

Challenge 4b: Funding strategies - Management aspects

The continuous upgrading of research infrastructures

The continuous upgrading of RI

- RI are not static entities, they are permanently evolving
 - This process requires the input of all stakeholders of RI
- Stakeholders of RI:
 - Policy makers
 - Funding bodies
 - Infrastructure providers
 - Users (scientists, clinicians, industry)
- Input of scientists to policy development and infrastructure choice is crucial: they are best placed to know what their requirements are

ELSF:

- Platform of independent organizations representative or supportive of the life sciences, biotechnology and biomedical research communities in Europe
- Mission: to increase the visibility and impact of life scientists in the public and policy-making arenas; and to advance research and to promote the contribution of scientists to European society
 - ELSF: instrumental in the creation of the ERC
 - ELSF: mandate of its constituencies to be involved in the RI debate



Why should ELSF be active? What can ELSF add to the process?

- It is difficult to get a complete picture of available RIs
- It is difficult to get a broad picture of what scientists need
- There is a need to organize, inform and consult the life sciences community (similar to physics community in the past) in order to:
 - Carry out an internal debate
 - Present a united front to other stakeholders
 - Express the scientists' needs to decision makers

➤ This is the *raison d'être* of a platform such as ELSF



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EUROPEAN LIFE SCIENCES FORUM

Why is there a need to organize the LS community in Europe?

Example of the human genome sequencing project, a data of central importance for 100,000's of life scientists.

- Only after the project was finished did the community realize how critical it is that the genome sequence is in the public domain (IP, universal accessibility).
- This was recognized by the Wellcome Trust and the scientists who were actively engaged in the genome project, but not by most life scientists or public funders.



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How can ELSF act?

- Difficult, long-term, iterative process...
 - ... but it is possible (see ERC)
- Conferences & workshops (scientists, stakeholders)
- Position papers, articles, interviews
- Specific sessions at scientific congresses
- Lobbying (MEPs, Commission, other stakeholders)

ELSF actions

- First meeting on RI for the life sciences in Vienna, 5-6 June 2007
- 50 scientists, administrators and representatives of funding bodies

➤ http://www.elsf.org/elsfpaper_ri_final.pdf

Conclusions of the Vienna meeting

- RI are shared resources needed by a community to conduct its research
- In LS, often information and availability of material, rather than a single instrument, is at the heart of an infrastructure
- Secondary missions: services, training, technology development, SOPs

- A research field can only be made a priority if, at the same time, the necessary infrastructures are developed

- To create, organize and/or fund LS RI, an impetus at the European level is clearly required

- Need to include the input of practicing scientists

ELSF and the European Science Foundation (ESF)

**“Conference on Research Infrastructures
for the Life Sciences”**

European Parliament, Brussels, 13-14 September 2007

www.elsf.org

Similarities between RI and the ERC debate

- ELSF/ISE helped keep the ERC debate alive... and aim to do so for RI
- The solution requires substantial funding, acceptance by the scientific community, flexibility and long-term perspectives
- Sense of urgency for the competitiveness and independence of European research

- RI cannot remain national or inter-state policies: RI have a European dimension which requires European solutions
- The scientific community initially mistrusted the Commission on the ERC, but came to realize that only Commission involvement and good faith could enable realisation of the ERC in a reasonable timeframe – to be kept in mind when thinking about European RI

LS RI: a definition shift

- Human genome witnesses a shift in definition from research project to research infrastructure: the end product is data required to carry out research – the human genome is an infrastructure

“Human Protein Atlas” initiative: to generate a collection of antibodies against every single human protein. These reagents would be used to explore the function of the corresponding proteins, their variants, interactions, as well as their cellular location both in health and disease.

- Difficulty to fund this kind of project in a sustainable manner

Final considerations

- RI issues are similar for other disciplines, e.g. the social sciences
- The debate in the scientific community must therefore ultimately be carried out in a broader disciplinary context (Initiative for Science in Europe – ISE), but the specificities of each discipline must first be tackled internally

