

ERA-Instruments aims at initiating coordination and a sustainable network of ministries, charities, funding agencies and research councils active in funding of life science research infrastructure (RI). This European platform of relevant stake-holders will set up comprehensive tools for adequate treatment of instrumentation related topics enabling conclusions for research policies on both a national and European level. The ERA-NET will focus on bio-analytical instrumentation including post-genomic high-throughput techniques, NMR, mass spectrometry, microscopy, micro-array platforms etc. These midsize equipments have become an essential and strategic strength for European countries. *ERA-Instruments* can build on the broad experience with RI funding of its partners and its scientific advisory board. Contact to scientists will thus remain close and continuous. Promotion of RI funding in FP-7 and support for new member states will also strengthen the position of European research.

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A successful first year

Looking back on the first project year a fair number of results and reports document a successful start

In April 2009 *ERA-Instruments* has completed its first project year. While the year 2007 and a good part of 2008 were occupied with the application and negotiation phase with the EC, the first year of *ERA-Instruments* saw a multitude of activities springing from the kick-off meeting in Madrid in April 2008 like fireworks ignited by a spark.

Many of the activities have produced results and no less than ten reports were submitted to the commission.

Following these analyses we now move towards drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations. The importance of mid-size RI has become obvious throughout the different activities of *ERA-Instruments*. There is a growing appreciation that mid-size RI issues need not to be solved in isolation but can be jointly tackled in a European context, thus filling the ERA with life.

Thomas Gübitz, Johannes Janssen, Christian Renner
German Research Foundation, Bonn

Meeting #2: „Stake-holder views“ in Santorini, 12./13. October 2008

The Greek partner NHRF organised a remarkable event in a location that future meetings will find hard to surpass



Science and science policy from all over Europe – isn't that the first taste of true ERA?

The Santorini workshop was aiming at the views and needs of the scientists in establishing, running and using mid-size research infrastructure (RI). At the first workshop in Madrid everybody was still warming up to the subject and participants were getting to know each other. On Santorini the discussions were very lively showing the high engagement of the partners as well as the Scientific Advisory Board.

The conference was perfectly organized by Loula Sigala and her team – from the first evening to the transport to the airport.

Many thanks for that to our Greek partner NHRF!



The beautiful sight across the impressive caldera of Santorini made up for the long hours of discussion and argument.

The major questions that were addressed in the discussions were concerning funding and charging models for RI facilities that provide access to external users as well as prerequisites and conditions for efficient use of such centres. Recognizing the different requirements and current practise in different fields, sub-groups were formed for three thematic areas during the break-out session.

At the time of the workshop many activities were underway and the workshop served for clarifying the aims and for discussing first experiences with the approaches chosen. Half a year later at the end of the first project year many of these actions had been successfully completed and results transformed into reports and collections.

The valuable experience that we have gained through the workshop has brought *ERA-Instruments* a big step forward.



Serious work by serious people. The conference centre was a secluded place offering a supportive atmosphere.

User Meeting on Advanced Light Microscopy, 24. September 2008 in Bonn

The first ERA-Instruments User Meeting was held in conjunction with an International Microscopy Symposium in Bonn, Germany

An unexpected opportunity for a first user meeting offered itself in the form of a high-profile symposium on advanced light microscopy taking place in Bonn (<http://www.thch.uni-bonn.de/microscopy2008/>).

Since this symposium was organized by the University of Bonn with support by DFG it was an ideal opportunity to engage the international experts in a discussion round directly following the regular symposium program.

An important lesson learned was that hardly any scientists attended exclusively the user meeting and that, apart from our Scientific Advisors Dietmar Manstein and Tanel Tenson, all experts were anyway participating at the symposium and came to our user meeting as an add-on.

The resultant mix of developers of methods and instruments, of heads of microscopy centres, a company delegate and "end-users" of methods was ideal for the prospected discussion. The valuable results have been collected in a meeting report that has been distributed within *ERA-Instruments*, but will also be published on the website in the near future.

Last, not least, many thanks to Ulrich Kubitscheck (University of Bonn) and to Achim Tieftrunk (DFG) for their help and support in combining the user meeting with the symposium and for inviting the right people to the discussion.

Scientific Advisory Board Meeting, Utrecht, 22 January 2009

The Scientific Advisory Board has defined Terms of Reference for their work and elected a chairman

The meeting in Utrecht responded to the requirement of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) for an internal meeting of the Board. Terms of reference were agreed upon and Jose Carrascosa and Albert Heck were elected as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board, respectively.

The role of the SAB was discussed and clarified and the requirements of the SAB in terms of information and participation were communicated to the coordinators.

Coordination Meeting of all Partners in Prague, 23 February 2009

The Partners met in Prague to discuss the first year's deliverables and to prepare for the reporting of the first year of the project

On Carnival's Monday (which is hard at least for an organisation located nearby Cologne) almost all partners came together at the GACR head quarters in Prague for a very productive meeting presenting their results of the first year of *ERA-Instruments*. Due to the stimulating atmosphere, a lot of current issues could be advanced next to the main topic, the reports. We are deeply indebted to Zuzana Cechova and Veronika Paleckova for the perfect organisation of this enjoyable event.

User Meeting "Next Generation Sequencing"

The second ERA-Instruments User Meeting was part of the „GeneForum 2009" in Tartu, Estonia.

A project like *ERA-Instruments* offers a lot of opportunities for exploring new formats while addressing its topics. The user meeting in Tartu might serve as an example. Instead of inviting experts to come to a round table discussion, we went to them and integrated our agenda into a scientific conference in form of a dedicated session. A panel discussion with four out-standing experts in the field of next generation sequencing explored the current developments and challenges associated with this technology. Keen to know how it worked? Well, the report is in preparation and will be delivered soon. But we can already commend the inspiring atmosphere of this reputable conference we were honoured to participate in and contribute to.



Workshop #3: „Made in the EU“ in Hinxton, UK

Wellcome Trust invited us to the small village of Hinxton that now has built an international reputation with its unique research campus

Preceding the scientific programme of the workshop was an internal *ERA-Instruments* discussion of past results, present activities and future plans. In view of the numerous reports that have been produced by the partners the proposal for a concise paper containing the most relevant conclusions was accepted by Scientific Advisory Board and all partners. This publication will aim at recommendations rather than just summarizing the present state. A professional layout and clear messages will aid in bringing the results of *ERA-Instruments* to a wider perception among policy makers and scientists.



The Wellcome Trust conference centre offers ideal conditions for a retreat



The conference grounds combines Traditional English style with all modern amenities.

In general, the progress of *ERA-Instruments* was found to be very satisfactory as the few delays in some parts are offset by early results in other parts. The scientific part of the workshop comprised talks by renown experts in the fields of sequencing and bioinformatics. The main topic was the data challenge presented by modern experimental techniques such as next generation sequencing, but also the enormous data generating potential of imaging methods was addressed.

A tour through the Hinxton sequencing and computing facilities gave an impressive demonstration of the issues discussed in the lecture hall. We owe Nicola Perrin and David Carr plus their local team a dept of gratitude for the perfect organisation of the meeting and thank Wellcome Trust for their generous financial support.

Upcoming events:

- Study tour to Canada in September
- Study tour to China and Japan in November

News & Links

The EUROHORCS and ESF have recently published a “**Vision on a Globally Competitive ERA and their Road Map for Actions**”: <http://www.eurohorcs.org>. The document describes a midterm agenda by identifying ten goals. One of it is entitled “**Develop shared funding and exploitation of medium-sized research infrastructure**”. ESF is preparing a member organisations (MO) forum which will describe the actions in more detail: <http://www.esf.org/activities/mo-fora.html>

The 5th EU Conference on Research Infrastructures took place in Versailles on December 9-10, 2008: <http://www.ecri2008.eu/>
An important aspect was the publication of the first update of the ESFRI roadmap containing **ten new ESFRI projects**, four of them in the Biological and Medical Sciences (see ESFRI-Website: <http://cordis.europa.eu/esfri/home.html>)

The European Research Facility Association (ERF) is organizing a one-day seminar on the **Future Access to European Research Infrastructures: Benefit to Academia, Industry and Society, the 27th of October 2009 in Lund** under the auspices of the Swedish Presidency of the European Union. Website: http://www.europeanresearchfacilities.eu/documents/ERF_seminar_programme6.pdf

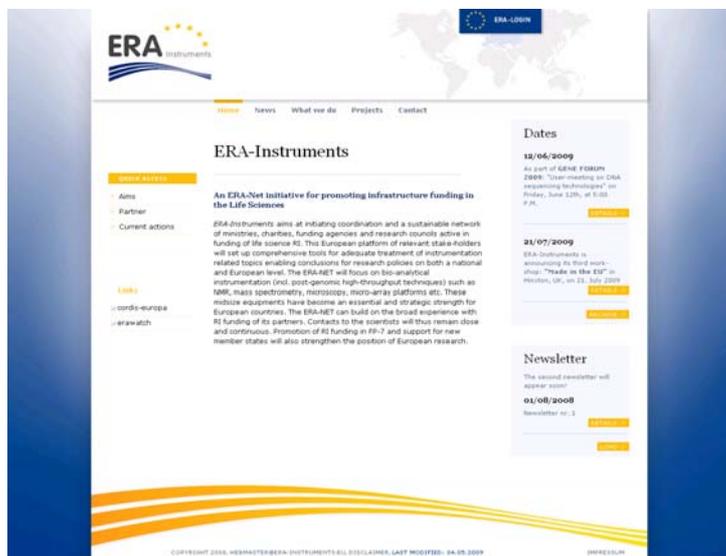
ESF has published the results of their **European Survey of Research Infrastructure** containing a report (<http://www.esf.org/activities/science-policy/research-infrastructure/the-2nd-european-survey-of-ri.html>) and a **European RIs Web portal** (<http://www.riportal.eu>) with various search options on nearly 600 existing European RIs. The survey is in close relation to *ERA-Instruments'* Workpackage 2.

About ERA-Instruments

The Programme

It has become increasingly obvious that concepts and strategies for research infrastructure (RI) funding should be harmonised and coordinated within the EU. ESFRI has determined requirements for European RI funding and has presented a roadmap. Growing attention is paid to life sciences that rely on RIs of a less centralised, but more networked dimension. There is a clear need for action in the interdisciplinary area between physics, chemistry, biology and medical sciences as cutting edge instrumentation becomes increasingly expensive and, yet, indispensable for world-class research. However, promotion of research policies, apart from the ESFRI projects, has been restricted so far to national efforts without managing these actions with a European view. Funding and research organisations can not afford to remain at the national stage in view of world-wide competition for the best scientists and the most promising projects. Frontier research is an international undertaking since long and funding organisations have to follow scientists to the European level.

The new ERA-Instruments Website



Updates and further information on:
www.era-instruments.eu

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The ERA-Instruments Partners

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