

ERA-NET Cofund AquaticPollutants
TAP Action

Kick-off workshop proceedings

20th of January 2022

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Executive summary

The ERA-NET Cofund AquaticPollutants aims at pooling resources from participating research programme owners / managers from European, associated and third countries to implement a joint transnational call for proposals with European Commission co-funding (Call 1) and two additional calls (Call 2 and 3) with European Commission support for implementation. All three calls are interconnected by mutual complementarity.

The AquaticPollutants TAP Action has the role of the third ERA-NET Cofund AquaticPollutants call (second additional call). It is a network of national projects focussed on specific RDI needs that addresses topics close to the AquaticPollutants call content.

In order to participate in the Action, interested funding organisations either included in their national calls the same call text on a specific RDI need, or selected projects in this area from new calls or possibly already started calls and request the selected projects to join an international cluster (so called TAP Cluster on emerging pollutants and pathogens) organised by the participating FPOs. Thereby, the Action will create an opportunity for broader cross-border cooperation, greater collaboration and a more unified focus on water RDI across Europe and beyond. It will allow coordination between the individual projects, lead to a greater impact at the European and global level, and address research gaps and avoid duplication. The Action is open to all members of ERA-NET Cofund AquaticPollutants and members of the participating JPIs.

The countries that will take part in this joint action are:

- Czech Republic (CZ) - represented at the Kick-off workshop
- France (FR) - represented at the Kick-off workshop
- Ireland (IE) - represented at the Kick-off workshop
- Spain (ES) - represented at the Kick-off workshop
- Sweden (SE) - not represented at the Kick-off workshop

The agenda covered an overview of the TAP Action implementation processes, introduction of all parties involved, their expectations and needs and the foreseen next steps. The event started with a plenary session opened by a keynote by Simon Frank, Project Management Agency Karlsruhe, coordinator of the AquaticPollutants. Next, TAP concept and objectives were covered followed by presentation of role and expectation of the most important groups involved and present at the meeting (TAP Steering committee and members of the TAP cluster of excellence). Findings from the mapping survey previously distributed were presented with focus on crosscutting background and expectations. At the end of the plenary session, the attending national projects presented a brief introduction of their objectives.

After the break, the national projects joined a discussion where the TAP Steering Committee took the role of a silent observer. The most important part of the discussion was a Q/A session on aims & objectives of the Action. Through the discussion, participants joined forces to discover synergies and identify outputs that could be achieved before the end of the year 2023. Potential connections between the AquaticPollutants TAP Action and the AquaticPollutants Transfer Project was clarified. It was important to ensure the contrast between the two programmes were fully clarified.

As an outcome of the discussion, the cluster members elected their Scientific Coordinator, Angeles Blanco (Complutense University of Madrid) from the Spanish project CYTOSREMOVAL. With her help, the cluster came up with its first working title: *RedCoPollutants*.

Introduction

The AquaticPollutants project is a European Commission funded ERA-NET Cofund Action built on the collaboration of the Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) on Water, Oceans and Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), which aims to strengthen the European Research Area (ERA) in the field of clean and healthy aquatic ecosystems. In order to reach this objective, the project supports the development of the AquaticPollutants Thematic Annual Programming (TAP – Work Package 6, Task 6.2) as its third joint call. This joint call is subordinate to the ERA-NET Cofund AquaticPollutants joint transnational call with European Commission co-funding. This call is referred to as “the first” or “cofunded” call. There are two additional joint calls (including the TAP Action) that have the European Commission’s support for implementation.

All three calls are interconnected by mutual complementarity. The first call addresses the combined challenges of the Water JPI, JPI Oceans and JPI AMR building on the issues of risk management of emerging pollutants, pathogens and antimicrobial resistances in aquatic ecosystems (freshwater, groundwater, marine), their spread in the environment “from the source to the mouth”, their effect on human health as well as strategies and concepts to reduce those effects and their input into the ecosystems. The two additional calls complement the cofunded call in order to strengthen alignment activities of the three JPIs and their Member States.

TAP Action, the third ERA-NET Cofund AquaticPollutants call, is a “light alignment” tool aimed to foster the alignment of national research programmes. It will complement the co-funded call theme while aligning national programmes relevant for this theme, leverage the impact of SRIAs of JPIs on Water, Oceans and AMR by focussing on the thematic areas of the three JPIs. In order to do that, it employs a multi-disciplinary approach including economic, ecological, societal and technological disciplines and perspectives. The desired outcome is increased efficiency of public funding and research by avoiding duplication across Europe and beyond. The ultimate goal of the TAP Action is helping to broaden and/or transfer knowledge on the characterization and transformation of physical, chemical or biological contaminants of emerging concern and methodologies and strategies to remediate and reduce these contaminants in aquatic ecosystems.

The foundation of the TAP Action is the establishment of a network or cluster of excellence of national projects focussed on specific RDI needs from new or already started national calls in order to partner them, creating a critical mass of research and technological excellence and sharing of knowledge.

The theme of this Action is: Measuring of Inputs and Taking Actions to Reduce contaminants of emerging concern, Pathogens and Antimicrobial Resistant Bacteria in the Aquatic Ecosystems (inland and marine). The aim of this theme is reduction of effects of contaminants of emerging concern, including chemicals, pathogens, antimicrobial resistant bacteria and (micro)plastics in the aquatic ecosystems (inland and marine) and subsequent impacts on human, animal, plants and ecosystems.

Participation in the TAP action is not limited to the AquaticPollutants partners but is open to all funders of the Water JPI, JPI Ocean and JPI AMR community and is voluntary. This action will run for 24 months, that is from January 2022 until December 2023. The first meeting of the cluster of excellence was organized on the 20th of January 2022 by the TA CR and it was held online due to the pandemic.

Meeting Aims and Objectives

The objectives of the TAP Kick-off workshop was to set out the proposed implementation of the ERA-NET Cofund AquaticPollutants TAP Action starting in 2022. Specific objectives were to provide the cluster of excellence with:

- an introduction platform;
- clarification of the processes involved in the Action and upcoming milestones and deliverables, most importantly the Implementation Plan;
- overview of the previously mapped expectations of the cluster members and the Steering Committee;
- channel to communicate its needs in order to start the process of Implementation Plan preparation;
- opportunity to make the first joint steps such as select the scientific coordinator and the cluster name

Attendees

21 participants connected to the workshop including from five European countries: four Steering committee organisations and 8 national projects from Czech Republic, France, Ireland and Spain and three external organisations from Czech Republic and Germany. Among the external organisations there were representatives of the AquaticPollutants Transfer Project (TP), the second AquaticPollutants joint call.

The TP representatives had a chance to observe the proceedings and form a better idea about the direction the TAP Action is taking in order to later facilitate the search for common interests and identification of possible cooperation pathways.

Proceedings

The workshop programme is available in Annex 2. The workshop included two plenary sessions with a discussion session in the middle. The event was chaired and facilitated by Baya Nuñez from TA CR also delivering the opening welcome.

As a warm-up, the attendees introduced themselves and their organisations in a quick roundtable.

The keynote speech was presented by Simon Frank, Project Management Agency Karlsruhe, coordinator of the AquaticPollutants.

The first plenary session included a presentation by Baya Nuñez covering the Aims of the Workshop and Agenda, introduction to the ERA-NET Cofund AquaticPollutants, description of the TAP Action concept and operations and expected overall benefits and results of the Action. The TAP Implementation Plan Template was shown and described in detail. Important milestones were listed. All parties involved in the TAP Action were introduced and their roles explained.

This presentation was followed by a presentation by Aneta Lízancová from TA CR covering expectations of the cluster members and common grounds between scope of projects based on the data gathered in a mapping survey distributed in December 2021. Finally, after a Q/A session, the national projects creating the cluster of excellence introduced themselves.

- ANTARES by Sonia Suárez
- ARG Tech by Jan Bartáček
- Change4Water by Pavla Kovaláková
- CHYPSTER by Marina Coquery
- CYTOSREMOVAL by Angeles Blanco
- HOPEM by Pavla Kovaláková
- Pharma_CARE by Laetitia Minguez
- PIER by Dearbháile Morris

Their presentations were facilitated by Aneta Lízancová. The project Mic GIVER was not presented due to the absence of its representative, Stéphane Le Floch.

All presentations of the national projects are available in the Annex 3 and short descriptions of the projects are included in the Who-is-who brochure on the AquaticPollutants TAP Action website.

After the break, a group discussion took place involving the representatives of the national projects, the TAP chair (TA CR) in the role of the facilitator and the TAP Steering Committee members as observers. The cluster members shared their expectations of the next steps and the outputs of the TAP Action and compared them to the expectations of the funders.

Summary of Discussion and Responses

Baya Nuñez stressed that the main benefit of the TAP Action is that normally, national projects involved would not be able to go international, but thanks to this TAP Action and their involvement in the cluster they have the possibility to share knowledge, information and resources that they would not normally have access to.

She repeated that there are milestones that need to be fulfilled, and the cluster members are advised to meet at least twice in person, four times ideally (if the pandemic situation allows it).

After the scientific coordinator is elected, it will be her/his responsibility to create the network and to start working on an implementation plan together with a target audience that the cluster members would like to reach out to and what they want to actually achieve.

The role of the scientific coordinator is to

- lead the work in developing the TAP Implementation Plan and delivering the Implementation plan
- lead the work in developing the proposed TAP Action outputs
- represent the cluster at the midterm guided dialogue with the TAP Steering Committee
- lead the work in developing the final follow up of the TAP Implementation Plan
- if requested, support additional foresight exercises carried out by the JPIs in the selected scientific area of the TAP Action.

The SC will be in touch with Baya Nuñez regarding the progress and activities of the cluster and any questions that would possibly arise.

If possible, next year the cluster members and the funders should all see each other again in a TAP Action meeting, details TDB.

Baya Nuñez explained that as the next step the cluster is to connect the projects and create a concept of how the group will work together, on what, and to what end.

She recommended to share what each project offers and needs and build on that. Above all she recommended to cooperate, divide roles and tasks as soon as possible, use the Implementation Plan template and the ERA-NET Cofund AquaticPollutants TAP dedicated web pages, think of the timeline and always follow data sharing rules.

It was explained by the Steering committee that the national conditions for joining TAP Action differ a lot. While some projects received additional funding to participate, some did not. For questions on efforts needed and their reimbursement the projects should contact their national funder.

Angeles Blanco asked about the role of the AquaticPollutants Transfer Project (TP). Armelle Montrose from ANR explains that the TP is not another TAP Action, but an initiative to support impact of the international consortia funded in the first joint call of the AquaticPollutants ERA-NET Cofund. The idea of the second AquaticPollutants call, Transfer Project, is to develop new methods for knowledge transfer in order to increase the dissemination and impact of the results of the projects funded in the first call. The TP is to develop new communication strategies for better impact of RDI results and supports all co-funded call projects with networking, transfer of results and public relations using its own developed research approach, and thereby increasing uptake of these outcomes. It is not an initiative open to national projects unrelated to the AquaticPollutants cofunded call.

Next, the role of the Scientific Coordinator was clarified. Baya Nuñez explained that from this position it is crucial to involve all the other cluster members. The Scientific Coordinator is just leading the process, but all should cooperate as much as possible and divide tasks and responsibilities among yourselves. The implementation plan development should be a teamwork. However, the work concept is up to the cluster and if it doesn't wish to use the official task division method, it is not mandatory.

The Implementation Plan was reviewed. Baya Nuñez explained that the IP draft is just for inspiration and the cluster does not have to strictly follow it. She stressed that the plan should relate to ToR. Ideally it should be achievable, realistic and the more specific, the better. It would be best to look into short term and long term expectations and predict when meetings will take place. The outputs should be usable, as the objective is to achieve something real and to reach out to a real audience.

Baya Nuñez explained that the scientific coordinator will receive a one time fee of 10.000 EUR. One candidate for the role was presented - CYTOSREMOVAL project and its representative Angeles Blanco. No need for this sentence as Angeles has agreed to undertake the role for the 2 years duration – if this is correct, then no need for latter sentence.

Angeles Blanco realizes it is very demanding, ambitious and very challenging. The work should be based on mutual benefits. The benefits should be big enough to motivate everyone to work together with regard to sharing information, resources, methodologies etc. We may share difficulties with interpretation of data, analysis - we should have a meeting in order to discuss these difficulties and may benefit from that in the end.

Several cluster members raise questions about the expected outputs and their achievability. Baya Nuñez explains that the outputs are subject to choice of the cluster.

Lisa Sheils from the EPA explained that the cluster should choose outputs that work in the members' favor, are feasible for them to achieve in respect to their strengths, objectives and available means. The cluster should focus on realistic outputs that they can produce as a collective. She stressed the group should not overextend their outputs – quality rather than quantity is kept – be it joint publications, policy briefs, etc. What they wish to produce as an output should be agreed by all and input by all.

She recommended looking at previous TAP outputs and JPI Water Knowledge Hub outputs on the JPI Water website and gaining inspiration from there.

Baya Nuñez said that the cluster should choose something that everyone will benefit from.

Silvia Lorrio (AEI) adds that Angeles is right, projects participating are selected based on themes, but funding for traveling for meetings can be provided if needed.

Lisa Sheils adds that her tip is to think about one or two things that everyone can do together very well. It is important for projects to know what they have knowledge and resources for. Keep it simple and keep it smart and do not try to do too much, keep it as simple as possible. Common ground can be a good starting point for the whole cooperation between projects involved in the cluster.

Since there is no other cluster member that would like to candidate for the role and all agree with the candidacy of Angeles Blanco, the candidacy is approved. Congratulations to the Scientific Coordinator, Angeles Blanco (Complutense University of Madrid) from the Spanish project CYTOSREMOVAL.

Angeles Blanco agrees with focusing on fewer things more profoundly and having realistic expectations, common ground and keywords will be a starting point. She is sure the cluster can be beneficial for all of the members. Acronym idea for the cluster from Angeles: RedCoPollutants. It is agreed to use this Acronym as a working title for now.

Baya Nuñez mentions TA CE hopes to be able to host a physical meeting soon, probably in the summer, but it is strongly recommended for the cluster to meet online before that in order to synchronize and have everything prepared.

Angeles Blanco proposes a meeting of the cluster at the end of February.

Baya Nuñez says that the minutes of the meeting, the ToR, the updated Who-is-Who and the IP template will be sent to the cluster via email. A meeting with the Scientific Coordinator will be organized.

In the end, the attendees went back to the plenary to view the conclusions and closing remarks by Baya Nuñez.

Annex 1: List of Attendees

Country	Name	Organisation
CZ	Aneta Lízancová	TA CR
CZ	Baya Barbora Nuñez	TA CR
CZ	Jan Bartáček	University of Chemistry and Technology
CZ	Jiří Guth	Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic
CZ	Klára Křížová	Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic
CZ	Pavla Kovaláková	T. G. Masaryk Water Research Institute, public research institution
CZ	Petr Březina	T. G. Masaryk Water Research Institute, public research institution
CZ	Přemysl Soldán	T. G. Masaryk Water Research Institute, public research institution
DE	Anne Petzold	PTKA
DE	Kaitlyn Carter	DECHEMA e. V.
DE	Romy Durst	PTKA
DE	Simon Frank	PTKA
DE	Thomas Track	DECHEMA e. V.
FR	Armelle Montrose	ANR
FR	Laetitia Minguez	LIEC
FR	Marina Coquery	INRAE
IE	Dearbháile Morris	National University of Ireland Galway
IE	Lisa Sheils	EPA
ES	Angeles Blanco	Complutense University of Madrid
ES	Silvia Lorrio	AEI
ES	Sonia Suárez	University of Santiago de Compostela

Annex 2: Agenda

Below

Annex 3: National projects' presentations

Below