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ERA-NET PathoGenoMics 2012 Joint Status Seminar

January 23-24, 2012, Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain

ERA-NET PathoGenoMics is organizing a Status Seminar on the projects funded under its 2nd and 3rd joint calls, which will take place at the H10 Costa Adeje Palace Hotel, on the southern coast of Tenerife, on January 23-24, 2012.

All the coordinators and partners of the research projects funded through the two calls are invited to present their projects. In addition, one junior researcher per partner from each project of the first call is invited to present his/her findings as a poster.

A preliminary agenda, hotel room prices and contact information of the hotel are available at:

www.pathogenomics-era.net

We are looking forward to a successful seminar!

Important dates:

Hotel room booking (highly recommended)

by October 1, 2011

Deadline for registration

October 30, 2011

Deadline for abstract submission

December 14, 2011

Seminar organizers:

Dr. Julio Barbas / julio.barbas@micinn.es

Ms. Jess Jackson / jessamyn.jackson@micinn.es

Ministry of Science and Innovation, Spain

Dr. Bülent Genç / b.genc@fz-juelich.de

ERA-NET PathoGenoMics Coordinator

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On March 28-30, 2011 ERA-NET PathoGenoMics held its 2nd joint call status seminar and 3rd joint call kick-off meeting in Vienna. After two interesting days of scientific presentations, the partners of the various funding organizations brainstormed in preparation for the sequel program, *named ERA-INFECT*, planned for the funding period of 2012-2015.

ERA-NET PathoGenoMics, focusing on transnational research in genomics of human pathogens microorganisms, is a consortium of 13 funding organizations from 9 countries. The program has been very successful in publishing and handling 3 joint calls. While the 1st call focused on basic research, the 2nd & 3rd calls took a more applicable approach and included also companies and clinicians. The total funding of all 3 calls reached almost 43 Million Euro.

The transnational calls were complimented with additional activities, such as the PathoGenoMics Ph.D. award, to support young scientists, the creation of a comprehensive website publishing brochures, newsletters and press releases. Following this fruitful transnational research framework, all partners wish to continue the ERA-NET PathoGenoMics (2004-2012) collaboration with a widened scope and partnership into a second funding phase – ERA-INFECT.

The funding partners are now in the process of defining the specific research areas which will be the focus of

ERA-INFECT. As part of this effort, during the status seminar and the NSC/EB meeting held in Vienna (March 2011), a discussion was propped up with the participating scientists on the future scientific trends in the field of pathogenomics. Interesting suggestions included progressing into post-genomics research in the field of systems biology and synthetic biology; tackling the issue of globalization and diseases that are promoted by migration; the issue of infectious diseases in aging populations; and host-pathogen interactions. All these and more are currently being considered and evaluated.

In closing, we wish to share with you some thoughts of two members of the PathoGenoMics steering committee: Dr. Julio Barbas, Staff Scientist at the National Research Council in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Innovation, Spain, one of the leading active partners of ERA-NET PathoGenoMics, and Dr. Bülent Genç from Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH (FZJ), Germany, the Coordinator of ERA-NET PathoGenoMics.

Julio Barbas (ES)
Serawit Bruck (FR)



INTERVIEW WITH Dr. JULIO BARBAS -

Staff Scientist At The National Research Council In Collaboration
With The Ministry Of Science And Innovation, Spain

What were some of the challenges that ERA-NET PathoGenoMics had to deal with at the beginning?

Launching the 1st call as part of the 5th Work Package was a big challenge. For most of the partners this was the first experience in working within the ERA-NET framework. We had to hold more than five meetings in preparation for the 1st call, and every word extensively discussed. Each country wanted to promote its own national ideas. But finally we succeeded and have been using the procedure that was formed back then in 2005 as the basis for other ERA-NET consortia. For example, we used the PathoGenoMics 1st call wording and agenda as a reference for ERA-NET Neuron, in 2007, or for ERASysBio, in 2009. This was very helpful. As a consequence, it took us half the time to launch ERA-NET Neuron's and ERASysBio's 1st call.

Another challenge was that in the beginning, the different members of the national funding organizations didn't know each other. It took us a while to form an efficient and productive collaborative environment. Now we can more easily launch multi-national initiatives. For example, I'm involved with 5 different ERA-NET consortia: PathoGenoMics, Industrial Biotech, Neuron, Systems Biology and Plant Genomics, and I'm not an exception. This means that we meet the same colleagues in several different networks, which is a great advantage.

Why is ERA-NET PathoGenoMics so successful?

ERA-NET PathoGenoMics is a success because of two main factors: the people and the scope of the ERA-NET. In some ERA-NETs the scope may be too



broad, and every call focuses on a different topic. As a result, after four calls, we still haven't created a community of European scientists in the field. In other ERA-NET's the scope may be too narrow, and hence the interest is limited. ERA-NET PathoGenoMics is just the right scope. In the Tenerife status seminar 2010, we had a nice participation of the researchers involved in the 1st, and 2nd calls, and they represented a significant part of the European scientific community in the field. If you are a European scientist in the field of pathogenomics, you've most probably heard about ERA-NET PathoGenoMics. It is the perfect size. The national representatives team, in particular the ERA-NET coordinator, is the second reason for success.

What do you think about the idea that the JPI will focus on more applied research while the ERA-NET should focus on more basic research?



I cannot see such a difference between the ERA-NETs and JPIs. I totally agree with the final aim of the Commission to launch JPIs. I understand that they want and it is necessary a more ambitious program than the ERA-NET. But it would have been wiser to first evaluate the success of each ERA-NET and to create the JPI based on these conclusions. The way it is now, the JPIs compete in some cases with the ERA-NETs on funds and budgets within the funding agencies and within the Commission.

What do you think are the parameters for the success of ERA-NET PathoGenoMics?



First and foremost, funding is crucial. In PathoGenoMics, the Commission invested 3M Euro that were mobilized by the partners to 43 M Euro. The budget of PGM coming from the FP programme represents only about 7% of the money that the consortium invested in research. This is funding which is meant for collaborative European research.

The other 95% is managed national (and regional) funding organizations, and addresses national (and regional) demands. The ERA-NET framework is an effective way to bypass this, and increase the budget for collaborative European research, since the national agencies control the funds, but in coordination with other European countries. This is still limited. So I agree with the philosophy behind the JPI, but not with the current practice.

How do you see the future of ERA-NET PathoGenoMics?

I hope that in a few years ERA-NET PathoGenoMics, developed into a JPI or any other similar structure, will be able to launch calls of 50-60 M Euro. In order to progress, we have to be more ambitious. We should aim at adding new partners from new countries. Each country should commit funds in accordance to their scientific contribution. Also, we have to expand our scope in terms of areas of research to include such fields as post-genomics, systems and synthetic biology and the research to other pathogens (viruses, parasites) and the systemic combination of them.



Bülent Genç, coordinator (DE)
Catarina Resende (PT)



INTERVIEW WITH DR. BÜLENT GENÇ

Coordinator of ERA-NET PathoGenoMics from Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH (FZJ), Germany

What are some of the challenges of the ERA-NET framework?

The challenge is to build a network in which each partner can feel appreciated and remain in close contact with the other partners. This is an ongoing challenge. At this consortium it works very well. One can compare it to a living organism, a tree – if you nurture it, you can enjoy the fruits, and reach satisfying results. In the kickoff meeting of the 3rd call, we witnessed the achievements of the 2nd call, and thus could build on them. The idea is that we create accumulative knowledge.

What do you think about the move towards more applied science in the 2nd and 3rd call?

Indeed, the progress in the calls is from basic to applied science. We focus on transnational and translational research from bench to patients. I think it is important to move towards applied science, and include industry players and clinicians, like we did in

the 2nd and 3rd call. We can then bring back ideas from the clinic to the lab. If we find out that something doesn't work, such as antibiotic resistance, we can go back to the bench and study this further. It's a continuous and beneficial feedback loop.

What should be the next step?

The next step should be to go more deeply into the clinic. We should share the knowledge with clinicians. Our ultimate goal should be to combine scientists with clinicians and industry players.

What should improve?

I think we should encourage additional countries like Sweden and the UK to participate in our framework.

Beyond that we are happy to welcome countries outside the EU like Turkey and Canada, who have sent representatives to this meeting and are interested in joining the ERA-NET.