



PROJECT FINAL REPORT

Grant Agreement number: 212879

Project acronym: EURORIS-NET

Project title: European Research Infrastructures Network of National Contact Points

Funding Scheme: CSA (Coordination and Support Action)

Period covered: from **1.11.2007** to **31.10.2011**

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Final publishable summary report

Executive summary

The *EuroRIs-Net project, the European Network of National Contact Points for “Research Infrastructures” programme* has successfully supported the efficient implementation of the Research Infrastructures Programme and promoted the benefits offered by the Research Infrastructures (RIs), in order to enhance the Research Excellence, the competitiveness and the growth of Europe. The project started in 2007 and run for 48 months. The consortium consisted of 35 partners, which were the RIs NCPs from MS, AS, & ICPC (Russia, Canada and S. Africa), whereas the UK, SI and BY RIs NCPs joined as observers in 2008, 2010 and 2011, respectively.

A coherent network has been developed through the interactive collaboration among RIs NCPs, supported by new tools for knowledge sharing and exchange of good practices through the network, while at the same time promoting the visibility and efficacy of the RIs programme. Moreover, according to the objectives of the project, it improved the effectiveness of the Research Infrastructures (RIs) NCPs network through the upgrade of the level of the trans-national cooperation, which resulted in more consistent services provided to the customers/clients across Europe.

Namely:

A) It developed training, twinning and knowledge exchange activities to less experienced NCPs for establishing a consistent level of high quality information and assistance services throughout Europe.

B) Through Virtual Help Desk, a new tool operating under the project website and the continuously updated FAQs, it particularly supported the RIs NCPs during the open calls periods and the newcomers in the RIs NCP network, providing them the knowledge and help to better service their national clientele.

C) It established links and identified efficient synergies with other NCP networks and RIs stakeholders', especially with I3 coordinators and RI policy bodies. The network responded to the demand expressed from RI operators for support and further multiplication of their efforts for knowledge sharing and integration towards the RIs scientific communities. Project tools such as the Virtual Help Desk (VHD) were further used and updated in that sense (in parallel to systematic information / networking events), whereas a series of e-newsletters and success stories were produced, in addition to the project targets. The expansion and interaction of the knowledge base of the project with other RI projects and stakeholders has been highlighted and mapped at the RI WP 2011, in the framework of which the RIs NCP network submitted a new proposal (Nov 2010). The new NCP network (EuroRIs-Net+) will capitalize on the experience, networking assets and cohesion of the EuroRIs-Net network and will offer an observatory environment for the identification and mapping of national / regional initiatives through an interactive knowledge setting which will be offered to RI ecosystem (including RIs NCPs and RI policy bodies), with visualization of RI services offered, supporting “bridge structures” among users & scientific communities (e.g. in new I3 topics, usage & access models, identification of e-infrastructure's role and needs etc.), enhancing cross-programme visibility of RI programme.

D) The Network promoted the “Research Infrastructures” programme in high-level European events and organised three events of pan-European scope (including one event organised at the international level) as well as three cross-border events (“extended” information days with the participation of more than one neighboring countries) bringing together RIs stakeholders in order to discuss current and future challenges, complementarity of funding and other EU initiatives, RI programme links with excellence, innovation and industry, access opportunities and other issues addressed by policy makers, I3 service providers and user communities etc.

Summary description of project context and objectives

The term “Research Infrastructures (RIs)” refers to facilities and resources that provide to the scientific community essential services needed for the performance of leading edge research in both an academic and/or industrial environment. Research Infrastructures should be open to researchers, to the scientific community and to the Industry and cover the whole range of scientific and technological fields. The Research Infrastructures are of high importance in order to strengthen the knowledge base of Scientific Communities and the technological know-how of Industrial sector across Europe.

Research Infrastructures are highly important for the development of capacities and the European Research Area itself which should build on the existence, development and efficient access to the Research Infrastructures.

Before the implementation of the network, the tasks of RIs NCPs Network were limited to the national level for the mobilization of the Scientific Community and Research teams and to the provision of information. The lack of coordination of activities among RIs NCPs had several consequences such as: duplication of efforts and lack of synergies with low value results, consequently, between the RIs NCPs and the other NCPs networks under the previous Framework Programmes.

The instrument to achieve this goal was the upgrading of the existing European Network of National Contact Points for the Research Infrastructures programme and the improvement of services and tools provided to potential beneficiaries in the RI programme as well as Research Infrastructures users. The Network became the essential “partner” for researchers and institutions in their effort to utilize the knowledge and experience existing among RIs NCPs, to promote awareness of the existence of Research Infrastructure facilities ‘ready to use’ and to contribute to the overall European research effort.

The EuroRIs-Net network provided the means for strong collaboration and mutual learning among RIs NCPs, resulting in better services tailored to the needs of the different RIs stakeholders.

The **overall objective** of the project was to provide support through the Research Infrastructures (RIs) NCPs network for the efficient implementation of the RIs Programme and to promote the best possible utilization of RIs, so that “economies of scale” could be achieved at European level, capabilities increased and European Research Area and the EU competitiveness, strengthened.

EuroRIs-Net project aimed to improve the effectiveness of the RIs NCPs European network that could support the overall implementation of the “European strategy” for building on the Capacities offered by Research Infrastructures. It has been envisaged to establish a **sustainable** and more **efficient** RIs NCPs Network which could be considered as an essential “support Network” for the Scientific Communities, the Industrial sector and the users of RIs across Europe, since it would facilitate their efforts and it would be able to support the extension of their performances and capacities in all disciplines.

Moreover the project aimed to systematically promote the implementation of EC guidelines and recommendations regarding the operation and transnational cooperation among the members of the RIs NCPs network, outlined in pertinent official EC documents (23/8/2006/ European Commission, DG RTD/A2).

EuroRIs-Net project actually established **RIs NCPs Network**, which was based on the structure and operation of the RIs NCPs that have been officially nominated in the Member States and Associated Countries.

Based on the above the analytical specific objectives of the project were the following:

a) “To ensure the effective implementation of the RIs Programme by fostering cooperation among National Contact Points (NCPs)”

The effective implementation of the Programme was a key for building up a strong base and system of European Research Infrastructures which would provide support to the Researchers and Public and Private Sector (including Industry) across Europe.

According to the above the project aimed to reinforce the network of National Contact Points (NCPs) for Research Infrastructures in FP7, by promoting transnational cooperation and thus enhance the coherence and establish a consistent operational level of the RIs NCPs across Europe through the improvement of their professional skills. It was envisaged to offer efficient support to the implementation of the RIs Programme and to facilitate the efforts of EC, itself.

In order to achieve the above objective the EuroRIs-Net project has implemented activities to enhance the coherence and to upgrade the level of professional skills of the RIs NCPs network and thus to improve the services provided by the network as a whole as well as by each individual RIs NCP.

The RIs NCPs network ensured the information flow between the Researchers, Stakeholders and users of RIs and the Commission (supported by the development of a website for RI programme addressing to the interests of different RIs stakeholders and through the organisation of project events to support the dialogue among RI stakeholders). It also maintained a close collaboration with the Commission in order to transfer up to date information and to keep the users close to the state of the art regarding Research Infrastructures. A major achievement for the later was the organisation of the RIs NCP meeting at the final year of project implementation, where significant information was exchanged both with the EC representatives (mainly in relation to the open RI Call specifics) and other relevant RI projects' representatives.

Moreover, efficient synergies and coordination were developed between RIs NCPs and the **other NCPs networks** so as to facilitate the flow of information regarding RIs and their importance and impact, in all scientific fields. A final NCPs network meeting was organised by EuroRIs-Net at the closure of the project, to identify areas for further coordination and synergy continuation.

b) “To upgrade the professional skills/ professionalism of the RIs NCPs network at European level in order to improve its coherence”

The coherence of the level of professionalism across the RIs NCPs network was based on exchanges of experiences and good practices for mutual benefit, resulting in high level services to the users and better overall support to the RIs Programme itself.

The transfer of knowledge and the share of good practices was a priority of the network and included twinning schemes, training seminars, operation of a “virtual Help Desk” for RIs NCPs and on the job training activities (through twinning visits) among others. The above activities include among others a methodology, which will be developed taking into account the guiding principles for NCPs, prepared by EC. The results of the analysis of the questionnaire were used for the identification and exchange of “good practices” to be incorporated and implemented on the NCP's training operations. This is expected to benefit all NCPs, independently of the level of their expertise.

Moreover, twinning activities and schemes were implemented based on the results of the above analysis.

The above-mentioned analysis and methodology has been an important milestone of the project since it served as a base for the topics of the training seminars, the implementation of the staff exchange and the “on the job-training visits”. Moreover a “virtual help desk” for the internal support between RIs NCPs has been established and operated and creation of FAQs (for RIs NCPs) allowed the Network to offer a more coherent level of services across Europe. Those activities highly contributed to the improvement of the professional skills of the whole network, so that RIs NCPs could provide high quality services to the existing and potential users of RIs and the proposers of RI programme across Europe.

c) *“To improve and provide coherent, high-quality equal services and to increase the visibility of the RIs Programme to the scientific communities, Private and Industrial sector, and users of RIs at Pan-European level”*

The insufficient information flow and transnational awareness on RIs resulted on low information flow about the RIs Programme itself as well as about the opportunities offered by RIs for strengthening the Research capacities across EU.

Within this framework, the project and its Network aimed to increase the visibility of the RIs across Europe through several European awareness activities and to ensure the quality of service which should be based on a common strategic plan and tools. More analytically, the network coordinated promotional and awareness activities in European level towards the involvement of RIs in the ERA:

- Increase the visibility of the RIs Programme itself and its RIs NCPs Network across Europe through several promotional activities and presentations in high visibility Events with Pan-European interest. Representatives of the Network should deliver presentations at events of Pan-European interest which will be organised by RIs Programme (eg. European Conference on RIs) or within the framework of the other Priority Themes. This would increase the visibility of RIs Programme itself not only as a “Horizontal” Programme but as a Programme which could improve the performance of the Scientific Communities and Industrial Sectors of all scientific fields. Moreover, the network in order to increase the visibility of RIs, should develop and use dissemination “tools” in European level such as an e-newsletter, presentations, press releases to be posted in European Media, collection and dissemination of success stories regarding RIs’ utilization across countries and Scientific fields as well as success stories regarding the participation in the RIs programme itself.

- Develop a coherent “set of tools based on common standards” based on the inputs and collaboration of all Network in order facilitate them to implement European awareness and dissemination of information activities and to enable them to have a harmonized reaction across Europe and to offer “equal treatment” to all users and proposers.

Among others a “single entry point” should be created which should be a very well-structured web site with continuous updating, and awareness activities and dissemination of information in European level will be realised. The above mentioned tools would facilitate the efforts of the network to raise the average quality of the proposals across Europe, to ensure the geographical dispersions of the successful proposals and to offer efficient support to the regions with low participation in RIs programme under the previous FPs.

d) *Networking and synergies with the other NCPs network for the promotion the capabilities offered by RIs Programme towards an integrated approach to ERA and to cultivate a “wide culture on RIs” across Europe”*

The insufficient coordination of activities between the RIs NCPs network and the other NCPs networks, in the period previous to FP7, resulted in lack of information regarding the importance of RIs, the capacities and the support capabilities which could be offered by RIs to the specific Scientific Communities across Europe.

To this end within the framework of the EuroRIs-Net project synergies should be realized, as well as networking and cross cutting NCPs activities in order to mobilize the “critical mass” of the other NCPs networks (NCPs Families) to operate as “multipliers” for the RIs Programme. Thus, the RIs NCPs network should enhance its “pool” of target groups, as the other NCPs networks will promote concrete information about the opportunities and benefits of RIs to their national target groups and its complementarities with the other Priority Themes and Specific Programmes under FP7.

Moreover the above mentioned European coordination activities across the NCPs networks should allow the RIs NCPs network to:

- Collect inputs for the existing and emerging needs regarding RIs across Europe based on the “points of view” of other NCPs networks, which have a “live and continuous collaboration with their national scientific groups and Industrial sectors.

- Enhance the collaboration with the RIs NCPs of ICPC for mutual benefit

- Identify specific measures and support actions for Specific Scientific Communities across Europe which are “less familiar” or have poor information flow about the RIs facilities and the e-Infrastructures themselves. A typical example is less familiarity with the RIs and e-Infrastructures among the Scientific Communities of Humanities sector, history, law, anthropology, e.tc.

E-infrastructures could give the potential that disciplines such above mentioned incorporate the facilities of e-Infrastructures and to extend their performance towards to the “knowledge-based economy’

- Specific collaboration activities will be established both with the “Regions” and “Research Potential” NCPs Network as it is essential to promote, in collaboration with them, the opportunities being offered to the convergence and outermost regions to exploit their potential for scientific excellence, through the RIs Programme and the RIs themselves.

To this end the RIs NCPs networks has considered organizing European events with the participation of the project managers of the other NCPs networks and undertake an on-going coordination activity for a fruitful and close collaboration between the RIs NCPs Networks. This was envisaged to lead to added value results for the Scientific Communities and the Private Sector across Europe and contribute to the strengthening of Europe’s competitiveness.

Description of the main S&T results/foregrounds

During the lifecycle of the project, the following results were produced (since EuroRIs-Net is a Coordination Support Action, the results are **not** scientific):

Knowledge exchange and cooperation among RIs NCPs, fostering RI programme

Via the “Good practices” questionnaire answers, RIs NCPs have identified their needs and competences on RI programme, based on which training seminars and twinnings were built. **Three (3) training seminars** were accomplished on schedule, whereas there was a 50% increase of the number foreseen for NCP **twinning meetings** – 9 twinnings were realized in total (an older trainee could become a trainer for a new RI NCP, within the project lifecycle).

Based on training material, knowledge needs and critical knowledge assets were further elaborated and have been fruitful both in terms of the Virtual Help Desk (VHD) knowledge base and in terms of articles produced– for network’s internal use - such as “RSFF instruments” or the “Financial issues specific to FP7 Research Infrastructures programme”.

Online tool & FAQs

An efficient communication “flow” has been established among the partners of the Consortium based on web “internal” tools (the Discussion Forum and the VHD), which facilitated the daily collaboration of the NCPs, the exchange of good practice and problem-solving. The main instrument for knowledge exchange among RIs NCPs (and also a main objective of EuroRIs-Net) has been the VHD. This tool, embedded in project’s website’s “partners’ area”, has been fully operational in the beginning of Y2. VHD was explicitly used especially during the period of open calls, whereas relevant FAQs were continuously updated.

Access to this instrument, including the FAQs, has been expanded also to non-beneficiaries RIs NCPs. Discussions were done as to whereas NCPs from other NCP networks could also be able to use it. The forthcoming network environment (EuroRIs-Net+) will consider the fulfillment of this request, through an implementation in a slightly different platform (in terms of access rights), in order to provide VHD as a service to specific types of registered users.

The ‘living experience’ of the network was further mapped on the “best practice” handbook of the project. A substantial number of RIs NCPs contributed to this handbook, whereas the task leader, APRE, identified best practice / sharable experiences from other NCP networks, which were adapted to this handbook for the RI programme.

RI NCP meeting

The **RIs NCPs meeting** organised by the project, with the support of DG Research and DG INFSO in July 2011, allowed for communication of up-to-date information on RI programme to the members of the RIs NCPs network, from EC (RI programme) representatives. Furthermore, it set the basis for discussions on patterns for Expressions of Interest exchange among RIs NCPs, especially for the formulation of networks of existing infrastructures.

The aforementioned achievements are challenged by the high fluctuation and mobility of NCPs themselves. Actually, the experienced NCPs might leave and “old” NCPs will be replaced by new NCPs, who will need training, as well. The maintenance of generated knowledge, as a result of the use of the Virtual Helpdesk, the “Handbook for the good practices” and the application of quality standards in network services will certainly continue providing additional impact in horizontal areas of the Capacities’ programme, related to RI programme implementation and success.

Trainings

Three training seminars took place during the project lifetime. The training topics were identified by two surveys sent out in summer 2008 and 2010. The titles and place of the training seminars were as follows:

1st Training Seminar

Title: Legal and Financial Issues

Place and Country: Uni Club Bonn, Konviktstr. 9, 53113 Bonn, Germany

Date: 3 February 2009

2nd Training Seminar

Title: Complementarities of FP7 and other funds, RSFF

Place and Country: The Polish Institute for Fundamental Technological Research, the Polish Academy of Sciences, Pawinskiego 5B 02-106 Warsaw, Poland

Date: 26 October 2009

3rd Training Seminar

Title: Project Cycle of Integrating Activities

Place and Country: Deutsches Zentrum fuer Luft- und Raumfahrt / German Aerospace Center, Koenigswinterer Str. 522-524, 53227 Bonn

Date: 7 April 2011

It was evident from the answers of the survey that the majority of the NCPs had difficulties in assessing large projects like the Integrating Activities from the point of view of legal and financial aspects, as well as performance. Thus, the objective of the first training was to give a basic introduction into the legal and financial aspects of EU-research funding and with the knowledge gained, a special focus on the legal and financial issues of Integrating Activities, including special clauses for the combination of funding schemes. In order to apply the knowledge the NCPs were asked to execute a practical exercise on the calculation of different rates of indirect costs. The third training was dedicated to the project management of Integrating Activities from the point of view of coordinators who have to manage Integrating Activities. The objective was to give insight in Integrating Activities in different fields of science and respective requirements for successful coordination of these projects.

The first and the last training were complementary to each other with regard to the implementation of large projects.

The second training was dedicated to the complementarities of the Structural Funds, the Framework Programme for research and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme as well as the Risk Sharing Finance Facility (RSFF). References to the structural funds and RSFF as means for the construction of new infrastructures are integral part of annual work programmes of the programme Research Infrastructures. Therefore, it deemed necessary to implement a training session on the functioning and the complementarities of the different funds.

On the whole, all three training sessions offered knowhow to the network on the functioning and financing of large research infrastructure projects, which is useful and essential for the work as NCP. The feedback of the participants gave clear evidence that the training sessions were relevant and useful for the daily work. In addition, the participants declared that the quality of the training was excellent.

In summary, all three training sessions corresponded to the training needs of the network and were considered as excellent with regard to relevance and quality.

Twinnings:

9 twinning visits took place (2009-2011) aiming to transfer knowledge/expertise from more experienced to less experienced NCPs. The added value was the improvement of the NCPs' skills, the facilitation of their daily work and the exchange of useful experience. Results and conclusions of the visits were widely disseminated to all NCPs, so that as many NCPs as possible benefit from the acquired knowledge/experience

The efficiency/impact of the training and twinning activities was evaluated by the NCPs and was assessed through the periodical reports, in order to provide strong and weak points of these activities. The conclusions can be utilized in future initiatives.

Twinning visits, training seminars and the extensive usage of the Virtual Help Desk of the project from the RI NCPs have supported the competence base of this network and have provided the basis for better services to NCP clients & RI stakeholders in general. They ensure the cohesion of the service level among the RIs NCPs in European level and will allow to the network to apply same "treatment" to the users and proposers in European level. Thus, all RI stakeholders receive from our network accurate and reliable support and up-to-date information on the RI programme.

Establishment of dialogue with RI stakeholders – exploration of a new role for RI NCPs

Having identified the strength of the horizontal nature of RIs in FP7 Capacities Programme, EuroRIs-Net has emphasized the need to establish a coordination dialogue between EuroRIs-Net and the other NCPs networks. This dialogue has been continuous throughout project lifetime.

Multiple synergy events have been performed in order to identify activities of mutual benefit; whereas the targeted distribution of the information about access to existing RIs was the most significant outcome from those activities (a survey on "new users for existing RIs", led in Y2 as additional project activity, in cooperation with I3 operators, highlighted the need for specific efforts to this direction, which is complemented in the follow-up project – EuroRIs-Net+). The activities led addressed the challenge to bring RI stakeholders closer and get them more interactive within the RI programme.

The perspective of establishing an "exchange point" between the Network & ESFRI has also been explored. A formal channel between ESFRI and the EuroRIs-Net project has not been realistic, as ESFRI is an informal body in itself, so the main channel of information could flow through ESFRI national delegates. RIs NCPs could contact their delegates for all sorts of enquiries. According to the relevant questionnaire analysis and interim online surveys, there is diversity in the setup and relation of RI NCPs to their national RI / ESFRI delegates. Conclusions on the current role of RI NCPs and future trends were drawn, as well as a mapping of the contacts of the RI NCPs to ESFRI delegates and other scientific stakeholders involved RIs. In the "Report for the future role of RIs NCPs and establishment of an "exchange Point" between EuroRIs-Net-ESFRI" further details and challenges for a new role for RIs NCPs are presented.

Those issues were discussed initially in distinct sessions within the framework of the 1st Workshop of the project, organized in December 2008, at CNRS, Paris, within the scope of the French EU presidency. Many initiatives have been undertaken by EuroRIs-Net in order to focus on communication and to create information exchange channels with both e-IRG and ESFRI, for the benefit of the RI ecosystem in general. e-IRG cooperation has been established mainly in terms of dissemination activities (through e-IRG-SP2), whereas participation in e-IRG workshops has enlightened the project's approach towards e-infrastructures. Aligned with the above, a thorough cooperation approach with RI policy bodies in Europe (ESFRI/e-IRG) has been attempted, whereas joint activity plans with projects of relevant objectives have been set (e.g. EuroRIs-Net has established collaboration with ERA-Nets, such as SEERA_EI - a MoU has been signed already for the implementation of joint activity plans - as well as other CSAs, in order to better and more efficiently serve the RI ecosystem and multiply the benefit of existing knowledge on RI funding and RI usage opportunities.

The “variable geometry” of the network regarding collaboration with relevant representatives at the national level has been already mapped in the “current role of RI NCPs and future trends” interim report, based on results of the relevant internal project questionnaire.

The 1st EuroRIs-Net Workshop managed to activate a dialogue and an intensive “brainstorming” among relevant bodies related to the current and future role of RI NCPs. Actually, focus is given on the establishment of an open and transactional environment that will permit the identification of emerging needs of the scientific communities (through collaboration with other NCP networks) towards RIs and the establishment of a fruitful communication approach with RI stakeholders ecosystem.

Additionally to the questionnaire on “New users for Existing Research Infrastructures”, elaboration of activities related to the identification of national and regional initiatives were considered for the collection of this information, as well as the exploitation of the communication mechanism and tools already established both inside the network and in collaboration to other NCP networks, for the growth of synergy effects performed with other NCPs networks. Furthermore, as part of the NCP practice, Expression of Interest for participation of institutions to proposals related to open RI Calls were exchanged among NCPs, facilitated through the existence of the project “platform”.

Workshops / Conferences

The 1st **EuroRIs-Net Workshop** was successfully implemented under the French Presidency of the European Union (Dec 2008), in CNRS, Paris, creating a vivid dialogue among RI stakeholders. It even addressed issues that were outside the scope of the event (initially focusing on the exploration of the role of RI NCPs in the new area and beyond FP7, towards Horizon2020). The event conclusions highlighted the need to support synergy among NCP networks for better penetration of the RI Programme among all thematic areas’ stakeholders, and the crucial role of RIs NCPs in raising awareness of transnational access and the usage of Research Infrastructures and their services.

The **International Conference on Research Infrastructures** and a special **round table** entitled “**A vision of the socio-economic benefits of research infrastructures at international level**”, were organized by APRE, within the scope of EuroRIs-Net’s ongoing dialogue with RI stakeholders (Sept 2010, CNR, Rome, Italy). European Commission’s visions for RIs as well as the priorities of the strategic bodies such as ESFRI and e-IRG were presented, whereas RI operators and national policy makers discussed extensively their approaches on the development and usage of Research Infrastructures. Our partners from ICPC countries moderated the 2nd session of the round table, focusing on the exchange of good practices in international collaboration and the importance – and need for awareness - of the socio-economic benefits of the European and global RIs at international level.

Final EuroRIs-Net workshop, entitled “**Research infrastructures at the heart of the Innovation Union: Current challenges for national & regional stakeholders**” was organised on October 10th, 2011, in Athens, Greece. In the final workshop, results of the European (1st) Workshop of the network and the International Conference, as well as current developments and future endeavors of the RI programme and the ERA were discussed. The workshop gave the opportunity to the network to further establish communication with the RI ecosystem taking into account the need for observatory services regarding the evolution of national RI programmes and the indications for integration at the European level, as well as the contribution of RIs to innovation and competitiveness of Europe.

The three events organised by the project (1st European Workshop, International Conference, Final EuroRIs-Net workshop) gave the opportunity both to present project activities and services to RI stakeholders (also through case studies of RI NCPs) and focus on areas such as: access opportunities for RIs, international cooperation perspectives, horizontal coverage of FP7 thematic areas and emphasis on the multi-disciplinarity principles and innovation, socio-economic benefits of RIs, complementarity of funding – SF / FP7) and discuss further the role of RI NCPs, especially in view to the new programme Horizon 2020

Cross-border events

A total of **three crossing border events** took place in the last two years of the project.

- **1st Cross border event** was organised in St Gallen (Switzerland) on 14-15.6.2010, with cooperation of AT, DE, CH RIs NCPs.
- **2nd Cross border event** was organised in Nicosia (Cyprus) on 15.9.2011 with cooperation of CY, IT, GR RIs NCPs.
- **3rd Cross border event** was organised in Budapest (Hungary) on 20.9.2011 with cooperation of AT and HU RIs NCPs

The organisation of cross-border events was a significant added value outcome of the project.

For many years, all countries have had info days on new calls and new work programmes in their own countries. In some larger countries, road shows are organised to communicate the information to all researchers (especially in capital cities). The identification of problems reaching researchers in more rural areas was discussed during the second annual project meeting of EuroRIs-Net by the RI NCPs of Germany, Switzerland and Austria and the idea of a combined info day for the three countries, away from the capital cities, was born.

Within the framework of activities aiming to increase the visibility of the RI programme and their contribution to regional development, the EuroRIs-Net supported three Cross-Border events organised around the RI programme calls (as “extended information days”). EC representatives, RI operators / coordinators provided information on future activities, actual work programme and coordination opportunities for stakeholders of the participating countries.

Through the organisation of those events, some having also thematic orientation, according to an RI Call open topics and the interest of the collaborating countries, cooperation opportunities were highlighted. The events gave also the opportunity of attendance to RIs NCPs coming from other countries (according to budget availability), which resulted in further knowledge sharing among the network.

Broad and targeted dissemination activities

The website of the project is being continuously updated by the coordinator, with the participation and input of all members of the Consortium (both public and private area) - www.euroris-net.eu

The screenshot shows the EuroRIS-Net website homepage. The header includes the logo and navigation links. The main content area features a welcome message and a detailed description of Research Infrastructures (RIs). A sidebar on the left contains a menu with links to 'The Project', 'The Partners', 'News', 'Events', 'Success stories', 'eNewsletter', 'Useful links', and a questionnaire. A 'Partners Area' section at the bottom left includes logos for the European Union and the National Contact Points. Two main content boxes at the bottom right are titled 'RIs Programme' and 'RIs across Europe', each containing information about open calls and related activities.

The Network has corresponded dynamically to the necessity of a dissemination “infrastructure”, by creating a helpful and clear **dissemination plan** for the better exploitation of material produced from the project. Through a series of events (see list in “**Potential impact and main dissemination activities and exploitation results**”) the Network has actively demonstrated its efficiency towards the activation of the research and scientific communities into the knowledge and exploitation of the RIs.

The Network has had significant presence in pan-European events on Research Infrastructures and promoted RI programme in various thematic-oriented events, as well. The good coordination with other NCP Networks and its support by the EC relevant initiatives (e.g. ECRI 2010) has been particularly helpful for the efficiency of dissemination activities in multiple target directions (in Y4, the project has been referenced in CORDIS technology marketplace as “playground” for Research Infrastructures information, whereas a systematic focus on complementarities with Regional Programme (and the significance of access to RIs and impact on regional innovation, e.g. in WIRE 2) and Open Access initiatives, was emphasized.

One of the key challenges in the production of statistics for country/ discipline participation is the availability of data. Relevant data on CIRCA were aligned with statistics performed by the relevant WP4 task (task 4.3) to identify areas with increased need for awareness on RI programme. **Structured Lists** (RI projects funded through the FP7 RI programme Calls) were prepared and are publicly available through the project website, while the aforementioned statistics on the representation of RIs in the context of geographic regions and scientific fields were prepared (supported by a relevant methodology), in order to sustain specific transnational awareness activities towards target groups less familiar to RIs. The two datasets are presented to beneficiaries in combination, through our intranet, whereas main conclusions of the statistical analysis have already been presented in targeted events related to less favored themes of FP7. This information was particularly useful for the elaboration of relevant synergy actions towards targeted scientific communities (more particularly through NCP networks cooperation).

Continuous update of Structured Lists is envisaged for the follow-up network – EuroRIs-Net+ (planned to be transformed into a searchable database environment which will raise awareness of Transnational Access Calls, and other useful information / services offered by RI operators). This will be done through a parallel process of identification of specific datasets, policies, measures, surveys and methodologies for the analysis, usage and exploitation of RIs throughout the ERA ecosystem, considering issues such as the planning of training demand for focused scientific communities, and the role of Industry in the wider economic development that RIs imply. Several data sources will be exploited, such as relevant EC projects or RI instruments for which specific collaboration actions will be considered, in the framework of RI NCPs' activities and knowhow.

Website continuous update, dissemination material (e-newsletters, press releases, leaflets & success stories, as well as the DVD "Research Infrastructures – Why so important" produced in March 09) and Structured Lists were efficient dissemination tools for the programme and effective tools, beneficial to RI stakeholders.

Disseminating efforts have been strategically scheduled and implemented, supported by the DG Research and DG INFSO, through the Communication Units for Research Infrastructures, based on a concrete set of tools and a detailed dissemination plan, developed through the project, in order to achieve both broader and more focused visibility of the RI programme.



Picture from 1st Annual Meeting



Picture from 2nd Annual Meeting



Picture from Final EuroRIs-Net workshop



Picture from 3rd Annual Meeting

The aforementioned activities resulted in:

- A more efficient RI NCP Network, with a concrete and well focused role (present & future) in the RIs Programme, as well as the establishment of a stable framework of collaboration with the NCP Networks of other thematic Priority Themes.
- An insight into the issue of the Regional Impact of RIs, through case study presentations and the exchange of experience at national & regional levels.
- Greater visibility of the RI programme and projects, with support for Scientific Communities less familiar with the RIs Programme, to participate in the Programme
- Coherent, high-level services offered by the network, including knowledge “exchange” and “preservation” concerning the RI Programme, as well as competent guidance for end-users.

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Potential impact and main dissemination activities and exploitation results

Apart from the improved efficiency of the RIs NCPs services across Europe, the project also supported the opening of communication channels with RI policy bodies and the European Commission itself (we should highlight the fact that despite the lack of organisation of an NCP meeting during the first three years of the project, the network managed to organize itself an NCP meeting in Y4 – supported by the European Commission).

The network's activities contributed to the development of interest in RI programme participation and the awareness of access opportunities to the different scientific communities in Europe and above and their important role on the further improvement and development of the European excellence on all Research fields; the enhancement of the innovative base of the European Industry; the strengthening of the dialogue with ICPC countries with important RIs for mutual benefit.

Increasing information on the RI programme developments was considered to be among the most prominent results of the project, more specifically through the project website information (www.euroris-net.eu), success stories, newsletters etc. The network soon developed a consistent set of communication tools and a dissemination plan for the better coordination of use of those tools towards the RI ecosystem.

Gradually, the network managed to improve and offer a consistent NCPs service across Europe which will be further evolved into stronger links and services to the RI ecosystem. Through the systematic cooperation and communication with other NCP networks, broader visibility to targeted scientific communities will be achieved, whereas communication lines with the European Commission are established to support information exchange regarding national RI planning, regional developments and complementarity of funding for RI expenditures.

The network has set up strategic partnerships with other projects and RI ecosystem actors and therefore it may provide contacts and multiply communication with RI stakeholders, if needed. Through the project activities, the network formed an essential and important "ring" in the "value chain of RIs", consisting of the coordination of initiatives (at national and EU level) and the key players, stakeholders and users, including the European Commission and ESFRI.

The results of the project are consolidated under the project website – e.g. outcomes such as structured list of RIs or other information on RI programme are offered through the same environment of the Project website (www.euroris-net.eu). The project's website provided continuously updated information on the RIs and the relevant initiatives at national and EU level to the users, potential proposers and the public.

Following results are addressed also to the aforementioned audience and include:

Structured lists (projects under RIs ordering by Thematic Priorities) - <http://www.euroris-net.eu/ri-projects-per-thematic-priority>

9 E-newsletters - <http://www.euroris-net.eu/e-newsletter>

11 Success stories – <http://www.euroris-net.eu/content/success-stories>

Leaflets of the project (*a second version was implemented in Y4*)

Press releases & Model presentation of the project

1st Press release: <Aug 2008 < The EuroRIs-Net project >

2nd Press release: <Dec 2008>, < First year of the EuroRIs-Net Project >

3rd Press release: <Feb 2009>, < The EuroRIs-Net project: Broadening the scope>

4th Press release: <March 2010>, <The EuroRIs-Net: Good spirit and excellent services in two year existence >

5th Press release: <July 2010>, < EuroRIs-Net actively supporting events for a more effective Research Infrastructures Programme>

6th Press release: <Sept 2011>, < EuroRIs-Net +: The new project supporting the activities of the European Network of RIs NCPs >

Short Video on RIs “Why RIs are so important” – check also http://ec.europa.eu/research/infrastructures/index_en.cfm?pg=what

Presentations/Stand in European conferences:

The Network participated in high level events of high visibility to promote the opportunities offered to the researchers through participation in RI programme or access to RI facilities.

More specifically, EuroRIs-Net was presented in the following events (delivery of presentation, or booth support):

- Research Infrastructures and the Regional Dimension of ERA (23-24.03.2009, Czech EU Presidency, Prague)
- Research Connections 2009 (7-8.05.2009, Czech EU Presidency, Prague)
- Sustainable Development: A Challenge for European Research (26-28.05.2009, EC/Brussels)
- Development Strategy of Large-scale RIs of the Russian Fed. & Cooperation with EU (8.09.2009, Copenhagen, Denmark)
- Euroscience Mediterranean Event 2009 - ESME2009 (15-19.10.2009, Athens, Greece)
- ECRI 2010 (23-24.03.2010, Barcelona, Spain)
- European Science Open Forum ESOF 2010 (2-7.07.2010, Torino, Italy)
- 5th Internet Governance Forum (IGF) (14-17 September 2010, Vilnius, Lithuania)
- Security Research Conference 2010 (22-24 September 2010, Oostende, Belgium)
- ICT 2010: Digitally Driven (27-29 September 2010, Brussels, BE)
- eChallenges e-2010 Conference & Exhibition (27-29 October 2010, Warsaw, PL)
- International Conference on Airborne research for the Environment (25-30 October 2010, ICARE, Toulouse, France)
- ViaExpo Congress & Exhibition (13-15.04.2011, Sofia, Bulgaria)
- EuroNanoForum 2011 (30.05-1.06.2011, Spiniverse Oy/Budapest, Hungary)
- WIRE 2011 (7-9 June 2011, Debrecen, Poland)
- Environmental Technologies – Envbiotech 2011 (5-8 September 2011, Gdansk, Poland)
- Future Materials for Grand Challenges (22-23 September 2011, Warsaw, Poland)
- Science - Passion, Mission, Responsibilities, 26-27 September 2011, Warsaw, Poland)
- eChallenges 2011 (26-28 October 2011, Florence, Italy)

In general, the network has exploited the opportunities to cooperate with other NCP networks for sharing the booth costs and also managed to participate – achieving a better visibility towards RI stakeholders - in EC presidency events.

In 9th e-infrastructure Concertation meeting (22-23 September 2011, Lyon, France), the poster of the new project EuroRIs-Net+ was presented, whereas the results of the EuroRIs-Net project were communicated extensively during poster session and other meeting occasions.

In new EuroRIs-Net+ website there is a “corner” for public deliverables of the EuroRIs-Net project, available at: <http://www.euroris-net.eu/euroris-net-deliverables>

Distribution of Information material in workshops, conferences etc.:

EuroRIs-Net dissemination material was distributed in more than 14 additional events of pan – European relevance, in areas such as energy, environment, social sciences and humanities, e-infrastructures etc. *All dissemination events in which the network participated are stated in the relevant deliverable of WP4.*

In conclusion, the Network had a strong presence in high visibility events at European as well as at national level, attracting RIs Stakeholders as well as Stakeholders of the other scientific fields with less knowledge regarding the benefits of RIs. The International Conference on RIs, co-organised by APRE, in Rome, during the third year of the project, highlighted the role of the project in relation to its links the RI ecosystem, whereas the two workshops organised in Paris and Athens and the cross-border events organised in St Gallen, Budapest and Nicosia increased “connectivity” with RI actors such as I3 operators, RI policy bodies and the business sector and highlighted the potential of the network to respond to RI ecosystems’ needs.

Furthermore, the project events promoted the benefits of RI implementation through complementarity of funding among FP7 and Structural Funds both at regional and national level (good examples were presented as well) The dissemination plan included the promotion of RIs capabilities to the wide scientific communities through the other NCPs thematic Networks, therefore the last project workshop was combined with a NCP networks’ meeting, coordinated by EuroRIs-Net, which highlighted the need for synergies and the multiplying operation of NCP networks for RIs.

The results of the Network will build the ground for a “wider dialogue” on the future strategy regarding RIs, among and within the European Commission, Scientific Communities, Stakeholders, decision makers and the Industries in Europe, through the activities of EuroRIs-Net+ (the follow-up project of the RIs NCPs’ network).

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