage was the submission of **outline proposals** by email to the Call Secretariat, submitted in English using the application form downloadable from the NERC website. The use of the form was mandatory with rejection in case of deviation from the designated format.
- The second stage in the process was the submission of full proposals. Applicants with successful outline proposals had been notified following the Evaluation Committee decision. The deadline for reception of full proposals was approximately 6-7 weeks from the date of notification of a successful outline proposal. Full proposals had to be submitted in English and made using the Research Councils' Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system. The time required for full registration could take up to three months, so applicants needed to start the registration process before knowing the outcome of their outline proposal. Non-UK applicants were not required to register.^{17,18}

¹⁵ Funding model (ERA-ENVHEALTH Annex 4 - Funding model FINAL.doc, provided by AFSSET)

¹⁶ ERA- ENVHEALTH Annex 6 – Secretariat procedures FINAL, document provided by AFSSET

¹⁷ The 'Call for proposals' document (ERA- ENVHEALTH Call for proposals.doc, provided by AFSSET)

¹⁸ Annex B to the Call: Guidance on registering and submitting with Je-S (ERA- ENVHEALTH Annex 1 - additional info.doc, document provided by AFSSET)



The Lead Applicant had to be a UK partner due to NERC's funding constraints, and the Principle Investigator (scientific leader of the consortium) could be a different organisation from a different country.¹⁹

Selection procedure

As a mandatory first step in order to be able to participate in the overall call process, **outline proposals** were submitted from the interested research teams. The outline proposals were screened for eligibility and evaluated against formal criteria by the call secretariat. Then the independent, international Evaluation Committee²⁰ should have evaluated and ranked the outline proposals. Due to the limited number of the pre-proposals (10), this step of evaluation and ranking was skipped and all the pre-proposal holders were invited to submit full proposals.

The submitted **full proposals** were sent for international peer review, and then anonymised reviews were sent back to the applicants for comment/rebuttal.

The Evaluation Committee *moderated the assessments* provided by the peer review procedure (review reports and rebuttal) and ranked the full proposals. The Evaluation Committee *recommended* the top-ranked proposals for funding, and indicating a cut-off point (below which proposals were considered of insufficient quality given the purpose of the call and the selection criteria).

As a final step of the selection process, the *funding partners decided* jointly to fund the top-ranked proposals based on the ranked list and the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee. This decision was taken by the joint Steering Committee.

Eligibility and selection criteria

Following the eligibility check²¹, the proposals were evaluated against the selection criteria of the call (see Annex 8.7).^{22,23}

Outline proposal stage: Initially, the pre-proposals were supposed to be assessed against the scientific and added value criteria²⁴, but finally only an eligibility check

¹⁹ Annex 3 to the Call, Guidelines for applicants (ERA- ENVHEALTH Annex 3 - Full proposal form - Part B FINAL.doc, provided by AFSSET)

²⁰ The Evaluation Committee consisted of individuals with high level of personal expertise enabling them to assess the quality of the applications of the 1st call. The role of the Evaluation Committee was to advise on the selection of the best projects by advising on the referees for the assessment of full proposals, and based on the assessment process, providing summary for the Selection Committee (formed by the financing organisations).

²¹ Proposals had to meet the following criteria in order to be able to participate in the selection process:

- international, scientific research projects performed by eligible research organisations [national eligibility criteria apply to research organisations and for participation by the private sector (profit and non-profit)];
- the main applicant is employed by a public organisation in one of the countries represented by the ERA-ENVHEALTH partners funding the call;
- the work must involve research groups from the UK, France and the Netherlands, and may involve groups from other European member states;
- maximum duration of the project is 3 years;
- the scope or scale of the proposed research exceeds a single country.

²² Assessment criteria (ERA- ENVHEALTH Annex 5 - Assessment criteria FINAL.doc, provided by AFSSET)

²³ Ranking of full proposals (ERA- ENVHEALTH Annex 7 - Guidelines Evaluation Committee FINAL.doc, provided by AFSSET)



(see above) was carried out, and all the 10 teams were invited to submit full proposals.

Full proposal stage: the submitted full proposals were assessed against the three main aspect of evaluation: scientific, added-value and management criteria. The full proposals were evaluated and peer reviewed by external referees, followed by the applicant's response to the review (rebuttal). Based on this process, the Evaluation Committee ranked and recommended proposals for the Steering Committee in a written summary explaining its decision. The policy-relevance of the top-ranked proposals was then discussed at this stage.^{25,26}

Project management and reporting

The administrative rules of the relevant funding organisation were applied, although general reporting requirements are standardised across countries: yearly interim reports and a final report are required.

²⁴Three assessors among the Evaluation Committee were selected in order to provide written assessment/comments on the outline proposals to the Committee. Feedback was provided to applicants and could then be taken into account before submitting the full proposals.

²⁵ The Evaluation Committee (ERA- ENVHEALTH Annex 6 - Secretariat procedures FINAL.doc, provided by AFSSET)

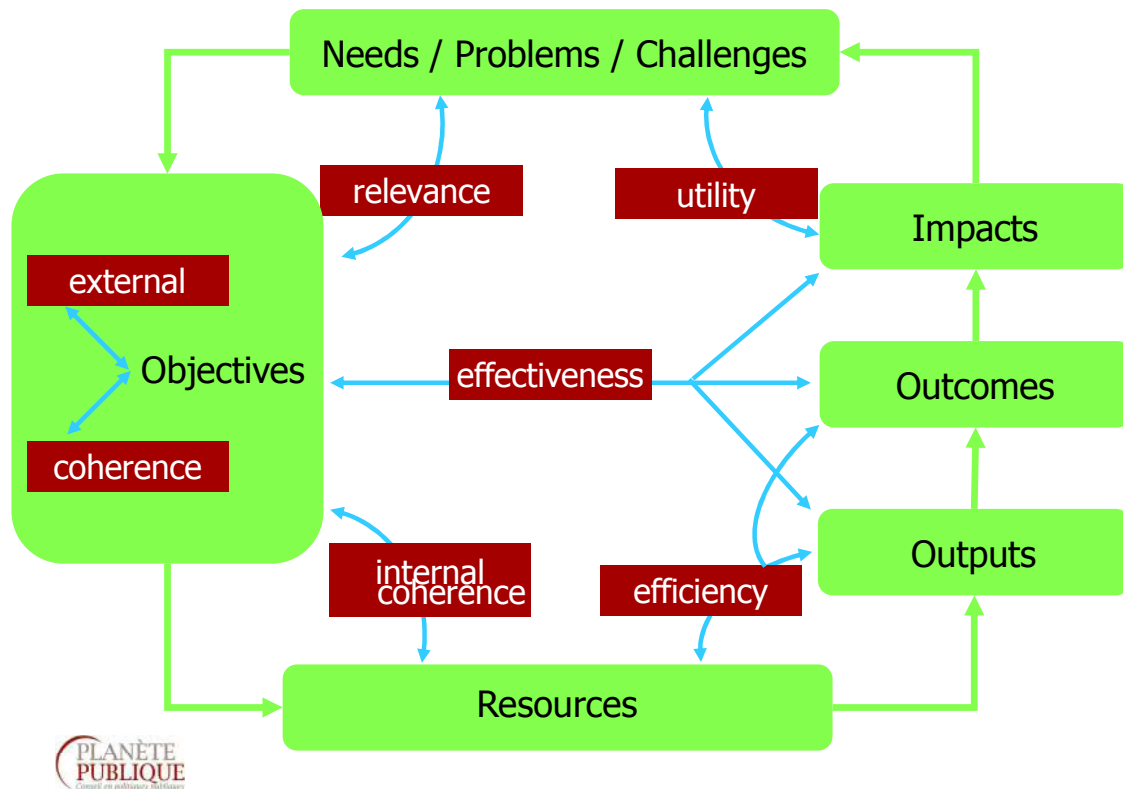
²⁶ Referee's assessment criteria (Assessment Criteria for Assessment form.doc, provided by AFSSET)

6 Answers to the evaluation questions

In this section, the evaluation questions were regrouped and classified according to the evaluation criteria. The *evaluation criteria* explain the link between the needs, objectives, resources and results of the process, as it is shown in Figure 8.

Each section of the answers to the evaluation questions starts with the definition of the evaluation criteria. The structure related to each evaluation question includes the list of the related judgment criteria, followed by a detailed answer, and finally completed by a short summary to wrap up the findings.

Figure 8. Evaluation criteria





1. Relevance

Relevance is the extent to which programme objectives respond to the problems and needs to be solved, taking into account the fact that they may evolve during implementation.

1.1. To what extent do the project proposals reflect the expectations, needs and objectives expressed by the programme managers through the first call for projects?

Judgement criteria:

- *The expectations in terms of answers to the call of the funders are met*
- *The expectations of the funders in terms of quality of consortium are met*
- *The needs and objectives of the call should be met through selected proposals*
- *The needs and objectives of programme managers are met by the topics raised by the project proposals*
- *The objectives of selected projects are usable for programme managers and policy-makers*

The expectations in terms of answers to the call of the funders are partially met. The main divergences in the objectives of the financing partners reflect on one hand the differences between the needs of a policy-making/regulating organisation and a research financing body. On the other hand, national and organisational goals were brought to the participation in the call:

- NERC: was willing to enlarge the pre-existing national programme on capacity building through the transnational aspect. In addition, NERC considered the call as a pilot process for next calls.
- AFSSET: wished to enhance the involvement and visibility of French research teams of E&H field at the international and EU scale. At the same time, AFSSET considered the call as an opportunity to make the organisation better known and recognised in the field of research financing organisations in the EU. Finally, the same procedural expectations were expressed as NERC, considering the call as a pilot process.
- VROM: considered the call as a tool to bring scientific answers to policy-makers on the health impact of climate change on a European scale, being in favour of the tendering process to achieve their goals. In addition, VROM expected to analyse through the 1st call to which extent policy relevance can be achieved on a transnational level.



It is important to clearly distinguish the expectations, needs and objectives of programme managers from those of decision-makers. Policy-makers need scientific answers to some specific policy questions to take decisions in an evidence-based manner. In contrast, programme managers are responsible for financing science, and expect to enhance the cooperation of the scientific community and the production of both scientific excellence and new scientific outputs. In that sense VROM can be considered as a policy oriented organisation in contrast to research financing programme management bodies.

The expectations of the funders with regards to high quality consortia presenting scientific excellence participating in the call were met and this judgement was in line with the assessment of the evaluators regarding the participating research teams.

The selected projects fulfil the expectations of AFSSET and NERC regarding the environment & health aspects and risk assessment, and partially the expectations of VROM in relation to the topics on water and soil. The non-selected proposals match the expectation framework of the financing organisations, aiming to investigate mainly biological-pathogen related topics (7 proposals out of 8).

There is less information on the usefulness of the research results for programme managers and policy-makers, since the funded consortia are still carrying out the research. NERC and AFSSET expressed their satisfaction with the research topics and they consider the future results as potentially useful. However, the research topics of the selected projects, as well as the overall scope of the call are not fully in line with the expectations of some policy-makers. Since the scope of the call was found too narrow, or focusing on different issues from the policy-makers' expectations, these expectations cannot be fully met.

The call is considered relevant and satisfying for programme managers. Policy-makers' expectations were not stated explicitly enough to be taken into account entirely in the design of the call and could not ensure fully relevant answers to their needs.

1.2. To what extent was it relevant to handle the call on a transnational level compared to national programmes?

Judgement criteria:

- *The call allowed addressing research areas on a broader, transnational/EU level*
- *The application for the call was simple enough compared to national/EU programmes*



- *The scientific questions are different from those of national and EU programmes*
- *The application for the call was easier or had the same difficulty compared to national calls in the funding countries, in the ERA-ENVHEALTH partner countries and in the EU programmes*

Research areas were addressed on a broader, transnational or EU level through the call. The research proposals were addressing questions which concerned at least the three countries of the financing organisations.

The scientific questions of the proposals were mentioned as being different from those of national programmes. Most of the interviewed (selected and non-selected) research groups considered that the scientific topics of their proposals did not fit into other transnational calls.

The relevance of the transnational character of the call was further justified by the programme managers' consideration regarding the relatively small national scientific communities dealing with the research area of the call.

Researchers found the application to the call much simpler compared with EC programmes, and not considerably different from the national calls. Taking into account that the call used the NERC call application, no new elements were met by the UK partners of the research consortium. At the same time, as English language was required for the entire process, Dutch and French researchers had to adapt their documents, in contrast to the usual process in the case of French national calls.

The transnational aspect of the call was relevant and successful, leading to an extended scientific scope of the proposals compared with the national calls. In addition, the application process was considered simpler than that of the EC programmes and not much more complicated than the national ones.

2. Input effectiveness

The **input effectiveness** measures the realisation of the call elaboration and its related activities: to what extent the call has been successfully created.

2.1. How the design process leading to the launch of the call took place and was it satisfactory? What are the lessons to be drawn?

Judgement criteria:

- *The design of the call (choice of the topic, drafting of the call, design of the process) took into account the expectations of the funders*



- *Partners reached an easy agreement for the choice of topics*
- *All partners interested were involved in the design of the call and could express their point of view*
- *Partners are satisfied with the design process*
- *The call was considered clear by researchers*
- *The production of the call was considered efficient by those concerned*
- *The process allowed the drafting of the call within the time constraints that were defined*

The call design includes the choice of the research topic, the drafting of the call and the design of the procedural framework.

The *call drafting* (the writing of the text) was managed by NERC, and the financing partners gave a quick return on the text before the launch of the call. The interviewed stakeholders were satisfied with the text, finding the content: clear, exhaustive and short at the same time, and useful regarding the inclusion of the selection criteria. Only one out of the two non-selected research teams having answered the on-line questionnaire found that the text was not clear enough.

The choice of the *research topic* of the call was the result of a compromise, and reflected the objectives of the financing organisations through a relatively quick agreement. After having consulted the broader scientific area with the other EEH partners, the topic of the call was narrowed down with the participation of some external experts. A few EEH partners were not fully satisfied by the decision process for the call area.

The production of the call was considered effective by the concerned stakeholders, especially taking into account the serious time constraints. Namely, the budgets available for the call from the financing organisations' side had to be spent in a limited time frame.

Stakeholders considered the drafting of the call satisfactory. The judgment regarding the selection of the scientific scope of the call varies: satisfactory for funding organisations, slightly too narrow or not focusing on the right questions for policy-makers, and not fully satisfactory for a few EEH partners.

2.2. To what extent was the advertising of the call satisfying for the funders and for other participating countries?

Judgement criteria:

- *The research teams in the area (environment & health) in the ERA-ENVHEALTH countries heard about the call, most of them applied to it as well*



- *In the EEH countries*
- *In the 3 funding countries*
- *Several channels were used for advertising the call (national/EU/international research platforms; different media; events; etc)*
- *Funders considered the advertising of the call satisfactory (regarding the results in terms of participation and use of advertising tools)*

The advertising process was managed by each of the financing organisations. All used their own website to promote the call, taking into account that the EEH website was not available at the time. In the UK and France the usual mailing lists of researchers were used as well. NERC also advertised in scientific papers.

Apparently, the most effective advertising was carried out in the UK. The process was less successful in France, where all the potentially concerned research teams were not reached. The questioned researchers could mention some other research teams which could have been interested in the call.

In the Netherlands researchers were mainly involved by their English partners, as in some cases in France. The researchers in other (non-financing) EEH partner countries were not informed officially at all.

Regarding the channels used for advertising the call, no other ways (national/EU/international research platforms; different media; events; etc) were used in addition to those mentioned above.

The advertising process was thus considered partially effective and successful by the financing bodies, leading to the reception of an acceptable number of proposals (10), but not fully ensuring that all the concerned research teams could participate.

2.3. To what extent did the design of the research topics reflect the needs and allows for an overall coherence (or the topics are too narrow to cover all the important aspects of the problem of climate change and its impact on human health? What are the reasons for that)?

Judgement criteria:

- *The research needs were clearly defined*
- *The choice of the topics reflects the needs of the decision-makers*
- *The choice of the topics is considered relevant to address society's needs*
- *The research areas of the call are said by the research community to respond to the research needs in the field of climate change & health*



- *Researchers and invited external experts and members of the scientific community consider that the different questions raised in the call offer a comprehensive and coherent set of issues to be dealt with*
- *The research topics defined in the call were large enough to make sure that the research proposals fit in the thematic framework for the selection*

The definition of the research field was one of the most important questions raised by the stakeholders.

A key feature of this call was developing a clear line of sight between climate change scenarios, impacts on soil and water ecosystems, and the implications for human health via the environment.

The research had to reduce uncertainties in climate change impact scenarios and in associated human health vulnerability, clarifying the implications in terms of potential end-user management responses. Relevance to end-users had to be generically applicable rather than relate to a single site or situation.

The 2 projects selected for funding were:

- Risk assessment of the impact of climate change on human health and well-being
- Environmental change and rising dissolved organic carbon trends: implications to Public Health

Between the three financing partners, some differences in orientation regarding the scientific area had to be matched:

- VROM needed to include soil and water related aspects,
- NERC could finance only environmental related projects, and
- AFSSET needed to emphasis the health aspect and risk assessment part of the projects.

All the partners agreed to prioritise policy-oriented applied research rather than fundamental research, but the extent to which the research results should have to answer directly to policy-makers' questions was not clearly stated and differed in the 3 financing organisations.

As it was already mentioned, the non-financing EEH partners were involved in the definition of the research area and their needs were taken into account only to some extent.

Decision-makers' expectations were not fully satisfied as some of them found the area too narrow. Other important areas could be financed in the health and climate change issue, even if the present area can still bring some useful answers to the needs of society. Since the scientific topic of the call was the result of a compromise between the three financing organisations, and taking into account that the policy-



makers were not directly involved in the final negotiations and decision, their needs could not be fully reflected.

Based on the interviews with researchers, their needs in terms of scientific topics were met, they found the areas relevant, and filling a gap in the available financing possibilities. Financed and non-selected researchers indeed found the topic interesting, and matching with their projects. Hence, the topic of the call can be seen as responding to the research community needs in the field of climate change & health, and large enough to make sure that the research proposals fit in the thematic framework for the selection.

Researchers, as well as the interviewed external experts consider that the different questions raised in the call offer a comprehensive and coherent set of issues to be dealt with.

The choice of the research area was relevant, but partially successful. The agreement on the research area of the call was satisfactory for the three financing partners, including their expectations as programme managers. At the same time, expectations of other EEH partners and policy-makers were not fully taken into account and some of them found the topic too narrow. Researchers considered the thematic area of the call relevant and large enough.

3. Output effectiveness

Effectiveness shows the extent to which the intervention is achieving or is contributing to the achievement of its stated objectives. The **output effectiveness** measures the realisation of the operational objectives, which, in the case of the EEH 1st call for proposals, is the implementation of the call.

3.1. How the selection process was carried out and was it effective?

Judgement criteria:

- *The selection process was not more complicated than in the case of a national call*
- *The selection process was transparent enough for the researchers*
- *The composition of selection committees satisfied the expectations of the funders*
- *The set of selection criteria was suitable to evaluate the projects in an appropriate manner*
- *The evaluation of the projects based on the selection criteria was understandable for the selection committee members*



- *The procedure implemented for the selection committee meetings was suitable for the members and led to successful selection*
- *The selection process led to the funding of the most interesting projects from both the scientific and decision-makers point of view (Scientific quality and researchers interest, and interdisciplinarity)*

The selection process, the set of selection criteria and the establishment of the evaluation committee were managed by NERC, as well as the selection of the external evaluators.

The two-stage evaluation (evaluation and selection of the pre-proposals, then the final full proposals) with the possibility given to the researchers to answer the evaluators' comments in the second stage were considered as a good way to elaborate high quality projects with scientific excellence, meeting the expectations of the financing organisations.

The elaboration of the selection process was based on methods already used in NERC, and a similar process is used in the Netherlands. This practice differs from the national calls in France in some ways, such as the two stages of the selection, but was not considered much more complicated by the stakeholders.

Researchers in general found the selection process partially transparent. They considered very effective the fact that the selection criteria are included in the text of the call. In contrast, the selection of evaluators was considered incomplete. The interdisciplinary nature of the call and the submitted proposals required evaluators with specific expertise in several scientific areas. Due to the lack of time, not all the scientific fields addressed by the proposals could be covered by the evaluators. Some researchers found the scoring unbalanced with regards to scientific excellence in a specific field against the interdisciplinarity aspect. They would also like to extend transparency, and have the possibility to refuse the evaluation of a peer reviewer and change for another evaluator in case of doubt about competencies in the scientific topic of the proposal.

In order to improve the scientific quality of the proposals, the two-stage process of the call (letter of interest - feedback to applicants, then submission of final proposal) was considered helpful by the research teams. At the same time, they expressed their needs to have a longer period to elaborate the pre-proposals, explained by the fact, that all the organisational work (assess scientific goals, find partners, agree on financial and working repartition, etc) should already be done for the first round. They also mentioned that some financial support at the outset of this preparation work would be welcome.

The process of rebuttal on review reports of evaluators was found to be very helpful for the researchers. However, the already mentioned issue concerning the specific scientific expertise of the evaluators generated some disappointment by the same



participants, which had believed in a very good ranking in the first round and then were not selected.

The composition and the work of the evaluation committee were appreciated unanimously by all the questioned stakeholders and satisfied the expectations of the funders. The financing organisations found the performance of the evaluation committee very effective. The procedure implemented for the selection committee meetings, as well as the set of the selection criteria was suitable for the members and led to a successful selection.

Programme managers considered the selection process effective, enabling them to choose the highest ranked projects as the most interesting ones in terms of scientific quality, interdisciplinarity, transnationality, novelty, and to some extent policy-relevance as well. Decision-makers found the process followed the usual selection procedure, but at the same time they were not fully satisfied with the results, regarding the policy relevance.

The stakeholders found the selection criteria well established and a good tool to rank the proposals by, taking into account the different aspects of the evaluation, such as scientific excellence, added value and project management. The interdisciplinarity character of the projects was not very highly ranked compared to other aspects, but it is difficult to distinguish if that phenomenon was rooted in the selection criteria system or in the way of scoring by the evaluators.

However, the number of received proposals (10), the budget of the call and finally the number of selected projects (2) did not fully justify such an administrative overhead²⁷. This statement is underpinned by the fact that the first evaluation round was reduced to an eligibility check due to the limited number of pre-proposals. At the same time, one of the objectives was to launch a pilot call delivering experiences in terms of management and implementation of the call. The process can be considered effective and not fully efficient.

The selection process was effective, leading to the selection of the two most interesting projects. The choice of the evaluators was, in some cases, found to be not fully adapted to the research topics addressed by the received proposals, neither to the interdisciplinary aspect of the call. At the same time, the process itself was only partially efficient regarding the administrative work compared to the number of proposals and financed projects.

²⁷ 8 members of the evaluation committee and 6 member of the selection committee of the financing organisations, all of them were working at least a total workday. In addition to that, 3-4 evaluators of the proposals assessing once the proposals, who were then re-evaluating them in the light of the answers of project holders on the evaluation comments.



3.2. How the financing process was carried out and was it effective?

Judgement criteria:

- *The financing rules of the funding countries were compatible and allowed the financing of the selected projects*
- *The design of the call was not modified due to national financing constraints*
- *There was no proposal/project team rejected or modified due to national financing constraints*
- *There were no major differences regarding the objectives, the ways of functioning and use of the resources between the three financers. Or if yes, good compromise could be found*

The financing process is the key issue of the call and could have become a bottleneck in the realisation of the selected projects and the overall call.

The differences in the financing rules of the three financing organisations required creativity and flexibility from the partners. First, the fact that NERC could finance only UK participants led to the special application rules, such as the obligation to have a UK lead applicant, and modified the call design. Secondly, this same issue implies that the call could only follow the virtual common pot model. The financing partners were financing their own national teams on the basis of a common research area.

In addition to the strong NERC rules applied in the financing process, the availability of the financial resources was not ensured for a certain period by VROM. This slowed down the contracting and financing process with the Dutch partners of the selected consortia, as well as the workflow of the projects.

No Memorandum of Understanding or other type of agreement was signed by financing partners before the launch of the call, which could partially help to avoid this problem by ensuring that the engaged partner was de facto responsible for the budget in question. The document was signed with delay, by 2010 for the last partner. This experience of the delayed signature, with the problem of the availability of the budget from VROMs' side shows the importance of the timing of the commitment document.

The 3 financing partners decided to finance the selected projects by each financing their own national participants in the consortia. This process is one of the characteristic of a virtual common pot, one of the common funding possibilities identified within ERA-NETs. Taking into account in addition the fact that not all the money available for the call was spent, the call can be considered as *partially effective*. On the other hand, two projects are on the way of realisation and could be financed, which is already a success.



3.3. How the contracting process was carried out and was it effective?

Judgement criteria:

- *The contracting process was similar to that of at least one of the funding countries or the general EU contracting process (there was a contracting model that could be followed)*
- *The contracting process enabled a quick start of the projects*
- *The contracting process was not considered as too complex by the research teams*
- *There were no major differences regarding the objectives, the ways of functioning and use of the contracting between the three financers. Or if yes, a good compromise could be found*

The contracting process followed the national and organisational rules in the three countries. In the UK the contracts were signed quickly after the selection of the projects without any difficulties. In France the contracting was delayed for a few months due to the elaboration of a new contract form including the international aspect of the financing. In the Netherlands the contracting was hugely delayed due to restructuring in VROM and the issue with the financial resources and the contracts were signed mid-2010. The contracts were not identical, only harmonised regarding the transnational aspect of the projects.

The projects were to start in late 2008, as the available budgets had to be spent. However, the contracting process was not achieved in the same timeframe. Based on the researchers' interviews, the work of the research teams within the consortium continued despite the fact that the Dutch partners had neither contract, nor financial resources. At the same time, the work was delayed compared to the planned schedule, and the teams had to finance their own work temporarily.

The contracting process was partially effective, depending on the countries, but leading to some delay on the realisation of the financed projects. The nature of the call (virtual common pot) leaves room to use national contracting and financing rules. At the same time, huge differences in the timing of contracting and payment between countries represent a great risk in the progress and achievement of selected research projects.



4. Outcome effectiveness

The **outcome effectiveness** describes the extent to which the specific objectives are realised: in the case of the EEH 1st call through the achievement of the selected projects.

4.1. To what extent and why does the call for projects meet the strategic and thematic objectives of programme managers? To what extent were the objectives in terms of scientific excellence and interdisciplinarity of the projects achieved? (project level)

Judgement criteria:

- *The strategic and thematic objectives of the programme managers were clearly stated while designing the call*
- *The strategic and thematic objectives of the programme managers were met by the first call*
- *The consortium is in the process of creating scientific results which would not be possible by the partners on their own (ask managers and researchers)*
- *The participants of the consortium represent several research areas*
- *The amount of the financial resources available for one research project was appropriate to achieve scientific excellence*
- *The interdisciplinarity objectives were met by the research teams*

The main objectives of the call were to achieve results of scientific excellence and interdisciplinarity on one hand, and on the other hand to create a transnational call, complementary to EC programmes and national calls.

The consortia created to address the call covered several research areas, meeting the *interdisciplinary* requirement. The evaluators and external scientific advisors found the proposals and the selected topic of *high quality, meeting the scientific expectations*. Based on interviews with the financed researchers, the consortia are in the process of creating scientific results which would not be possible by the partners on their own (*transnationality*).

The amount of the financial resources available for each research project was considered appropriate by the researchers to achieve scientific excellence; the *budget is enough* or just enough to realise the project.

The *dissemination of the research results* and their use by policy-makers relies mostly on the research teams at the moment. The assessment of the available financing contracts together with the interviews with the stakeholders indicate that



the dissemination and the use of the results are not fully ensured neither by the research teams, nor by the financing partners.

The call allowed for good outcome effectiveness, and accomplished the specific objectives successfully: to achieve scientific excellence and interdisciplinarity on one hand, and on the other hand to launch a transnational call, complementary to EC programmes and national calls. At the same time, the dissemination of the results is not fully ensured, leaving room for improvement.

5. Impact effectiveness

The **impact effectiveness** shows the achievement of the strategic objectives of the EEH 1st call for proposals.

5.1. *What are the contributions and the involvement of the public authorities in the first call? How did they plan to use the results for their public policies?*

Judgement criteria:

- *The policy-makers were involved in the process (design and implementation of the first call)*
- *The objectives of the policy-makers were expressed and taken into account in the process*
- *The results of the selected research projects will be used by the policy-makers*
- *The policy-makers plan to use the results*

Creating new knowledge in E&H, answering policy-makers' and societal needs through the results of the financed research projects is one of the most important objectives of the call. The use and the dissemination of the research results depend on how the policy-makers' needs have been taken into account during the process on one hand, and how the programme managers defined it prior to the project contracting on the other hand.

In this case, the policy-makers were to some extent involved in the call process, but finally their expectations were not fully taken into account. In the definition of the research area of the call, their needs were considered indirectly, leading to the partial inclusion of these needs. Considering this, the interviewed policy-makers cannot actually plan the use of the research results.

In contrast, the financed research project coordinators are keen on involving stakeholders identified as relevant related to their projects, even if it is not clearly stated in their financing contract. They organise stakeholder workshops and thus are able to answer to the research needs expressed.



The communication of the research results is not completely elaborated yet, and mainly left to the researchers. In general, researchers disseminate their results in scientific papers and through workshops. Some stakeholders expressed their reservation towards workshops, explaining that too many are organised and it is impossible to attend them all.

Providing feedback to policy-makers and allowing for a better applied use of the results through the dissemination and communication of results has not been fully thought through from the side of the financing bodies neither in the financing contracts with researchers, nor on the EEH level.

6. Efficiency

The **efficiency** shows the extent to which the call enables the achievement of impacts (outputs, outcomes and results, such as the research results, lasting cooperation between research teams, or a lasting call process) with the inputs made available. In general, efficiency is related to the economical performance of the process.

6.1. Were the financial resources efficiently used or spread?

Judgement criteria:

- *The financial resources were efficiently used*

To assess the overall efficiency of the call, the use of the final research results should be taken into account. The consortia are in the process of creating scientific results. At this stage, the financial resources seem to be in line with each project needs. The selected research teams in general mentioned that the amount of financial support was appropriate to achieve scientific excellence and work in good conditions in an international consortium.

Two projects were financed and some dedicated resources for this call were not spent.

The financial resources of the call were not spread, but some more scientific results could have been achieved with other ways of financing (e.g. tendering). At the same time, the administrative efficiency of the project selection was only partially adapted to the low number of proposals.



7. External coherence

The **external coherence** measures the extent to which the objectives of different actions are logically mutually reinforcing each other. In this section, the added value of the call is presented from the beneficiaries' (researchers) perspective.

7.1. To what extent does the call for projects provide added value in terms of creating new cooperation between research teams? (project level)

Judgement criteria:

- *The call led to the creation of new research cooperation in terms of interdisciplinarity and access to expertise and research tools*
- *The formed consortia were satisfying for the funders in terms of team composition and quality*
- *The call led to the creation of lasting research cooperation*
- *The call led to the creation of multidisciplinary teams*

The research consortia in general were newly established and most of the teams met a new partner. Some links were established based on the suggestions of a common colleague. Some researchers used the web and bibliography to find partners.

Opportunist consortia could not be identified, rather the creation of the consortia generated real added value. Some non-selected project holders decided to realise at least partially their projects and look for other financial resources. The financed project holders also expressed their willingness to work together in the future with at least one of the partners.

At the same time, the research teams understood the call as having a restriction by the obligation to involve and just involve UK, Dutch and French partners, even if the possibility to involve partners from other countries was stated in the text. Two different reasons could lead to this understanding: first, the text was not fully clear. Secondly, the researchers assumed that the involvement of an external partner in addition to the ones from the financing countries would be a disadvantage in the selection process.

Researchers would mention other countries from where partners could be found (such as Sweden, Finland, Germany, New Member States, etc). The obligation to include a UK lead applicant was seen as a manageable issue, but neither UK partners nor non-UK participants fully appreciated it.

The call led to the creation of new research cooperation in terms of interdisciplinarity and access to expertise and research tools, as well. The quality of the consortia was considered high by the evaluation committee members.



The call led to the creation of lasting, scientifically high quality, multidisciplinary research cooperation in the case of the financed teams, and also for some of the non-selected consortia.

7.2. To what extent does the call for projects represent added value for researchers compared to national or EU programmes? (project level)

Judgement criteria:

- *The ERA-ENVHEALTH call was complementary to national financing programmes in the same scientific area*
- *The application for the call was easier or had the same difficulty compared to national calls in the funding countries, in the ERA-ENVHEALTH partner countries and in EU programmes*
- *The amount of the financial resources available for one research project was appropriate to achieve scientific excellence*
- *The financial resources of the call were higher than in the case of national programmes of the funding countries*

The researchers found it easier to answer this call compared to EC ones (less administrative burden). The topic was interesting, and the opportunity to create international cooperation was attractive. They appreciated the possibility to have a smaller consortium than in EU projects and work internationally at the same time.

Financially they found the call appropriate, meaning that the money would be just enough for their work, and higher or the same as in the case of national calls. Larger projects could be created in terms of financial resources, as well as in terms of research topics.

The call was considered easy administratively and enabled the creation of a manageable sized, international consortium, and provided higher financial resources.

7.3. To what extent does the call provide an added value in terms of research topic for the researchers?

Judgement criteria:

- *The call allowed addressing research areas on a broader, transnational/EU level*
- *The scientific questions are different from those of national and EU programmes*



The research topic was found interesting unanimously by the interviewed researchers, and mentioned as a call for filling a gap in science financing. Some would have liked to extend the scope (some suggestions): More physico-chemical aspects, rather than biology and health (pathogens); or more Pathogen-related topics, or run-off of toxic substances from soil to groundwater and surface water.

The added value in terms of scientific scope of the call was confirmed by the researchers.

8. Utility

The **utility** is the extent to which the impacts of a call respond to problems and needs that must be tackled.

8.1. *Was the experience of the transnational call useful in the management of national calls for each of the financing partners? And for the members of ERA-ENVHEALTH?*

Judgement criteria:

- *Elements of the overall process of this call (design, management, use of results) will be used in the process of national calls of the funding countries and by the ERA-ENVHEALTH partners (Good practice)*

The impact on the management of national calls among funders was not high. The incorporation of some of the selection criteria into the French national call for projects could be identified as the only good practice transferred. At the same time, the issues which occurred during the design and implementation (financing and contracting framework, choice of the research area) are highlighted as lessons learnt for the next call from the side of the EEH partners.

Few good practices were transferred between the financing organisations. The experiences with the financing and contracting framework and with the choice of the research area are highlighted as important lessons learnt for the next call.



7 Conclusion and recommendations

This part is dedicated to summing up the overall findings of the evaluation.

- First, some **general conclusions** on the 1st call are drawn to give a larger picture.
- Short feedback of the **benchmark** study is given then to highlight the main similarities and differences of experiences in other ERA-NET calls. The findings are incorporated into the recommendations.
- Then **recommendations on specific activities** are formulated with regards to the design and implementation of the call.
- Finally, **general recommendations** are given on the procedural aspects.

7.1 General conclusion of the evaluation

The main findings of the assessment can be summarised by highlighting the good practices (in green), and the main difficulties (in red):

1. **The Call Secretariat with the National Focal Points worked well.**
2. **The text of the Call was appropriate.**
3. **The application and selection procedure was seen by the researchers as easier than for EU calls and as not more difficult than for the national calls.**
4. **The selection process was well established, but should be adapted to the number of proposals received, and the interdisciplinary nature of the call.**
5. **The scientific questions raised by the call regarding health vulnerability resulting from future climate change impacts on soil-water ecosystems, land use and water resources at regional scale are currently being addressed by the selected projects.**
6. **The objectives of the financing partners were not clearly set and shared in advance.**
7. **The selection of the research area of the call was not satisfactory for all partners and stakeholders.**
8. **The financing and contracting rules were defined but not exhaustively stated prior to the launch of the call.**
9. **The commitment document was defined but not signed by the financing partners prior to the launch of the call.**

Regarding the different multi-level **objectives** of the financing organisations in the call, the needs of the programme managers (AFSSET and NERC) were mainly met. As



the policy-makers objectives, including VROM, were different and not explicitly expressed, they could not be fully satisfied.

- Enhanced cooperation between the research fields of environment and health has been enabled (**interdisciplinarity**).
- The financed research projects are of international **excellence** at the **European scale and scope** (addressing the common climate change and health issues with common solutions).
- The effective and lasting **cooperation** of research teams on a **transnational** level was facilitated.
- The use of the research results for **decision-makers** in support of evidence-based policy and practice in the area of climate change and health on the national and European levels is partially fulfilled.
- The creation and testing of a new funding scheme (**pilot process**) from a thematic point of view is entirely met.
- Existing funding opportunities at European and national levels are **complemented**.
- The **efficiency** in the use of resources for environment and health research is increased, enabling the achievement of a synergic effect of the funding at the EU and multinational levels.
- A **better state of health** could be reached by action on the climate change caused effects, addressed in the national and international environment and health action plans.

7.2 Feedback from the benchmark study

The specific conclusions and recommendations (see Table 3), as well as the general recommendations (7.4) include the elements coming out of the benchmark study, in addition to the findings from the evaluation of the 1st call for proposals. The main observations of the benchmark study are shown in Annex 8.8.

As a general conclusion, all the project holders and stakeholders agree that the ERA-NET scheme is useful and a good tool to finance transnational research projects, and an innovative solution between the national and European levels of research financing schemes. The transnational programmes target this niche, and provide appropriate support by applying the principles of subsidiarity. Some common positive feedback can be listed here, drawn from the comparison of transnational calls. In terms of project size and themes, they bring added value compared to national and EU calls. In terms of budget, the transnational call is synergic: financiers provide some available funds and have access to all research results. Regarding the



management, a call secretariat is essential for the good implementation of the calls. In order to ensure the high scientific quality of the projects through the selection procedure, international evaluators should be involved, to ease the evaluation of interdisciplinary topics.

Some common difficulties can also be identified; the most important concerns the financing issues. Namely, that the setting up of a real common pot is very difficult, mostly virtual common pots exist. Common contracting/financing rules should try to be elaborated in addition, instead of keeping strong national rules.

The “funders’ agreement” was a crucial point in the cooperation for the call. The agreement should be discussed at an earlier stage of the process. A lighter solution with a “letter of commitment” can be a solution to consider.

The process to define the research themes was also identified as a common issue. It has to take into account national agendas and strategies, and has to focus on applied research and less on fundamental research to answer financiers (policy-makers) needs. A limited number of financing partners (max 4-6) can ease the choice of topics and the definition of the financing rules.

Finally, the dissemination of results was stated as a key issue as well, however its execution is usually left to the research teams, and depends on the researchers.

7.3 Recommendations on specific activities

The *specific conclusions and recommendations* for the call follow the logical procedural order, helping to identify by activity the strong points and the issues to be improved.

In the framework of the NETWATCH project, the ERA-LEARN²⁸ team elaborated a guideline²⁹ and an exhaustive *checklist* for call activities in order to share experiences with the calls already accomplished³⁰.

The checklist presents the different steps from the call planning to the follow up period (under the title ‘after the call’)³¹:

²⁸ ERA-LEARN is a systematic investigation of experiences and acquired know-how with the perspective to identify good examples and to develop a set of recommended procedures.

²⁹ http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/static/eralearn/manual_printable.pdf

³⁰ <http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/index.cfm/static/eralearn/overview.html>

³¹ ERA-LEARN checklist, Version Feb 2010. 2,
http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/static/eralearn/checklist_printable.pdf



Table 2. Checklist for call activities

Group of activity	Subgroup of activity	Activity
<u>1. Call planning</u>	Call process & administration:	Call administration
		Overall time frame
		Submission of proposals
		Evaluation of proposals
		Funding modes
		Financial commitment
		Funding decision
		Start of funded projects
		Monitoring
	Administrative conditions and necessary documents	
	Timing of the call:	Call schedule
		Overlaps with other calls
		Fine tuning of call milestones
		Plan necessary meetings
		NETWATCH call calendar
Scope of the call:	Method for definition of scope	
	Overlaps of topics with other calls	
	Identification of target groups	
	Definition of targeted projects	
<u>2. Call preparation</u>	Call documents:	Supporting documents
		Check coherence of call targets, documents and results
	Promotion of the call:	ERA-NET specific activities
		National / regional activities
		Promotion via target group
<u>3. Submission</u>	Submission of pre-/full proposals	
	Submission of national / regional funding application forms	
	Distribution of submitted proposals to involved funding organisations	
<u>4. Evaluation</u>	Result of evaluation process	
	Procedures	
	Criteria	
	Forms	
<u>5. Funding decisions</u>	Funding decisions	
	Challenges of national contract preparation	
	Distribution and monitoring of funds	
<u>6. After the call: monitoring, dissemination & impact assessment</u>	Monitoring of funded projects	
	Monitoring of call implementation	
	Call results	
	Dissemination of call results	
	Analysing impact of joint calls	



The **summary of the evaluation results for the specific activities** of the 1st ERA-ENVHEALTH call are shown in Figure 9, where the level of modification suggested for a next call is represented by colours.

The coloration is based on the NETWATCH recommendations³² and slightly modified by the use of a fourth colour.

Explanation of the Colour Code:

Red: considered as below the acceptable level and therefore could be the bottleneck of future calls and collaboration between partners (e.g. sign Memorandum of Understanding)

Yellow: improvement required (e.g. narrowing the theme)

White: small improvement or precaution required (e.g. set selection criteria); or no information yet on the performance of the activity (e.g. provide research results)

Green: no major improvements required, the implementation of the activity could be transferred to the next call (e.g. drafting the call)

The specific recommendations for the activities of the call are summarised in Table 3, indicating the focus:

1. Process related recommendations, targeting administrative issues or referring to ERA-NETs in general
2. Recommendations on research financing issues in general or regarding the transnational aspects
3. Result related issues or recommendations related the policy-orientation aspects

A more **detailed table shows the strengths, weaknesses and specific suggestions by activities** in Annex 8.9.

³² http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/index.cfm/static/eralearn/evalcriteria_instructions.html



Figure 9. Modification level of the activities of the 1st call for proposals

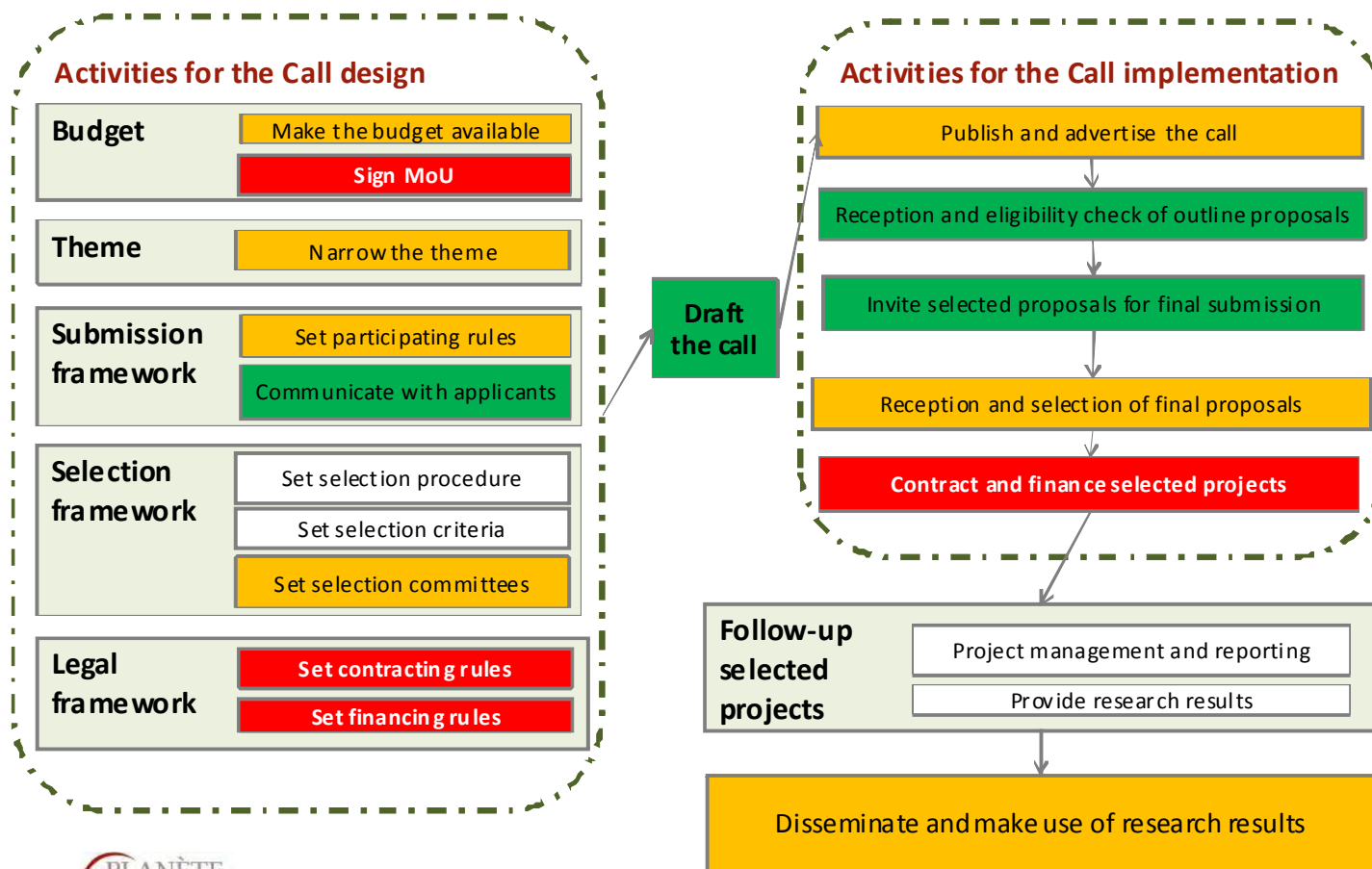




Table 3. Specific recommendations by activities for the 1st call

Procedural steps	Activity	Process, administration, ERA-NET	Research financing, transnational call	Results, policy orientation
Budget	Make the budget available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The availability of the funds should be ensured before the launch of the call. Bureaucratic difficulties of one of the financing partners are considered as issues out of the scope of the ERA-NETs, having at the same time an impact on the performance and reputation of the programmes and ERA-NET system. - As the launch of the call and the contracting process should fit in the intersection of timeframes with the availability of the resources, some steps should be prepared in advance in order to reduce the necessity to rush. These pre-prepared activities could be related to contracting, such as the elaboration of the text of the contracts, or the rules on the follow-up of the projects. 		



Procedural steps	Activity	Process, administration, ERA-NET	Research financing, transnational call	Results, policy orientation
	Sign Memorandum of Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Memorandum of Understanding should be elaborated and signed by the financing organisations BEFORE the launch of the call. - The budgetary, financing and contracting issues should be agreed on a higher decision-maker level first, before giving the floor to the elaboration of the details by the programme managers, in order to ensure and support commitment. 		
Scientific theme	Define/precise the scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The more stakeholders are involved, the more research topics are raised. There is a larger choice but it is more difficult to answer all needs. A special financing framework should be developed (see general recommendations). - The rule: 'Funders have the final decision' should be clarified and communicated at an early stage of the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More time should be dedicated to the selection of the specific topics of the call, in order to let the other stakeholders (policy-makers, other EEH partners ...) express their needs. 	



Procedural steps	Activity	Process, administration, ERA-NET	Research financing, transnational call	Results, policy orientation
Submission framework	Set the submission rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The new call can use the EEH website or other websites where any participant of the call is able to submit a proposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shorter proposals could be required for a quicker selection process. - The elaboration of the pre-proposals needs more time (to involve partners, agree on the scientific topic, agree on the financial and work repartition, etc), the timeframe should be extended. 	
	Communicate with applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The process of communication with and information of the participants can be kept for a next call for proposals. 		



Procedural steps	Activity	Process, administration, ERA-NET	Research financing, transnational call	Results, policy orientation
Selection framework	Set selection procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The selection process was a very effective tool for the selection of the most interesting projects and could be kept for a next call, but should be better adapted to the number of proposals. - The estimation of the number of proposals can be carried out by asking relevant researchers about their willingness to participate, and which topic would they go for (so called 'beauty contest'). 		



Procedural steps	Activity	Process, administration, ERA-NET	Research financing, transnational call	Results, policy orientation
	Set selection criteria		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The selection criteria can be reinforced and extended with some aspects on policy relevance, sustainability, and social aspects. - A definition of the categories of the selection criteria, such as 'policy relevance' or 'added value' is needed, and should be clearly stated for the applicants and for the evaluators. 	
	Create evaluation committees		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An international pool of evaluators has to be set up, in order to ensure the availability of all kinds of experts in the related fields of a next call. 	



Procedural steps	Activity	Process, administration, ERA-NET	Research financing, transnational call	Results, policy orientation
Legal framework	Set contracting rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For a same call, the common contracting rules have to be defined in advance, preferably before the launch of the call. - Special attention should be paid to the start of the projects, which can be very different in the participating countries. 		
	Set financing rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The use of a real common pot instead of virtual common pot would be ideal. - At the same time, the inclusion of partners with strong national or organisational rules allows a larger budget and the financing of several national research teams. 		
Text of the call	Drafting the call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The same characteristics of the text should be kept: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o short, o containing all information, o including the selection criteria, o requiring a reasonable amount of legal documents and administrative work from the applicants. 		



Procedural steps	Activity	Process, administration, ERA-NET	Research financing, transnational call	Results, policy orientation
Publish and advertise the call	Publish and advertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The advertising of the next call will be able to use the EEH website and network, as well as the already used organisational channels (website and mailing list). - The non-financing partner countries should be involved, in order to enhance their participation in the research consortia. 		
Pre-proposal	Reception of outline proposals Selection or eligibility check Inform participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In function of the number of proposals, the first round could be reduced to an eligibility check or extended to a deeper evaluation and real selection. - The requirements regarding the outline proposals could be flexible in function of the information needs of the call managers: from a simple letter of interest to a more elaborated pre-proposal. - In any case, the assessment of policy relevance should be reinforced already at this first stage. 		



Procedural steps	Activity	Process, administration, ERA-NET	Research financing, transnational call	Results, policy orientation
Final-proposal	Reception and selection of final proposals, applicant information	- The selection process and the information of the proposal holders are appropriate for a next call. The complexity of the process should be adapted to the number of submitted proposals.	- The scientific expertise and scope of the evaluators and the assessments provided by them can be better adapted to the interdisciplinary nature and the specific scientific areas of the proposals. - Applicants could include the competences needed to assess their project in the proposal.	
Start of the projects	Contracting and financing selected projects	The contracting and financing process has been discussed in the 'legal framework' section.		
Follow-up of the projects	Project management and reporting	- The financing framework of the projects should allow the consortium to advance the expenses of the consortium partners, which is mainly achievable only in case of a real common pot.	- The participation of the financing organisations at the financed projects' meetings should be stated in the financing contract, or at least expressed before the start of the projects.	



Procedural steps	Activity	Process, administration, ERA-NET	Research financing, transnational call	Results, policy orientation
Scientific results	Dissemination and use of research results (feedback to policy-makers)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The dissemination of some results at each deliverable / milestone can be requested from the research consortium in the annual reports, not only at the end of the research exercise. - The dissemination of the research result should use all available channels, including already existing/organised workshops and websites. - Feedback to policy-makers should be ensured by their involvement in the main milestones of the projects, as well as the elaboration of reports in an appropriate language and length for them. - There is still time to further develop the process for reporting back to policy-makers, taking into account that the research projects are in the mid-term period. The following should be defined: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o target group



Procedural steps	Activity	Process, administration, ERA-NET	Research financing, transnational call	Results, policy orientation
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o message o summary o explanation - The message and summary should be adapted to the audience (target group). - New tools need to be elaborated in the field of dissemination and knowledge brokerage with an active role of the programme managers in this message flow ('translator' of the results to policy-makers and reach the policy-makers, make them available to listen/read to researchers). - Guidelines should be elaborated for that, and a transfer process should be found in order to bridge the gap in communication between policy-makers and researchers. - It is easier to transfer a message to policy-makers when they are involved from the beginning.



7.4 General recommendation – ‘A la carte’ method

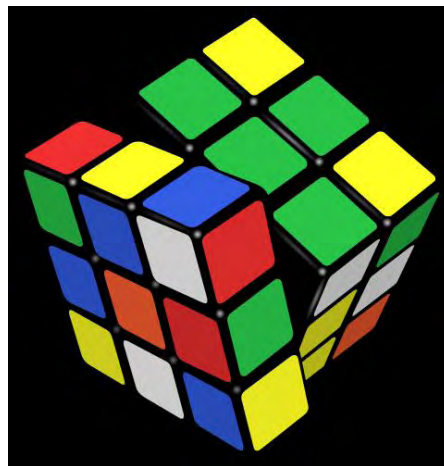
This section describes a financial and scientific framework based on the assessment of the first call and the benchmark study, where there is room for enlarged cooperation and financing of several scientific areas.

The steps enabling the shaping of this cooperation framework can follow an ideal order, leading to a more secure basis that can be relied on during the implementation phase:

1. Agree on cooperation
2. Make budget available
3. Define research topics
4. Launch the call

There are several parameters of the call design and implementation which can be difficult to agree on by the financing and other EEH partners, such as the scientific scope or the approach (call for proposals or tender).

As the 1st call shows, matching the objectives of the financing partners can be difficult, and needs creativity, as illustrated by the Rubik's cube: when you manage to match one side (such as an agreement on the research fields), another side becomes messy (for example the financing rules don't match).



With the rising number of financing partners, the needs regarding the scientific area of the call become very difficult to match. Either the scope should be narrowed to the real intersection of the expressed interest; either it should be enlarged to include all the needs. On the other hand, it is worth including a larger number of partners to have access to a larger budget.



The two opposite efforts can find common ground. The method for meeting the expectations of all partners is based on the analogy with a dinner: how to have dinner together, without having to eat the same dish? The *'A la carte' method* deals with the different expectations and objectives by providing the possibility of launching several calls within the same framework, where partners can choose (design) the call matching most of their needs:

With a large number of partners (i.e. all EEH partners) a *strategic plan or an umbrella action plan* can be elaborated, defining the main research fields, and perhaps indicating a schedule related to the different research areas or axes.

Then based on this action plan, *specific targeted calls* can be launched on one of the axes in function of the interested partners, the budget they can make available, and the objectives they express related to the research results. The targeted calls can be launched one after the other or in parallel.

To give some ideas on the *scientific fields* to be taken into account for next calls, some topics were stated by the interviewees and are listed hereinafter, without any order of priority:

- Health impacts of heat waves.
- Impact of atmospheric pollutants.
- Endocrine disruptors.
- Propagation of vector-borne diseases.
- Air quality.
- Topics from the Parma conference on environment and health³³:
 - access to safe water and sanitation,
 - opportunities for physical activity and a healthy diet,
 - disease prevention through improved air quality, and
 - healthy environments free of toxic chemicals.
- More physico-chemical aspects, rather than biology and health (pathogens).
- Pathogens, run-off of toxic substances from soil to groundwater and surface water.
- Insight of industrial innovation, in order to foresee risks and avoid problems such as with GMOs.

Finally, the call assessment raised issues about the *approach used to finance research*: the 'tendering' type of financing compared with the 'competition of proposals' type of financing. In fact, the two types seem to be contradictory at first sight, but can be used parallel. Specific targeted research calls on the pre-defined axes can be launched either as tenders, or calls for proposals, depending on the urgency and the specificity of the research results needed. The scheme has the

³³ <http://www.euro.who.int/parma2010b>



advantage of providing a well elaborated framework, established by all the ERA-ENVHEALTH partners, and allows for a ***maximum of flexibility in three dimensions*** with regards to the:

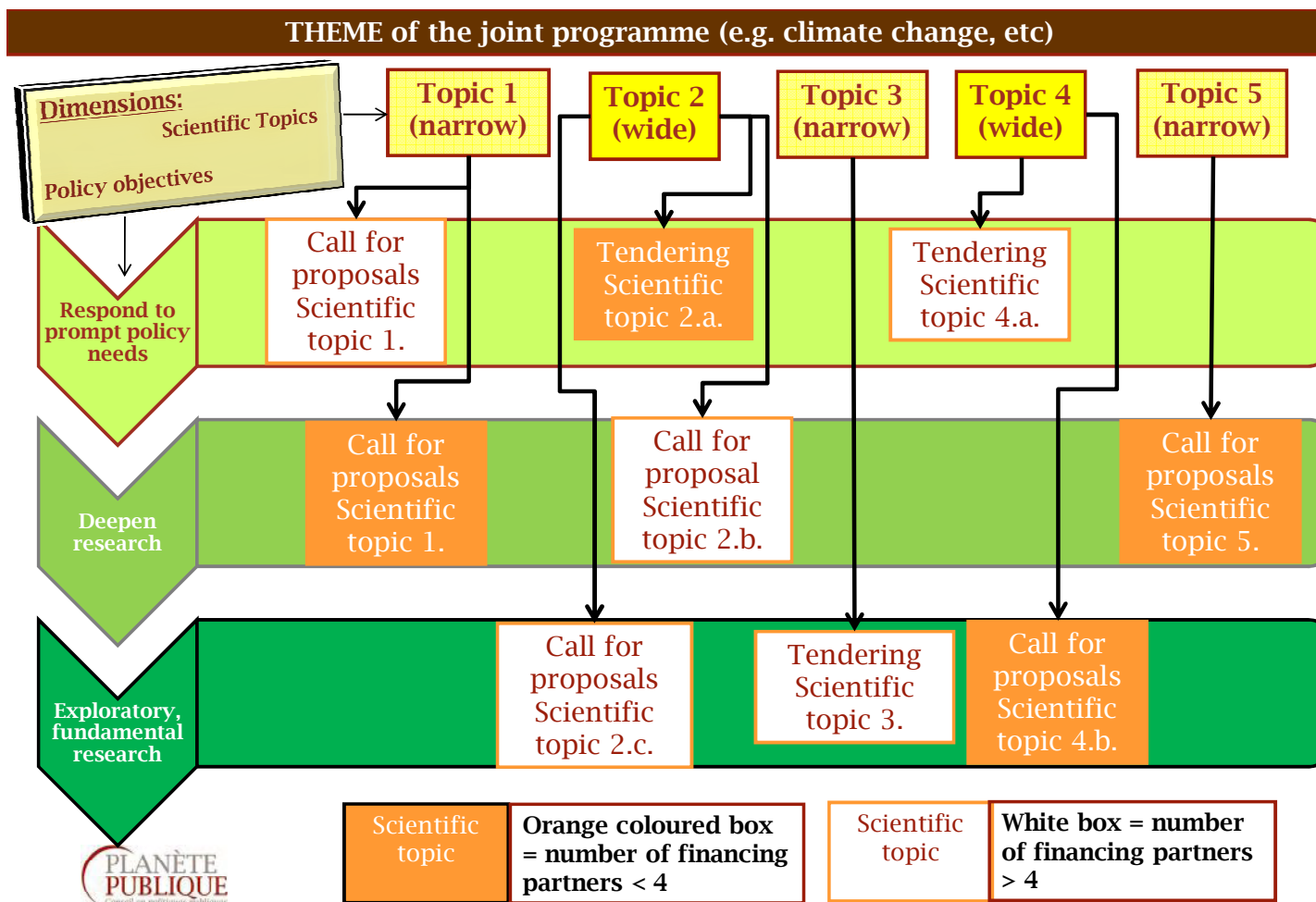
- *Choice of the topic*
- *Number of partners financing a selected research area*
- *Financing approach (call for proposals or tendering)*

In addition, the different types of financial schemes can be launched separately over time or in parallel.

Figure 10 illustrates the financing scheme described above:



Figure 10. 'A la carte' scheme





7.5 The role of the European Commission

The stakeholder interviews and the discussions during the Evaluation Steering Committee meetings brought attention to the involvement and coordinating **role of the European Commission**. In particular the coordination between national research financing institutions in terms of participation in ERA-NETs was mentioned as missing.

At the same time, the communication within the Commission was not seen as fully effective: the project officers in the EC may not be fully aware of all the research already carried out and financed on the same topics in different DGs, or through the same consortia. The FP7 programme considers ERA-NETs in the same way as research projects; however the results are quite different and should not just stop after the 4 years of financing.

Programme managers and policy-makers expressed their needs to know about the existing research results in order to avoid double-financing. In that sense, the information available at the Commission level would be useful. The issue is even more relevant, considering the continually narrowed national budgets for research and the economic crisis. Transnational calls can help overcome this financial burden, but should be efficient and finance areas where no other financial resources are available.

The European programmes and especially framework programmes are seen as considerably bureaucratic by the researchers. The new research commissioner (Máire Geoghegan-Quinn) gives hope, with the Eighth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP8) under design (and due to be launched in 2014): create a less bureaucratic framework that supports EU goals, including the creation of a European Research Area. She is also willing to coordinate with all research programmes in other EC directorates such as energy, environment and agriculture.

In the meantime, information on ERA-NETs facilitating the harmonisation of the research financing activities are collected by NETWATCH and can be found on the website launched in February by IPTS (<http://netwatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/nw/>).



8 Annexes

8.1 Evaluation objectives

The evaluation of the first call aims to provide recommendations for future transnational calls for research, and in particular for the design a second joint call in the framework of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project.

The evaluation of the call is a two-stage process. This *first part* of the evaluation is conducted on the first call before the launch of the second call. It concentrates on the management and scientific evaluation issues encountered during the first call. The results are summarised in the present report.

After the first call is completely finished and all research achieved, a *second part* of the evaluation will be carried out. All standard aspects of evaluation will be taken into account (usefulness, efficiency, efficacy, coherence, sustainability). It will concentrate on the impacts of the programme, both in terms of strengthening European research in health & environment and providing useful data and decision-making tools to policy-makers, climate change and human health being a very important subject nowadays. It will also examine whether or not the recommendations made during the first part were adequate, and if they were effectively taken into account and/or implemented for the second call. The final report will address the successes of the process as well as its barriers and limitations. This impact evaluation is a keystone to appreciate the adequacy between policy-making needs and research results and outcomes. In addition, this evaluation of the call is - to our knowledge - a novelty in ERA-NET projects.³⁴

It is important to highlight that the first call is being evaluated two years after the launch of the call. Some of the stakeholders were not able to remember every detail, or were not available to share their experiences. In parallel, the selected and financed research projects are still underway, and not much can be said on their results, the dissemination of the results and their use. Finally, the nature of the evaluation of the call demands a stronger qualitative analysis rather than a quantitative assessment.

- The methodology of the *first step* of the evaluation includes the setting of the evaluation framework by reformulating and prioritising the evaluation questions, and at the same time defining evaluation criteria and indicators.
- In the *second step* of the evaluation, the evaluators gather information based on an analysis of available documents. That step will lead to an

³⁴ Workpackage descriptions, document uploaded to the project site: <http://www.era-envhealth.eu/servlet/getBin?name=BEA1BA8201AAFC9CC0CE0E25D6B896361235399772168.pdf>



understanding of the reasoning of action and describe the process by characterising the stakeholders and their relationship.

- The *third step* is dedicated to interviews with the key stakeholders: from the financing partners of the call, the ERA-ENVHEALTH project partners and the candidates having answered this first call (both selected and rejected proposals).
- The *last step* is the international benchmark study, aiming to compare the ERA-ENVHEALTH project with other ERA-NET programmes.



8.2 List of interviewees

Stakeholders	Type of interview
<p>Partner structures participating in the funding of the first call for proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>AFSSET: Adrienne Pittman and Dr. Jean Lesne</i> ▪ <i>VROM: Dr. Tom van Teunenbroek</i> ▪ <i>NERC: Lesley Aspinall and Dr. Dominique Balharry</i> 	<p>2 face to face interviews for about 2 hours and telephone interviews</p>
<p>Evaluation Steering Committee members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>EA: Mike Briers</i> ▪ <i>BelSPO: Mohssine EL Kalhoun</i> ▪ <i>ADEME: Nathalie Poisson</i> <p>Other partners (not members of the steering committee) and for the Benchmark study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Swedish EPA: Tove Hammarberg</i> ▪ <i>EPA: Shane Colgan</i> ▪ <i>Finish environment Institute: Olga Mashkina</i> ▪ <i>UBA: Vera Rabelt</i> ▪ <i>ISPRA: Luciana Sinisi</i> 	<p>telephone interviews for about 1 hour</p>
<p>Persons in charge of the financed research teams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Pr. M. Baylis, Veterinary Clinical Science, University of Liverpool</i> ▪ <i>Pr. C. Freeman, Biological Sciences, Bangor University, UK</i> ▪ <i>Pr. Thomas Olivier, EHESP, Rennes, France</i> <p>Non-selected project holders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>P. Hartemann, Nancy University, France</i> ▪ <i>All the Lead applicants and Scientific coordinators of non-financed proposals were requested to fill in the questionnaire: 2 answers</i> 	<p>1 face to face interview and 2 telephone interviews for about 2 hours</p> <p>1 telephone interview for about 1 hour, and a questionnaire for all non-selected proposals</p>
<p>Members of the committees (scientific and policy-makers' point of view):</p> <p>Scientific assessment committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Pr Charles Godefray, Oxford</i> ▪ <i>Prof. Thor-Axel Stenström, Swedish Institute for Infectious Disease Control</i> <p>External advisory committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Marco Martuzzi (WHO-European Region),</i> ▪ <i>Richard Owen, School of Biosciences, University of Westminster</i> <p>Policy-makers - non committee member:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Eric Vindimian, CEMAGREF, FRANCE</i> 	<p>Telephone interviews for about an hour</p>



8.3 Evaluation questions, judgement criteria, indicators & descriptors

Table 4.

Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
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³⁵ The evaluation criteria explain the link between the needs, objectives, resources and results of the process.

³⁶ These are the questions which were defined by the EEH Evaluation Steering Committee to be answered by the evaluation, stated in the Terms of References (TOR).

³⁷ The evaluation questions of the TOR were reformulated and aggregated into core questions by the Evaluation Steering Committee and the evaluators together.

³⁸ The ranking shows the level of importance of the core questions. The Evaluation Steering Committee members were asked to give a mark to each question, and the marks were averaged then, setting the final rank of the core questions.

³⁹ The purpose of the use of the judgement criteria is to improve transparency by making the judgement explicit. They help structure the answers to the questions formulated. One or more judgement criteria were derived from each evaluation (core) question. They defined the nature of the data collected, as well as the type of analysis to be used.

⁴⁰ Indicators and descriptors help collect information. Indicators define the quantitative data gathered, while descriptors are used for the qualitative assessment.



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
Input effectiveness	1. How the call for research projects was established (choice of the topics, formulation of the call)? What are the lessons to be drawn?	How the design process leading to the launch of the call took place and was it satisfactory? What are the lessons to be drawn?	24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The design of the call (choice of the topic, drafting of the call, design of the process) took into account the expectations of the funders 2. Partners reached an easy agreement for the choice of the topics 3. All partners interested were involved in the design of the call could express their point of view 4. Partners are satisfied regarding the design process 5. The call was considered as clear by researchers 6. The production of the call was considered as efficient by those concerned 7. The process allowed the drafting of the call within the time constraints that were defined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time needed to achieve a satisfactory compromise regarding the content and drafting of the call - Issues raised during the negotiations on behalf of the funders



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
	2. Do the areas of research and the questions raised allow an overall coherence, or are they too narrow to cover all the important aspects of the problem of the climate change and its impact on the human health? What are the reasons for that?	To which extent the design of the research topics reflects the needs and allows for an overall coherence?	19	<p>8. The research needs were clearly defined</p> <p>9. The choice of the topics reflects the needs of the decision-makers</p> <p>10. The choice of the topics is considered as relevant to address society needs</p> <p>11. The research areas of the call are said by the research community to respond to the research needs in the field of climate change & health</p> <p>12. Researchers and invited external experts and members of the scientific community consider that the different questions raised in the call offer a comprehensive and coherent set of issues to be dealt with</p> <p>13. The research topics defined in the call were large enough to make sure that the research proposals fit in the thematic framework for the selection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Satisfaction of researchers/funders with the defined needs in terms of research topics - Satisfaction of researchers/funders with the extent of needs met - The broadness of research areas covered - Satisfaction of researchers/funders with the themes of the call - Amount and quality of proposals to the call (high/low) - Number of research institutes dealing with the topic in the funder/participating countries



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
Relevance	3-6. Do the scientific questions addressed by the projects (including the rejected projects) match the objectives of the first call and the need of the decision-makers? What is the connection between the demands expressed by decision-makers and the received research proposals? Which are the research demands not addressed by the received research proposals? What were financiers' expectations (in terms of response and consortium)? Were they satisfied (from the answers)?	To which extent do the project proposals reflect the expectations, needs and objectives expressed by the programme managers through the first call for projects?	26	<p>14. The expectations in terms of answers to the call of the funders are met</p> <p>15. The expectations of the funders in terms of quality of consortium are met</p> <p>16. The needs and objectives of the call should be met through selected proposals</p> <p>17. The needs and objectives of programme managers are met by the topics raised by the project proposals</p> <p>18. The objectives of selected projects are usable for programme managers and policy-makers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number and theme of proposals not fitting in the call by their research topics and hence rejected - Research topics not addressed by the call and considered important by the researchers - The expectations of funders in terms of number/quality of proposals are met - Statistics on the consortium: number of participant teams by consortium, number and distribution of countries by consortium and in total, repartition of research teams by thematic area (health vs. environment)



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
	18. Was the subject differently handled because of its transnational character?	To which extent was it relevant to handle the call on a transnational level compared to national programmes?	21	<p>19. The call allowed us to address research areas on a broader, transnational/EU level</p> <p>20. The application for the call was simple enough compared to national/EU programmes</p> <p>21. The scientific questions are different from those of national and EU programmes</p> <p>22. The application for the call was easier or had the same difficulty compared to national calls in the funder countries, in the ERA-ENVHEALTH partner countries and in the EU programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information on research calls in the last 3 years (period of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project) with the same research topic on national level in the funder countries - Information on calls in the last years related to the climate change AND health topic on EU level - Budget of national/EU programmes in the research area compared to the present call - Number and distribution of countries by consortium, repartition of research teams participating in the same consortium by thematic area (health vs environment) and country - The management of the call was simple enough compared to national/EU programmes
Internal coherence	7. Was the number of objectives in line with the financial resources of the financial bodies during the first call?	To which extent and why do the call for projects meet the strategic and thematic objectives of	17	23. The strategic and thematic objectives of the programme managers were clearly stated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Satisfaction with the realised strategic and thematic objectives - Money spent on a selected



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
	8. Were certain objectives privileged to others?	programme managers?		<p>while designing the call</p> <p>24. The strategic and thematic objectives of the programme managers were met by the first call</p>	<p>project compare to the needs of research team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Satisfaction of the researchers with amount of the financial support
External coherence	11. How does the first call for proposals of ERA-ENVHEALTH take a stand on the national programmes of each participant of the consortium?	To which extent does the call for projects represent an added value compared to national or EU programmes for both researchers and funders?	21	<p>25. The ERA-ENVHEALTH call was complementary to national financing programmes in the same scientific area</p> <p>26. The composition of the consortium enhanced interdisciplinarity and access to expertise and research tools between the member teams of the consortium.</p> <p>27. The financial resources of the call were higher than in the case of national programmes of the funding countries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information on research calls in the last 3 years (period of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project) with the same research topic on national level in the funder countries - Budget of national programmes in the research area compared to the present call - Complementary aspect of the call compared to national programmes



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
	<p>23. What is the researchers' opinion about this first call and about the way of financing with regard to other national or European calls?</p> <p>Did they use the platform?</p>			<p>28. The call allowed bringing together research project partners who wouldn't work together otherwise.</p> <p>29. The research areas addressed by the call were not financed by other national or EU resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposals failed due to non compliance with call requirements - Questions regarding the application (subject and amount of phone calls and emails) - Satisfaction of researchers with the wording and simplicity of the call - Information on research calls with the same research topic on national level in the funder countries and of EU programmes
	<p>12. Why did the experts answer to the call and prefer to apply for an international/transnational offer than for a national one in their country?</p>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget of national/EU programmes in the research area compared to the present call - Use of the platform



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
	22. How were the researchers informed about the call for projects?	To which extent was the advertising of the call satisfying for the funders and for other participating countries?	20	<p>The research teams in the area (environment & health) in the ERA-ENVHEALTH countries heard about the call, most of them applied to it as well</p> <p>30. In the EEH countries 31. In the 3 funding countries</p> <p>32. Several channels were used for advertising the call (national/EU/international research platforms; different media; events; etc)</p> <p>33. Funders considered the advertising of the call as satisfactory (Regarding the results in terms of participations and use of advertising tools)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of proposals arrived to the managing authority compared to the number of proposals expected by the funders - Money spent on advertising - Media used for advertising the call (inviting research teams, call accessible on internet by everybody, appear in brochures/conferences/etc). If EU helped in advertising. - Media by which research teams got informed



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
	<p>13. How well did the researchers address the 3 research themes when designing the project proposals?</p> <p>Was the two stages process of the call (letter of interest – feedback to programme managers, then call) useful for the design of the thematic areas of the call?</p>	<p>To which extent does the call provide an added value in terms of research topic?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - field of activity - process 	19	<p>34. The research topics answered the needs of researchers</p> <p>35. The process put in place with independent experts guaranteed that the call addressed relevant questions for target researchers. (fit)</p> <p>36. The communication between the call designers and the target researchers/independent experts was satisfying (To delete??)</p> <p>37. New questions were raised in the call which were not addressed in other calls</p> <p>38. New questions were raised in the call which could not be addressed in other calls</p> <p>39. Researchers were satisfied with the research topics of the call compared to their field of research activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The difference in the scientific themes between the first and the second stage of the call - The researchers received enough information and support during the two-stage process regarding the needs of funders in terms of research results -



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
	<p>14&24. How the research consortiums were established (consortium pre-existent, opportunist, having real added value, newly formed)?</p> <p>In case of non selected projects is the cooperation was sustainable on the long term?</p>	<p>To which extent does the call for projects provide an added value in terms of creating new cooperation between research teams?</p> <p>Point of view researchers (before: more related to theme)</p>	19	<p>40. The call led to the creation of new research cooperation in terms of interdisciplinarity and access to expertise and research tools:</p> <p>41. The formed consortia were satisfying in terms of composition of teams and quality for the funders</p> <p>42. The call led to the creation of lasting research cooperation</p> <p>43. The call led to the creation of multidisciplinary teams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New cooperation (including the insight of rejected consortium) - Common actions (proposals, research, publication, etc) between the partners of a project team (all the 10, including selected and rejected consortium) since the call



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
Output effectiveness	<p>9. Is there a link between the composition of the committees and the mechanism of the selection process, the used criteria (their interpretation) and the result of the first call (list of the selected projects)?</p> <p>17. How did the meetings of the committees of evaluation and selection proceed?</p>	How the selection process was carried out and was it effective?	26	<p>44. The selection process was not more complicated than in the case of a national call</p> <p>45. The selection process was transparent enough for the researchers</p> <p>46. The composition of selection committees satisfied the expectations of the funders</p> <p>47. The set of selection criteria was suitable to evaluate the projects in an appropriate manner.</p> <p>48. The evaluation of the projects based on the selection criteria was understandable for the selection committee members.</p> <p>49. The procedure implemented for the selection committee meetings was suitable for the members and led to successful selection.</p> <p>50. The selection process led to the funding of the most interesting projects for both scientific and decision-makers point of view (Scientific quality and researchers vs. interest interdisciplinarity)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of selection criteria - Time needed to evaluate a project - Number and background of evaluators participated in the process - Cost of evaluators - Time to select a project (the time needed for a meeting of the selection committee) - Cost of administration and cost of participation time of the members of selection committee - Composition of the selection committee - Time spent on selection process and cost of a member of the selection committee (read the evaluations, prepare committee meeting, participate at the meeting)



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
	<p>10. What were the financing rules of each three financier countries? Did it raise problems in the project selection process and the management of the first call?</p> <p>19. Are there major differences regarding the objectives, the ways of functioning and use of the resources between the three financiers?</p>	<p>How the financing process was carried out and was it effective?</p>		<p>51. The financing rules of the funding countries were compatible with each other and allowed the financing of the selected projects</p> <p>52. The design of the call was not modified due to national financing rule constraints</p> <p>53. There was no proposal/project team rejected or modified due to national financing rule constraints</p> <p>54. There were no major differences regarding the objectives, the ways of functioning and use of the resources between the three financiers. Or if yes, good compromise could be found</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problems occurred due to financing rules of the funding countries - Number and importance of the modifications in financing rules due to national financing rule constraints - Number and importance of the modifications in proposals and/or project teams due to national financing rule constraints - Number of proposals rejected due to national financing rule constraints - Number of objectives discarded due to differences in national financing rules - Satisfaction of funders with the financing rules



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
	20&21. How did the contracting process take place? What were the main difficulties? How are contracts drawn up? Were there any disagreements on their formulation?	How the contracting process was carried out and was it effective?		55. The contracting process was similar to at least one of the funder countries or general EU contracting process (there was a contracting model to follow) 56. The contracting process enabled a quick start of the projects 57. The contracting process was not considered as too complex by the research teams 58. There were no major differences regarding the objectives, the ways of functioning and use of the contracting between the three financiers. Or if yes, good compromise could be found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issues raised due to the difference of contracting rules of the funder countries - Satisfaction of funders by the contracting process



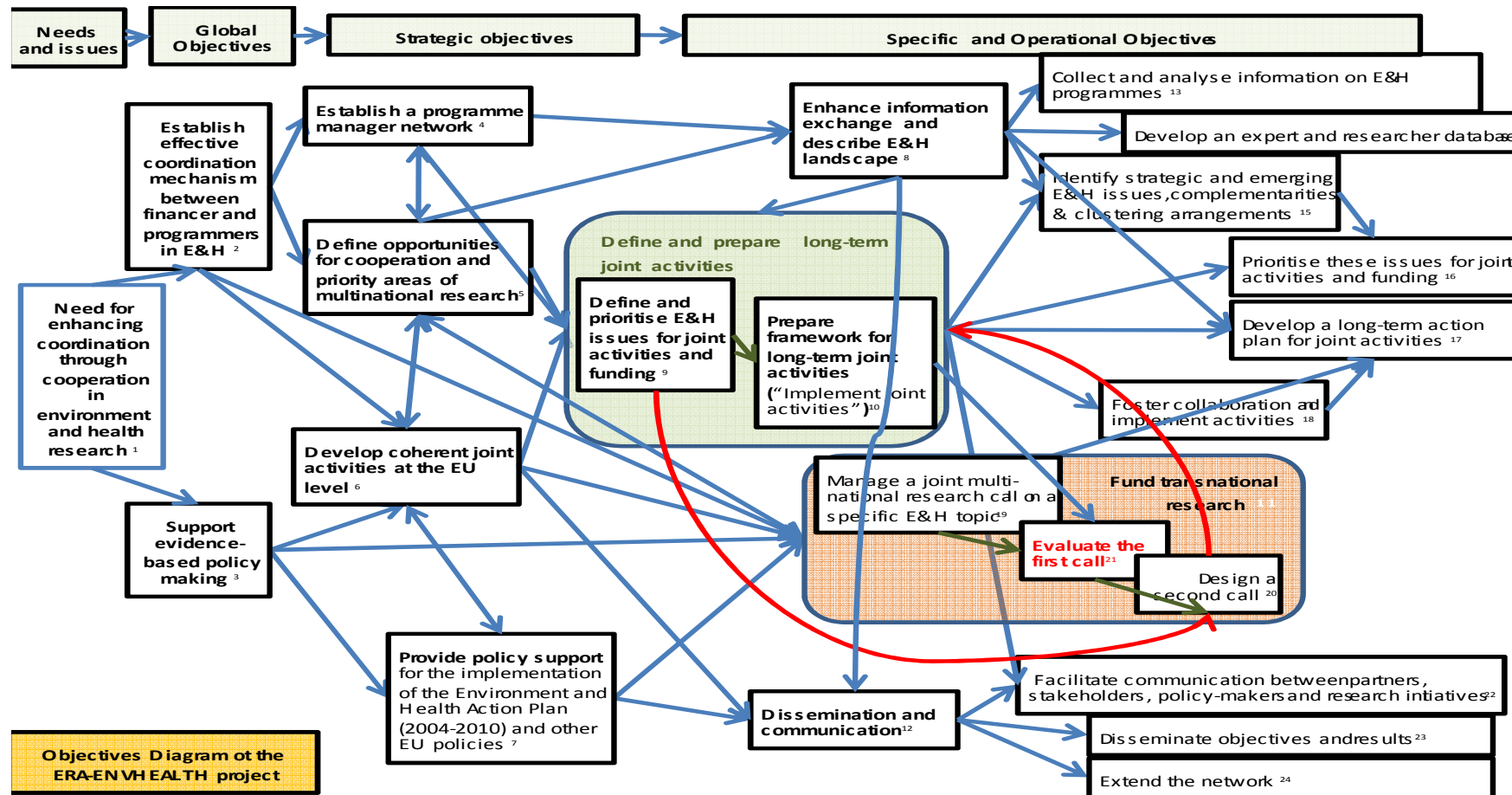
Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
Efficiency	<p>15. Did the creation of consortium allow achieving scientific excellence and complementarity?</p> <p>16. Was the expected interdisciplinarity implemented in a sufficient way within the framework of the first call? Was it taken into account in the evaluation?</p> <p>7. Were the financial resources efficiently used or spread?</p>	To which extent were the objectives in terms of scientific excellence and interdisciplinarity of the projects achieved?	21	<p>59. The consortium is in the process of creating scientific results which would not be possible by the partners on their own. (ask from managers and researchers)</p> <p>60. The participants of the consortium are representing several research areas</p> <p>61. The amount of the financial resources available for one research project was appropriate to achieve scientific excellence</p> <p>62. The interdisciplinarity objectives were met by the research teams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of researcher teams participating in a consortium having different research profile (environment or health) - Number of different research area represented in the consortium - Number of selection criteria regarding intresdisciplinarity - Satisfaction of funders regarding the interdisciplinarity aspect - Satisfaction of funders with the excellence and complementarity aspects - Satisfaction of funders with the size (budget) of the selected projects - Satisfaction of researchers by the amount of the financial resource available for one project



Criteria of evaluation ³⁵	Evaluation question from TOR ³⁶	Core question ³⁷	Mark ³⁸	Judgement criteria ³⁹	Indicators / Descriptors ⁴⁰
Utility	25. Was the experience of the transnational call useful in the management of national calls for each of the financing partners? And for the members of the ERA-ENVHEALTH?	Idem	22	63. Elements of the overall process of this call (design, management, use of results) will be used in the process of national calls of the funder countries and for the ERA-ENVHEALTH partners (Good practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good practices to be used on national level - Information on research calls in the last 3 years (period of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project) with the same research topic on national level in the funder countries - Budget of national/EU programmes in the research area compared to the present call
Impact effectiveness	26. What are the contributions and the involvement of the public authorities in the first call? How did they plan to use the results for their public policies?	Idem	23	<p>64. The policy-makers were involved in the process (design and implementation of the first call)</p> <p>65. The objectives of the policy-makers were expressed and taken into account in the process</p> <p>66. The results of the selected research projects will be used by the policy-makers</p> <p>67. How do the policy-makers plan to use the results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exchanges (mail/phone/participation at meetings) of policy-makers with programme managers during the process - Objectives of policy-makers expressed and met by the call - Policy measures/instruments planned to design(revise) in the near future based on the results of the selected research projects - Policy-makers satisfaction with the results of the call



8.4 Objectives tree of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project



See references for each objective in Annex 8.5.



8.5 List of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project objectives

This list aims to show the origin (document) of the objectives, defined by the ERA-ENVHEALTH partners. The numbers in brackets corresponding to an objective refer to the boxes in the objectives tree (Annex 8.4).

Needs and issues:

Source: 'Description of Work' of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project (17th DOW 23-09-08 Final.pdf) document provided by AFSSET, p.8

(1) "ERA-ENVHEALTH will help respond to the recognised need for enhancing coordination through cooperation in environment and health research."

Global objectives

Source: Aims and objectives from the project site:

<http://www.era-envhealth.eu/servlet/KBaseShow?sort=-1&cid=23174&m=3&catid=23177>

(2) An effective coordination mechanism (PDF - 424K - 19/02/2009)

The objectives of the ERA-ENVHEALTH project are to bring together the financiers and programmers of research in health environment to establish a lasting collaboration between the various organisations by studying the results and methods in these various organisations, by defining priority sets of themes and while answering there by joint activities and transnational calls for projects of research. ERA-ENVHEALTH will bring dynamism to Environment and Health research in Europe by promoting collaboration between research programmes and fostering innovative idea.

(3) Evidence-based policy making (PDF - 424K - 19/02/2009)

The originality of ERA-ENVHEALTH is to start with a trans-national joint call in order to experiment joint funding and to fully assess the implementation of this joint programme. ERA-ENVHEALTH is a contribution to the European E&H Action Plan 2004-2010, promoting the better use of E&H research results to support policy development, and to better anticipate issues affecting the public.

Strategic objectives:

Source: 'Description of Work' of ERA-ENVHEALTH project; 17th DOW 23-09-08 Final.pdf document provided by AFSSET, Strategic and specific objectives p.10-11

(4) Establish a network of programme managers to share information on research activities and expertise in the area of environment and human health sciences.



(5) Define opportunities for cooperation and coordination of national and regional research activities and **identify priority areas** for multinational research leading to multi-disciplinary collaborations between the respective research communities.

(6) Develop coherent joint activities at the EU level on specific environment and health topics.

(19 Operational objective) Implement joint multi-national calls for research proposals on identified E&H issues.

(7) Provide policy support for the implementation of the Environment and Health Action Plan (2004-2010) and support a number of other EU policies concerned with environmental health including strategies regarding climate change, air pollution and children's health.

Specific and operational objectives:

Source: 17th DOW 23-09-08 Final.pdf (document provided by AFSSET): Work package descriptions p.19-30

(8) Information exchange - describing the E&H research landscape:

(13) Collect and analyse information on E&H programmes,

(14) and develop an expert and researcher database.

(9) Definition and preparation of joint activities:

(15) Identify strategic and emerging E&H issues, complementarities & clustering arrangements,

(16) and prioritise these issues for joint activities and funding.

(10) Implementation of joint activities = *Prepare framework for long-term joint activities:*

(17) Develop a long-term action plan for joint activities,

(18) and foster collaboration and implement activities.

(11) Funding of transnational research:

(19) Manage a joint multi-national research call on a specific E&H topic,

(21) evaluate it,

(20) and design a second call.

(12) Dissemination and Communication:

(22) Facilitate communication between partners, stakeholders, policy-makers and research initiatives;

(23) Disseminate objectives and results,

(24) and extend the network.



8.6 List of the objectives of the 1st call for projects

This list aims to show the origin (document) of the objectives of the 1st call for projects, defined by the ERA-ENVHEALTH partners. The numbers in brackets corresponding to an objective refer to the boxes in the objectives tree (Figure 3).

Needs:

Source: 17th DOW 23-09-08 Final.pdf, document provided by AFSSET, Work package descriptions p.24

(1) The purpose of this call is to obtain practical experience on managing and evaluating an E&H multinational programme.

Global objectives:

*Source: Note concerning the 1st call, 03.07.09, document provided by AFSSET
Scope and themes, p.2*

The call was open to proposals for international scientific research projects that:

- (3) link scientific advancement to challenges in environment and health research, policy and practice;
- (2) generate new knowledge and insights;
- (4) generate added value by linking expertise and efforts across national borders, leading to research projects designed at the appropriate scale and scope.

Strategic objectives

*Source: Note concerning the 1st call, 03.07.09, document provided by AFSSET
A new funding opportunity, p.5*

The aim of the joint calls is to allow the best researchers across Europe to link up with their peers in ways different from those currently possible within the available European and national funding schemes to:

- (5) address present and future challenges in environment and health;
- (6) help identify and forecast problems;
- (7) network local research, knowledge and management expertise and share research facilities throughout Europe;
- (8) coordinate related activities at national and European levels (e.g. to compare case studies);
- (9) promote transdisciplinary design of research questions and responses to environment and health challenges; and
- (10) increase the efficiency in use of resources for environment and health research.



Specific objectives

Source: Note concerning the 1st call, 03.07.09, document provided by AFSSET

Aims of the call, p.2

With this call, the partner organisations in ERA-ENVHEALTH aimed to:

- (11) to solve environment and health issues of European and national concern by mobilising and supporting scientifically excellent research;
- (12) promote international, collaborative research projects of international excellence at European scale and scope;
- (13) create new funding opportunities in Europe for excellent environment and health science, complementing existing schemes at the European and national levels;
- (14) disseminate research findings and encourage their use and application; and
- (15) contribute to effective and lasting linkages between relevant actors in European environment and health science and policy-based organisations in support of evidence-based policy and practice.



8.7 Assessment criteria

The Evaluation Committee applied the criteria below to assess the quality of the proposals. At the full proposal stage, international experts were asked to provide a peer review taking into account all assessment criteria (scientific aspects, policy relevance, project management and added value). The anonymized reports were sent to the applicants for comments (rebuttal).

Outline proposal stage

Criteria for the selection of pre-proposals

1. Scientific Aspects (as below)
2. Added value (as below)

Full proposal stage

1. Scientific Aspects

Scientific aspects will be assessed by means of the following criteria:

- Scientific quality of the proposed research
- Novelty / Originality and innovation
- Clarity of the hypothesis and quality of methodology
- Quality and suitability of the consortium
- Level of inter/multi/trans-disciplinarity
- Suitability of resources
- Fit to thematic priorities

Scientific excellence is a prerequisite for funding.

All applications must involve both environmental scientists and medical/health researchers in joint research projects. Interdisciplinary approaches are, therefore, required.

2. Added Value

Added value will be assessed by means of the following criteria:

- Importance of the research for solving pressing concerns/issues related to environment and health
- Manner in which stakeholders and end users will be involved
- Arrangements for knowledge transfer
- European benefits

3. Project management

Project management will be assessed by means of the following criteria:

- Feasibility and risk
- Level of integration and collaboration
- Suitability of budget requirements
- Quality of project governance
- Nature of links with other programmes (Note: other relevant sources of funding and links with related programmes must be disclosed)



8.8 Benchmark study

Several ERA-NET projects were investigated in order to compare them with the ERA-ENVHEALTH project and its 1st call. The main benchmark projects and documents were:

- ✓ SKEP,
- ✓ SNOWMAN,
- ✓ CIRCLE,
- ✓ BIODIVERSA,
- ✓ BONUS,
- ✓ CRUE,
- ✓ Finnish Environment Institute recommendations, etc.

As a general conclusion, all the project holders and stakeholders agree that the ERA-NET scheme is a good tool to finance transnational research project.

Some of the relevant common findings regarding the transnational calls were the following:

- They bring added value in terms of project size and themes compared to national and EU calls.
- In terms of budget the transnational call is synergic: financiers put some money available and have access to all research results.
- International evaluators should be involved in order to ease the evaluation of interdisciplinary topics.
- A call secretariat is essential for the good management of the calls.
- Not only research institutes and universities could be involved, but consultancy organisations too, when the objective is to bring applied research results for policy-makers.
- ERA-NETs help to bridge the gap between ministries-agencies-researchers..

Some common difficulties could also be identified:

- The setting up of a real common pot is very difficult, mostly virtual common pots exist.
- Common contracting/financing rules need to be elaborated instead of keeping strong national rules.
- The “funders’ agreement” was almost a breaking point in the cooperation towards the call. The agreement should be discussed at an earlier stage of the process. A lighter solution with a “letter of commitment” can be an answer.



- The process to define the research themes has to take into account national agendas and strategies. A focus on applied research and not on fundamental research is required to answer financiers (policy-makers) needs.

The SKEP project and network was the main benchmark, as it financed and launched 3 calls, and found a way to continue the cooperation with certain partners once the project ended.

The SKEP ERA-NET project was a partnership of 17 government ministries and agencies, from 13 European countries, responsible for funding environmental research. The project aimed to improve the co-ordination of environmental research in Europe.

Some of the common elements of the two projects were:

- Limited number of financing partners (max 4-6): ease the choice of topics and financing rules.
- The good work of the Call secretariat was a key element of the implementation of the call.

The main strength and good practices of SKEP identified in comparison with the EEH call were:

- The creation of an international pool of evaluators: help to easily find evaluators for interdisciplinary projects and avoid conflict of interest.
- From the 3 call, one at least was a real common pot.

The weaknesses and lessons learnt from the SKEP project were:

- It is difficult to set up a real common pot, a virtual common pot is more frequent.
- The dissemination of results is a key issue; however its realisation is left to the research teams, and depends on the researchers.
- The compromise on research topics is difficult. The topics could be split and launched at the same time by several calls.
- The evaluation criteria could be too strict and thus some money could not be spent (national spending rules...).

The strength and good practices of EEH were:

- 2 stages submission (pre- and final proposals), with feedback from evaluators which enhances scientific excellence.
- The choice of the broader research area (E&H) fills a huge gap and answers real needs from the researchers and policy-makers sides.

Weaknesses and lessons learnt:

- Difficult to set up a real common pot.



- The rules of financing and contracting should be clarified and accepted in advance.
- The quasi 3 stage evaluation should be adapted to the number of proposals expected (administrative work in line with the amount of proposals).



8.9 Strengths, weaknesses and specific recommendations of the 1st call for projects

Procedural steps	Activities	Strong points	Points to be improved	Recommendations
Budget	Make the budget available	Relatively high amount of money was available	The availability was not ensured by some of the partners The intersection of the timeframes regarding the spending of the resources was narrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The availability of the money should be ensured before the launch of the call. Bureaucratic difficulties of one of the financing partners are considered as issues out of the scope of the ERA-NETs, having at the same time impact on the performance and reputation of the programmes and ERA-NET system. - As the launch of the call and the contracting process should fit in the intersection of timeframes on the availability of the resources, some steps should be prepared in advance in order to reduce the necessity to be in a rush. These advanced activities could be related to contracting, such as the elaboration of text of the contracts, or the rules on the follow-up of the projects.
	Sign Memorandum of Understanding		The signature of a commitment document showed to be vital to ensure the financing of the selected projects, and happened only after the start of the selected projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Memorandum of Understanding should be elaborated and signed by the financing organisations BEFORE the launch of the call. - The budgetary, financing and contracting issues should be agreed on a higher decision-maker level first, before giving the floor to the elaboration of the details by programme managers, in order to ensure and support the commitment.
Scientific theme	Define/precise the scope	The definition of the main scientific areas of the call was selected with the involvement	The narrowed research field of the call was defined very quickly by the three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More time should be dedicated to the selection of the specific topics of the call, in order to let the other stakeholders (policy-makers, other EEH



Procedural steps	Activities	Strong points	Points to be improved	Recommendations
		of the EEH partners. The selected theme filling a real niche in terms of transnational research-financing.	financing partners, without involving the other EEH partners.	partners) express their needs. - The more stakeholders are involved, the more research topics are raised. There is a larger choice but it is more difficult to answer to all needs. Special financing framework should be developed (see general recommendations). - The rule on 'Money decides' should be clarified and communicated at an early stage of the process.
Submission framework	Set the submission rules		Due to the time constraints and that the EEH website did not exist at the time of the launch of the call, the NERC platform had been used. This is why special submission rules applied: only UK participants could submit the proposals.	- The new call can use the EEH website or other websites where any participant of the call is able to submit a proposal. - Shorter proposals could be required for a quicker selection process. - The elaboration of the pre-proposals need more time (involve partners, agree on the scientific topic, agree on the financial and work repartition, etc), timeframe should be extended.
	Communicate with applicants	The call Secretariat and the National Focal Points did good job, and communicate well with the participants.		- The process of communication with and information of the participants can be kept for a next call for proposals.



Procedural steps	Activities	Strong points	Points to be improved	Recommendations
Selection framework	Set selection procedure	The process was very sophisticated and allowed for an effective selection.	The selection process was not fully efficient. The administrative overhead was not in line with the number of the proposals received.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The process of the selection was a very effective tool for the selection of the most interesting projects and could be kept for a next call, but should be more adapted to the number of proposals. - The estimation of the number of proposals can be supported by asking relevant researchers about their willingness to participate, and which topic would they go for (so called 'beauty contest').
	Set selection criteria	The selection criteria were effective, allowing the measurement of several aspects, and a good ranking of the proposals.	Some selection aspects were not addressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The selection criteria can be reinforced and extended by some aspects on: policy relevance, sustainability, social aspects. - The definition of the categories of selection criteria, such as 'policy relevance' or 'added value' is needed, and should be clearly stated as for the applicants and for the evaluators.
	Set evaluation committees	The evaluation committee worked very effectively, and - with the selection criteria - allowed for the selection of the higher ranked projects, which were the most interesting for the financing partners.	The external evaluators (peer reviewers) were selected and requested in a short delay, and some of the research topics addressed by the proposals were not fully covered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An international pool of evaluators has to be set, in order to ensure the availability of all kind of experts in the related fields of a next call.



Procedural steps	Activities	Strong points	Points to be improved	Recommendations
Legal framework	Set contracting rules	In the UK the contracting process was appropriate in time.	The French contracting process was delayed by the international nature of the projects. In the Netherlands, the financing issues highly delayed the contracting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For a same call, the common contracting rules have to be defined in advance, preferably before the launch of the call. - Special attention should be paid to the start of the projects, which can be very different in the participating countries.
	Set financing rules	The financing rules of AFSSET and VROM were satisfying.	The special restriction of NERC on financing only UK partners resulted in national financing from all financing partners. This resulted in some unused budget at the partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The realisation of a real common pot instead of virtual common pot would be ideal. - At the same time, the inclusion of partners with strong national or organisational rules allows a larger budget and the financing of several research teams.
Text of the call	Drafting the call	The text of the call was high quality, containing all the necessary information for the submission of a good proposal.		<p>The same characteristics of the text should be kept:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - short, - containing all information, - including the selection criteria, - requiring reasonable amount of legal documents and administrative work from the applicants.
Publish and advertise the call	Publish and advertise	The advertising in the UK was successful, reaching the interested research teams.	In France and the Netherlands the advertising was partially successful. These research groups were sometimes reached by their UK partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The advertising of the next call will be able to use the EEH website and network, as well as the already used organisational channels (website and mailing list). - The non financing partners' countries should be involved, in order to enhance their participation in the research consortia.



Procedural steps	Activities	Strong points	Points to be improved	Recommendations
Pre-proposal	Reception of outline proposals Selection or eligibility check Inform participants	The reception and eligibility check took place in an effective way, as well as the information of the participants.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In function of the number of proposals, the first round could be reduced to an eligibility check or extended to a deeper evaluation and real selection. - The requirements regarding the outline proposals could be flexible in function of the information needs of the call managers: from a simple letter of interest to a more elaborated pre-proposal. - In any case, the assessment of policy relevance should be reinforced already at this first stage.
Final-proposal	Reception and selection of final proposals, information of applicants	The selection process, including the comments-answer between applicants and peer reviewers took place in an effective way, leading to the selection of two very interesting projects. The information of the applicants and winners was carried out in an appropriate way.	Some proposals addressed scientific questions which were out of the scope of the evaluators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The selection process and the information of the proposal holders are appropriate for a next call. The complexity of the process should be adapted to the number of submitted proposals. - The scientific expertise and scope of the evaluators and the assessments provided by them can be more adapted to the interdisciplinary nature and the specific scientific areas of the proposals. - Applicants could include the competences needed to assess their project in the proposal.
Start of the projects	Contracting and financing selected projects	The contracting and financing process has been discussed in the 'legal framework' section.		
Follow-up of the projects	Project management and reporting	In the light of the benchmark, the fact that the research teams are working on the selected projects can be considered as a good result of	The financing organisations were not invited to the kick-off and other working meetings of the selected projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The participation of the financing organisations at the financed projects' meetings should be stated in the financing contract, or at least expressed before the start of the projects. - The financing framework of the projects should



Procedural steps	Activities	Strong points	Points to be improved	Recommendations
		the call. However, they started even before the signature of all contracts, which can not be considered as an ideal situation.	Due to the financing and contracting constraints of the Dutch partners, the realisation of the projects is slightly delayed.	allow the consortium to advance the expenses of the consortium partners, which is mainly achievable only in case of a real common pot
Scientific results	Dissemination and make use of research results (feedback to policy-makers)	The researchers foresee some publications and workshops for the dissemination of the results. Stakeholder workshops have been held in order to meet their needs.	The dissemination is not explicitly set in the financing contracts, and not clearly developed within the EEH partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The dissemination of some results at each deliverables/milestones can be asked from the research consortium in the annual reports at the EEH call, not only at the end of the research exercise. - The dissemination of the research result should use all the available channels, including already existing/organised workshops and websites. - Feedback to policy-makers should be ensured by their involvement in the main milestones of the projects, as well as the elaboration of reports in a usable language and length for them. - There is still time to further develop the way of reporting back to policy-makers, taking into account that research projects are in the mid-term period The followings should be defined: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o target group o message o summary o explanation the message and summary should be adapted to the audience (target group). - New tools are needed to be elaborated in the field of dissemination and knowledge brokerage process with the active role of the programme



Procedural steps	Activities	Strong points	Points to be improved	Recommendations
				<p>managers in this message flow ('translator' of the results to policy-makers and reach the policy-makers, make them available to listen/read to researchers).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guidelines should be elaborated for that, and invent the right transfer process in order to bridge the gap in communication between policy-makers and researchers. - It is easier to transfer message to policy-makers when they are involved from the beginning.



8.10 List of documents

- Memorandum of understanding
- Description of Work
- Note concerning the 1st call
- Call for projects
 - Referee's assessment criteria
 - Call for Projects
 - Annexes: 1. Country Contact Details, 3. FULL PROPOSAL APPLICATION FORM, 4. Funding model, 5. Assessment Criteria, 6. Instructions for the Call Secretariat, 7. Information and guidelines for the Evaluation Committee, 7. Appendix 2 Final, 8b. FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION FORM, 9. Good practice and conflict of interest
- Projects
 - Proposals and contracts
- Selection process
 - Evaluation Committee Meeting
 - Scoring sheet
 - Minutes of the preparatory meeting for Negotiation of the FP7 E&H ERANET
 - Minutes of the 2nd preparatory meeting for the FP7 E&H ERA-NET
 - List of the External Advisory Committee (EAC) for the ERA-ENVHEALTH project
- Benchmark
 - ERA expert group report (2008)
 - ERA Partnership 2008 Initiatives
 - ERA-NETs on Stage
 - Analysis of ERA-Nets' experiences and recommendations for good practices (Finnish Environment Institute)
 - FP6 ERA-NET Study (June 2009)
 - The ERA new Perspectives: Green Paper (2007)
 - SNOWMAN call evaluation report, BONUS cook book, etc
 - NETWATCH website documents

How to join the ERA-ENVHEALTH project

Your organisation funds and/or manages E&H research programme

If your organisation is interested in taking part in the ERA-ENVHEALTH project, please contact the leader of the "Extend the network" task for more information on how to join the project as an E&H research funding and/or managing organisation:

Luciana SINISI
ISPRA - Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale
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00185 Roma
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You are interested in becoming a member of the External Interest Group (EIG)

If you are interested in joining the External interest group to be kept informed of the progress of the project and maybe be called upon to participate in certain meetings and discussions, please contact the leaders of WP5 "Dissemination and Communication":

Bart VERHAGEN and Mohssine EL KAHLOUN
ERA-ENVHEALTH project communication
Federal Coordination Environment & Health Services of the President
FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment
Victor Horta Square 40, box 10
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Bart.Verhagen@health.fgov.be
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You are part of another ERA-NET focusing on Environment and/or Health

Other ERA-NETs with a focus on environment and health are more than welcome get in contact to exchange ideas and look at possible cooperation. In this case, please contact the coordinator of the project:

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ERA-ENVHEALTH project coordination
European and International Relations Unit
AFSSET - French Agency for Environmental and Occupational Health Safety
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Partners of the consortium:

Partner name	Acronym	Logo
French Agency for Environmental and Occupational Health Safety (France)	AFSSET	
French Environment and Energy Management Agency (France)	ADEME	
Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and the Sea (France)	MEEDDM	
Belgian federal Science Policy Office (Belgium)	BelSPO	
Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment (Belgium)	FPS	
Environmental Protection Agency (Ireland)	EPA	
Superior Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (Italy)	ISPRA	
Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Sweden)	Swedish EPA	
Ministry for Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (Netherlands)	VROM	
National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (Netherlands)	RIVM	
Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic (Slovak Republic)	UVZ	
Environment Agency (England and Wales)	EA	
Natural Environment Research Council (UK)	NERC	
Ministry of Health (Israel)	MOH	
Federal Environment Agency (Germany)	UBA	
National Research Council (Italy)	CNR	