



**D5.5 First strategy report in the engagement
of prospective partners of the future
ERA4Health Partnership
WP5**



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¹ PU = Public
SEN = Sensitive

D5.5 FIRST STRATEGY REPORT IN THE ENGAGEMENT OF PROSPECTIVE PARTNERS OF THE FUTURE ERA4HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ERA4Health Partnership began its activities on 1 November 2022 with a consortium of 32 partners and 27 funding organizations from 22 countries. During its actual runtime, ERA4Health remains open to integrating additional partners and aims to identify, contact, and engage in dialogue with potential new national and regional partners and funding organizations. This outreach includes countries already involved in ERA4Health and those not yet partner of the project. ERA4Health will focus its attention on organizations within the EU, as well as in other parts of the world. In collaboration with Pillar 2B, particular attention will be given to integrating partners who wish to support multicountry Investigator Initiated Clinical Studies (IICS).

In this Deliverable 5.5, all activities and efforts undertaken during the first running year of the ERA4Health Partnership to engage new partners and funders to join the consortium are summarized.

2. RESULTS

ERA4Health effectively engages the scientific community and various stakeholders by clearly communicating their activities and results. This approach encourages increased participation and investment in their initiatives. ERA4Health has implemented a website and social media channels (LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube) to communicate about ERA4Health and its activities. New dissemination materials are developed, like a digital flyer and a brochure, for both online use and physical meetings. These materials provide an overview of the partnership, its objectives, and opportunities, making the information easily accessible and understandable to potential partners and stakeholders.

Following the success of its initial two Joint Transnational Calls in 2023 – HealthEquity and CARDINNOV - ERA4Health has further enhanced visibility for its research initiatives and calls, like JTC3 NutriBrain and JTC4 NANOTECMEC, through active communication of the activities linked

to the calls like their announcements and infodays, and dissemination activities as matchmaking events. This strategic dissemination has broadened its reach to a wider audience of potential partners and funders, capitalizing on the momentum created by the early successes of these calls. JTC3 and 4 were very successful in attracting new external partners. New funders from Switzerland and Estonia support these research calls.

Dissemination activities, such as webinars and matchmaking events have been playing a key role in building networks. They provide platforms for researchers, organizations and funders to connect, share expertise, and form consortia, as seen in the collaboration with the European Technology Platform on Nanomedicine (ETPN).

The first international workshop for the search of synergies, held remotely on June 9, 2023, is an example of proactive engagement. The synergies working group of ERA4Health invited additional (non-consortium members) national and regional funders to this 1st International Annual Workshop for the search of synergies with our Partnership ERA4Health. In addition to 7 representatives of the European Commission, 46 ERA4Health partners and 29 members of the Synergies Working Group, 77 other entities also attended the workshop, such as NGOs, Universities, research organisations, and local, regional, or national authorities. This approach resulted in more alignment with national and regional priorities. This workshop was aimed at exploring synergies between activities in ERA4Health and other relevant networks, demonstrating the Partnership's commitment to expanding its collaborative network and aligning with national policies. Such workshops are instrumental in identifying and discussing new initiatives, enhancing the network, and facilitating alignment with national and international policies.

ERA4Health's active and extensive communication and dissemination of many activities, results, and several funding opportunities have attracted new partners and funders. Some new partners have expressed their interest in joining the Partnership. Thus, setting up the first two successful

research calls, 'HealthEquity' and 'CARDINNOV,' proved to be very attractive in this context. The ERA4Health coordination team received multiple expressions of interest from external new funders that were willing to join ERA4Health Joint Transnational Calls and/or become partners of ERA4Health in the near future, such as Canada (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, CIHR), Switzerland (Swiss National Science Foundation, SNSF), UK (UKRI and NIHR), Czech Republic (Czech Health Research Council). These potential new partners were then presented with a general introduction to the ERA4Health Partnership. Funding opportunities, as well as possible difficulties and limitations were discussed. Indeed, some of these funders were already incorporated as external funders in the ERA4Health Joint Transnational Calls of 2024 (NANOTECMEC and NutriBrain). Their adhesion as formal partners of the consortia will be explored in the near future and especially during the preparations of the 2nd Phase of the Partnership. As example, an Estonian independent observer (from ETAG) has been invited to the CARDINNOV call. Following this invitation, the joint call secretariat presented ERA4Health and CARDINNOV. The observer forwarded the information internally and ETAG reached the coordination team to participate to the 2024 Calls.

For the UK partners, it is very relevant now because UK partners recently officially become associate partners in the Horizon Europe framework program. Therefore, this becomes more relevant for the 2nd phase of the ERA4Health Partnership proposal then. Similarly, a Slovak research organisation was already member of the ERA4Health consortium, but a new Slovak funder (the Slovak Academy of Sciences) participated in the two ERA4Health first calls as funder and was integrated formally as a member of the consortia through an Amendment.

Significant efforts have already been made to engage new funders in joining the 2nd phase of the ERA4Health Partnership with the IICS. WP 15.1. focuses on mapping and funding sources available to fund multinational IICS in Europe. As part of this WP, a survey targeting more than 200 potential IICS funders was created. Among other topics, the survey interrogated funders (including non-ERA4Health partners) about the possibility to join ERA4Health to support a future

JTC on IICS. This information is being used by the ERA4Health coordination to reach out possible new partners (Deliverable 15.1).

In addition, as part of WP14, the Partnership organized a face-to-face workshop focused on the analysis of bottlenecks and challenges in designing and conducting IICS of Pillar 2B, which took place in Paris on September 14th & 15th, hosted by the European Clinical Research Infrastructure Network (ECRIN). ECRIN extended invitations to organizations that, having participated in the above mentioned survey, that could potentially be interested in joining a future JTC call on IICs, notably: French Ministry of Health (France), NIHR (UK), SNSF (Switzerland), KCE (Belgium), AMB (Poland) and Cures within reach (USA). Outcomes of the workshop are summarized in a report that is available through the [ERA4Health website](#).

Ongoing networking activities within ERA4Health also present excellent opportunities for promotion and the potential involvement of new partners. For instance, an independent observer participating in an ERA4Health research call process noted that joining the ERA4Health consortium could be particularly beneficial for partners from Estonia.

In the future and the second year of the Partnership new partners mainly will be approached to participate in the potential 2nd phase of the Partnership to fund clinical studies as funder or to be involved as funders in the consortia.

3. CONCLUSIONS

During its first year, ERA4Health made significant communication and dissemination efforts and during organizing of events, workshops, and regular meetings new partners for the consortium were engaged and potential funding organizations for upcoming opportunities were attracted. These activities played a crucial role in expanding the network and fostering collaboration, essential for the growth and success of ERA4Health's initiatives and objectives.

It would be advantageous to develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy for new partners that can be involved in the future within the Partnership. A more proactive approach will be established in WP5, encompassing measures, JTC discussions, and funding opportunities. To increase interest in new countries, we will enhance the dissemination of all ERA4Health activities and reinforce communication through newsletters, social media, and targeted communication and dissemination. Within the countries already involved, efforts will be made to engage new funders and attract potential partners with the support of contact persons already active in the consortium.

On 8 and 9 February 2024, a physical workshop titled “Funding Mechanisms for Investigator-Initiated Clinical Studies” will be organized in Brussels, to which new external funders will be invited.

In the future, the Partnership will actively strive to expand its network and continue its efforts to mobilize additional partners. A pro-active strategy will be developed to:

- improve the geographical coverage of the Partnership for countries associated to Horizon Europe with a view to improving the joint programming of research between countries and later to enlarge the Partnership with non-European countries
- the uptake of knowledge to support policies and actions
- make particular efforts to ensure inclusiveness and enhance participation of some countries that are less performing in these types of collaborative networks and thus less inclined to participate (widening).