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Final Report

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1 Final Publishable Summary Report

1.1 Executive Summary

ERA-CAPS is the ERA-Net for Coordinating Action in Plant Sciences. It brings together 25 partner organisations from 22 different countries under the ambition to strengthen the European Research Area for molecular plant science, whilst expanding it to include countries beyond Europe. Among other activities, ERA-CAPS launched two joint calls open to all molecular plant science resulting in 26 transnational projects receiving €42M of research funding.

In the initial stages of ERA-CAPS, there was an intensive process of information exchange between partners and integration of the new members of ERA-CAPS who had not been part of the previous ERA-Net on Plant Genomics (ERA-PG). This culminated in the 1st Strategic Workshop where partner organisations agreed on a common agenda and a shared vision for the network.

A website was developed to facilitate awareness of the ERA-Net and disseminate key information and news. It also provides a partnering tool to bring together researchers before applying for calls. Also developed was a public Plant Science Database. This contains data from the partner countries and will help to promote collaborations within the plant science community.

Further work to increase the visibility of the network has involved developing close relationships with other organisations and networks. In particular, ERA-CAPS works closely with FACCE-JPI, EPSO, PLATFORM, PLANT-KBBE, the International Steering Committee for Plant Genomics and the Global Plant Council. ERA-CAPS has published two articles in Pan European Networks, issued five newsletters, contributed articles to the EPSO newsletter and participated in international conferences.

The two transnational calls for collaborative research proposals are major outputs of ERA-CAPS. Both calls were broad and open to any molecular plant science application. Four themes were highlighted in the call: Food Security, Non-Food Crops, Adaptation to a Changing Climate, and Biotic/Abiotic Stresses. The first call attracted commitments of over €20M from 15 countries and resulted in 14 research projects being funded. The second joint call saw initial funding commitments of approx. €22M from 17 countries. Twelve top-ranked projects were funded.

Efforts have been made to support the plant science community in other ways. IPR guidelines and templates have been prepared to advise ERA-CAPS research projects. A data Sharing Policy has been developed to maximise impact from the ERA-CAPS research projects. An expert working group has developed a roadmap identifying issues in data management and data standards within plant science, and providing recommendations to address these. Three grant holders' workshops have been organised: one for ERA-PG and two for projects funded through the ERA-CAPS calls.

Evaluations have been performed on both the ERA-PG programme and the ERA-CAPS call procedures. The ERA-PG evaluation confirmed the importance of the programme in performing high quality research in plant sciences in Europe, and highlighted the added value for scientists participating in the programme. The ERA-CAPS evaluation demonstrated that the calls were efficient and well received by the community; it also highlighted areas that could be improved in future calls.

There is a strong desire both from the plant science community and ERA-CAPS partners for the network to continue after the funding from the European Commission ends. Several ERA-CAPS partners will continue the network with the ambition to hold a further call in 2016. The self-sustained network is facilitated by a Memorandum of Understanding and Terms of Reference agreed by the partner organisations.

1.2 Summary description of project context and objectives

Project Context

Plant sciences face important challenges at the European and global scale due to a burgeoning world population that requires sustenance. Reliable production of high-quality and safe food, feed and renewable Carbon supplies for green chemistry, without the use of excess land, energy, water, pesticides and chemicals is therefore essential.

To ensure that we have the scientific understanding to again revolutionise agricultural capabilities to deliver higher yields with lower inputs in a changing climate, we have formed a network focusing on Coordinating Action in Plant Sciences (ERA-CAPS). This unites the scientific and economic capabilities of member states and enables the coordination of sustainable transnational plant science research programmes.

ERA-PG (2004-2009) successfully initiated a programme to structure the scientific and technological basis for plant genomics programmes in Europe. This has fostered the development of the common knowledge base necessary to build coherent transnational policy frameworks. However, if transnational cooperation and resolute mutual goals in the plant sciences are to be firmly embedded in national policies and processes, these foundations must be strengthened and expanded.

To bring this about, ERA-CAPS pursues the development of a common agenda for plant science in Europe and create a joint research programme. ERA-CAPS facilitates data management, access and sharing solutions. Through external engagement ERA-CAPS enables interaction between researchers, funders and relevant European initiatives, and assists in the systematic exchange of information to facilitate the expansion of the network and the involvement of new members and affiliates.

Such a network significantly helps plant sciences address both current and future challenges in food and non-food crop production.

Project Objectives

The long term objective of ERA-CAPS is to promote sustainable collaboration in plant sciences through coordinating and funding excellent transnational research. ERA-CAPS pursued six major interlinked objectives, each addressed by a work package (WP). Key to achieving the ambition of joint programming was the development of a common agenda and shared vision and a means of implementing it (WP1). To facilitate the expansion of the network and the involvement of new members in particular, we have undertaken activities to assist the systematic exchange of information and best practices and the definition and preparation of joint activities (WP2). Furthermore, we have implemented a joint research programme incorporating two joint calls (WP3) where we have actively encouraged involvement of new member countries. Integral to maximising the impact of ERA-CAPS were external engagement and data management to promote and enable interaction between researchers and between other European and Global initiatives (WP4). It was essential for ERA-CAPS to investigate mechanisms to enable the network to

become self-sustaining (WP5). Effective coordination, communication and outreach is crucial to the impact of any ERA-NET, this function was met by WP6. Finally, efficient programme management to enable the smooth running of the programme was contained within WP7.

Address of the Project Public Website

www.eracaps.org

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1.3 Description of the Main S&T results/foreground

1.3.1 Work Package 1: Developing a Common Agenda

Work Package leader: BBSRC. All partners involved in implementation.

WP1: Objective and Introduction

WP1: To develop a common agenda and shared vision for plant science research across the European Research Area.

Through information gathering and communication between the partner organisations that make up the ERA-CAPS consortium, and through a dedicated Strategic Workshop held in June 2012, a common agenda and shared vision has been established. This has driven the scope of the two joint calls that ERA-CAPS has launched.

WP1: Tasks

Task 1.1: *National Programmes Content and Strategy* (lead: BBSRC)

Part of the work of the ERA-PG (the ERA-Net in Plant Genomics, which preceded ERA-CAPS) was to gather information on the national genomics programmes in their partner countries. Task 1.1 in ERA-CAPS was to update this information for those partners who were common to ERA-PG and ERA-CAPS to include all molecular plant sciences. As the information from ERA-PG was several years old, a complete refresh of the data was completed and combined with Task 2.1 of WP2, the Capacity Survey of partners new to ERA-CAPS. The information gathered was used to identify common areas of research interest amongst the partners, and helped to define the call topics for the first joint call.

The results of this survey were presented at the 1st Strategic Workshop (see Task 1.2), and were reported in Deliverable 1.1.

Task 1.2: *Strategic Workshop 1* (lead: ETAG, assisted by BBSRC)

In order to set the scene for ERA-CAPS, the first Strategic Workshop for ERA-CAPS was held in Tallinn, Estonia in June 2012. The workshop was opened by Maive Rute, Director of the Biotechnologies, Agriculture and Food Directorate, DG Research, European Commission, and included sessions on Integrating New Members (Task 2.4), Common Strategy and Shared Vision (Task 1.4), and initial planning for the First Joint Call.

Task 1.3: *Existing transnational activities* (lead: BBSRC, assisted by F.R.S.-FNRS)

The survey associated with this task coincided with the 2nd Strategic Workshop (held in April 2013). The survey was framed in the context of the development of a self-sustaining network (WP5), and sought to gather information from partners about their experiences of working in transnational programmes (e.g. other ERA-Nets) and to gather early views on the self-sustainability of the ERA-CAPS network, which will feed into WP5. The results of this survey were presented at the 2nd Strategic Workshop in Paris, and are reported in Deliverable 1.1.

Task 1.4: *Developing a shared vision and strategy* (lead: NWO)

Using the information gathered in the other tasks of Work Package 1, in particular through discussions at the 1st Strategic Workshop, a report detailing the partner organisations' vision for ERA-CAPS and the strategy by which this can be achieved was presented in Deliverable 1.2. The report established the ERA-CAPS vision on each of the following: networking of the funding agencies, transnational funding, external engagement, communication, data management and long-term sustainability.

WP1: Deliverables of the Work Package

D1.1 Report documenting current position with respect to transnational collaborations, common goals and tentative roadmap

D1.2 Report focusing on developing a shared vision and strategy:

1.3.2 Work Package 2: Integrating New Members

Work Package Leader: ETAG. Involved participants: F.R.S.-FNRS; DFG; HAS-SEC; LZA; MBIE; NCBiR; MPNTR; MTA-ATK; EPSO; ANR; DBT; MIPAFF; JST; MAFF; NSF

WP2: Objective and Introduction

WP2: To facilitate the integration of new members into ERA-CAPS and provide the infrastructure to continue and expand the collaboration beyond the timeframe of ERA-CAPS.

ERA-CAPS expanded the membership of ERA-PG to include several new member states. These new member states are now fully integrated into ERA-CAPS. This was facilitated by information sharing in the early stages of the project, and through having a dedicated session in the First Strategic Workshop. The majority of the new members committed funds to both joint calls. A partnering tool was set up on the ERA-CAPS website to encourage plant scientists from across all ERA-CAPS partner countries to set up collaborations in advance of the second joint call. In addition to the new members involved from the start of the network, a new Hungarian partner (the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Agricultural Research; MTA-ATK) joined the ERA-CAPS consortium in June 2013 and quickly integrated into the network. In March 2015, MTA-ATK organised an additional Strategic Workshop to help shape the self-sustained ERA-CAPS network (see WP5).

WP2: Tasks

WP2 is divided into four tasks:

Task 2.1: *Capacity survey* (Task leader: LZA, assisted by MPNTR)

To reduce the number of surveys, the National Programmes and Content Survey (Task 1.1) and the Capacity Survey (Task 2.1) were combined into one survey that was sent to all ERA-CAPS partners (rather than two subsets of the consortium: "old" and "new" members). The reports of these tasks were combined in Deliverable 1.1 to give a complete view of the plant science funding landscape in all ERA-CAPS partners

Task 2.2: *Requirements survey* (Task leader: MPNTR, assisted by DFG)

The Requirements Survey was incorporated into the New Members reports during the dedicated session at the First Strategic Workshop (Task 2.4). Overviews of plant science funding organisations from Belgium,

Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, New Zealand, Poland and Serbia were given. Also presented were their responses to Task 2.2, the requirements survey, where they detailed what they offer and hope to gain from their participation in ERA-CAPS. These are detailed in Deliverable 2.2.

Task 2.3: Key facilities and personnel survey (Task leader: ETAG, assisted by MPNTR). Task combined with WP6, Task 6.4.

The data gathered in the task should feed the ERA-CAPS database (Task 6.4). To reduce duplication of effort and to maximise community engagement in the task, it was decided to combine the Key Facilities and Personnel Survey (Task 2.3) and the Database (Task 6.4) into one. Each ERA-CAPS partner has entered information about their own organisation and plant science schemes into the database. Before launching the database publicly, and to establish a core of researchers, the details of applicants to the second ERA-CAPS call were entered into the database. Now that the database is live, ERA-CAPS is publicising it to encourage plant scientists to enter their own data. For further details see Task 6.4.

Task 2.4: Dedicated session within strategic workshop 1 (Task leader: ETAG)

The 1st Strategic Workshop was held in Tallinn, Estonia, on 19-20th June 2012. The meeting was attended by Maive Rute, Director of the Biotechnologies, Agriculture and Food Directorate, DG Research, European Commission. Within the First Strategic Workshop (Task 1.2) the dedicated session for the new members of ERA-CAPS (Task 2.4) was held. This session reported the results of Tasks 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.

WP2: Deliverables

D2.1 New members meeting report: Survey results and common agenda.

D2.2 New members' requirements survey.

1.3.3 Work Package 3: Transnational Research Programme

Work Package Leader: DFG. All partners and call participants involved in implementation.

WP3: Objectives and Introduction

- **Promote cutting-edge research in the plant sciences through funding of transnational collaborations of the best scientists, by launching two joint ERA-CAPS calls, and thereby preparing the ground for future joint calls of ERA-CAPS partners.**
- **Continue to develop the framework for joint calls (i.e. funding modalities, legal and IPR requirements, etc.).**
- **Evaluate the impact and added value of the two ERA-PG calls, and the response to the two ERA-CAPS calls.**

In order to expand the European Research Area in Molecular Plant Sciences, ERA-CAPS launched two joint calls, leading to 26 transnational projects worth €42M of funding. More than 1000 researchers from 30 different countries (including eight non-European) were mobilised as call applicants.

The first joint call was launched in 2012 with 14 collaborative research projects being funded from 110 applications, totalling €21M distributed to the projects. At the outset of the call, 16 organisations from 15 countries committed funding, with the involvement of the National Science Foundation (USA) via a parallel call. The second joint call was launched in 2014. It received 142 eligible applications, of which 62 were

invited to submit full proposals. Eighteen organisations from 17 countries took part in the call, with NSF participating as a full partner. The twelve top-ranked projects, totalling approx. €20M, were funded and will start mid-2015.

The framework for joint calls has been established with updated call procedures, and legal and IPR guidelines for applicants; call processes were closely reviewed in light of the need for streamlined processes in a self-sustained network. A set of documents including Guidelines for Application and Evaluation & Selection have been developed together with the templates for submission and evaluation, timeline and financial overview sheet for funding recommendations and decision making. In order to monitor the progress and potential deviations from the original research plans of the funded projects a schedule for mid-term and end-term reporting has been developed. Progress in the achievements of milestones and objectives will be monitored as well as dissemination activities. The ERA-CAPS Scientific Advisory Body will assess the reports and will be asked for feedback how to improve the output and impact of the ERA-CAPS Programme.

The evaluation of ERA-PG calls has been completed, demonstrating strong support for the ERA-Net mechanism for funding among the community, and the benefits of supporting collaborative, multinational research projects. An evaluation of the ERA-CAPS calls showed that the two calls were well-received by the applicants and that they were implemented well. Feedback from the evaluation will influence how future calls in the self-sustained ERA-CAPS network will operate.

WP3: Tasks

Task 3.1: *Information exchange on call procedures* (lead: ETAG, assisted by DFG)

A questionnaire was sent out to the ERA-CAPS members with all relevant call documents from the second ERA-PG call attached. New ERA-CAPS members were asked for feedback as to whether any of the described procedures and rules would clash with national regulations or might generate any other difficulty, and whether they would like to suggest any changes to the procedure and rules applied previously by ERA-PG. Those ERA-CAPS members who had participated in one or both of the joint calls of ERA-PG were provided with the chance to update information, and/or comment about preferences for specific procedures.

The results of the questionnaire were gathered in a report provided in deliverable 3.1 *Summary of feedback from the new ERA-CAPS members to the 2nd ERA-PG call documents* (lead: ETAG). This was then used as one of the inputs for the preparation of the 1st ERA-CAPS Call (task 3.2). In general, while a lot of constructive feedback could be obtained on the call procedures to be employed and the call documents to be prepared, no major hurdles were identified by the ERA-CAPS members for joining the call other than the very obvious issue of budget availability.

Task 3.2: *The first ERA-CAPS Call* (lead: DFG)

Information gathered from task 3.1 as well from tasks 1.1, 2.1, 2.2 and from the Final ERA-PG Grant-holders' Workshop (Task 3.4) was all fed into the design of the first joint Call of ERA-CAPS. A first point of integration of the available information and for further discussion of open questions concerning the planned joint Call was at the First Strategic Workshop of ERA-CAPS in Tallinn in June 2012. Agreement was reached about the general outline of the call, about a one-stage submission procedure to be used, and

about an adjusted time line for the call, aiming for a launch of the call in autumn 2012. Call topics would be broad and inclusive, and financing of the call would follow a virtual common pot model.

A Call Secretariat and a team of National Call Coordinators were installed by September 2012.

The **Call preannouncement** was published on the ERA-CAPS website on **20 September, 2012**.

Final preparations for the launch of the call were discussed at the ERA-CAPS Management Board meeting and ERA-CAPS High Level Group meeting in October 2012 in Bonn (see Work Package 7 for descriptions of the Management Board and High Level Group). Major call documents like the Call Notice, content of the National Annexes to the Call Notice and further procedural details were discussed and agreed upon.

The **1st ERA-CAPS Call** was **launched on 19 November, 2012**. In total, **16 ERA-CAPS partner organisations** or ERA-CAPS associated organisations **from 15 countries** participated in the first call: Austria (FWF), Belgium (F.R.S.-FNRS), Denmark (DASTI), France (INRA), Germany (DFG), Israel (MOARD), Latvia (LZA), The Netherlands (NWO), New Zealand (MBIE), Norway (RCN), Poland (NCBiR), Portugal (FCT), Serbia (MPNTR), and United Kingdom (BBSRC), and two Irish organisations, DAFM and Teagasc. In order to provide an opportunity for joint projects of ERA-CAPS consortia and US scientists, the National Science Foundation (USA) opened their annual national Plant Genome Research Program Call for joint applications. A Memorandum of Understanding was being prepared between ERA-CAPS (represented by BBSRC, as coordinator) and NSF to allow the sharing of review materials between the two parallel calls.

The budget commitments amounted to about 20 Mio. € across the participating funding organisations.

Deadline for the submission of joint project proposals was **15 February, 2013**.

At the submission deadline, **110 joint proposals** were received. All of them were eligible and underwent external peer review before being discussed by the First Call Review Panel in August 2013, and by the First Call Moderating Panel of the involved partner organisations in early September 2013. Formal funding decisions were made by the involved partner organisations between September and December 2013.

In total, 14 joint projects were funded, which started from January 2014 onwards. The overall budget granted by the participating funding organisations was ca. 21 Mio €. The first call Grant Holders took part in both the 1st and 2nd ERA-CAPS Grant Holders' Workshops (Rome, June 2014 and Lisbon, May 2015, respectively. See Task 6.2).

Timeline – 1st ERA-CAPS Call:

20 September 2012 – Call Preannouncement
19 November 2012 – Launch of the 1st ERA-CAPS Call
13 December 2012 – Launch of the parallel PGRP Call of the NSF (USA)
15 February 2013 – Submission deadline for the 1st ERA-CAPS Call
13 March 2013 – Submission deadline for the PGRP Call of the NSF (USA)
16 February 2013 – March/April 2013 – General and National eligibility checks
25 April 2013 – Review Panel set up complete (final approval by ERA-CAPS HLG)
May – July 2013 – External Peer Review
21 June – Review Panel for the PGRP Call of the NSF (USA)
16 July – 6 August 2013 – Rebuttal phase
19 – 21 August 2013 – Review Panel meeting (Bad Honnef, Germany)
3 September 2013 – Meeting of the Moderating Panel of funding organisations (Porto Heli, Greece)
5 September 2013 – ERA-CAPS High Level Group approved the final funding recommendations (Porto Heli, Greece)
September – December 2013 – National funding decisions
December 2013/January 2014 – grant letters
From January 2014 – Start of ERA-CAPS projects

The list of funded projects is available at the ERA-CAPS webpages: <http://www.eracaps.org/joint-calls/era-caps-funded-projects>

Task 3.3: *Updating legal and IPR-related documents* (lead: INRA)

Supported by IP experts from a sub-set of the ERA-CAPS partners (the ERA-CAPS IPR working group), the task leaders prepared Intellectual Property Right Conditions guidelines, a Consortium Agreement template (supplemented by Guidelines for Listing Research Background in a Research Collaboration), and a template Material Transfer Agreement. These were initially prepared for the first ERA-CAPS call and updated for the second call. All of these documents were approved by the ERA-CAPS High Level Group and have subsequently been published on the ERA-CAPS website.

Task 3.4: *Final ERA-PG grant holders' workshop and brokerage event* (lead: DFG)

This final workshop for grant holders from the preceding ERA-PG calls was held 28-29 July 2012, in conjunction with the EPSO/FESPB Meeting in Freiburg (Germany). The workshop was also attended by a number of representatives of ERA-CAPS partner organisations (BBSRC/UK, DFG/Germany, MOARD/Israel, NWO/The Netherlands, MINECO/Spain - all previous ERA-PG members, plus NSF/USA).

To this grant holders' workshop, all consortia funded through the ERA-PG Sub Call A (Sub Call focussed on fundamental research) of 2006, or through the ERA-PG Call of 2008, respectively, were invited to send one or more representatives. In agreement with the funding organisations that supported the ERA-PG Sub Call B of 2006 (ANR, France; BMBF/PTJ, Germany; MINECO, Spain; plus FCT/Portugal and BBSRC/UK; supporting Public-Private-Partnerships), the grant holders of Sub Call B were not actively approached about participation in the workshop, as they had been invited in the past to annual Status Seminars in the framework of the on-going PLANT-KBBE funding initiative of the involved funding organisations. Instead, a presentation summarizing the results from ERA-PG Sub Call B and following PLANT-KBBE calls was given at the workshop by Dr Julio Barbas (MINECO, Spain).

The rate of positive responses received from invited ERA-PG grant holders was high. All but one of the funded projects were represented at the workshop, the majority of them by oral presentations of the project results. These presentations were followed by lively and fruitful scientific discussions. The overall impression regarding the scientific output of the projects was very positive. In a separate session on 29 July, the grant holders were asked for feedback regarding the call procedures and overall management of the programme. A short report summarising the output of this open discussion has been prepared. One point that might deserve mentioning here was that applicants, among a lot of useful and mostly positive feedback, expressed some regret that after ERA-PG had formally ceased to exist, no explicit networking activities across the different funded consortia could be supported any more. The exchange of experience and knowledge between projects from seemingly diverse areas of plant science in a rather small, not very formal meeting was a feature especially appreciated about this final grant holders' workshop.

The opportunity of having several ERA-CAPS members and observers present was used for a separate funders' meeting (in conjunction with the ISCPG – International Steering Committee on Plant Genomics) on 30 July 2012. In addition, a data management workshop was organised by ERA-CAPS partner NWO (see task 4.3) on 1 August 2012 in Freiburg.

Task 3.5: Evaluation of the ERA-PG research programme (lead: FCT)

Based on the mid-term and end-term project reports of the consortia funded through ERA-PG and a grant holders' questionnaire, the output and added value of the ERA-PG research programme was evaluated. The results are summarized in a report (see Deliverable 3.4), which highlighted the importance of the ERA-PG grants for the performance of high quality research in plant sciences across Europe, with grant holders pointing to the added value of participating in the programme on a number of levels. These included the formation and continuation of European partnerships, facilitating exchange of data, materials, tools and resources, the use of facilities, and the provision of opportunities for staff training. Moreover, the outcomes produced in the ERA-PG projects had a high impact in Plant Genomics and could not have been achieved on a purely national level.

Task 3.6: The second ERA-CAPS Call (lead: DFG)

The second Call was implemented via a two-stage review procedure, i.e. it included pre-proposals that were reviewed by the review panel, and full proposals that were reviewed both by external reviewers and the review panel. As with the first Call, the Call Secretariat was run by the DFG. Full details of the early stages of the 2nd call were provided in the RP2 periodic report, and are summarised here.

The **Call preannouncement** was published on the ERA-CAPS website on **21st November, 2013**.

<http://www.era-caps.org/news/second-era-caps-joint-call-pre-announced>

The **2nd ERA-CAPS Call** was **launched on 15 January, 2014**. In total, **18 ERA-CAPS partner organisations** or ERA-CAPS associated organisations **from 17 countries** participated in the second call: Austria (FWF), Belgium – Flanders (FWO), Belgium - FWB (F.R.S.-FNRS), Denmark (DASTI/IFD), Estonia (ETAg), Germany (DFG), Hungary (MTA – OTKA), Israel (MOARD), Italy (MIUR), Latvia (LZA), New Zealand (MBIE), Norway (RCN), Poland (NCBiR), Portugal (FCT), Serbia (MPNTR), Switzerland (SNSF), United Kingdom (BBSRC), and USA (NSF). The budget commitments amount to about 22 Mio. € across the participating funding organisations

Deadline for the submission of joint project pre-proposals was **14 March, 2014**. At the submission deadline, **142 pre-proposals** were received, **140** of which could be declared eligible after checking against

both general ERA-CAPS eligibility rules and national eligibility rules. All eligible **pre-proposals** were discussed by the **Review Panel** installed for the second call in May 2014. The panel recommended **62 proposals** to be invited to the full proposal stage.

By the **full proposal deadline (18th July, 2014)**, all **62 invited proposals** were received. These proposals collectively involved 294 teams (21 of them with double or multiple applications) requesting funds from 15 call participating funding organisations in 14 countries; 9 non-funding countries are represented (France, Spain, The Netherlands, Australia, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Finland, Saudi Arabia).

These 62 full proposals subsequently underwent external peer review and were subsequently discussed by a Review Panel in November 2014, and by a **Moderating Panel** of the involved partner organisations on 3rd December, 2014.

Out of the 62 proposals the Review Panel had grouped and ranked, funding was highly recommended for eight proposals ranked A+ and another 21 proposals ranked A. These funding recommendations were further considered by the Moderating Panel composed of representatives of the funding organisations. As a result of this discussion at the Moderating Panel meeting, two consortia were asked to submit revised budgets and accordingly, partially revised workplans in order to enable funding of these projects with the budget available via ERA-CAPS. The review panel re-assessed the revised projects and re-confirmed their position in the ranking list. Following approval of the final funding list by the ERA-CAPS High Level Group in February, the national funding organisations made their final decisions during spring 2015. Eventually, the **12 best ranked proposals** could be **funded** despite the budget constraints in some of the participating countries. The total budget granted for the projects of the second Call amounts to ca. **20 M EUR**.

The 12 funded Collaborative Research Proposals involve 57 research teams (including 5 self-funded teams) plus one industry partner from 15 different countries.

The list of funded projects is available at the ERA-CAPS webpages:

<http://www.era-caps.org/joint-calls/era-caps-funded-projects>

Timeline – 2nd ERA-CAPS Call:

21.11.2013	Pre-announcement of the Call
14.01.2014	Launch of the Call
14.03.14	Closure of the call for pre-proposals
17.3.-01.04.14	Eligibility checks
7.-8.05.14	Review Panel meeting – Preproposals
19.05.14	Invitation full proposals
18.07.14	Closure of the call for full proposals
21.7.-04.08.14	Eligibility checks of additional teams
04.08.-13.10.14	External Peer review
14.-23.10.14	Rebuttal phase
19.-20.11.14	Review Panel meeting- Full proposals
03.12.14	Moderating Panel meeting
15.12.14	First communication of results to applicants
18.02.2015	Approval of funding recommendations by the ERA-CAPS High Level Group
25.03.15	Final communication of the ERA-CAPS decision to the applicants
May - August 2015	Start of the projects

Task 3.7: Evaluation of the ERA-CAPS calls (lead: FCT, assisted by MIUR)

A questionnaire was sent out to successful as well as unsuccessful applicants to the two ERA-CAPS calls, which had been developed based on the respective questionnaire used by ERA-PG. The questionnaire was launched in April 2015, granting three weeks for completion. After compiling the results, FCT presented the outcome of the survey at the second ERA-CAPS Grant Holders Meeting in Lisbon (7-8 May 2015). The overall response rate of 43% was very satisfying, as were the results of the survey in general. The survey showed that the ERA-CAPS calls were well received by the plant science community and were structured and managed well by the Call Secretariat. In particular, there was strong support to keep call topics broad, to retain a two-stage application process and to continue to provide an opportunity to respond to reviewer comments. Areas raised by the respondents that could be improved included reducing the time from call launch to final awarded of grants at the national level, and quality of reviews.

WP3: Deliverables of the Work Package

- D3.1 Summary of feedback from the new ERA-CAPS members to the 2nd ERA-PG call documents
- D3.2 Set of funded ERA-CAPS research projects (first call)
- D3.3 Updated legal and IPR-related documents for use by ERA-CAPS grant holders
- D3.4 Evaluation report on impact/ European added value of ERA-PG
- D3.5 Set of funded ERA-CAPS research projects (second call)
- D3.6 Report of evaluation of ERA-CAPS calls

1.3.4 Work Package 4: External engagement and data management

Work Package Leader: NWO. Partners involved: BBSRC, F.R.S.-FNRS, INRA, DFG, LZA, RCN, FCT

WP4: Objective

WP4: To maximise the efficiency, effect and impact of ERA-CAPS.

Relationships within the ERA-Net and with other relevant organisations and networks were developed in the early stages of the ERA-Net and strengthened throughout the course of the project. This has been through sustained information exchange and cross-representation at relevant meetings, and through the communication activities carried out in Work Package 6.

The impact of the results from research projects funded through ERA-CAPS joint calls will be achieved both through the ERA-CAPS Data Sharing Policy (put into force for the second joint call), and a continued focus on data standards. Ensuring that data generated through ERA-CAPS projects is managed in a way that makes it accessible to and useable by others serves to maximise the impacts of ERA-CAPS research. To further the progress in this area, ERA-CAPS convened an Expert Working Group which has written a paper identifying issues in data standards in the plant sciences, along with recommendations for ERA-CAPS and the plant science community to take forward in its self-sustained phase. These include support for a data standards workshop bringing together key groups and initiatives to identify areas for community-led collaborative working, and a recommendation for ERA-CAPS to provide a mechanism for flagship projects in data standards to be funded.

WP4: Tasks

Task 4.1: *Establish and enhance links with the relevant national European and global initiatives* (lead: LZA, assisted by F.R.S.-FNRS and INRA)

Based on extensive investigations, LZA (Latvia), aided by INRA (France) and F.R.S.-FNRS (Belgium), has compiled and presented a comprehensive overview of organisations and relevant networks with which ERA-CAPS should maintain two-way communication. This was achieved through information exchange directly with these organisations and networks, cross-representation at meetings and workshops, and regular updates at ERA-CAPS Management Board meetings on other networks' activities.

Some of the organisations and networks that ERA-CAPS has developed a close working relationship with include Joint Programming Initiatives (particularly FACCE-JPI), the European Plant Science Organisation (EPSO, an active observer in ERA-CAPS and a key link to the plant science community), the Platform of Knowledge-Based Bioeconomy-Relevant ERA-Nets (PLATFORM; bringing together the coordinators of these ERA-Nets to share best practice), the Transnational Plant Alliance for Novel Technologies (PLANT-KBBE – a sister network to ERA-CAPS), the International Steering Committee on Plant Genomics (ISCPG) and the Global Plant Council and the European Technology Platform “Plants for the Future”, among others.

Task 4.2: *Enhance ERA-CAPS visibility and facilitate information flow* (lead: LZA; assisted by F.R.S.-FNRS and NWO)

The visibility of the network is greatly enhanced by the website developed in WP6; it also provides a means to disseminate information about the network to the wider community. Other mechanisms that have been

used to enhance visibility include press releases, articles in related newsletters and publications (see WP6), and the inclusion of ERA-CAPS on NET-WATCH which provided a powerful means to promote our joint calls. Through involvement in PLATFORM, ERA-CAPS contributed to the promotion of best practice within KBBE ERA-Nets. ERA-CAPS has increased visibility through representation at a number of external meetings and conferences of the plant science community. These have included the UK Plant Science 2012 conference, FESPB/EPSO Plant Biology Congress 2013, Plant and Animal Genomics Conference XXI and XXII, 7th EPSO Conference, ERA-IB Platform meetings, 3rd Bioeconomy Stakeholders' Conference, 9th International Learning Network workshop (where ERA-CAPS was used as an exemplar of international working), and the ETP-Plants for the Future Action Plan Launch.

Task 4.3: *Developing Standards for Research Outputs* (lead: NWO), combined with **Task 4.5: *Exploiting infrastructures*** (lead: RCN, assisted by INRA)

A workshop to start off Task 4.3 was organised in August 2012 in Freiburg at the EPSO/FESPB Plant Biology Congress attended by several scientists involved in data-intensive plant-science research. The feedback and opinions expressed in this workshop will help to shape the outputs of this task. As a result, the 'Description of Work' (DoW) for this task was critically reviewed and restructured (including merging it with Task 4.5) to maximise what could be achieved.

Through a working group of experts, well-connected with the entire community, both tasks 4.3 and 4.5 would be able to consult the community and take a bottom-up approach resulting in a 'Road map' on data management issues in the plant sciences, with proposed solutions and recommendations for the funding agencies that comprise ERA-CAPS and the wider plant science community. In 2014, the ERA-CAPS Expert Working Group on Data Standards, comprising eight experts from six European countries, was established. All members were experts in their own right but also served to link to wider relevant circles. One member, for instance also serves on the ERA-CAPS Scientific Advisory Body. Another member also serves on the 'Heads of Nodes' committee within ELIXIR. Two members serve on the executive board of the Global Plant Council, and two members are former president and vice-president of the European Plant Science Organisation EPSO, etc. The Expert working group held four workshops which resulted in a draft document sent out for consultation to a broad range of molecular plant science representatives. After a fifth workshop to consider the responses to the consultation, the Expert Working Group finalised the roadmap.

The roadmap, highlighting issues in data standards and infrastructures in plant sciences along with proposed solutions and recommendations, was presented to the ERA-CAPS 7th Management Board meeting in May 2015. It was well received by the funding agencies, who concluded:

- Data management remains a subject of interest for ERA-CAPS after the end of the EC-funded phase of the project;
- The proposed 3rd ERA-CAPS call may include a sub-call dedicated to addressing issues regarding data standards and data management in the plant sciences, with a view to have 'flagship projects' in this area;
- ERA-CAPS, including BBSRC and NSF specifically, will support preparing a special workshop during the Plant and Animal Genome conference (PAG XXIV) held in San Diego on January 9-13 2016, to bring together key stakeholders from the plant science community and funding agencies to discuss the issues raised in the roadmap and to initiate joint working to overcome these issues.

Task 4.4: *Sharing and accessing data arising from ERA-CAPS funding* (lead: FCT, assisted by BBSRC, DFG and NWO)

This task aimed to develop a common ERA-CAPS Data Sharing Policy to guide the research projects funded through ERA-CAPS. The task began with a survey of all the partners' data sharing policies. During the Paris 2nd Strategic Workshop in April 2013, the results of the survey were discussed and it was concluded that there would be two main objectives of publishing an ERA-CAPS Data Sharing Policy:

- to capture the principles common to the majority of policies
- to support the development of best practices on issues where common understanding is still lacking.

With these objectives in mind the policy was drafted and sent out among the ERA-CAPS partners for feedback in December 2013. To make sure the policy would reflect the best practices and would be acceptable to all partners, a round table discussion took place during the ERA-CAPS 5th Management Board Meeting in March 2014. The discussion resulted in unanimous agreement, after some minor adjustments of the Policy document. The Data Sharing Policy was implemented for the second joint call (WP3), where applicants were asked to submit a Data Management Plan as part of their application for funding.

At the 2nd Grant Holders' Workshop in Lisbon in May 2015, the successful applicants to the second ERA-CAPS call were asked for their opinions on the Data Sharing Policy, and the requirement to submit a Data Management Plan as part of their application. Despite initial reservations about the additional work required to prepare the plans, the PIs expressed that the requirement for a Data Management Plan proved very useful and suitable to serve as starting point for coming (ERA-CAPS) calls as well.

WP4: Deliverables

D4.1: Increased visibility & integration of ERA-CAPS

D4.2: Roadmap on standards for research output

D4.3: ERA-CAPS data sharing policy

D4.4: Exploiting infrastructures

1.3.5 Work Package 5: Developing a Self-sustaining Network

Work Package Leader: INRA. All partners involved in implementation.

WP5: Objective and Introduction

WP5: To provide a basis by which ERA-CAPS can become a durable self-sustaining network.

WP5 is dedicated to investigating and implementing methods to promote the self-sustainability and continuation of the network outside of the period funded by the EC. The long term aim is to create a durable network of research owners and managers committed to joint coordination of their national programs for plant science research in consideration of both European and global interests. The Work Package began operation with a Strategic Workshop held in April 2013 dedicated to early discussions and plans for becoming a self-sustaining network. An outcome of this Workshop was the development of a Position Paper detailing the need for a self-sustained ERA-CAPS network and the options for how this can

be achieved. Subsequently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Terms of Reference for a self-sustained network have been developed and agreed by the partners wishing to remain in the network. It is planned that the self-sustained network will start on 1st August 2015. The MOU is framed around a self-sustained call to be launched in 2016, but contains work packages led by current partners to ensure that the key functions of the network remain in place (i.e. Coordination, Call Management, Communications, and Monitoring & Evaluation). The call processes have been streamlined to maximise efficiency, whilst remaining flexible to allow new partners to join the call closer to the launch date.

WP5: Tasks

Task 5.1: *Building a Sustainable Collaboration* (lead: INRA, assisted by F.R.S.-FNRS)

Task 5.2: *Second Strategic Workshop: Building a Sustainable Network* (lead: INRA)

These two tasks are closely linked, and are considered together here. The first steps for building a sustainable collaboration consist of getting the partners together to share views and opinions of the options that are available to us for the sustainable continuation of the ERA-CAPS network. To this end, the Second ERA-CAPS Strategic Workshop: “Building a sustainable network” was held at INRA in Paris 11th and 12th of April 2013 (Milestone 5.1) with the aim developing ideas for the self-sustainability of the network. We invited several other networks to the workshop (amongst others, ERA-Nets who are either already or who plan to be self-sustaining) to present ERA-CAPS with their valuable experiences and to contribute to discussions.

A key output of the workshop was a position paper (Deliverable 5.1) targeted to funding organisations and policy makers. It aims, on one hand, to give potential investor or funding agencies the reasons for remaining/becoming involved in the programme after the EC funded phase and, on the other, to provide guiding principles and options for future working.

A Working Group was created in order to come up with solutions to the outstanding issues (i.e. overall coordination, membership administration, etc.). A survey was circulated to ERA-CAPS partners to learn more about their potential involvement/roles in a self-sustaining Network. In parallel, discussions were held with several self-sustained initiatives (ERA-Net BIOENERGY, ASPERA, EuroTransBio, ERA-Chemistry) in order to seek inspiration and learn about best practices which could be applied to the ERA-CAPS programme.

A videoconference was held in January 2015 on the practicalities of a self-sustained network. Discussion within the working group allowed to identify/define the most suitable funding model as well as the overall coordination system for the self-sustained ERA-CAPS network.

Finally, a strategic workshop was held in March 2015 to move forward with a self-sustained initiative. The meeting allowed to get firm commitments from partners in a self-sustained ERA-CAPS network (most of them confirmed their involvement as a partner or an observer) and to distribute tasks among partners as well as to identify the respective leaders. Also it was agreed to have a self-funded joint call in 2016. The remaining tasks were then distributed during the last Management Board meeting in Lisbon in May 2015. At that time, it was agreed that the self-sustained ERA-CAPS would be operational on 1st August 2015.

Task 5.3: *Integrating new ideas and requirements into a flexible call structure* (lead: BBSRC)

Following the end of the EC-funded phase of ERA-CAPS, there is the ambition of the partners to continue to work together to launch joint calls to serve the plant science community. Without the financial support of

an EC grant, it is important that the processes for running a call are streamlined and efficient. To this end, the Task leader firstly held informal discussions with the Call Secretariat about possible mechanisms for a self-sustained call. Having launched two ERA-CAPS joint calls, using one- and two-stage processes, the Call Secretariat has excellent experience of what works well in the context of ERA-CAPS and the expected number of applications that may be received to a future call (142 pre-proposals for the second call).

A teleconference was organised between BBSRC, DFG, FWF, NSF and the Call Secretariat to discuss options and potential mechanisms for future working. DFG volunteered to take on the key role of the Call Secretariat. Several options for the third self-sustained call were discussed (see Deliverable 5.2 for details), but the essential recommendations made to the ERA-CAPS partners were as follows:

- A two-stage application process should be used, as this eases the burden on both the science community (application preparation and peer review) and the Call Secretariat (identifying reviewers)
- The absolute requirement for strong peer review and scientific excellence should be maintained
- Continue to use a Review Panel to select full proposals, followed by a round of external peer review (ideally three reviewed, but at least two), an opportunity for applicant rebuttal, and finally the Review Panel performs the final ranking of full proposals
- Invite back fewer full proposals (45-50, rather than the 62 invited for the second call)
- Reduce the burden on the Call Secretariat by a greater involvement in identifying reviewers by the partner funding agencies
- Payment of Panel Member T&S could be shared between funding agencies

These proposals were accepted by the ERA-CAPS partners at the Strategic Workshop held in March 2015. In order to further streamline the process of future calls, several call templates were produced by the ERA-CAPS Call Coordinator as part of his work during the third reporting period.

Task 5.4: *Developing mechanisms to ensure self-sustainability* (lead: DASTI/IFD)

Task 5.4 aimed to define and implement a model for the continuation of ERA-CAPS in a durable and self-sustainable manner after the ERA-NET and without EU funding. To start the process of defining a model for the continuation of ERA-CAPS without EU funding, a survey was conducted among ERA-CAPS partners to clarify the preferred funding model for a future network and to estimate each partner's expected contribution. A video conference was held in January 2015 in order to discuss the practicalities of the establishment of a self-sustained network. Different models for coordination as well as financing were discussed, and it was agreed to seek inspiration in other similar self-sustained networks.

As a result, a small review was made of the strengths and challenges of different self-sustained networks. This review, along with the survey of partners' expected contribution, was presented to all ERA-CAPS partners during a strategic workshop held in March 2015. Here, it was agreed to move forward with a network financed through in kind contribution from partners. The main structure of the coming network was agreed upon, including work packages and their respective leaders.

Based on the discussions at the strategic workshop, and drawing inspiration from existing documents from ERASynbio, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Terms of Reference were developed. The MoU is the non-legally binding contract between partners in the self-sustained network and outlines the rights and duties of partners and observers. The ToR details the work to be carried out under the self-sustained network and the distribution of tasks among partners.

A main activity to be implemented by the self-sustained network is the launch of a joint call for proposals. Hence, the MoU and ToR covers the period until the end of implementation of a joint call in 2016, with the possibility of extending the cooperation further after this. The content of the MoU and ToR was agreed upon during the ERA-CAPS MB meeting in May 2015 and finalised shortly hereafter.

The MoU has been circulated to partner organisations (Deliverable 5.3) and is to be signed before the end of July 2015. This date has been set taking into consideration the processes of approving such documents in various partner organisations. Consequently, the start date of the self-sustained initiative will be August 1st 2015. The ERA-CAPS Self-sustained Initiative is expected to have at least nine signing partners and eight observer organisations.

WP5: Deliverables

D5.1: Position paper targeted to funding organisations and policy makers setting out guiding principles for future joint working

D5.2: Policy document for flexible call structure

D5.3: Commitment agreement for future joint working

1.3.6 Work Package 6: Coordination, communication and dissemination

Work Package leader: F.R.S.-FNRS. Partners involved: BBSRC, DASTI/IFD, MIUR, FCT

WP6: Objective and Introduction

WP6: To ensure information flow into and out of the consortium and to other stakeholders to maximise the impact of the ERA-CAPS network.

The initial part of this objective was achieved through the development of a dedicated external website and internal extranet for ERA-CAPS, and through internal reporting at Management Board and High Level Group meetings. These continued with regular updates and newsletters on the website (with over 50,000 hits since its launch), along with the addition of a partnering tool to promote collaborations and the production of a booklet to disseminate the achievements of the network. ERA-CAPS has also published two articles in Pan European Networks. The Plant Science Database has been built and is now populated with information about the ERA-CAPS funding partners and details of researchers who applied to the second call. Work will continue beyond the end of the EC-funded phase to promote the database more widely through our website and contacts in relevant organisations and initiatives.

One of the most important groups of ERA-CAPS stakeholders is the grant holders funded through our joint calls. In this reporting period, the second grant holders' workshop was held in Lisbon for projects funded in both ERA-CAPS calls. Bringing the cohort of ERA-CAPS researchers together helps to foster knowledge exchange and promote further collaborations.

WP6: Tasks

Task 6.1 Reporting Requirements (Task leader: BBSRC)

This task is closely linked to the work carried out within Work Package 7 (Management) as it involves the preparation of reports for the Management Board and High Level Group meetings. At each Management Board meeting, the partners were provided with a paper and an oral report updating them on the activities

of the Programme Coordination Office, and progress in each of the Work Packages, Deliverables and Milestones, plus any administrative requirements for EC reporting. Similarly, the High Level Group received updates from the Programme Coordination Office covering progress across the whole network. For both management groups, the details were circulated as part of the minutes after the meetings.

Task 6.2 Organise ERA-PG/ ERA-CAPS Grant Holders' workshops (Task leaders: BBSRC assisted by MIUR and FCT)

For the final ERA-PG Grant Holders' Workshop, see Task 3.4.

In September 2013, two ERA-CAPS management meetings (4th Management Board and 2nd High Level Group meetings) and the Moderating Panel for the 1st Joint Call were held in conjunction with the 7th EPSO Conference in Porto Heli, Greece (Deliverable 6.4). Holding these meetings at a plant science conference increased ERA-CAPS' visibility (through a poster presented at the conference and through direct interactions with researchers) and furthered integration into the plant science community.

The first ERA-CAPS Grant Holders' Workshop was held on 12-13 June 2014 (Deliverable 6.5). The meeting aimed at fostering exchanges among scientists and allowing for mutual exchanges with the funders. The workshop took place at the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research in Rome with 50 delegates in attendance. The event focussed on presentations from ERA-CAPS grant holders, representatives and scientific keynotes. A report has been written on the main outcomes of the workshop. The report, all presentations and workshop documents were made publicly available on the page: <http://www.era-caps.org/news/era-caps-grant-holders-meet-each-other-rome-first-time>

The Second ERA-CAPS Grant Holders' Workshop (Deliverable 6.6) was organised by FCT on 7-8 May in Lisbon. The aim of the workshop was threefold. Firstly, the event gathered the Grant Holders funded through the First ERA-CAPS call and gave them the opportunity to present the first outcomes of their projects. Secondly, the Grant Holders funded through the 2nd ERA-CAPS call were invited to introduce their projects, and thirdly, the Grant Holders were given the opportunity to network with each other and share resources, tools and information. Feedback on the ERA-CAPS calls in terms of procedures and content was also gathered during the workshop from the funded researchers.

Task 6.3 Extranet (Task leader: F.R.S.-FNRS)

From the publicly accessible website (Task 6.6), a Member's Log-in facility was set-up with technical support from a subcontractor. The extranet was first put in place as a secured space for the sharing and storage of internal documents (minutes of meetings, draft reports...). Following several requests by the partners, the functionalities of the extranet were enhanced to include:

- Addition of comments and discussion windows on ERA-CAPS internal documents
- Organisation of events using an interactive calendar and 'doodle like' planning tool
- Organisation of polls
- Automatic notification system to the partners
- Storage of joint call related documents (accessible only to national Call Coordinators)
- Use of ERA-CAPS Extranet as a platform for the second ERA-CAPS Joint Call: pre-proposals uploaded, results eligibility check, reviews and rebuttals, ToR
- Sharing of several internal documents

These functionalities allow for a smooth information exchange between ERA-CAPS full partners and observers a reduction of the volume of e-mails while offering a centralised platform. Moreover, thanks to

the launching of an RSS the partners are automatically notified of any new comment, event or poll. The confidentiality of the extranet has been improved thanks to a more sophisticated access management system. The new system allows the webmaster to individually define access authorisations. There is a technical function allowing Extranet users to directly share their comments regarding specific documents, which was widely used and proved to be useful.

In order to support the intranet users an '*Intranet User Guide*' was created.

Task 6.4 Database (Task leader: DASTI/IFD)

The ERA-CAPS Plant Science Database has been conceived to include: data from member organisations about national funding programmes, the programme owners, capacity and priorities as well as particular resources available in that country, a 'who's who' of the leading scientists and/ or key institutions, and further information about the research currently being supported relevant science base in their country. This information will mainly be collated from tasks in WP1, WP2 and WP4, and directly from the plant science community.

The Plant Science Database is accessible through a link on the ERA-CAPS public website:

<http://www.eracaps.org/plant-science-Database> or directly through the URL: <http://eracaps-psd.org/>

Interested researchers can create a user account in the Database and add their professional profile and keywords for searching by colleagues. The users' email address is never displayed on the website. Contact requests from other users are issued by a form on the website and forwarded to the researcher, who can then choose to answer or neglect the request.

The Database is currently populated with 339 researchers and 394 organisations (735 including faculties and departments) from 24 countries. Among the researchers are 300 who were involved in proposals to ERA-CAPS calls. The researcher data in the Database include name, organisation, Research profile / CV, EPSO keywords, and Own keywords.

Resources are available at Innovation Fund Denmark to keep the Database technically maintained until the end of 2017.

Task 6.5 Website (Task leader: F.R.S.-FNRS)

The publicly accessible website <http://www.eracaps.org> was launched on 3/05/2012. The development of the website was subcontracted to an expert company. The website architecture includes the following sections:

- Home
- About (Partners, Why molecular plant science, Objectives and workplan, Management framework, About ERA-PG)
- Joint Calls (ERA-CAPS calls, ERA-PG funded projects, ERA-CAPS funded projects)
- News and events (News, Newsletter)
- Publications
- Related Initiatives

The website contains all the general information with regards to ERA-CAPS activities, including call documents, national contact persons, news and background.

Besides this more conventional information, the website also offers interactive applications:

- Platform for user interaction (discussion forum)
- Tool for collaboration (search for collaboration)
- Subscription to the newsletter
- Linkage to social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn)

Over the course of the network, the content of the website has been regularly updated and improved with regular news items, newsletters, contact lists, and a Partner Search Tool to facilitate the formation of collaborations for the second joint call.

The website has been successful both in terms of visits (over 50,000 visits since it was launched) and geographical coverage (among top 10 visits per country: 8 Member States + United States and New Zealand).

Figure I and II below give some statistics about the visits to the website:

Figure I: overall page views/visitors

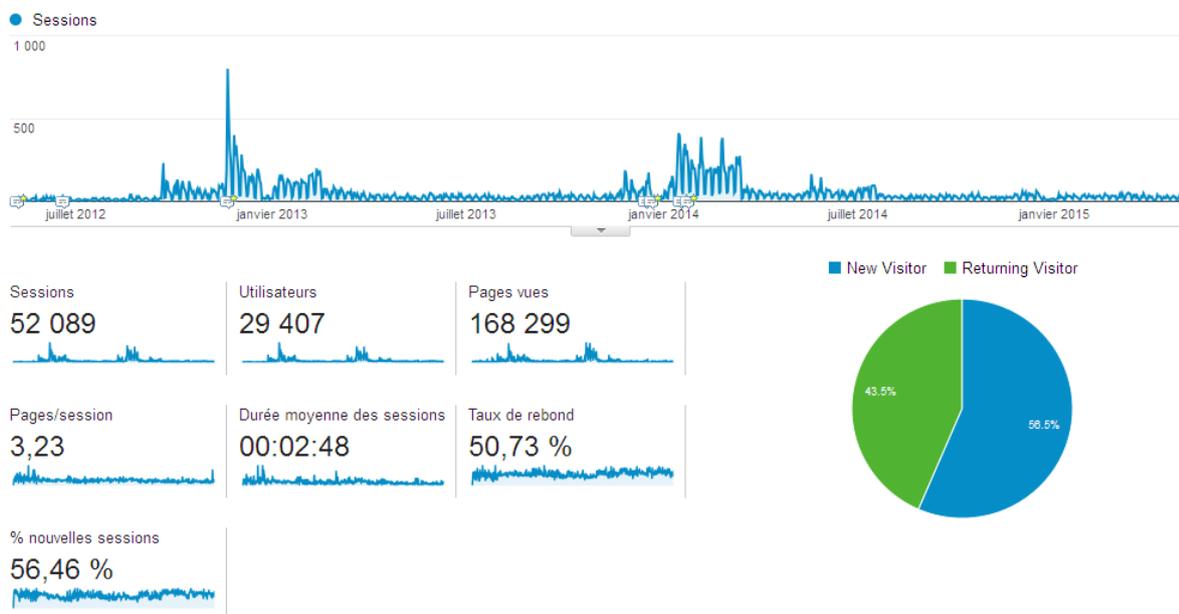


Figure II: page views per country

Pays	Sessions	% Sessions
1.  Germany	7 563	14,52 %
2.  United Kingdom	6 882	13,21 %
3.  France	4 139	7,95 %
4.  Belgium	3 334	6,40 %
5.  Portugal	3 324	6,38 %
6.  Italy	3 241	6,22 %
7.  United States	3 012	5,78 %
8.  Poland	1 960	3,76 %
9.  Austria	1 915	3,68 %
10.  New Zealand	1 593	3,06 %

The members of the ERA-CAPS Network are committed to keeping the ERA-CAPS website live in the coming years.

Task 6.6 Publications (Task leader: F.R.S.-FNRS)

The ERA-CAPS logo and graphic chart were designed with technical support from a subcontractor. Following a poll to all partners, the final logo was selected (Deliverable 6.3). In addition, a standardised slide set has been created and is used by the partners

In order to reach external audiences an information **leaflet** has been prepared and was disseminated through various channels including national and international events. Its content summarises the objectives, activities, partnership and contact information of ERA-CAPS. This document is available to the public at the following address: <http://www.eracaps.org/publications>.

A list of target recipients of the ERA-CAPS **newsletter** was established in order to disseminate up to date information about the activities and results of the programme. This has been achieved through the dissemination of five newsletters.

A **press release** was published on 13/02/2012 to mark the launch of ERA-CAPS. This document is available to the public at the following address: <http://www.eracaps.org/publications>

The press release has been disseminated through various channels including the ERA-CAPS website, ERA-CAPS national partners' websites, a mailing list of network contacts and through other relevant websites, such as the AlphaGalileo news services.

Further promotion of the network has been achieved through a **press release** about the launch of the first joint call, and via **news articles** published in the EPSO newsletter and in GARNish (the newsletter of the UK GARNet network for the Arabidopsis community).

In order to reach external audiences various types of publications were produced:

- Publications of science policy articles:
 - “Essential networks: how the ERA-CAPS Network is promoting sustainable collaboration in plant sciences”, published September 2013: <http://www.paneuropeannetworks.com/science-and-technology.html>
 - “Data sharing for greater impact: outline on how data sharing can help public funding for molecular plant science achieve a greater impact”, published December 2014: <http://www.paneuropeannetworkspublications.com/ST13/files/assets/basic-html/page242.html>
- Poster at EPSO Conference, Porto Heli, September 2013
- Updates on ERA-CAPS activities were included in several EPSO Newsletters: EPSO Newsletter June 2013: ‘ERA-CAPS activities’, EPSO Newsletter November 2013: ‘ERA-CAPS beyond the half-way mark’, June 2014: ‘ERA-CAPS programme attracts researchers from all over the globe’, EPSO Newsletter April 2015:
- A summary booklet was produced on the main outcomes of the programme. The booklet was made available on the ERA-CAPS website in an electronic version (Deliverable 6.8).

Furthermore, ERA-CAPS was included in the publication: “*Bioeconomy ERA-NET Actions European Research Area Networks of the 6th and 7th Framework Programmes*”, Publications Office of the European Union, 2014.

All these publications are available on: <http://www.eracaps.org/era-caps-publications>

WP6: Deliverables

D6.6 Second ERA-CAPS grant holders workshop

D6.7 Updated ERA-CAPS database

D6.8 Programme summary booklet

1.3.7 Work Package 7: Management

Work Package leader: BBSRC

WP7: Objective and Introduction

WP7: To establish an efficient management structure and Programme Coordination Office to enable the smooth-running of the programme and ensure timely completion of the milestones, deliverables and reporting requirements.

The Programme Coordination Office (PCO) established at BBSRC has supported and coordinated the activities of the whole ERA-CAPS network. This has been achieved through regular and open communication with partners, and the organisation of formal Management Board and High Level Group meetings throughout the programme where progress against tasks, deliverables and milestones was reported. All milestones and deliverables have been achieved, reports have been provided to the European Commission, and the Programme Coordination Office will continue to operate into the self-sustained phase of ERA-CAPS.

WP7: Tasks

Task 7.1 Programme Coordination Office (PCO)

In order to facilitate efficient project management for ERA-CAPS, a Programme Coordination Office (PCO) was set up at the coordinating partner's offices (BBSRC) run by a full-time Senior Programme Manager who was employed in January 2012, just prior to the launch meeting. This was shortly followed by the establishment of a clearly defined, two-tier management structure. This comprises a Management Board and a High Level Group.

The Management Board oversaw the progress of the individual tasks and overall work programme, and consisted of the Programme Managers from each of the partners. This board met twice a year at a meeting organised by the PCO and chaired by the Coordinator. The High Level Group met once a year and consisted of high-level representatives from each partner, chaired by the representative from the Coordinating partner, BBSRC. The High Level Group had overall responsibility for taking strategic decisions, monitoring the progress of the programme, and approving high-impact documents and appointments (such as the election of the Scientific Advisory Body, and approval of the joint call Review Panels). Given that most High Level Group members delegated their responsibility for attending meetings to their Management Board member, both groups decided that it would be more time and cost effective to combine the two management levels for High Level Group meetings. The High Level Group continued to have responsibility for approving certain activities within the network, in particular the approval of the list of projects to be funded through the joint calls. Such votes were carried out ad-hoc by email, rather than by convening a meeting.

To provide scientific advice and direction, a Scientific Advisory Body was elected by the High Level Group in October 2012. The twelve-member SAB was elected from nominations of leading plant scientists received from the partner countries. Members of the Scientific Advisory Body attended the Second Strategic Workshop in Paris in April 2013 where they contributed to discussions about ERA-CAPS becoming self-sustaining at the end of the EC-funded phase. One of the key responsibilities of the SAB is to monitor the progress of the projects funded through the joint calls, therefore their formal meetings were held immediately following the two ERA-CAPS Grant Holders' Workshops. This enabled the SAB to engage with the grant holders directly. The SAB were very impressed with the quality of the projects funded in the two calls, and will continue to monitor the projects throughout their duration.

The PCO closely monitored the day-to-day progress of the tasks within the Work Packages, formed good working relationships with each of the partners, and ensured that the Description of Work is followed as closely as possible in order to achieve the objectives of ERA-CAPS. Where necessary, amendments to the Description of Work and the Grant Agreement were negotiated by the PCO with the European Commission. In particular the PCO secured a six-month no-cost extension from the European Commission, which enabled key activities such as the second joint call to achieve maximum impact within the timeframe of the Grant Agreement. Communication between beneficiaries outside of regular meetings was mostly by email, telephone and occasionally video conferencing.

Task 7.2: Consortium Meetings

The PCO organised the following consortium meetings (in collaboration with the hosting partner organisation):

- ERA-CAPS Launch Meeting; London, UK; 30-31 January 2012
- 1st Management Board Meeting; Tallinn, Estonia; 20 June 2012
- 2nd Management Board Meeting; Bonn, Germany; 23 October 2012
- 1st High Level Group Meeting; Bonn, Germany; 24 October 2012
- 3rd Management Board Meeting; Paris, France; 12 April 2013
- 4th Management Board Meeting; Porto Heli, Greece; 3 September 2013
- 2nd High Level Group Meeting; Porto Heli, Greece; 5 September 2013
- 5th Management Board meeting; Vienna, Austria; 28 March 2014
- 1st Scientific Advisory Body meeting; Rome, Italy; 13 June 2014
- Combined 6th Management Board and 3rd High Level Group meeting; Budapest, Hungary; 19 September 2014
- 7th Management Board meeting; Lisbon, Portugal; 6 May 2015
- 2nd Scientific Advisory Body meeting; Lisbon, Portugal; 8 May 2015

The PCO prepared the agenda and circulated papers in advance of each meeting. After each meeting, the PCO circulated the minutes and followed up on actions agreed in the meetings.

Task 7.3: Reporting Requirements

In collaboration with WP and task leaders, the PCO prepared Periodic Reports for the European Commission at the end of each of the three reporting periods of ERA-CAPS, all of which were submitted within the 60-day reporting deadlines.

The PCO coordinated the submission of Financial Reports at the end of each reporting period. This was achieved through providing detailed guidelines on the preparation of the Forms C, giving advice on a one-to-one level to those submitting the Forms C, and carrying out thorough checks of the Financial Reporting before submitting to the European Commission. All Forms C were submitted electronically to the Commission within each of the 60-day reporting deadlines. The PCO also had the responsibility of distributing the EC funds to the partners in good time, and managing the overall budget of the network to maximise effective use of funds.

1.4 Potential Impact, the main dissemination activities and exploitation of results

Potential Impact - Summary

Transnational research funded through the ERA-CAPS network has the potential to provide tangible advances towards meeting the challenges facing plant science and the need to provide high quality, secure and sustainable food, feed and fuel solutions for a burgeoning population. Meeting these challenges will have a huge impact on the peoples of the EU by bolstering the economic competitiveness of the EU, increasing the effectiveness of public services and enhancing quality of life, health and creative output.

A major impact of ERA-CAPS has been more intensified, sustainable collaboration and cooperation between the Partner and Observer countries and organisations which made up the consortium. ERA-CAPS has leveraged the Partners' funding, exploited synergies and driven efficiencies throughout the system. ERA-CAPS has developed new strategic partnerships to transform the way in which the funders of plant science and the research community work.

ERA-CAPS has driven co-ordination, concentrated research and expertise, enabled sharing of facilities, and networked researchers across Europe and globally. The ERA-CAPS consortium is extremely wide ranging and the impact that a collaborative activity on this scale has had in terms of increased openness and the development of coherent transnational policies at the regional, national and international levels cannot be underestimated.

Impact by Work Package

Work Packages 1&2 have brought together a significant number of national funding agencies from across Europe and beyond. Through a process of relationship building, mutual learning and alignment of plant science research priorities, a strong alliance has developed that will continue beyond the duration of the EC-funded project. Links that have developed between the ERA-CAPS funding agencies will foster further collaborations at the bilateral and multilateral levels not only in the field of plant sciences, but across disciplines. Work Package 2 in particular has served to expand the existing ERA-PG community of funders to include newer Member States and countries from outside of the EU. In doing so, this helps to achieve the aims of the European Research Area in plant sciences, and to expand these aims beyond the boundaries of Europe.

Work Package 3 has leveraged funding across national and regional organisations to support €42M of plant science research from two transnational calls. Research projects funded through these calls have the potential to each tackle their own part in global challenges such as the need to provide high quality, secure and sustainable food, feed and fuel solutions for an ever-increasing population. Through collaboration and sharing of expertise and facilities, the research funded through ERA-CAPS has reduced the fragmentation of plant science funding, and has maximised the impact achievable from research funding by bringing together the best scientists into a single research programme to take forwards cutting-edge plant science research. Impact is not only achieved through the research of individuals but achieved by groups and wider teams working across disciplines and sectors. Work Package 3, through an evaluation of the ERA-PG research programme and the ERA-CAPS call procedures, has demonstrated that the research funded through the ERA-Net mechanism is well-received by the plant science community. The ERA-PG evaluation demonstrated the researched conducted in the programme would not have been achieved through national funding mechanisms alone, and that there was added value associated with transnational funding.

This information serves to reassure funding agencies that participation in such programmes as ERA-Nets is a valuable use of national research funding.

Work Package 4 had two work streams: External Engagement and Data Management. The External Engagement activities of ERA-CAPS have served to bring relevant networks and organisations interested in Plant Science together through information exchange and cross-representation. The sharing of knowledge and expertise between related initiatives has facilitated the harmonisation of procedures and practices, and has added value by bringing together expertise and resources. It also ensures that there is no duplication of effort when working towards common plant science goals. External engagement activities have ensured that the ERA-CAPS network is well recognised by the community it serves, and has strengthened the quality of research proposals submitted to the ERA-CAPS calls, thus ensuring that the very best science receives funding. Maximising the impact of ERA-CAPS was a core objective of this work package. In particular, this was achieved through linked activities associated with Data Management. Firstly, a common Data Sharing Policy was implemented for the second joint call. This has raised the profile of the need for researchers to make their data available to others to further increase the impact of their research. By making a Data Management Plan a compulsory part of applications to the second call will ensure that data generated through publically-funded research has the potential to be used, re-used and re-purposed, ensuring maximum impact from ERA-CAPS funding. In order for data to be readily shared, appropriate data standards should be followed. ERA-CAPS realised that some aspects of the plant sciences were not as well advanced in this area as others, and convened an Expert Working Group to analyse the situation and make recommendations to further the standardisation of plant science research data. The recommendations made by the Expert Working Group will be taken forwards in the self-sustained ERA-CAPS network, and so there is the potential to further increase the impact that can be derived from ERA-CAPS research data and from data generated by the broader plant science community.

The work carried out in Work Package 5 has ensured that there is a long-term sustainability of the ERA-CAPS network beyond the scope of the EC-funded grant agreement. The work package has brought together the elements required for the funding organisation involved in ERA-CAPS to continue their work to ensure that there is a mechanism for transnational research funding for the plant sciences. Further calls through a self-sustained ERA-CAPS network will maximise the leveraging of funding available for joint research programmes. A flexible call structure has been adopted for future calls, which has ensured that processes are streamlined and that the experiences learnt from running the two joint calls within the EC funded phase will be capitalised on. The substantial investments already made by the ERA-CAPS partners in the research funded through the joint calls demonstrate strong support for this area of science.

Work Package 6 focussed on communications and dissemination. From the outset, an ERA-CAPS brand was developed with a logo and standardised presentation tools. A public website was built for ERA-CAPS within the first six months of the network, well ahead of schedule. This ensured that the ERA-CAPS network had a public face and could start the essential process of increasing its visibility. The website was an essential part of communication and dissemination, as it was through the website that the joint calls were advertised and the news of the network was disseminated. Throughout the EC funded phase of the network, the ERA-CAPS website received over 50,000 hits from a wide range of countries both within and outside of the European Union. During the course of ERA-CAPS, the work package disseminated key news items and announcements not only through the website, but also through leaflets, flyers, press releases, ERA-CAPS newsletters and articles for other newsletters (e.g. EPSO and GARNish), as well as publishing two articles in

Pan European Networks. The use of multiple outlets ensured the reach of ERA-CAPS was as wide as possible. ERA-CAPS has also developed a Plant Science Database which was launched at the end of the programme – this has the potential to serve the plant science community by providing a source of information on plant science funding, researchers and organisations, and will facilitate the formation of future research collaborations. In order to help maximise the impacts of the ERA-CAPS research community, two grant holders' workshops were held to bring together the scientists involved in the research projects funded through the joint calls. This provided networking opportunities for the community, and provided a platform to spark discussions and form further collaborations within the community.

Work Package 7 covered the management activities of the network. The smooth running of the network and efficient programme management ensured that the network could achieve its goals and that the funding received from the European Commission for the network was used with maximum efficiency and effectiveness. In the self-sustained network, the Programme Coordination Office set up to run the ERA-CAPS network during the EC-funded phase will continue to operate in-kind, and will provide support to the Management Board, the Scientific Advisory Body and the consortium as a whole. This ensures continuity of the network and enables the maximum benefit to be realised from the experiences of coordinating the network to date

Dissemination Activities

The main dissemination activities included the development of a public website, publication of two articles in Pan European Networks (one to introduce the network, the other to publicise the Data Sharing Policy), the production of flyers and press releases to promote the network and its calls, posters and presentations at international conferences and workshops, the generation of a mailing list to which five newsletters were issued, articles featured in other networks' newsletters, the organisation of two Grant Holders' Workshops, and the production of a final booklet summarising the achievements of the network. See section 1.3.6 for further details.

Project Logo



Website Screen Shot

Homepage | ERA-CAPS

www.eracaps.org

A- A+ CONTACT

HOME | ABOUT | JOINT CALLS | NEWS AND EVENTS | PUBLICATIONS | RELATED INITIATIVES

ERA-CAPS
Promote sustainable collaboration in plant sciences through coordinating and funding excellent transnational research.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Results of the Second ERA-CAPS call for proposals announced
The ERA-CAPS call consortium is pleased to announce that 12 transnational projects involving 57 research teams (including 5 own funded teams) from 15 different countries have been selected for funding. [Read more](#)

Results of Second ERA-CAPS call to be announced very soon
The applicants that participated in the full proposal stage will soon be notified of the result of their proposal. The list of funded projects will be available in May through the link: <http://www.eracaps.org/joint-calls/era-caps-funded-projects> [Read more](#)

Second Grant Holders Workshop on 7/8th May 2015 in Lisbon
An upcoming activity of the ERA-CAPS Network is the Second Grant Holders' Workshop that will be held on 7/8th May 2015 in Lisbon. [Read more](#)

PARTNERS

[view all partners](#)

List of Project Meetings and External Meetings

The following table provides details of meetings organised by ERA-CAPS and meetings/conferences with ERA-CAPS representation.

Meeting	Location	Date	Partners involved	Work Packages
ERA-CAPS Launch Meeting*	London, UK	30-31 January 2012	Full consortium	ALL
FACCE-JPI Mapping Meeting	Madrid, Spain	22-23 February 2012	1	4
Data Management Workshop and ERA-PG Grant-holders' Workshop planning meeting*	Brussels, Belgium	6 March 2012	8,13,Observer1	3,4
UK Plant Science 2012 Conference	Norwich, UK	18-19 April 2012	1	4
1 st Strategic Workshop*	Tallinn, Estonia	19-20 June 2012	Full consortium	1,2

Meeting	Location	Date	Partners involved	Work Packages
1 st Management Board Meeting*	Tallinn, Estonia	20 June 2012	Full consortium	ALL
FAO/EPSCO Consultation Workshop	Rome, Italy	25-27 June 2012	3	4
1 st PLATFORM Workshop	Copenhagen, Denmark	26-27 June 2012	1	4
FESPB/EPSCO Plant Biology Congress	Freiburg, Germany	29 July – 3 August 2012	1,8,10,13,19, Observer7	4
ERA-PG Grant-holders' Meeting*	Freiburg, Germany	29 July 2012	1,8,10,13,19, Observer7	3
International Steering Committee for Plant Genomics	Freiburg, Germany	30 July 2012	1,8,10,13, Observer7	4
Data Management Workshop*	Freiburg, Germany	1 August 2012	1,7,8,10,13,19, Observers1,7	4
2 nd Management Board Meeting*	Bonn, Germany	23 October 2012	Full consortium	ALL
IPR Documents Working Group*	Bonn, Germany	23 October 2012	1,7,8	3
1 st High Level Group Meeting*	Bonn, Germany	24 October 2012	Full consortium	ALL
Meeting of coordinator with MPNTR*	Belgrade, Serbia	1-2 November 2012	1,18	7
Plant and Animal Genomics Conference (PAG XXI)	San Diego, USA	12-16 January 2013	1, Observer7	4
International Steering Committee for Plant Genomics	San Diego, USA	13 January 2013	1, Observer7	4
Meeting with Professor Joop Schaminée about plant ecology data management	Wageningen, The Netherlands	22 January 2013	13	4
ERA-IB Platform Meeting	Dresden, Germany	14-15 March 2013	1	4
Meeting of coordinator with EC Legal and Project Officers*	Brussels, Belgium	21 March 2013	1, EC	7
Meeting of coordinator with FRS-FNRS & DFG*	Brussels, Belgium	21 March 2013	1,3,8	3,6
FP7 Finance Training Course	Brussels, Belgium	28-29 March 2013	1	7
2 nd Strategic Workshop*	Paris, France	11-12 April 2013	Full consortium	5
3 rd Management Board Meeting*	Paris, France	12 April 2013	Full consortium	ALL
2 nd PLATFORM Workshop	Paris, France	18-19 April 2013	1	4
ETP Plants for the Future meeting	Brussels, Belgium	23 April 2013	3	4
PLATFORM Call Masterclass	Brussels, Belgium	17-18 June 2013	1,3	3

Meeting	Location	Date	Partners involved	Work Packages
NSF Panel Meeting (parallel call to ERA-CAPS 1 st joint call)*	Arlington, VA, USA	21 June 2013	1,Observer7	3
Introductory meeting – new Hungarian Partner*	Budapest, Hungary	12 July 2013	1,20	7
1 st Call Review Panel*	Bad Honnef, Germany	20-21 August 2013	1,3,8,17	3
7 th EPSO Conference	Porto Heli, Greece	1-4 September 2013	Full consortium	4,6,7
4 th Management Board Meeting*	Porto Heli, Greece	3 September 2013	Full consortium	ALL
1 st Call Moderating Panel*	Porto Heli, Greece	3 September 2013	Partners in 1 st Call	3
2 nd High Level Group Meeting*	Porto Heli, Greece	5 September 2013	Full consortium	ALL
Work Package 6 meeting*	Brussels, Belgium	18 November 2013	1,3,5,Observer1	6
Work Package 4 meeting*	Lisbon, Portugal	28 November 2013	1,12,13,15,17	4
Plant and Animal Genome XXII Conference	San Diego, USA	11-15 January 2014	1,Observer7	3,4
International Steering Committee for Plant Genomics	San Diego, USA	12 January 2014	1,Observer7	3,4
3rd KBBE ERA-Net PLATFORM Workshop	Leiden, Netherlands	13-14 February 2014	1	4
H2020 ERA-Net COFUND Briefing	London, UK	20 March 2014	1	7
5th Management Board meeting*	Vienna, Austria	28 March 2014	Full Consortium	ALL
Data Standards Expert Working Group (EWG) – 1 st Meeting*	Amsterdam, Netherlands	16 April 2014	1,13, plus EWG	4
ERA-IB Platform Meeting of ERA-Nets related to Industrial Biotechnology and Innovative Technologies	Dresden, Germany	5-6 May 2014	7	4,5
2 nd Call Review Panel (pre-proposals)*	Bad Honnef, Germany	7-8 May 2014	1,3,8,17	3
Data Standards EWG – 2 nd Meeting*	Brussels, Belgium	29 May 2014	1,13, plus EWG	4
1st ERA-CAPS Grant Holders' Workshop*	Rome, Italy	12-13 June 2014	Full Consortium, plus Grant Holders & SAB	3,6
Self-sustainability Working Group*	Rome, Italy	12 June 2014	Full Consortium	5
1 st Scientific Advisory Body meeting*	Rome, Italy	13 June 2014	1 plus SAB	7

Meeting	Location	Date	Partners involved	Work Packages
Data Standards EWG – 3 rd Meeting*	London, UK	26 August 2014	1,13, plus EWG	4
Combined 6th Management Board and 3 rd High Level Group meeting*	Budapest, Hungary	19 September 2014	Full Consortium	ALL
3rd Bioeconomy Stakeholders Conference	Turin, Italy	8-9 October 2014	1	4,7
KBBE ERA-Net PLATFORM Dissemination Event	Turin, Italy	9 October 2014	1	4
2 nd Call Review Panel (full proposals)*	Bonn, Germany	19-20 November 2014	1,3,8,17	3
9th International Learning Network Workshop	Brussels, Belgium	27-28 November 2014	1	3,4,7
2 nd Call Moderating Panel*	Brussels, Belgium	3 December 2014	Call Partners	3
ERA-CAPS 3 rd Strategic Workshop*	Budapest, Hungary	13 March 2015	Full Consortium + guest speakers	5
ETP-Plants for the Future: Action Plan Launch	Brussels, Belgium	24 March 2015	1	4
KBBE ERA-Net PLATFORM2 Annual Workshop	Amsterdam, Netherlands	27 March 2015	1	4
Data Standards EWG – 4 th Meeting*	Brussels, Belgium	9 April 2015	13 + EWG	4
Call Secretariat Meeting (planning 2016 call)*	Brussels, Belgium	20 April 2015	3, 8	3, 5
7 th Management Board meeting*	Lisbon, Portugal	6 May 2015	Full Consortium	ALL
2 nd Grant Holders Workshop*	Lisbon, Portugal	7-8 May 2015	Full Consortium + Grant Holders & SAB	6
2 nd Scientific Advisory Body meeting*	Lisbon, Portugal	8 May 2015	1 + SAB	7

Notes:

- Meetings marked with an asterisk were organised by ERA-CAPS.
- Not all consortium members necessarily attended meetings highlighted as involving the full consortium, but all were invited to contribute.