



1st Joint Call Kick-off Meeting
“Tackling global societal challenges through
innovative climate research”

Brussels, June 16, 2015

Meeting Report



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JPI Climate invited the 9 consortia selected in the context of the JPI Climate 1st joint call¹ (both for Topic 1 –“societal transformations in the face of climate change” and for Topic 2 –“Russian Arctic and boreal systems”) to a Kick-off meeting, which took place on June 16-17, 2015 in Brussels. 8 consortia were represented in the meeting by at least 1 person, in most of the cases there were more than 1 consortium representative. All in all, 34 participants (including consortia representatives, invited experts, funding agencies & ministries representatives, and the organisation team) took part of the meeting. A participants’ list is attached at the end of this report.

As announced in the call text, JPI Climate provides an accompanying programme, aiming at three goals:

- (1) to boost networking at different levels;
- (2) to foster capacity building among the projects; and
- (3) to explore outreach and communication strategies.

This report is exclusively focused on the first day (June 16), which was dedicated to goals (1) and (2).² The report summarises the outcome of two out of four sessions during the workshop: “**Consortia get-together (2): How to improve your research process?**” and “**The added value of JPI Climate**”. The comments, suggestions and (in some cases) criticism derived from the discussion have been anonymised. Most of them were expressed by one or a few participants, so they should not be interpreted as agreed statements of a representative sample, rather as a collection of comments.

This report does not include the contents related to the sessions “**Consortia get-together (1): What’s our project about?**” and “**Consortia get-together (3): How to improve the projects’ transdisciplinarity?**”. However, JPI Climate has conveyed the materials related to both sessions to the respective project representatives. These materials include:

- The project slides presented by each representative during the session “Consortia get-together (1): What’s our project about?”. These slides (together with the input slides by the sessions’ facilitators and the keynote by Prof. Roland Scholz) are also available at the JPI Climate website.³
- The flipchart sheets resulting from the session “Consortia get-together (3): How to improve the projects’ transdisciplinarity?”.

¹ More details on the call are available here: <http://www.jpi-climate.eu/joint-actions/calltransnationalcollaborativeresearchprojects>.

² The second day (June 17) corresponded to a workshop on knowledge usability. Its outcome will be distributed separately. More details on this workshop are available here: <http://www.jpi-climate.eu/news-events/archivenews/10859252/JPI-Climate-Knowledge-Usability-WORK-Shop-17-June-2015-Brussels>.

³ <http://www.jpi-climate.eu/news-events/archivenews/10859291/JPI-Climate-1st-Joint-Call-Kick-off-Meeting-16-17-June-2015-Brussels>

Consortia get-together (2): How to improve your research process?

Facilitator: Elisabeth Worliczek (University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna)

- This session was structured in two main issues corresponding to the phases of the research process within the JPI Climate 1st joint call: 1) The consortia setting-up (before the project start); 2) First experiences after the project kick-off (November 2014-January 2015) (see *meeting agenda*). On this basis, the content has been classified according to 4 topics that arose during the group discussion: “looking for consortium partners”, “engaging stakeholders”, “consortium agreement”, and “the role of the funders”.

1. Looking for consortium partners

- In most proposals, the majority of the consortia partners of academic character have known each other before setting up the consortium → trust and reliability are key factors.
- It’s important to check issues like national budget and the partner’s publication record.
- Funders should bear in mind that network building is time consuming and, therefore, act accordingly.
- Imposing (or recommending) a widespread geographic distribution when building up consortia probably implies long distances when travelling and might lead to using fast (and hence CO₂ intensive) means of transport (i.e. flying -see session “The added value of JPI Climate”). This is contradictory to JPI Climate’s principle of sustainability.
- Physical meetings in the preparation phase were in many cases crucial. Some consortia representatives suggested making such meetings mandatory in future calls by offering small grants to the participants.

2. Engaging stakeholders

- Different ways to engage (non-academic) stakeholders were mentioned: “targeted” (i.e. concrete persons, organisations... were chosen by a given partner and directly contacted) vs. “open” (i.e. no specific names in advance, but identification by third parties through e.g. the so-called “snow ball effect”).
- The importance of the research topic co-design (i.e. involving stakeholders in the definition of the research topic) was highlighted by several participants.
- Approaching non-academic stakeholders when communicating an output requires other types of communication as well as the use of local languages → calls should foresee some budget items to cover this “translation” work.
- There are large differences and varying degrees of difficulty when engaging stakeholders, depending on their nature, e.g. it is (relatively) easy to connect with local authorities, but is difficult to get the interest from civil society.
- The funding conditions for every partner (regardless of their nature –academic, private sector, public sector, NGOs...) should be equalised. This is the only way to avoid additional

stakeholder participation with the sole purpose of satisfying the funders’ demands. Bureaucratic burdens may become unsurmountable for non-academic stakeholders.

- Incentives should be found to make stakeholders interested enough to allocate resources, educational programs etc. In this sense, potential consortia should be able to demonstrate how the (potentially) involved partner might benefit from his / her participation in the consortium.
- Generally speaking, stakeholder involvement is extremely time consuming, and this should be again taken into account by funders.

3. Consortium agreement

- The setting up of the consortium agreement is extremely time-consuming due to the differences across the countries concerning e.g. financial issues or ethical approvals.
- Clear commitment from the national funders is needed to avoid difficulties during the whole process (including the application, submission and the negotiation).
- Sustainable (i.e. climate-friendly) and transparent (open access friendly) research demands an extra effort in the preparation phase and might cause disadvantages to those proposals which take them seriously, since they might have less time and resources to address the contents of their proposals. The only way to compensate this is to embed these criteria in the evaluation of the proposal so that those project proposals with more progressive sustainability and transparency approaches are rewarded by the evaluators.

4. The role of the funders

- It would be recommended to contact consortia representatives by e-mail and by phone in order to avoid undesired situations (e.g. important e-mails ending up in spam box).
- Concerning the “accompanying programme” (follow-up of the projects along their lifetime by JPI Climate): In general, the project representatives were excited about the idea of participating in meetings, workshops etc. to tackle the goals of the call (i.e. networking, capacity building and outreaching and communicating). However, a more precise time schedule of such a program is needed in order to plan the participation in advance. Otherwise, the participation cannot be guaranteed.
- Some participants stated that after JPI Climate’s approval for funding, the contract negotiation with the national funder was difficult and time-consuming. Clear commitment from the funders (i.e. ensuring the budget) is demanded.
- Funding conditions for non-academic partners is not synchronised between participating countries.
- To prepare an ethical approval within one month is very difficult.

The added value of JPI Climate

Facilitator: Alexis Sancho Reinoso (University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna)

- This session’s discussion was structured in 2 main issues: 1) Sustainability (“How can we organize our activities in a smart, climate-friendly way to inspire others to follow?”); 2) Transparency (“How can we improve the access to knowledge to research activities?”).
- Those suggestions/requests in **bold** letters are addressed specifically to JPI Climate.

1. How can we organise our activities in a smart, climate-friendly way to inspire others to follow?

Previous experiences on footprint management

- The Tyndall Centre (UK) has valuable “real life-based” expertise when managing its own CO₂ footprint.
- The “Green Plan”⁴ in France is a framework aiming to make French Higher Education Centres meeting sustainable development approach and it might be useful as a “learning-by-doing” experience on committing research performing organisations on a more balance carbon footprint.
- The “CFCR” project undertaken as a “fast track activity” within JPI Climate and its outcome (particularly the 2 policy briefs) should be taken into account.⁵
- Professional tools to facilitate videoconferencing: JPI Climate Central Secretariat has experience by organising video conferences with “Go To Meeting”.⁶
- Developing and establishing a “Footprint Management Plan” (parallel to the “Data Management Plan”) was understood as an interesting measure which would in any case need clarification and technical support from the funders. The Plan should help to design and schedule in advance the way how a consortium deals with its activities and their effects related to sustainability issues.

Lessons learned

- The first step is always the most difficult one. There is need for time to learn from errors; training sessions for consortium members are recommended.
- Choosing meeting venues in central locations is critical to achieving a better footprint management.
- Adapt meeting schedule to potential arrival time of participants. This might favour the use of certain transportation means like e.g. night train.
- Possibility for parallel online conferences in different places.

⁴ Source: <http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/Green-Plan.html>.

⁵ <http://www.jpi-climate.eu/jpi-themes/climatefriendlyclimateresearch>.

⁶ Source: <http://www.gotomeeting.co.uk/>.

- Train travel: it can represent high costs (even when it’s not always more expensive than going by plane) but also unexpected positive effects (related to e.g. worktime when travelling: creative space to think and prepare quietly for projects).
- Alternative, community-based actions for CO₂ offsetting should be born in mind. E.g. instead of carbon offsetting: do it within your project / area as a volunteer!
- Generally speaking, running climate-friendly strategies (related to research performing and/or research funding activities) takes time and therefore increases the budget.
- **JPI Climate needs to better communicate the “CFCR-philosophy”.**

Still to be achieved

- A high degree of flexibility at the workplace will decisively contribute to boost climate-friendly travel behaviour.
- In order to achieve a smart mobility concept, meetings should be scheduled and announced well in advance, including meetings organised by funders.
- The requirement of making climate-friendly climate research feasible might interfere with the geographical nature of the consortia. In this sense JPI Climate may think about **changing criteria in favour of geographical closeness**.
- The factor “climate-friendly” should be given the same importance as the factors “money” and “time”.
- **The carbon footprint should be estimated within the project budget and compensated (1% of the project for compensation actions).**
- However, reliable information on the footprint is needed. What are the implications of printing, travelling, energy use or accommodation in the research process? Brainstorming on how this data can be compiled is needed.
- **Interactive guidance with practical solutions will be extremely helpful.**

2. How can we improve the access to knowledge in research activities?

Publication of research results and data in open access journals (“gold” open access)

- The fact that most prestigious journals (with high impact factors) do not have open access discourages the scientists to publish in open access journals.
- Some examples from open access journals and their peer review systems were discussed. E.g., Austria included OA in the national strategy.
- OA journals are usually highly priced
- Open access may have dangers; some OA journals are fraud.
- In general, environmental science goes for “gold” OA.

Data availability in repositories or databases (“green” open access)

- For Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), a critical question is the privacy of the studied subjects (interviews, for instance). Some guidelines from the National Science Foundation (USA) for the social sciences may be useful.⁷

⁷ http://www.nsf.gov/sbe/sbe_data_management_plan.jsp.

- The quality of the data in OA databases may also be an issue (the participants presented some examples of databases – e.g. Climate Research Units – where the quality of the data is being challenged in recent studies). There is a need for validation of the data in these databases.
- Some universities have copyright issues, you cannot put your article in an open access, but you can upload the typewritten into the database.

General comments on accessibility

- There exist big differences between countries regarding their national open access policies.
- The OECD principles on open data might be helpful when establishing policies.⁸

General comments on outreach and dissemination

- The opportunity to communicate science results to the media (TV or newspapers, for example) was highlighted as a positive result from open access.
- The dissemination strategies were discussed. When the results of the research project are published and are ready to be disseminated, the project has already ended and travelling expenses or dissemination expenses thus can't be funded. There is a gap between funding the research expenses and dissemination/outreach expenses in the projects.
- The question of the societal impact of research projects was also discussed. How to assess/quantify the societal impact of a research project?
- The participants agreed that there is a need to define metrics concerning this issue.
- The question of what type of language should be used when communicating results is crucial. There are different habits in different countries. The creation of adequate dissemination results is a professional task, so communication specialists should be part of the research teams from the very beginning of the project. High touch is more important than high tech. Policy feedback must be in the national language.
- Creation of a dissemination plan, who are the target groups, survey about which kind of information is needed, how do you go forward to get that information. Here NGOs can play a decisive role.

Examples:

- The tool *Photovoice*⁹: you give a camera to local people in order to document issues they are involved in. Look at the pictures after a year, what can we summarize. Give those not used to talk directly a voice.
- It takes time to get research results get through to policymakers. So involving them in the discussion of the project preliminary results might be a good strategy in order to create space to facilitate discussion.
- Generally speaking, transdisciplinary research has the reputation to be difficult to be funded.
- **Access to knowledge should be fostered by JPI Climate according to the Guidelines – networks like between the 1st call projects can help transfer of knowledge.**

⁸ Source: <http://www.oecd.org/science/sci-tech/oecdprinciplesandguidelinesforaccesstoresearchdatafrompublicfunding.htm>

⁹ Source: <https://photovoice.org/>

Final remark

The organising committee of the JPI Climate 1st joint call kick-off meeting expresses its gratitude to the 9 funded consortia, and particularly to those persons who directly participated in the meeting. The ultimate goal of this event was to offer the opportunity to all actors involved in the call (i.e. research funding organisations, scientific evaluators, and selected applicants) to joint and to share perspectives, worries and hopes on how climate change can be better addressed through innovative research activities.

This is precisely what this report has tried to reflect. The organising team invites the meeting attendants and those persons who did not attend the meeting in person who might have questions or might need clarification on this report and on the “accompanying programme” to contact Ms. Elisabeth Worliczek (Elisabeth.worliczek@boku.ac.at) or Mr. Alexis Sancho Reinoso (alexis.sancho-reinoso@boku.ac.at).

JPI Climate 1st call Kick-off Meeting (Brussels, June 16-17, 2015)

List of participants

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