



# PLATFORM

## Platform of bioeconomy ERA-NET Actions

(H2020 Grant number 652635)

### REPORT

#### PLATFORM Workshop 'Think Back, Act Forward'

March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at Schiphol



Organised by WP1 - Practice: Efficient, effective, and inclusive organisation of ERA-NET activities

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### **Meeting organisers and report authors:**

Vera Grimm, Project Management Juelich	PLATFORM Task 1.1
Veit Klimpel, Project Management Juelich	PLATFORM Task 1.1
Annette Kremser, Project Management Juelich	PLATFORM Task 1.1
Fokke de Jong, Wageningen UR	PLATFORM Office
Christine Bunthof, Wageningen UR	PLATFORM Coordinator

May 2015

## 1 Introduction and background

As Horizon 2020 changed conditions and settings for the Member States coordination activities profoundly, there is a necessity to think about new, sustainable and alternative models of future cooperation and collaboration between national publicly funded research programmes. Therefore the overall goal of this creativity workshop was:

- (1) to identify main challenges within existing instruments of collaboration, and
- (2) to envision, design and discuss improved schemes of future collaboration in public-public partnerships between the Member States.

### 1.1 Description of instruments for P2P collaborations under FP6, FP7 and H2020

#### 1.1.1 ERA-NET<sup>1</sup>

The original objective of ERA-NET in FP6 was to step up the cooperation and coordination of research activities carried out at national or regional level in the Member States and Associated States through a single action to support:

- the networking of research activities conducted at national or regional level, and
- the mutual opening of national and regional research programmes. The scheme will contribute to making a reality of the European Research Area by improving the coherence and coordination across Europe of such research programmes.

The scheme enabled national systems to take on tasks collectively that they would not have been able to tackle independently. Both networking and mutual opening require a progressive approach. The ERA-NET scheme therefore had a long-term perspective that must also allow for the different ways that research is organised in different Member States and Associated States.

#### 1.1.2 ERA-NET Plus<sup>2</sup>

The objective of the ERA-NET scheme under FP7 was to develop and strengthen the coordination of national and regional research programmes through two specific actions:

- 'ERA-NET actions' - providing a framework for actors implementing public research programmes to coordinate their activities e.g. by developing joint activities or by mutually supporting joint calls for trans-national proposals.
- 'ERA-NET Plus actions' - providing, in a limited number of cases with high European added value, additional EU financial support to facilitate joint calls for proposals between national and/or regional programmes.

Under this ERA-NET scheme, national and regional authorities identify research programmes they wish to coordinate or open up mutually. The participants in these actions are therefore programme 'owners' (typically ministries or regional authorities defining research programmes) or programme 'managers' (such as research councils or other research funding agencies managing research programmes).

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<sup>1</sup> Text cited from: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/era-net-fp6\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/era-net-fp6_en.html)

<sup>2</sup> Text cited from [http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/era-net-fp7\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/era-net-fp7_en.html)

### **1.1.3 ERA-NET COFUND<sup>3</sup>**

The ERA-NET instrument under Horizon 2020 is designed to support public-public partnerships in their preparation, establishment of networking structures, design, implementation and coordination of joint activities as well as topping up of single joint calls and of actions of a transnational nature.

The ERA-NET under Horizon 2020 merges the former ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus into a single instrument with the central and compulsory element of implementing one substantial call with top-up funding from the Commission. The focus of ERA-NETs is therefore shifting from the funding of networks to the top-up funding of single joint calls for transnational research and innovation in selected areas with high European added value and relevance for Horizon 2020. This aims at increasing substantially the share of funding that Member States dedicate jointly to challenge driven research and innovation agendas. Financial contributions of Member States can be in cash or in kind in order to broaden the scope of ERA-NETs towards the coordination institutional funding of governmental research organisations.

In addition to the joint calls they implement, ERA-NETs have developed over the past years a vast range of networking and other joint activities that contribute significantly to the impact of the ERA-NET scheme and that should be sustained.

### **1.1.4 Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA)**

An FPA is a contract between the EC and all relevant funding agencies. This contract is a formalized relationship between the Commission and its partners, specifying the common objectives, the nature of actions, the procedure for awarding specific grants and the rights and obligations of each partner under the specific agreement. Only programme owners and managers are eligible as named beneficiaries. The funders submit each year a new proposal for organising one joint call. This proposal is evaluated internally at the EC, saving time compared to ERA-NET / Plus / Cofund which are evaluated by external reviewers.

### **1.1.5 European Joint Programme COFUND (EJP)**

The European Joint Programme ('EJP') under Horizon 2020 is a co-fund action designed to support coordinated national research and innovation programmes. The EJP aims at attracting and pooling a critical mass of national resources on objectives and challenges of Horizon 2020 and at achieving significant economies of scales by adding related Horizon 2020 resources to a joint effort. The main activity of the action is the implementation of a joint programme of activities to attain objectives common to Horizon 2020, ranging from research and innovation to coordination and networking activities, including training activities, demonstration and dissemination activities, support to third parties etc.

The EJP has a wide range of possible activities. Direct consortium activities and/or (single or multiple calls for proposals for financial support to third parties are eligible. The funding can be used to enhance and expand the activities of existing coordinated programmes or create new ones, provided they aim at attaining the objectives of a European transnational joint-programme established by the EJP consortium.

The minimum number of partners in a consortium for an EJP is five independent legal entities from different Member States or associated countries owning or managing national research and innovation programmes. These must be programme owners and/or programme managers.

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<sup>3</sup> Text cited from [http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/era-net-in-horizon-2020\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/era-net-in-horizon-2020_en.html)

## 2 Workshop and Method

### 2.1 LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®

The workshop used the well-established creativity method LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® to visualize ideas and to facilitate fruitful communication. The goal was to utilize the expertise of each participant individually and in a group, pushing the discussion out of the box and allowing for a serious playful atmosphere to talk about the tasks at hand in depth. The creativity format designed for this workshop is based upon three main principles:

First principle: **BUILDING** is a genuinely creative process which has a special power to enable the expression of individual thoughts and ideas in an intense way. Using LEGO® bricks and parts allows to design a three dimensional model in an almost path free way. This kind of process - building models - is very well qualified for creative collaboration, which not many methods are suitable for. Great ideas often emerge from the exchange between people (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Creative collaboration at the Platform2-workshop using LEGO

The neurophysiological phenomenon behind the method is the very strong hand-mind/mind-hand connection. The hand as the single most powerful characteristic of the human body plays an important role in the way we think. This allows for a “thinking with the hands”-action mode. Using the hands on constructing models improves the imagination and innovation potential of the participants. This creative, reflective process of making allows the brain to work in a different way and thereby unlock new perspectives. It provides a dynamic source of inspiration and reflection for the participants during the construction time and also afterwards by discussing the model.

Second principle: the **MODEL** is a physical, touchable result. By this the ideas, thoughts or emotions which guided the making become more real than with most other technique, e.g. mindmaps, flipchart writings could be achieved. The model as an outcome has a more distinct design process and there is in general a higher level of identification by the creators. Therefore the model is a “real” illustration and a cluster of metaphors of the story which is told by the creator.

Third principle: the **STORY**, narrative power and documentation. Before each model is presented to the other participants by its creator a “story card” has to be filled out (see Figure 2). On this card the model gets a fancy name for better remembering, it is then pitched in one sentence and at last described in more detail using guiding questions. With this story card the living model, the ideas behind it and the meaning of the single parts are transformed into a narration. Using a common story framework for all models helps to better understand the differences and the shared ideas and makes it easier to listen to the story of the other participants. Additionally the story card facilitates the documentation afterwards.

Schiphol, Amsterdam 2015/03/27		Collaboration between Member States <b>Optimizing</b>	PLATFORM2
1. Give your model a fancy name!			
2. Concerning which challenge?			
3. What is the story behind your model?			
** Describe in one sentence what your model means. ** What do the parts of the model represent? How are they linked? ** ** What ideas have guided your model-building? ** Do any of the parts represent time/dynamics, emotions or moods? ** ...			

Figure 2: Story card for recording the ideas.

## 2.2 Agenda and workflow

Originally two creative sessions build upon each other were planned, accompanied by an introductory talk from the European Commission and an outlook by the Task leader. The first building session was designed to create individual models by each participant. The given task was the identification of one or more challenges in the current forms of collaboration between the Member States. In the second building session it was planned to ask the participants at each table to make a shared model addressing one of the challenges identified previously.

However, a major power failure in the Western part of The Netherlands completely mixed up the schedule and necessitated spontaneous adaptations. Due to the consequences of the power failure some people could not attend the workshop at all and approximately half of the participants arrived with a delay of more than two hours.

With only half of the invited guests and without any key note talk the morning session was spontaneously and professionally handled by Casper Zulim de Swarte from the Netherlands Ministry of Economic Affairs. He presented the new instruments of the European Commission: the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) and European Joint Programme Cofund (EJP) which were accompanied by vivid discussions. From the participants perspectives especially the FPA does not address the main challenge, e.g. that there are too many and partly too small ERA-Nets. In agreement the experts found the FPA in its current planning status premature. The need of further work on this instrument was seen and was described in a policy brief to the EC afterwards.

During lunch several other participants managed to arrive at the venue so that in the afternoon session the second part of the LEGO-workshop could be held.

## 3 Results

Three groups built shared models each tackling one major challenge in current forms of collaboration between the Member States. The challenges were identified in the morning discussions or during the building session. The three selected challenges are:

1. Strengthening coordination and cooperation between Member States and Associated States to achieve research for addressing societal challenges
2. How and who should plan for the topics
3. Inclusiveness in planning, funding and performance

All three models, each addressing one challenge, will be described in the next chapters.

### 3.1 Sustainable Arc for Europe

*“Working together for building arches and bridges for better mutual understanding to find solutions and tipping power toward Member States”*

The model of the first group addressed the challenge of how to strengthen coordination and cooperation between Member States and Associated States to achieve research for addressing societal challenges.

The team sees several obstacles and black spots in the cooperation between the European Commission and the Member States. They represent two very different worlds which are represented by two different models connected via several bridges.

There is an imbalance between the ruling power (residing within the European Commission) and the main financial contributors (the Member States). Therefore it is a common wish among the team to intensify the influence in Brussels in a constructive way and “tame” the shark (i.e. the decisions on new instruments made by the European Commission). This can only be done together, and therefore bridges and arches are the dominant vision in this model. Key persons, capable of taming the shark, are needed on the arches and bridges to serve as interfaces, channeling the collective interests of the Member States towards the European Commission and vice versa. These key persons shall help to create opportunities for the Member States and shall be backed by them.

Bridges and arches are also needed among the Member States to better combine their strength and ensure the directed flow of information. Currently committee members - the transparent heads in the model - not always have sufficient knowledge of or experience with national funding strategies, goals and national interests. These information channels need to be secured, optimised and better coordinated, i.e. the committee members have to be well informed about national interests and the Member States should better coordinate their actions - building bridges - towards the European Commission and among themselves. Some of the existing bridges and arches are fragile and have to be reinforced for better mutual understanding and exploring the diverse possibilities of all the different bridges. One major goal shared throughout Europe is the transfer and dissemination of knowledge and especially its direct benefit for the European society. A good way to ensure this is the continuously adapted and improved exchange of information between the Members States. Figure 4 and 5 illustrate the model.



Figure 3: Group one


Schiphol, Amsterdam 2015/03/27	Collaboration between Member States <h2 style="margin: 0;">Optimizing</h2>	
1. Give your model a fancy name!		
Sustainable Arc for Europe		
2. Concerning which challenge?		
Strengthening coordination and cooperation between member states and associate countries to achieve research for adressing societal challenges.		
3. What is the story behind your model?		
++ Describe in one sentence what your model means. ++ What do the parts of the model represent? How are they linked? ++ ++ What ideas have guided your model-building? ++ Do any of the parts represent time/dynamics, emotions or moods? ++ ...		
Working together for building arches and bridges for better mutual understanding to find solutions and tipping power toward memberstates.		
On one site , the European Commission, with the tiger represents the mighty power of the European Commission in deciding research areas and the adequate instruments. The shark is a metaphor for the decisions about new instruments. The shark is covered by the net – which is on intention to influence the instruments and ideas of the European Commission – via the tamer – who will take the closer cooperation and collaboration between the member states. These are represented by the circle of people in the member states working together. The Group should organise their own communities to strengthen national ownership, which are represented by the transparent heads.		
The ultimate outcome is knowledge generation, which is represents by the tower with the wise owl, to meet social challenges. The knowledge has to be disseminated (represented by the propellers) to the European society (which are the people on the island next to the twoer) and give some benefit, which is shwon by the delicious cake.		
The key aspect is an improved communication and an augmented exchange of informations which are represented by the variety of tubes connecting the memberstates.		
The goal is to reinforce the bridges (there are some, but some are fragile) for a better mutual understanding about challenges and instruments. This is the best way to go forward. That means to bring knowledge to a wider audience (on the bridge).		
And to open windows of oportunites via the shark tamer.		

Figure 4: Filled story card for the „Sustainable Arc for Europe“



Figure 5: The model “Sustainable Arc for Europe”



### 3.2 The Elephant, the Turtle and the Monkey

*“Competition and Wisdom of the selector(s) and rules of the competition”*

The second group discussed the important question how and who should plan for the topics that really matters to the European Union.

Currently the Member States are discussing and competing with each other and with the experts on what topics should be tackled in ERA-NET COFUNDS. This procedure does not ensure the best topics for Europe to be selected because much energy is lost to the competition against each other. Furthermore, the selection process is not always straight forward and transparent.



Figure 6: Group two

It should be focused on the mass benefit – represented by the figure with the magnifying glass on the top of the elephant – but on the other hand, the elephant could be the one in the china shop and can breaking everything; but that’s another story.

To optimise the discussion and selection of highly relevant topics the participants envisioned a wise man with great overview (symbolised by an all seeing magician on a tower in the model). The decision makers should have a very good overview of EU-relevant topics, their possible impact and best funding opportunities alike. They have to be very well informed to come to a knowledge-based topic selection, focusing on mass benefit for Europe and avoid reinvention.

The European Commission combines and watches over major parts of the EU-funding excluding some scattered funding. However, the participants stated that the European Commission, who is guarding the money, works very slowly (symbolised by a turtle in the model) with time consuming procedures. The whole process of identifying and selecting the right topics should be much leaner. Proactive planning in e.g. programs could be one part of the solution but requires basic network funded central meetings and alignments with H2020 calls.

Optimising the current systems also means including all those stakeholders, e.g. European funders, scientists and others, who are not yet participating in the EU-funding schemes. They stand aside and observing the topics, the funding and its impact. They are described as non-productive and should be involved or get themselves involved (represented by the monkey and the skeleton).

A central role in the model plays the person of Joerg Niehoff, shielded from the rest of the commission (represented by the wizard with the black hat behind the shield on the corner), since he is inventing and developing new instruments for the European Commission like the FPA.

And there are important people organising the platform and keep the “machinery of the ERA-NETs” running – represented by the figures with the tools and the machine with the connected gearwheels.

The vehicle/ the car is symbolising the high finance and the industry having the “real” money and can cruise and pace cross the system. Figure 7 and Figure 8 illustrate the model.


Schiphol, Amsterdam 2015/03/27	Collaboration between Member States <h2 style="margin: 0;">Optimizing</h2>	
1. Give your model a fancy name! The Elephant, the Turtle and the Monkey		
2. Concerning which challenge? How and who should plan for the topics that really matters in the EU		
3. What is the story behind your model? ++ Describe in one sentence what your model means. ++ What do the parts of the model represent? How are they linked? ++ ++ What ideas have guided your model-building? ++ Do any of the parts represent time/dynamics, emotions or moods? ++ ...		
Competition and wisdom of the selector(s) and rules of the competition Part 1 = scientists planning their projects (red figures) Part 2 = funding agencies (blue figures) Part 3 = working guys (in labs and call secretaries) Joerg Niehoff: the wizard with the black hat behind the shield on the corner EC guards the money and has slow processes (the turtle) Part 4 = non participants – no welfare – the monkeys The wise guy; G.O.D. Ground Overall Decision, handing over the prize The Elephant = Focus on mass benefit for Europe Part 5 = High finance, banking and industry, the real money and power		

Figure 7: Filled story card for the model: „The Elephant, the Turtle and the Monkey

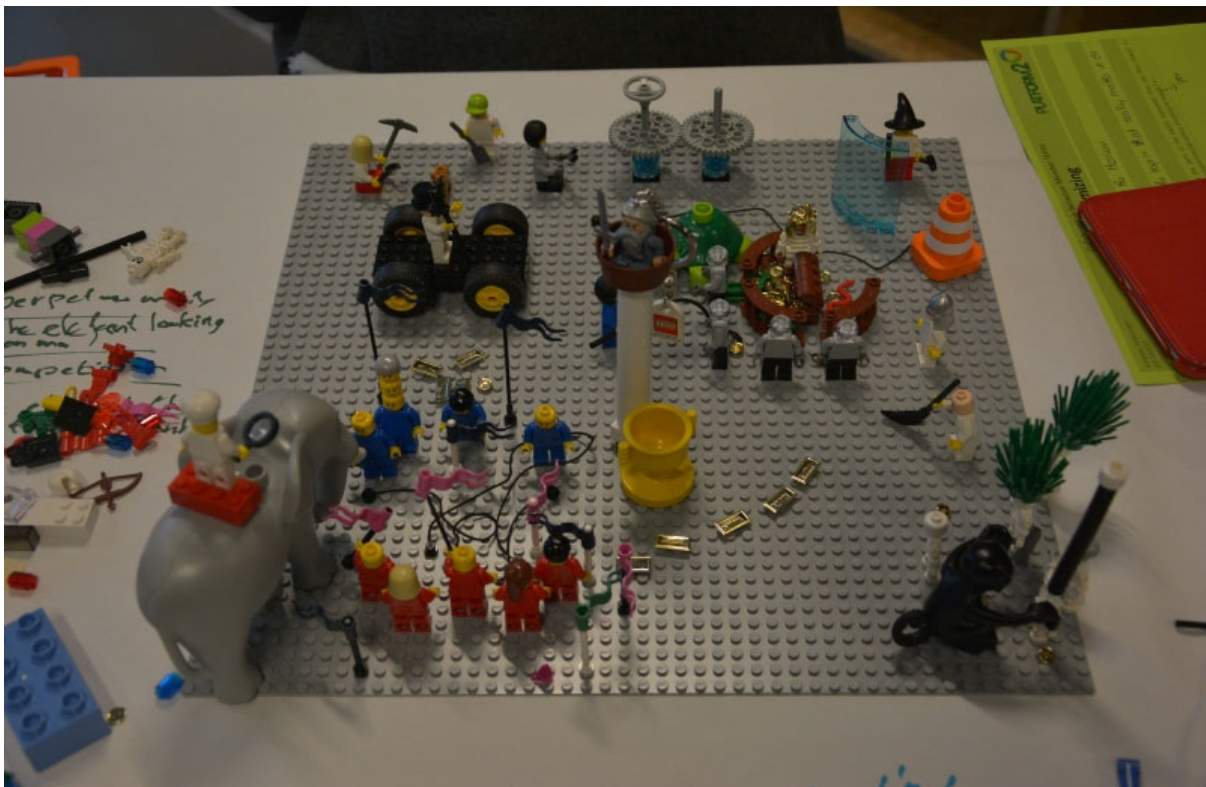


Figure 8: The model: „The Elephant, the Turtle and the Monkey“

### 3.3 Let´party

*“Inclusiveness in planning, funding and performance”*

The third group identified another main challenge: how to attract funders and funding agencies and how to get them to participate.

The participants visualised the current scheme with a central structural element consisting of the common or shared pot surrounded by funders, scientists and others. Associated 3<sup>rd</sup> parties are connected to this system via bridges. There are already several bridges but more have to be built to facilitate the participation of others. For example some countries are already involved e.g. in ERA NET activities but others are not. Especially smaller countries should be motivated to get (more) involved and get an easier access – metaphoric by new bridges.



Figure 9: Group three (left side at the table) and group two (right side of the table)

All the stakeholders are coming from different directions, e.g. different backgrounds or cultures but facing all the same center. There are also funders and interest groups which are not yet participating but coming close, e.g. as observers. Several obstacles block the paths, some of which can be overcome and others not. But including the “outsiders” and come up with new kinds of motivations takes some time but has to be guided as well.

The funded or to be funded topics are clustered but some are scattered, like zoonosis or plant research. The general idea behind this model was the common interest in doing it together resulting in the memorable name “let’s party” and give the opportunity to choose how and when to participate on every single “dancefloor”.


Schiphol, Amsterdam 2015/03/27	Collaboration between Member States <h2 style="margin: 0;">Optimizing</h2>	
1. Give your model a fancy name!		
Let`s party!		
2. Concerning which challenge?		
Inclusiveness in planning, funding, performance		
3. What is the story behind your model?		
++ Describe in one sentence what your model means. ++ What do the parts of the model represent? How are they linked? ++ ++ What ideas have guided your model-building? ++ Do any of the parts represent time/dynamics, emotions or moods? ++ ...		
1) Let`s party in a common interest in doing it together 2) Center: infrastructure, common/shared pot of money; funder around the center facing the center, associated / bridges: 3 <sup>rd</sup> party countries scattered: topics (zoonosis / plant research) in different areas and people around it some obstacles / with or without bridges: can be overcome (or not) some researchers (in an ivory tower) 3) People come from different directions and face the same center bridges are built to include as many as possible 4) Some “outsiders” already came close, others are still far apart the whole process (getting together) takes time		

Figure 3: Filled story card for the model: „Let`s party!“



Figure 4: The model: „Let`s party!“

## 4 Outlook

Some points were discussed in each of the groups and can be assumed to be central challenges:

- The communication between the Member States is not always and in all directions efficient and fruitful. Therefore a better mutual understanding about challenges and instruments is desired from all sides. Too many players lack of a good overview of the available funding instruments and possibilities. The big picture is not seen.
- Use and canalize the power of teamwork to help establish mutual goals, topics etc.
- Augment the national information flow from the scientific community to the ones in the different committees and therefore closer to the decision makers.
- There is a strong need for a better (wiser) decision making, i.e. choosing the topics, instruments etc. Unfortunately an easy solution to this challenge could not be identified
- Raising enough money for the management like networking, communication, etc. can be crucial for the success e.g. of the higher goal.
- Focus on societal benefits for the member states
- Speed up administrative processes



Figure 12: LEGO Outlook

PLATFORM brings together ERA-NETs in the area of the Bioeconomy with the following objectives: to increase collaboration among actors, to foster inclusiveness, to increase capacities for efficient and effective ERA-NETs, and to inform research policy making.

PLATFORM will further strengthen mutual learning, maximise synergies and increase coordination. The first workshop of PLATFORM-2 focused on sustainable and alternative models for cooperation between public research programmes. Topics of debate were the new instruments the Commission proposes to introduce in the 2016-2017 work programme of Societal Challenge 2, the main challenges, and improved schemes for collaboration between Member States. The main conclusions of the workshop were offered to the Commission for further developing new instruments, e.g. the FAP and EJP.

## Appendix 1: Agenda PLATFORM Workshop 'Think Back, Act Forward' March 27th 2015 at Schiphol, The Netherlands

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10:30	Registration (coffee, tea, cookies...) Participants are randomly assigned to the tables.
10:45	Welcome by PLATFORM2 coordinator (Christine Bunthof, PLATFORM2)
10:50	Introductory talk (Joerg Niehoff, EC, via Skype from Brussels)
11:45	Introduction to the method (Veit Klimpel, PtJ)
12:00	First task – building individual metaphoric models Participants have 20 minutes to build an individual model to visualize their answer and 10 minutes to write down a short story of their model, the idea behind, essential elements and name their model (structured short story telling) on a story card <u>What are the main challenge(s)/problem(s) for collaboration between the Member States?</u> Each participant will present his/her model and the idea behind to the group at his/her table. The group reflects in a discussion, moderately steered by the facilitator, on the identified challenges in transnational cooperation.
13:00	Lunch break with a mix of tapas
13:30	Second task – building shared models The same groups at the tables are now asked to build a shared model of an <u>optimised scheme for collaboration between the Member States addressing one of the challenges previously identified</u> . Statement preparation (short written statement and model-name on the story card) Choosing one presenter per group.
14:30	Presentation of the group results and discussion (one presenter per group, alternating between tables)
15:15	Outlook (Annette Kremser, PtJ)
15:30	End of workshop (farewell coffee and sweets)

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## Appendix 2: Lists of Participants of the PLATFORM Workshop 'Think Back, Act Forward' March 27th 2015 at Schiphol, The Netherlands

Name	Organisation/network
<b>Inge Arent</b>	IWT, BE ERA-MBT
<b>Ulla Bertelsen</b>	ICROFS, DK CORE ORGANIC, PLATFORM2
<b>Matté Brijder</b>	RVO, NL ERA-NET Bioenergy, PLATFORM2
<b>Christine Bunthof</b>	Wageningen UR, NL PLATFORM2, FACCE-JPI
<b>Dominique Darmendrail</b>	ANR, FR Water JPI, WaterWorks
<b>Fokke de Jong</b>	Wageningen UR, NL PLATFORM Office
<b>Niels Gøtke</b>	DASTI, DK ICT-AGRI, FACCE-JPI, PLATFORM2
<b>Martin Greimel</b>	BMLFUW, AT SUMFOREST, PLATFORM2
<b>Vera Grimm</b>	PtJ, DE
<b>Marion Karrasch</b>	PtJ, DE ERA SYN BIO
<b>Peter Keet</b>	Ministry EZ, NL GPC
<b>Veit Klimpel</b>	PtJ, DE
<b>Annette Kremser</b>	PtJ, DE ERA-SysBio, PLATFORM2
<b>Kees Kwant</b>	RVO, NL ERA-NET Bioenergy, PLATFORM2
<b>Stefan Lampel</b>	PtJ, DE PLATFORM2
<b>Heather McKhann</b>	INRA, FR FACCE-JPI, PLATFORM2 EAG
<b>Ino Ostendorf</b>	Ministry EZ, NL Oceans JPI, SUSFOOD, PLATFORM2
<b>Iver Thyssen</b>	IFD, DK ICT-AGRI, PLATFORM2
<b>Kim Turk</b>	MIZS, SI / MBT, WWNET+, ARIMNET 2, SUSFOOD, ERASynBio, PLATFORM2
<b>Philipp von Bothmer</b>	FNR, DE ERA-IB, PLATFORM2
<b>Paul Wiley</b>	BBSRC, UK ERA CAPS
<b>Casper Zulim de Swarte</b>	Ministry EZ, NL PLATFORM2