

The Joint Programming Initiatives

Joint programming is a process by which EU Member States establish a joint research strategy to tackle major societal challenges. The objective is to reduce research landscape fragmentation, and to align national research programmes and resources for more impact. Although the Member States launched ten Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) to implement this process, evaluation of the JPIs revealed that they lacked political and financial commitment to joint programming.

Policy context

The European Commission launched the concept of a [European Research Area](#) (ERA) in 2000, to address a fragmentation of the European research system that creates both duplication and a lack of critical mass. One key ERA objective is to improve coordination of national research programme implementation. The [ERANET scheme](#) and the [Article 185 initiatives](#) under the sixth Framework Programme for research (FP6), which promote networking of national research activities, did not completely resolve the lack of coordination. The European Commission therefore introduced joint programming as a new approach.

The Joint Programming Process

In April 2007, the European Commission [noted](#) that research on some key societal issues 'can best, or even only, be addressed effectively through European research programmes'. To tackle these societal challenges, the Commission suggested that Member States should establish and implement joint programmes based on their existing national programmes. The [Council](#) and the [European Council](#) supported this approach. In July 2008, the Commission [presented](#) joint programming as a Member State-led process, designed to coordinate research in Europe and to address major societal challenges. The [Joint Programming Process](#) (JPP) aimed at restructuring the European research landscape through EU level reorientation and programming of research activities in key areas. The Commission proposed Joint Programming Initiatives to implement the JPP.

The Joint Programming Initiatives

The EU Competitiveness Council [welcomed](#) the concept of joint programming in December 2008, and set up a High Level Group for Joint Programming known as the GPC (*Groupe de Programmation Conjointe*) to identify potential topics for Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) and develop guidance on the framework conditions for their implementation. Member States can launch a JPI when they are committed to jointly address a European or global challenge. The JPI has to bring clear added value to the current situation with regards to economies of scale and thematic coverage. Relevant stakeholders at regional and national level should be involved. Member State participation in the JPIs follows the principle of variable geometry and open access. The European Commission planned to facilitate the process, and no EU funds were expected to be involved *a priori*. Following a Council request, the European Commission, on the basis of Member States suggestion, [presented](#) a proposal for a JPI on combating neurodegenerative diseases (JPND) in July 2009. The European Parliament [supported](#) this pilot initiative, [launched](#) by the Council in December 2009. Three additional JPIs were [launched](#) in May 2010, on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE), Cultural Heritage, and Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life (HDHL). The second wave of six JPIs was [approved](#) in 2011, on the demographic challenge (More Years Better Life – MYBL), healthy and productive sea and oceans, urban challenges, sustainable water systems, climate knowledge, and antimicrobial resistance (JPIAMR).

Joint Programming Initiative activities

The governance structure of the JPIs usually includes a governing board, a scientific advisory committee and a secretariat. The first activity of a JPI is to develop a joint Member State vision for the selected area – the Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) translates the vision into research priorities and objectives. Finally, the public



authorities in the Member States aim their programmes and research instruments at achieving the agreed objectives, following an implementation plan adopted by the JPI. In this context, the JPIs manage the joint activities, including joint transnational calls for research projects, dissemination of results, mobility and training activities and access to research infrastructures. In November 2010, the GPC adopted [voluntary guidelines](#) for framework conditions on joint programming, to offer a list of tools and best practices and develop a standard model for JPI implementation. The [JPI To Co Work](#) project aimed at helping the JPIs adopt these framework conditions and exchange best practices. This project was integrated into the [ERA LEARN 2020](#) platform to support public-public partnerships in 2015.

Figure 1 – Key figures of the Joint Programming Initiatives

JPI	Participants		Creation	Adoption SRA	ERANET	
	Members	Observers and Partners			Plus	Cofund
JPND	23 MS + 4 AC + 2 TC	1 MS	2009	2011	-	1
FACCE JPI	17 MS + 3 AC + 1 TC	3 MS + 10 TC	2010	2012	1	2
JPI HDHL	14 MS + 2 AC + 2 TC	6 MS + 1 TC	2010	2012*	-	1
JPI Cultural Heritage	17 MS + 2 AC	5 MS + 1 AC + 1 TC	2010	2013	1	-
JPI MYBL	12 MS + 2 AC + 2 TC	1 AC	2011	2014	-	-
JPIAMR	14 MS + 2 AC + 3 TC	2 MS + 1 TC	2011	2013	-	1
Water JPI	16 MS + 4 AC	4 MS + 6 TC	2011	2013	-	3
JPI Oceans	18 MS + 3 AC	1 MS	2011	2014	-	1
JPI Climate	12 MS + 1 AC	5 MS + 1 AC	2011	2011	-	2
JPI Urban Europe	11 MS + 1 AC	6 MS + 1 AC	2011	2015	-	3

Source: European Commission. MS: Member State, AC: Associated Country, TC: Third Country. *Revised in 2015

Evaluation of the scheme and challenges

The first JPI [review](#) in 2012 considered that there was a political challenge to national programme owners and policy makers fully adopting and acting on the joint programming concept. There were also structural and organisational challenges to aligning national strategies and research programmes with the SRAs. The expert group noted that the necessary level of Member State commitment was not yet evident. No JPIs had then reached the ultimate stage of 'implementing multi-annual joint programmes and cooperation throughout the policy cycle'. The expert group highlighted that joint programming was not about bringing new funds into joint calls, but about aligning existing national programmes to tackle societal challenges.

In 2013, the [Dublin conference](#) on joint programming, gathering all the stakeholders in the process, concluded that the Member States had to renew their commitment to joint programming. They needed to fully engage in the alignment of national research programmes in order to unlock the potential of joint programming.

The [evaluation](#) conducted in 2016 concluded that the level of ambition in support of the JPIs was disappointing. Most Member States were unwilling or unable to co-invest in the central executive resource required. Financial support from the European Commission through coordination and support actions and ERANET grants – which were not planned when launching the JPIs – was considered vital to their development. This put the Joint Programming Process as a Member State led process, and the long term sustainability of the JPIs, into question. The experts noted that Member States' participation in the JPIs showed a low level of internal coordination. Finally, a key issue remained the alignment of national research activities with the Strategic Research Agenda objectives.

Since 2013, the GPC has been working to address the current issues, such as the [alignment](#) of national programmes, the [interoperability](#) of national systems, the [governance](#) of the national JPI process, and the [framework conditions](#) for joint programming. A [similar task](#) has also been undertaken by the stakeholders under the ERA LEARN 2020 platform.

Implementation of the JPIs has highlighted the numerous difficulties in achieving deep coordination between national research systems at all levels of the policy cycle, from the selection of societal challenges to the joint programming of research activities, to the alignment of national programmes. Given the lack of Member State commitment and the financial constraints, no additional JPIs are to be established in the medium term, even though Member States and the GPC have [discussed](#) the establishment of a JPI on migration.