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EERA Joint Programme
Coordinator expertise
in European projects

YVONNE VAN DELFT'S PERSPECTIVE ON SUCCESSFUL EUROPEAN COLLABORATION

The Coordinator of the EERA Joint Programme in Energy Efficiency in Industrial Processes (EEIP) speaks about her experience in European projects and what makes a consortia successful. She also challenges researchers to look beyond only the objectives of the project.

For more than 25 years, Yvonne van Delft, coordinator of the EERA Joint Programme Energy Efficiency in Industrial Processes (EERA EEIP), has been working on energy transition in industry. First at the Energy Research Centre of the Netherlands and, since 2018, at TNO. Moreover, throughout

her career she has been involved in multiple EU research projects, either as part of the consortium or as an evaluator, and they have gained her a broad experience in cross-country and cross-institutional collaboration in her field of expertise.

This piece is based on an interview carried out with Yvonne for TNO and is particularly focus on **recommendations and challenging ideas stemming from her experience**. In this regard, it zooms on the vision the coordinator has for supporting Europe in achieving its energy and climate goals in a critical field like energy efficiency in industry.

“Too little attention has been paid to energy efficiency in industry in the last years.”

“Newly developed innovations can also be used for other means that the first one envisioned.”

WHAT PITFALLS HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED WHILE WORKING IN THE EU CONTEXT AND HOW HAVE YOU LEARNED TO AVOID THEM?

One thing that I find difficult about working in the EU context is that there are sometimes topics of great importance to the energy transition that are not always addressed by the EU calls and are thus not qualified to receive funding. To provide an example, currently, a lot of attention is paid to the topic of green hydrogen when talking about the energy transition. However, we are going to need more than one solution to achieve the energy transition. Keeping this in mind, it is then important to make sure funding is distributed among those different topics. I feel that too little attention has been paid to energy efficiency in industry in the last few years. Now, because of the situation with Ukraine and Russia, we can see how de-

-pendant we are on fossil fuels and that we are unable to immediately switch to green electricity. The EU has always been vocal about the need for energy efficiency. However, EU policy and innovation have, in a sense, fallen behind, which is what we aim to influence to make sure this topic becomes more central in the discussion.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO GIVE AS TIPS TO OTHERS WORKING IN THE EU CONTEXT AND SPECIFICALLY ON FUTURE EU RESEARCH PROJECTS?

First, the consortium is the most important. You need a properly committed consortium that is focused on achieving the end goal. The best course of action regarding this would be to have an industrial partner that takes the lead. Everything stands and falls with the consortium and the commitment of the partners to the partnership.

Second, the end goal of the European Union is to have innovation be implemented to reach the goal of reducing CO2 emissions. This means that you need to consider early on in the project what your innovation would contribute and how to make sure it can be implemented. During the duration of your project, it is very likely that things change and that the implementation you had envisioned is no longer possible. What I do not see enough within EU projects is people looking further ahead: for example, newly developed innovations can also be used for other means than the first one envisioned.

WHAT VARIABLES, IN YOUR VIEW, MAKE A SUCCESSFUL EU PROJECT?

One project I was part of as a partner consisted of a large number of partners. Starting from a low TRL, it focused on addressing alternatives to oil for efficient chemical production to reduce dependency on this imported fuel. This project was successful because it resulted in many seeds for further development and innovation and worked towards a broader goal. Furthermore, the different research lines had dedicated teams working closely and meeting regularly to share learnings, ensuring coherence between the research lines and promoting a community feeling among the partners.



“We are going to need more than one solution to achieve the energy transition.”

YVONNE'S TOP TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS IN EU PROJECTS

Yvonne shares words of wisdom from her years of experience as a partner and evaluator in EU projects

CONSORTIA

The consortium is the most important. Everything stands and falls with the consortium and the commitment of the partners to the partnership.

HAVE BIG EUROPEAN GOALS IN MIND

The end goal of the European Union is to have innovation to reach the goal of reducing CO2 emissions. Therefore, the project needs to consider how it will contribute to this goal.

EVOLVE AND ADAPT

During the duration of the project, it is very likely that things might evolve. Some things may not longer be possible, while new alternatives may emerge.

