

Article 185 initiatives

Article 185 initiatives are Member State partnerships funded by the EU framework programme for research. Promoted by the Commission in 2001 as an instrument to implement joint programming of research activities, Article 185 initiatives aim for scientific, managerial and financial integration of national research programmes at European level in a given field. Five partnerships have been established so far and another is planned. However, implementation of the three levels of integration are hindered by the existence of national legal and administrative barriers to transnational funding.

Policy context

In 2000, the European Commission launched the [European Research Area](#) (ERA) concept in order to address European research system fragmentation that creates duplication and a lack of critical mass. One key ERA objective is to improve coordination of national research programme implementation, as more than 80 % of the [research funding](#) in Europe is managed at national level. The European Council [asked](#) the Council and the Commission, together with the Member States, 'to develop appropriate mechanisms for networking national and joint research programmes'.

Using Article 185

The Commission [proposed](#) to use Article 169 of the Treaty establishing the European Community – now Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union – in 2000, to promote the networking of national programmes. This article, [introduced](#) in the Treaties in 1986, but never previously used, stated that the 'Community may make provision, with the agreement of the Member States concerned, for participation in research and development programmes undertaken by several Member States' when implementing the framework programme for research. Article 169 initiatives are policy initiatives creating long-term integrated partnerships led by Member States participating on a voluntary basis, implemented by a dedicated implementation structure (DIS), and financially supported by the framework programme.

In 2001, the European Parliament [expressed](#) 'the strongest possible reservations' on the 'variable geometry' of participation in these partnerships. The Commission [presented](#) its views on the implementation of Article 169 in May 2001. The objective was to integrate Community and national research efforts in specific areas presenting a large scale and diversity in the resources to be mobilised. Unlike the [ERANET scheme](#) launched in 2002 that supported mainly networking activities, Article 169 initiatives aimed at providing deep integration through [joint programmes](#). The Council [supported](#) this approach and invited Member States to identify possible topics for pilot programmes.

The European and Developing Countries Trial Partnership pilot under FP6

In August 2002, shortly after the adoption of the sixth framework programme (FP6) for research that included possible financial support for Article 169 initiatives, the Commission [adopted](#) a proposal for a 'European and Developing countries Clinical Trial Partnership' ([EDCTP](#)), based on a concept document developed by 14 Member States and Norway. The research programme would have a total budget of €600 million, spread equally between the EU, the participating Member States and other partners. The decision to set up the partnership was [adopted](#) by the Council and the Parliament in June 2003.

The DIS set up to manage the partnership was a European Economic Interest Group. Despite the initial ambitions, national administrative and legal barriers prevented the full integration expected by the nature of Article 169 initiatives. The issue of the creation of a real common funding 'pot', managed directly by the DIS, versus the use of 'virtual common pots', where national funding agencies fund national researchers and the DIS top-up funding with Community funds, was at the heart of the debate. The Commission [argued](#) that



Article 169 initiatives required scientific, management and financial integration, favouring the use of a real common pot. However, the Member States were in favour of ‘virtual common pots’.

Independent [evaluation](#) of the EDCTP pilot initiative conducted in 2007 concluded that pre-requisites had to be met when establishing new Article 169 initiatives, including the assessment that Article 169 is the appropriate tool, the existence and added value of national programmes, and adherence to funding rules.

New initiatives under the Seventh Framework Programme and Horizon 2020

Based on the EDCTP experience, the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) [Regulation](#) established six criteria that had to be met before proposing Article 169 initiatives: relevance to Community objectives; clear definition of the objective to be pursued and relevance to the objectives of the framework programme; presence of pre-existing or planned research programmes at national level; European added-value; critical mass of the national programme involved; and whether Article 169 was the most appropriate means to achieve the objectives. The Commission again [pointed out](#) the need for partnerships to achieve scientific, management and financial integration. The creation of a real common funding pot managed by the DIS was not mandatory, but referred to as an ultimate objective.

Under FP7, four additional partnerships were established for a duration of 10 years: [Eurostars](#) supporting SMEs performing research activities; the Active and Assisted Living programme ([AAL](#)) on ICT tools to support elderly people; the European Metrology Research Programme ([EMRP](#), later EMPIR); and the Baltic Sea research and development programme ([BONUS](#)). The last two partnerships were initially supported by an ERANET and an ERANET Plus scheme, illustrating the development from coordination of national programmes to integration with joint programming.

In 2013, Article 26 of the Horizon 2020 [regulation](#) stressed that Article 185 initiatives ‘shall be proposed in cases where there is a need for a dedicated implementation structure and where there is a high level of commitment of the participating countries to integration at scientific, management and financial levels’. The criteria were updated, especially regarding partners’ financial commitments. Four partnerships were [renewed](#) in 2014: [EDCTP2](#), [AAL2](#), [EMPIR](#) and [Eurostars2](#). [BONUS](#) runs under FP7 funding until 2017, at which time potential renewal will be discussed. A [proposal](#) for a new ‘Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area’ ([PRIMA](#)) was adopted by the European Commission in October 2016.

Figure 1 – Key figures of the Article 185 initiatives

Article 185 initiative	Number of participating countries	EU funding (million €)			National funds (million €)
		FP6	FP7	H2020	H2020
EDCTP	15 MS + 2 AC + 14 TC	200	-	683	683
Eurostars	28 MS + 5 AC + 1 TC	-	100	287	861
AAL	17 MS + 3 AC	-	150	175	175
EMRP/EMPIR	23 MS + 5 AC	-	200	300	300
BONUS	8 MS	-	50	-	-

Source: European Commission ([FP7](#), [Horizon 2020](#)) MS: Member State, AC: Associated Country, TC: Third Country.

Evaluation of the scheme and challenges

Interim evaluations and/or final evaluations have been performed on each of the partnerships ([EDCTP](#), [AAL](#), [EMPR](#), [Eurostars](#), [BONUS](#)). Evaluations are ongoing in the context of the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020. The Commission plans presentation of a meta-evaluation providing a general overview of the scheme in 2017. The evaluations concluded that Article 185 initiatives resulted in a reduction of research fragmentation and successfully created a critical mass of research and innovation activities in a field. The EMPIR initiative [integrates](#) 50 % of the EU funding in metrology research, for example.

However, only one of the Article 185 initiatives has used a real common funding pot to implement the required financial integration (EDCTP). The DIS usually manages the EU contribution, while that of the Member State is provided using different modes (in-kind contributions, national programmes topped-up with EU funding, additional activities), providing the scheme with a certain flexibility. As was the case with the ERANET scheme, Article 185 initiatives have faced difficulties in achieving transnational funding, due to a lack of political will when implementing joint programming. The [Joint Programming Initiatives](#) were thus established to implement public partnerships beyond the framework programme.