

SOLAR-ERA.NET

ERA-NET on Solar Electricity for the Implementation of the Solar Europe Industry Initiative

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Summary

SOLAR-ERA.NET – an EU funded FP7 project running from 2012 to 2016 – is a network that brings together more than 20 RTD and innovation programmes in the field of solar electricity technologies, i.e. photovoltaics (PV) and concentrating solar power (CSP) / solar thermal electricity (STE), in the European Research Area. The network of national and regional funding organisations has been established in order to increase transnational cooperation between RTD and innovation programmes and to contribute to achieving the objectives of the Solar Europe Industry Initiative (SEII) through dedicated transnational activities, especially joint transnational calls on an annual basis. The first two joint calls found great interest with 110 preproposals submitted with a total project volume of some 142 MEUR. Out of 45 full proposals submitted, 27 projects were suggested for funding. Some ten transnational projects are now running with further ones starting in the first months of 2015. A third joint call was launched end 2014 with the participation of 17 funding agencies from all over the European Research Area.

Purpose of the Work

SOLAR-ERA.NET shall contribute to reaching the objectives of the Solar Europe Industry Initiative (SEII) by carrying out the coordination and support actions for the implementation of the SEII between national and regional RTD and innovation programmes, mainly through joint transnational calls. Through the support of the funding organisations of some 50 MEUR, more than 100 MEUR shall be mobilised for transnational RTD and innovation projects.

Approach

As the largest ERA-NET (network in the European Research Area) ever in the solar power field, SOLAR-ERA.NET involves more than 20 RTD and innovation programmes dealing with PV and CSP. This high level of involvement of most relevant stakeholders provides excellent outreach and the coordination needed for an efficient and coherent approach in the highly diverse RTD landscape. For launching joint calls in such a context, the network strives to set up call implementation mechanisms that are efficient, pragmatic and as smooth as possible despite of the fact of having to deal with an “additional” transnational level involving inherently some coordinative and administrative issues. On the other side, it is expected that the transnational level allows for new project consortia and highly innovative projects. By identifying and choosing SEII priority topics for transnational calls carried out by SOLAR-ERA.NET, the network selects and funds industrially relevant transnational RTD and innovation projects in the field of solar electricity technologies.

Scientific Innovation and Relevance

The project proposals potentially supported by SOLAR-ERA.NET members must clearly demonstrate i) potential commercial impact / relevance to industrial and market needs / contribution to the Solar Europe Industry Initiative (SEII) and added transnational value, ii) scientific and technological excellence and iii) high quality and efficiency of the implementation and the management.

On a more general level, the SEII is embedded in the European Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-Plan) which aims to increase, coordinate and focus EU support on key low-carbon energy technologies in order to achieve Europe's 2020 energy objectives in the future. The SEII is a joint initiative of the industry sector, EC and member states.

Results and Conclusions

The first two SOLAR-ERA.NET transnational calls were launched in March 2013 resp. January 2014 with a public funding budget of each 12 MEUR, following a two-stage procedure. 478 applicants submitted 110 transnational preproposals with a total project volume of 142 MEUR. 45 full proposals (38 PV projects and 7 CSP projects) with a project volume of 65 MEUR were finally filed in and evaluated. The larger part of these full proposals was suggested for funding. Formal funding decision, negotiation and contractual phase have been successfully finalised for ten projects and more are expected in the first quarter of 2015.

The third set of SOLAR-ERA.NET transnational calls PV3 and CSP3 was launched end of 2014 with the participation of 17 countries and regions. Experiences show that SOLAR-ERA.NET joint calls find good interest in the industry sector and research community particularly due to the wider set of priority topics proposed and transnational orientation allowing for new and innovative consortia building.

Results on projects funded in the first two calls, preliminary information on research and industry response in the third call as well as an assessment of the outreach and impact of the SOLAR-ERA.NET calls will be available by the week of the 30th EU PVSEC.