

ELIXIR and HORIZON 2020

Purpose of the paper

To present to the ELIXIR Interim Board an update on areas of potential interest within Horizon 2020, the suggested steps for ELIXIR to prepare and respond to first Calls for Proposals and to agree on the principles for ELIXIR submissions.

Action required

For approval

1. Executive Summary

As part of the emerging five-year ELIXIR Programme (ELIXIR/2013/14), a Programme of Work dedicated to ELIXIR's External Funding Strategy will be developed. The objective of the External Funding Strategy is to ensure that ELIXIR is positioned accordingly such that it can respond to future Calls for Proposals to help contribute to the operations of current and emerging ELIXIR services throughout the ELIXIR Nodes and the Hub.

This paper builds on a Memo to the ELIXIR Interim Board in August 2013, which outlined the then latest state of play as regards Horizon 2020. It includes more recent information and summarises the latest news on areas within Horizon 2020 that likely to be of interest to ELIXIR. It outlines some next steps that ELIXIR needs to follow in order to prepare for and submit coordinated applications, and seeks approval of a set of guiding principles that ELIXIR should follow. It also builds on the discussion at the ELIXIR Heads of Nodes committee on 21-22 October, at which Heads of Nodes agreed that decisions regarding the actual topics that ELIXIR applies for should be discussed and agreed within that forum.

2. Positioning ELIXIR

Much work has already been done to position ELIXIR with the European Commission ahead of the Calls opening. In 2013, ELIXIR has held direct meetings with the following key individuals and units:

- Anne Glover, Chief Scientific Advisor to the President of the European Commission, February 2013
- Thierry Van Der Pyl, Director, Excellence in Science, DG CONNECT, February 2013
- Thierry Van Der Pyl and Kostas Glinos, DG CONNECT, May 2013
- Robert Madelin, Director-General, DG CONNECT, June 2013
- Ruxandra Draghia-Akli, Director, Health, DG RTD, June 2013
- Keith Sequeira and Patricia Reilly, Members of the Cabinet of Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn, June 2013
- Ana Arana Antelo, Head of Unit, Research Infrastructures, DG RTD, June 2013
- Annette Schneegans, DG Agriculture, June 2013
- Kostantinos Glinos, Head of Unit, e-Infrastructures unit, DG CONNECT, July 2013
- Didier Schmitt, Scientific Advisor to Professor Anne Glover, July 2013
- Jose Cotta, Head of Unit, Open Science, DG CONNECT, October 2013

In terms of forthcoming events, the ELIXIR launch event on 18 December 2013, which takes place one week after the first Calls for Proposals within Horizon 2020 are expected to open, will also be a further key opportunity to present to key officials within the European Commission the role the ELIXIR can play.

3. Principles for success

The first Horizon 2020 Calls for Proposals are due to open on 11 December 2013 and this presents the first possibilities to ELIXIR Nodes and the Hub to help resource current and emerging ELIXIR services. As more becomes known about the annual Work Programmes, it is clear that there will not be one single Call that ELIXIR can apply to; rather, there will be several topics of potential relevance to ELIXIR, spread through more than one Horizon 2020 Work Programme, some with deadlines in 2014 and others in 2015.

Due to the fierce competition for this funding, and the effort needed in writing coordinated applications, it is critical that ELIXIR considers carefully the topics and Calls that best fit the strategic priorities and strengths of members. When applications for funding are submitted under the name of ELIXIR, there should first be agreement from the ELIXIR Director and Heads of Nodes committee. This will help

ensure that a coordinated approach to applications is taken and that all applications complement the strategy of the infrastructure as a whole.

Thought should be given to the mission of ELIXIR, which is to develop and implement services to users. ELIXIR should therefore focus on topics with a strong infrastructure and service provision component, rather than pure research topics. Organisations that act as or are part of ELIXIR Nodes can still apply for research-focussed topics in Horizon 2020, just not use the name ELIXIR in these cases.

Such is the thematic focus of some topics (such as Health or Agriculture or Virtual Research Environments, for example), not all ELIXIR Nodes will take part in every application. The ELIXIR SAB, in its summer 2013 meeting, endorsed the principle that most appropriate partners for that particular application should be involved in each one and that this would mean that not all Nodes take part in each application if it is not suited to them. Whilst the ELIXIR Hub may lead some applications, it will be vital that ELIXIR Nodes also drive forward and lead other ELIXIR applications. Decisions regarding which Nodes take part in which applications, and what role each partner should have, will be discussed by the Heads of Nodes committee and the ELIXIR Director.

The Interim Board is asked to approve the following principles:

- ELIXIR applications should only be submitted to topics that are considered core to the current and future remit of ELIXIR
- Any ELIXIR applications for funding are submitted under the name of ELIXIR should first have agreement from the ELIXIR Director and Heads of Nodes committee. This will also ensure that ELIXIR never submits competing applications to the same topic
- The most appropriate ELIXIR partners for each ELIXIR application should be engaged; therefore, not all ELIXIR partners will take part in every ELIXIR application
- The discussions on which topics ELIXIR applies for, who coordinates and which partners should be involved should reside with the Head of Nodes committee and ELIXIR Director
- Only countries that have ratified the ELIXIR ECA or ELIXIR MoU countries that have made contributions to the ELIXIR Hub should be entitled to play a significant role in ELIXIR-named applications

4. Horizon 2020 areas of interest

A separate briefing document will be presented to the ELIXIR Heads of Nodes Committee for its meeting on 21-22 October 2013. This will list all of the topics from draft Work Programmes that are likely to be of interest to ELIXIR and will form the basis for on-going discussions at subsequent meetings. This section below summarises, in broad terms, the main areas of Horizon 2020 for which ELIXIR could consider applying to.

The natural home for ELIXIR-relevant topics is the Research Infrastructures programme. It is understood that Year One will see at least one Cluster grant in the Bio Medical Sciences funded. It is not yet known what the focus will be on but if the common theme is data then ELIXIR would want to coordinate this. Of the topics allocated to I3s, several reference directly the need for involvement with ELIXIR. There is also likely to be a Call for a Design Study to consider a Rare Diseases Infrastructure, and given the expertise of many ELIXIR Nodes in this field, ELIXIR may also wish to participate in this. Likewise, within the e-Infrastructures part of the programme, there are likely to be some technical topics that ELIXIR could apply to, including topics relating to data, HPC or Virtual Research Environments.

Outside of the Research Infrastructures programme, there could be scope to engage in specific topics within the following programmes: Health, Wellbeing and Demographic Change; Food security, agriculture, forestry, marine and biosciences; and ICT.

5. ESFRI Prioritisation

As reported in the August 2013 Memo and at previous Interim Board meetings, a mandate has been given to ESFRI to 'prioritise' the ESFRI Roadmap infrastructures. The outcome of this process is likely to have a direct bearing on the size and scope of direct funding for ESFRI Research Infrastructures in Year Two of the Research Infrastructures Work Programme.

The independent High Level Expert Group on Assessment of the projects on the ESFRI Roadmap - established by the EC together with ESFRI - reviewed the operational progress of all ESFRI Research Infrastructures and concluded that ELIXIR was in Category A, along with only 7 other ESFRI RIs. The ESFRI Strategic Working Groups have now been tasked with carrying out a scientific and user assessment of each ESFRI RI, with a view of using this for the final prioritisation. It is imperative that ELIXIR maintains its positive position in this process and that ELIXIR stakeholders continue to show how critical ELIXIR is both to its own scientific users and to the other ESFRI Research Infrastructures themselves.

The ESFRI Food and Health Strategic Working Group has developed a questionnaire to assess the scientific value and importance of the infrastructure to its users. ELIXIR's draft response will be provided to the Heads of Nodes Committee for their input.

6. Open Access to Data

The EC is currently developing proposals for a Pilot Action in Horizon 2020 on Open Access to Data. It is expected that as part of this package, the EC will make it obligatory that consortia applying to certain Horizon 2020 themes, such as the ERC and the FET programme, must include Data Management Plans as part of their applications. This is a development that ELIXIR welcomes and partners should consider the most appropriate ways of ensuring that the ELIXIR network can support this process, through for example, the maintenance of the service registry of resources that researchers can refer to in their applications and also options for training researchers in developing Data Management Plans.

7. Timeline and next steps

Calls for Proposals are due to open on 11 December 2013, and whilst the deadlines may vary between Calls, it is clear that ELIXIR will require several face to face meetings to decide on which topics to apply for, define which Nodes take part in which Call, and ultimately draft and write the applications.

The list below describes the suggested meetings and opportunities where Horizon 2020 applications will be discussed:

- First discussion on draft topics at Heads of Nodes meeting, 21-22 October 2013
- General discussion at Interim Board meeting, 4-5 November 2013
- Further discussion with Heads of Nodes following SAB meeting, 10 December 2013
- Meeting in Brussels to work on proposals to Horizon 2020, February 2014 (exact date tbc)

In addition, ELIXIR members should also continue to engage national Programme Committee members such that they recognise the value of and leveraging effect that using Horizon 2020 funds to support the operating costs of ESFRI Research Infrastructures can bring. All Nodes should participate in the discussions around ELIXIR's External Funding Strategy

8. Conclusions

ELIXIR needs to focus strategically on the Calls for Proposals under Horizon 2020 that are within scope, and to ensure that the best partners for each project are engaged on each grant.

The Interim Board is asked to approve the Principles for Success outlined in section 3.

We aim to ensure that ELIXIR has the best opportunity for funding from the ESFRI-focussed Calls in Year 2 of the Research Infrastructures Work Programme and Horizon 2020; to help ensure this the ELIXIR Interim Board is encouraged to represent ELIXIR in discussions in ESFRI Strategic Working Groups and ESFRI Forum.