

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 very productive second year

The second year of ERA-Instruments proved very productive and saw new activities emerging

Momentum of *ERA-Instruments* picked up considerably in the second period of the project. Two study tours to non-European countries took place, a very successful workshop was held in Vienna, two recommendation papers resulting from ERA-Instruments activities were published, additional activities were planned, and the discussion about the future or follow-up of ERA-Instruments initiated. With an extension of the project until the end of September 2011 we are looking forward to a productive and successful final year.

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

Meeting #4 in Vienna, 26./27. May 2010

The British partner BBSRC and the Austrian partner BMWF organised a very rich workshop

A look back over the second year of ERA-Instrument demonstrated an impressive list of interesting results. The organisers of the study tours to Canada and China/Japan reported about the insights gained during the study tours.

Johannes Janssen informed about the ESF Member Organisation (MO) Forum on research infrastructures (RI) as a follow-up project broadening the scope.

Hervé Péro presented the European Commission's view on policy developments and challenges in the field of research infrastructures.

In this context the question about the future of ERA-Instrument was raised and the discussion about future activities initiated.

During the session on "access", experiences with access agreements and widening of access were presented, followed by a discussion focussing on facility management and the need to increase coordination and integration, as well as funding (through the EC) for research facilities. Recommendations derived from the discussion and experiences on access to RI have been summarised in a publication.

The session on foresight processes and on what instrumentation is emerging/needed showed to which extent this challenge can be tackled but also illustrated limitations of foresight processes.

The meeting ended with a very informative visit to the research facilities at the Vienna Biocenter.



Workshop #4 was held at the premises of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research (BWMF) in the heart of Vienna.

New activities

Presentation of the NGS survey results and round table discussion at the ESF NGS Meeting in Leiden, Netherlands

With the support of Terry Vrijenhoek, representing gEUVADIS, the results of the next generation sequencing (NGS) instrumentation were presented at the ESF NGS Meeting in Leiden. A round table discussion produced informative statements about the issues surrounding this disruptive technology.

The present picture of NGS facilities is that half the staff of larger facilities is dedicated to data analysis, underlining the result of the survey that data analysis is currently perceived as a major bottleneck.

Discussing the profile of facilities, it was suggested that larger centres should serve larger projects while smaller projects should be run at local facilities. Local facilities are especially important for teaching.

Establishing and improving standards is a constant challenge and a dynamic process following suite to technological and bioinformatic developments. Larger initiatives play a major role in setting standards in their respective areas; for instance ICGC (International Cancer Genome Consortium), gEUVADIS for standardization and the establishment of best practices in studies of genomic sequencing, and BBMRI, the Pan-European research infrastructure for Biobanking and Biomolecular Resources.

ENEA carried out a dissemination activity during the 14th International Biotechnology Symposium and Exhibition in Rimini, Italy

A mini-stand with a continuous slide-show and an oral presentation informed about activities and results of ERA-Instruments at this international meeting with more than 1500 visitors. In particular, attendees from Asia showed interest in access to European research infrastructures.



The mini-stand with a continuous slide-show at IBS 2010 in Rimini.
(Picture courtesy of Flavio Fontana)

Coordination Board Meeting in Rome, October 2010

The Partners met in Rome to discuss the additional activities planned for the remaining period of ERA-Instruments and ideas for a follow-up project

In a warm and welcoming Rome, ENEA hosted a coordination board meeting during which the additional activities proposed by the partner organisations and future plans for ERA-Instruments were discussed.

On the first day the meeting was held at the ENEA headquarters in Rome with general information provided by the coordinator, and information and discussion about current and planned activities.

On the second day the meeting continued at the vast ENEA site at Casaccia outside of Rome with the discussion of activities which are still in planning and the possibilities to continue the project after its official closure. The day ended with a U2 concert in the Olympic Stadium in Rome.



"Finale" of the Coordination Board Meeting at Lago di Bracciano near Rome.

Two recommendations papers for research infrastructures were published in 2010

The results of the reports on "access and operation" and "funding schemes" for mid-size instrumentation in the life sciences have been summarised in form of recommendation brochures which are addressed to policy makers, funding agencies, research organisations, and facility managers. Both papers have so far received much attention and favourable feedback.

A third recommendation paper on "funding policies" is currently in preparation.

Study tours to non-European Countries

The study tours to Canada and China/Japan produced interesting insights

A delegation including members from partner organisations and members of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) visited during a week in autumn 2009 major organisations and institutions relevant to life science infrastructures in Canada. The tour organised by NWO and supported by the Dutch Embassies in Canada and the USA focussed on the areas Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal. Valuable insights into problems and solutions regarding the organisation of research infrastructures were gained. In particular the issue of research infrastructure management was brought to the attention of the delegation.

A few weeks later in November 2009 a delegation of partners and SAB members visited Beijing, China, and Kyoto and Tokyo, Japan, during a two week long tour. The delegation was well impressed by the high standard of research and equipment and the very much forward looking scientists at the Chinese top research institutes and universities. In Japan, a country with a long-standing track-record of large and well equipped laboratories with excellent scientific output, the atmosphere of the then looming cuts in research expenditure and the need to maintain and extent international collaboration were felt.

Taken together the study tours produced a wealth of insights which can be compared and contrasted to the European research infrastructure landscape.



The "Canada" delegation visiting the Genome Quebec Innovation Centre at McGill University in Montreal.



The "China/Japan" delegation's visit to the Tsinghua University - School of Life Sciences (Picture courtesy of Flavio Fontana)

Project extension until end of September 2011

In order to give partners more time to implement lessons learned from ERA-Instruments and to evaluate the project's benefits, the project applied for and received a cost-neutral extension until the end of September 2011

The extension of the project until 30th September 2011 allows all partners to produce reports on the impact of ERA-Instruments on their organisations. These will be presented at the final workshop organised by RANNIS on Iceland in May 2011. In addition the extension allows to organise the additional activities in a more relaxed timeframe and to wrap up the project properly.

Upcoming events:

- Showcase of academic technology, UK, April or June 2011
 - Workshop on facility management, Berlin, 14th or 15th April 2011
 - Partnering activity between industry and scientists, London, 17th May 2011
 - Final workshop in Iceland, 24-25th May 2011
 - Dissemination activity in Brussels, 21st June 2011
- (For registration or confirmation of dates please visit the project's webpage at www.era-instruments.eu)

News & Links

- RAMIRI - Realising And Managing International Research Infrastructure - is expected to start a second phase <http://www.ramiri.eu>
- ESFRI has published its BMS Thematic Working Group report http://ec.europa.eu/research/infrastructures/index_en.cfm?pg=esfri
- Euro-BioImaging started into its preparatory phase <http://www.eurobioimaging.eu/>
- BBMRI - Biobanking and Biomolecular Resources Research Infrastructure - www.bbmri.eu
- gEUVADIS - Genetic European Variation In Disease - www.geuvadis.org
- ICGC – International Cancer Genome Consortium - <http://www.icgc.org/>

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 Publications:



Mid-Size Instrumentation in the Life Sciences:
I. Efficient Operation and Access





Mid-Size Instrumentation in the Life Sciences:
II. Funding Schemes



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

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The ERA-Instruments Partners

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