

Expanding the European Research Area in Molecular Plant Sciences

PRE-ANNOUNCEMENT of the 2nd ERA-CAPS CALL¹

The ERA-NET Coordinating Action in Plant Sciences (ERA-CAPS) will issue its second Transnational Call for Proposals for Collaborative Research Projects on January 14th, 2014. The Call Notice will be published at www.ericaps.org and respective sources of information. The purpose of this pre-announcement is to enable interested parties to build their consortia and start preparing their proposals. The call for pre-proposals will close on the 14th of March 2014, 12.00 CET.

1. Network-partners

The ERA-CAPS network comprises currently 19 partners and 7 observers from funding organisations in 23 countries, including recent additions to the EU Member states and non-EU countries. The coordination of the network is supported by the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme under the ERA-NET scheme to strengthen the European Research Area. The network is coordinated by BBSRC, UK.

Table 1 ERA-CAPS Network Partners with in **bold** the organisations that confirmed to contribute financially to the 2nd ERA-CAPS call

FWF	Austrian Science Fund	AUSTRIA
F.R.S.-FNRS(pending)	Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique	BELGIUM
FWO	Research Foundation - Flanders	BELGIUM
DASTI	Styrelsen for Forskning og Innovation	DENMARK
France(pending)	To be decided	FRANCE
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft	GERMANY
MTA-OTKA	Centre for Agricultural Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences	HUNGARY
MOARD(pending)*	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	ISRAEL
MIUR(pending)	Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca	ITALY
LZA	Latvijas Zinatnu Akademija	LATVIA
MBIE	Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment	NEW ZEALAND
RCN	Norges forskningsråd, Research Council Norway	NORWAY
NCBiR	Narodowe Centrum Badan i Rozwoju	POLAND
FCT	Fundacao Para a Ciencia e a Tecnologia	PORTUGAL
MPNTR	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development	SERBIA
BBSRC	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council	UNITED KINGDOM
NSF	National Science Foundation	USA

* Correction: As opposed to an earlier communication, MOARD should be considered as pending towards participation in the second call.

¹ The content of the call described in this pre-announcement may be subject to changes and is not legally binding to the funding agencies.

2. Purpose of the call

The objective of this call is to stimulate true collaboration between research teams of different countries in order to achieve the highest quality projects, to increase synergies between national programmes and to strengthen international research in molecular plant sciences. The funding partners agree that this unifying approach is a fundamental prerequisite to maximise the utility of the limited resources available and to meet the European and global demand for molecular plant science innovation with a long-term perspective.

3. Research themes

By agreement of the funding organisations involved, the second joint call launched by ERA-CAPS will follow the same broad scope as described in the first joint call. This will cover all areas of molecular plant science, allowing maximum engagement of the plant scientists.

No specific topics have been defined; however, the themes below have been identified as being of common interest to several of the funding organisations and align, among others, with the overarching themes of the Joint Programming Initiative for Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE-JPI) and several societal challenges identified in Horizon 2020, the EU's new Framework Programme for research and innovation. These are examples of areas of research where we would welcome high quality applications, but they do not exclude other areas of molecular plant science.

- **Food Security:** research that contributes to the sustainable and secure supply of safe and nutritious food for an increasing global population. This includes yield optimisation, quality traits and nutrient use efficiency, amongst other research areas.
- **Non-food crops:** this theme includes research into crops (or appropriate models) where the end-use includes bioenergy or industrial biotechnology.
- **Adaptation to a changing climate:** research that addresses how plants can adapt, or be adapted, to grow in a changing environment.
- **Biotic/abiotic stresses:** this theme includes research into plant responses to either biotic or abiotic stress, or how plants contend with a combination of biotic and abiotic stresses.

Applications in **other areas** of molecular plant science are welcomed where the research answers fundamental biological questions of relevance to the development of the European (and Global) Research Area in molecular plant science.

4. Call structure

At the moment 13 organisations from 13 countries have confirmed participation in this second call. This number may increase before the call launch as decisions are pending (Table 1). The exact funds committed by each partner are not specified, though indications for individual countries may be given in the National Annexes. National Annexes will be published with the Call Notice on 14 January 2014 and will describe country-specific requirements.

Each national funding organisation will fund only the project participants from its own country/ region (virtual common pot mode). The Call is open to research groups from other countries under eligibility criteria to be published alongside the Call Notice.

The expected duration of projects will be three years.

Minimal requirement for an applying consortium:

A consortium should minimally include 3 partners from 3 different countries, at least 2 of them being participating ERA-CAPS partners. Projects may be supported by companies, but companies might not receive public funds, subject to national funding regulations.

Since the call aims at developing new collaborations as well as strengthening and enlarging existing partnerships, the applicants are encouraged to consider inviting partners throughout the whole network of countries. To foster this process, ERA-CAPS offers a web-based [Search for collaborations](#) tool, currently containing information about consortia that were funded under the ERA-NET Plant Genomics Programme. This data will be complemented with the profiles and partner-search-requests from any new candidates, who can post their data through an on-line survey. The link to this survey can be found at the above mentioned 'ERA-CAPS Search for collaborations' page.

5. Application and evaluation

There will be a two-stage application procedure (pre-proposals and full proposals) and accordingly a two-stage review procedure.

The applications will be reviewed by a Review Panel composed of scientific experts. After evaluation of the pre-proposals, selected applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be peer reviewed by external reviewers before further consideration and ranking by the Review Panel.

Application Guidelines and forms will be published at www.eracaps.org with the Call Notice on the 14th of January 2014.

6. Time schedule (as planned)

<i>Call Announcement:</i>	<i>14 January 2014</i>
<i>Due-date pre-proposals:</i>	<i>14 March 2014; 12.00 CET</i>
<i>Invitation full proposals:</i>	<i>19 May 2014</i>
<i>Due-date full proposals:</i>	<i>18 July 2014; 12.00 CET</i>
<i>Peer Review:</i>	<i>July- mid October 2014</i>
<i>Rebuttal:</i>	<i>October 2014</i>
<i>Communications of evaluation results:</i>	<i>December 2014</i>
<i>Funding decisions:</i>	<i>March 2015</i>
<i>Start of selected projects:</i>	<i>April-May 2015</i>

7. Contact

For the time being further information can be obtained from the [ERA-CAPS Call secretariat](#)