

## ESF RESEARCH NETWORKING PROGRAMMES – FACTS AND FIGURES

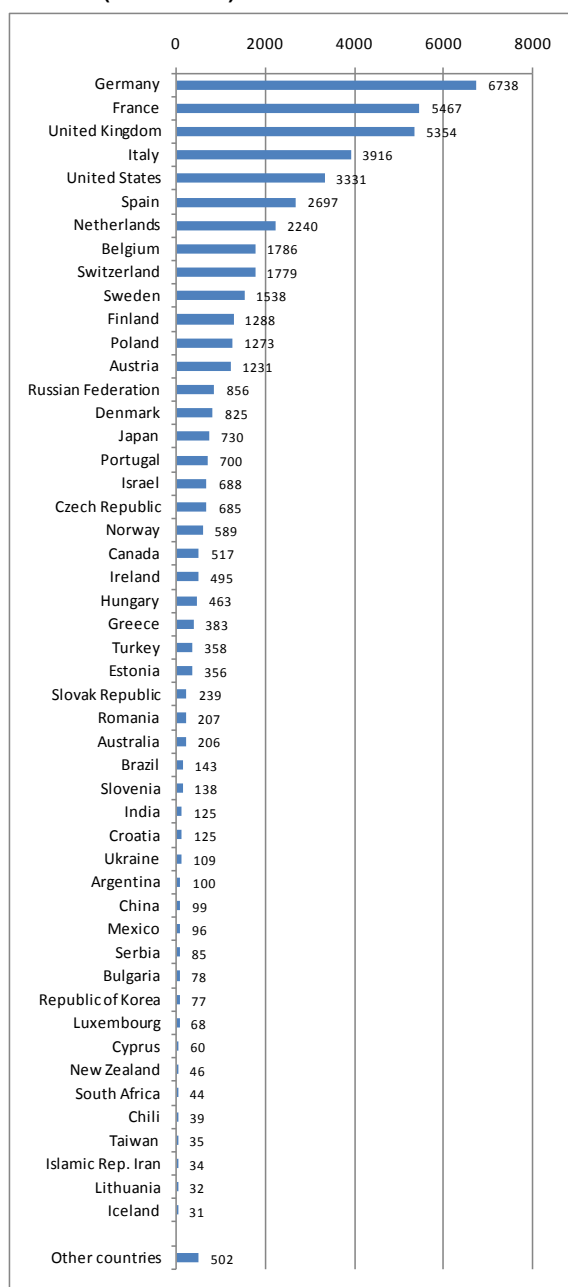
The Research Networking Programme scheme has a special place among ESF synergy instruments encouraging and stimulating cooperation between researchers and Member Organisations by creating a platform for nationally funded research groups to advance the frontiers of science. The instrument, active since 1975, has promoted European level collaboration for more than three decades with great success. The RNPs support a range of activities in which over **9.800** researchers participate annually.

Table 1 shows participations by type of activity and Chart 1 by country in RNPs activities.

**Table 1: Participants per type of RNP activity by year**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	TOTAL
Workshops/Conferences	6431	7325	8186	9132	7425	38499
Exchange visits	626	820	860	860	858	4024
School/Training	521	828	1279	2064	1786	6478
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7578</b>	<b>8973</b>	<b>10325</b>	<b>12056</b>	<b>10069</b>	<b>49001</b>

**Chart 1: Participants across RNP activities by country (2005 – 2009)**



Data for 2009 subject to revisions

In 2005 ESF commissioned a study analysing the impact of its networking instruments, including Scientific Networks and Programmes. The study concluded:

*“ESF is almost unique in providing networking funding, that aims to encourage and to level research funded by others in Europe.”*

*“Both the survey and the interview evidence strongly support the idea that these instruments foster research processes and help participants do and produce more than would otherwise have been the case. (...) there are clear cases where, for example, ESF instruments set common research agendas that would not otherwise easily have been tackled or create instrumentalities and infrastructures that enable progress.”*

In the same year, after 30 years of operation, ESF reorganised the Scientific Networks and Programmes into a single instrument, the current Research Networking Programmes scheme.

Since 2005 ESF announces a common call for proposals for all research domains which facilitates interdisciplinary collaborations. The recommended proposals are selected following a process of independent, external peer review. Applications are assessed against a set of criteria defined in the Call. Subsequently, the ESF Standing Committees discuss the proposals and the external assessments and decide which proposals to recommend for funding. In the case of multidisciplinary proposals (in the 2009 Call 39 proposals out of 126) each Committee involved provides its own decision.

The selection criteria are strict and only excellent proposals with significance for European research are recommended which is reflected in a rather low success threshold (15,9% in the 2009 Call).

On the basis of these recommendations one joint list of top-ranked proposals across all research domains is agreed upon for submission to Member Organisations.

ESF Member organisations decide on a voluntary basis (*à la carte* principle) which recommended proposals they will fund, thus enabling full participation of researchers from their national scene in the networking activities of those RNPs. Commitments, in the form of fixed annual financial contributions, run for the whole duration of the selected RNPs (4 or 5 years). Only those proposals which reach a viable level of funding to ensure that they will be able to fulfil their aims are launched.

Each country contributing to an RNP is entitled to nominate a member to its steering body. The Steering Committee of an RNP is responsible for ensuring that the high-level scientific objectives of the RNP are achieved and for managing the scientific activities as well as the financial aspects (use of funds, distribution of grants, etc) in consultation with ESF.

Chart 2 shows the participation of ESF Member Organisation countries in the 71 on-going RNPs in 2009.

**Chart 2: Participation of ESF MO countries in running RNPs in 2009 (by number of RNPs)**

