

Streamlining European research

Climate Impact Research Coordination for a Larger Europe (CIRCLE)...

CIRCLE ERA-Net is a co-ordination action aimed at implementing the European Research Area (ERA) in the field of climate change impacts, adaptation and vulnerability (CCIAV). It is a network of research funding and managing organisations (ie. owners and/or managers of national programmes on CCIAV research), and was supported by the European Commission (EC) through its 6th Framework Programme (FP6).

Aim of CIRCLE

CIRCLE aims at aligning Europe's national research programmes on CCIAV, and at developing collaborative forms of research funding and management, in order to fill knowledge gaps in the most efficient and effective ways.

Project duration and budget

CIRCLE started in summer 2005 and is currently extending its activities within the ERA-Net frame for 2005-2009. The project was funded under FP6 and has a budget of €2.8m. It is expected that CIRCLE can move on to become a second generation ERA-Net under the EC 7th Framework Programme (FP7), allowing the network to further prosecute its goals and explore new collaborative approaches to transnational CCIAV research funding.

Some effects and benefits of CIRCLE include: (i) development of a joint CCIAV research agenda; (ii) launching of joint calls among the participating national/regional research programmes; (iii) contributions to the development of a European Climate Change Adaptation Strategy; (iv) support to national adaptation strategies; (v) and the creation of close

links to decision-makers and their knowledge needs.

Scope of CIRCLE

The scope of CIRCLE is on applied CCIAV research, leaving out mitigation research. Basic climate system science (eg. Earth system modelling) is included in CIRCLE's focus in its essential support role for Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability research, but does not represent the core activities funded by the ERA-Net. These activities (eg. funding of transnational research projects) are oriented towards improving the understanding of the potential vulnerability to climate change impacts in Europe, as well as to the assessment and development of novel adaptation options.

CIRCLE organisation

The Executive Board (EB) is the principal governing body of CIRCLE. It consists of the Work Package Leaders and the Coordinator. The Coordinator represents the CIRCLE consortium to the EC and puts into action decisions of the Contractors Committee and the EB. The Contractors Committee contains all the consortium members, takes top level decisions and appraises the project progress.

The Work Package Leaders are responsible for the production of the planned results of their work packages in time, in budget and with the necessary quality.

CIRCLE partners

CIRCLE started its first activities as SSA (specific support activity) in autumn 2004 with a limited partnership of six countries (Sweden, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Hungary and Austria). CIRCLE has now almost 30 partner institutions from 20 partner countries (including observers), and

more countries will join as observers until the end of 2009.

Achievements of the project

Since its start, CIRCLE has raised a comprehensive information base, encompassing: (a) CCIAV related programmes across Europe (Extended Country Report); (b) analysis of the partner programmes' scientific content; (c) description of programme management, evaluation and dissemination practices; (d) analysis of relevant globally operating networks and European initiatives, programmes, projects and networks on CCIAV research; (e) analysis of (administrative) restrictions for transnational research co-operation and suggestions on how to overcome these; (f) current research policy practices related to socio-economic aspects of CCIAV; and (g) CIRCLE's position paper on topical transnational research co-operation.

Several joint activities were launched, including: (h) clustering of topically related national research projects within the frame of CIRCLE; (i) setting up of the CIRCLE database on CCIAV programmes and projects; and (j) the first co-operation agreements with other environmental related ERA-Nets.

Co-ordination has been successfully performed by: (k) enlarging the consortium of CIRCLE partners and observers, with Galicia, Switzerland, Iceland, Greece, Spain, Turkey and Malta joining the original consortium; (l) setting up communication tools (ie. CIRCLE homepage and intranet) and handling communication between the CIRCLE partners.

The dissemination of project results to a broader community includes, besides the CIRCLE homepage, the

set-up and content management of the CIRCLE newsletter and of its comprehensive distribution list for targeted information.

Active staff exchange among the partners was supported to allow insights into other countries' research management processes.

The operative success of CIRCLE has been proved by, among other initiatives: (m) launching the first call of the CIRCLE MEDiterranean group of partners; (n) launching the first call of the CIRCLE NORDIC group of partners; (o) having a first draft CIRCLE research agenda in place; and (p) agreeing on a common practice for administering CIRCLE joint calls (ie. management framework and evaluation scheme).

Research calls

One of CIRCLE's prime objectives is to organise and execute joint calls of the partaking research programmes. So far, the joint calls have certain geographical focus areas but in future, there will also be topical joint calls with a broader geographical scope.

Two research calls have been launched so far:

Mediterranean call

This call, with the topic 'Integrated Coastal Zones and Water Management', was launched on 11th July and closed on 12th October 2007. Funding pledges initially summed up to €2.15m. 16 proposals were submitted, with some €3.3m requested for funding.

Nordic call

This call, with the topic 'Consequences of climate change for policy making in the Nordic Countries', was launched on 19th October and closed on 10th December 2007. The call had a total maximum budget of €400.000.

Currently, preparations are being made to launch a third joint call:

Mountain call

Climate change impacts and response options in mountainous areas will be

launched on 22nd September 2009, with a total budget of €2.1m.

Future perspective

Within its scope of activities, CIRCLE's objectives until 2009 were to position itself in the European research and development landscape so that its new structure could fulfil the goals of: supporting the search for common research priorities across Europe; mutually streamlining research agendas to avoid duplication and enhance synergies; and supporting less experienced countries to set up their own research programmes.

In that way, CIRCLE is becoming a supporting measure for the development of a coherent European research policy on CCIAV.

A proposal for a second generation CIRCLE ERA-Net is currently under review. A new and enlarged network of CCIAV research programmes across Europe has been agreed. Former partners of CIRCLE, together with new member countries and organisations, have submitted an official proposal under the EC FP7 to carry on their activities until 2013.

This new ERA-Net will be co-ordinated by Portugal and has now enlarged its consortium to 24 country representations, making it one of the biggest networks of research funding organisations across the ERA spectrum.

Although keeping up with the spirit of CIRCLE, novel approaches to CCIAV research management have been discussed and are now serving as the basis for a network that looks forward to funding and supporting politically relevant science. The scope of this future ERA-Net will still remain on CCIAV research, but under its motto 'Science meets Policy', a closer relation to the developing European framework for climate change adaptation will be a critical part of its future activities and initiatives.

With a flexible four year work programme, the basic pillars of this new ERA-Net will be: the development of a common CCIAV research agenda that reflects the needs of both policy-making and research on adaptation; the continuation of joint research funding initiatives that can enhance the knowledge base on CCIAV in Europe; and the sharing of knowledge across the various levels of Europe's policy on climate change through the creation of a knowledge exchange platform that will be supported by all ERA-Net partners.

Some of the following clusters of co-operation are expected: information exchange about national research agendas/programmes/projects, by monitoring ongoing activities, especially in emerging fields, local-scale analysis, and cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral studies; information exchange on ongoing national adaptation measures and centres of knowledge; identification of opportunities to fund cross-cutting research at the transnational level; funding of excellence research through joint research projects and activities; and sharing the outcomes of the ERA-Net funded projects and activities, thus supporting policy development, decision-making and operational implementation of climate change adaptation in Europe.



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