

## International research collaboration opportunities: fostering EU Clean Energy transition in Lithuania

Topic: SUPEERA and PANTERA joint workshop - International research collaboration opportunities: fostering EU Clean Energy transition in Lithuania.

Time: Apr 27, 2023 09:00 AM Brussels

On April 27th, the final workshop of the 10-series was held in Vilnius, jointly organised by SUPEERA and PANTERA EU funded projects. The event brought together experts from academia, industry, and government sectors in a hybrid format, with 26 participants onsite at the [Lithuania Academy of Sciences](#) and 19 participants joining online. The participants shared valuable insights and experiences, contributing to a fruitful exchange of knowledge.

### Welcome address.

**Gintautas Dzemyda**, Head of the Division of Technical Sciences at the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, extended a warm welcome to the workshop participants.

**Ivan Matejak**, the coordinator of the [SUPEERA project](#), expressed his satisfaction in successfully concluding the workshops' series in the Baltic countries and highlighted their significance for facilitating valuable networking opportunities.



**Venizelos Efthymiou**, coordinator of the PANTERA project from the [FOSS Research Centre](#) of the University of Cyprus, emphasised the advantages of research and innovation collaboration for countries with lower research and innovation capacities, known as "[Widening countries](#)". He further stressed the importance of being in Vilnius close to the stakeholders of the country aiming to build the will to connect with the EIRIE platform and work closely with us for stronger presence of the local stakeholders in Brussels through the services that EIRIE offers. For these we will hear a lot more during the day.

**The SUPEERA project. Mobilization of EU-13 national public research resources in the Clean Energy Transition: challenges and opportunities**



**Ivan Matejak** presented the SUPEERA project, with a focus on bringing the research communities of the EU-13 countries<sup>1</sup> closer together and fostering collaboration among them. He addressed a range of challenges and opportunities, including specific challenges faced by Lithuanian actors. The limited participation in the [SET Plan Implementation Working Groups](#) was also highlighted. Consequently, he

discussed the lack of coherence between national and European priorities as a major concern and emphasised the importance of aligning Lithuania's National Energy and Climate Plan with the respective European policies. Furthermore, he underscored the benefits of enhanced collaboration between industry and research sectors and encouraged the active participation of Lithuanian actors in the SET Plan and the [European Energy Research Alliance](#).

**Brigita Serafinavičiūtė**, the research Attaché, Permanent Representation of Lithuania delivered a presentation on "Research and Innovation for Clean Energy Transition: Political Context in the EU". As representative of the [European Council](#) she provided an overview of the legislative landscape emphasising the energy topic as a central one in the [Green Deal](#). She highlighted the [Fit for 55 package](#) and she drew attention to the [Net Zero Industry Act](#), [EURATOM](#) and [Small Modular Reactors](#) as significant elements within the strategy for a clean energy transition. She underlined the importance of the [Partnership for Clean Hydrogen](#) as well as [EU Chips Act](#), explaining that Net Zero Industry Act has pervasive energy-related components. Finally, she presented a [Report](#)<sup>2</sup> from the European Commission underscoring the existence of energy public support as well as the importance of public opinion in the energy sector.



<sup>1</sup> Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania, Croatia.

<sup>2</sup> Source: European Commission (2023), *Synopsis Report - Looking into the R&I future priorities 2025-2027*, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023.



**Daumantas Kerežis** representing the Lithuanian [Ministry of Energy](#), delivered a presentation on the [Strategy of Lithuania on Energy Technology](#). He highlighted Europe's heavy reliance on imports for the deployment of net-zero energy technologies, particularly from China. Daumantas emphasised the significance of the SET Plan as the technological cornerstone of the EU's

energy and climate policy that aims to align national priorities on research and innovation projects by incorporating call themes and projects. He concluded by encouraging both industrial and academic stakeholders to get involved in the SET Plan.

**Tadas Tumėnas**, representing the [LINO office](#), explored the importance for Lithuania to collaborate with other EU stakeholders, emphasising the need for unity and collective action rather than individual efforts. He therefore introduced some networking platforms and organisations actively engaged in this collaborative endeavour. Providing an overview of LINO, as an informal association of research and innovation (R&I) and member of [IGLO \(Informal Group of RTD Liaison Offices\)](#), he emphasised the immense value of the network.



## PANEL DISCUSSION and Q&A



During the panel discussion, **Tadas Tumėnas** highlighted the value of informal networking like IGLO. Through the IGLO network, Lino Office and the other stakeholders established [Working Groups \(WGs\)](#) which play a pivotal role in achieving objectives like information sharing and event organisation. Additionally, Tumėnas suggested that it would be useful to conduct an analysis of Lithuania's EU project performances before and after LINO office involvement in IGLO. This analysis would reveal the tangible benefits of being part of an informal network.



**Brigita Serafinavičiūtė** also acknowledged that programs like [Horizon Europe](#) can be extremely complicated. This can make it hard for individuals to participate. That's why being part of larger networks is helpful. Given that, Brigita concluded by stating that it's also important to connect with neighbouring countries for the benefit of the country and the region.

**Venizelos Efthymiou** and **Daumantas Kerežis** engaged in the discussion acknowledging the benefits of the [EIRE platform to](#) strengthen collaboration. He suggested that countries with less involvement should concentrate their efforts in areas where they have a competitive advantage. **Daumantas Kerežis** shared his perspective on Lithuania's strong points. The conversation also delved into the revision of the NECP and the role of community involvement in refining NECP objectives and discussing the suitability of bottom-up approaches.

**Tadas Tumenas** underlined the benefits of physical meetings for making impactful changes, noting that his position in Brussels enables a better connection between national actors. **Brigita Serafinavičiūtė** acknowledged the perception of the Baltic countries as a strong and homogeneous region but reminded the existence of different national priorities in the energy sector. She stressed the need for increased collaboration among the Baltic countries; a slow process that nevertheless they have managed to coordinate and progress. **Tadas Tumėnas** remarked that addressing issues solely at LINO office in Brussels differs from addressing them collectively with other countries, highlighting also the unique perspective brought by Nordic collaboration at the EU level.

## R&I opportunities for collaboration and funding

The second part of the discussion started with **Francesco Matteucci** who presented the [European Innovation Council \(EIC\)](#), emphasising its equity approach. The EIC Fund was established to bridge the funding gap, attracts private capital and co-invests alongside private investors. Matteucci discussed the EIC Cleantech Thematic portfolios, the EIC challenges (Pathfinder, Transition, Accelerator) and the content-wise approach in different funding schemes. He concluded by inviting the audience to watch the webinar of [EIC 2023 info day](#).



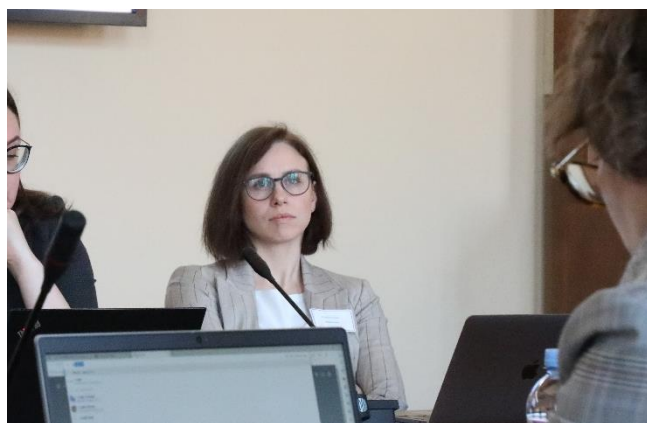
**Petter Støa**, Vice President Research at [SINTEF](#), started his presentation by discussing the [EEA and Norway Grants program](#) and its contribution to the Green Deal. To illustrate the impact of the grants, he provides examples of specific projects and initiatives funded by the EEA and Norway Grants in Lithuania. These examples showcase how the grants have been utilised to support various initiatives related

to environmental sustainability, climate action, and green innovation.

**Aiste Vilkanauskytė**, Adviser at Technology and Innovation Unit, [Ministry of Science, Education and Sports](#), delivered her presentation on “Lithuanian incentive package to facilitate participation in Horizon Europe” to showcase the role of the Ministry in supporting Lithuanian research and industry to participate in Horizon Europe calls. She outlined that Lithuania's Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport have representatives serving in the [SET Plan Steering Group](#).



She presented how the Ministry provides incentives for participating in Horizon Europe. Aiste's presentation touched on similar themes and concepts discussed previously with Francesco Matteucci and Tadas Tumenas, highlighting the interconnectedness of the topics being addressed during the event and showing the funding opportunities for Lithuania.



**Aurelija Povilaikė**, Head of NCP Unit and Coordinator, [WIDERA NCP](#), discussed the challenges and opportunities for widening countries' participation in the Horizon Europe program. She mentioned the program's focus on achieving scientific and technological impact through policy actions. She also emphasised the importance of the program and its horizontal pillar with funding opportunities to support EU 13

countries. This pillar addresses research and innovation disparities resulting from lower capacities, limited funding access, and brain drain. She noted that Horizon Europe presents Lithuania with a significant opportunity to enhance its scientific and technological landscape and drive innovation in Europe.

**Tomas Garuolis** Department Director at Business, Environment and Economy, [Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists](#) (LPK), provided a presentation on LPK Participation in European Partnerships. He discussed the partnership between the European Commission and other associations within the [INTERINO project](#), which focuses on providing business advice for joining international value chains and finding R&D&I partners ([Interreg](#)). Tomas Garuolis also mentioned the Process4Planet partnership and provided an overview of its strategic research and innovation agenda. He concluded by underlining the benefits of being part of European Partnerships mentioning their involvement in [EFFRA](#), [CCAM](#), and [ASPIRE](#).

## PANEL DISCUSSION and Q&A



During the panel discussion, **Tomas Garuolis** emphasised the crucial role of LPK in representing Lithuania's industry and creating opportunities for research centres to apply for funding. He highlighted the importance of involving Lithuanian research organisations early in consortia formation for specific funding calls, ensuring effective collaboration and integration into European initiatives. **Aiste**

**Vilkanauskytė** explained the distinction between co-funded EU projects and 100% EU funded projects. Co-funded EU projects involve contributions from various entities or EU funding programs, while 100% EU funded projects rely solely on financial support from the EU. Funding for EU projects is typically awarded through competitive grant programs to facilitate research, innovation, and development activities. **Aurelija Povilaikė** explained the importance of increasing Lithuania's participation in Horizon Europe. She also highlights the importance of WIDERA, which offers expert guidance, program rule navigation, partner search support, and proposal quality enhancement. **Aiste Vilkanauskytė** provided additional insights regarding the significance of a package approach in the Horizon program and how to build capacity for successful participation. By adopting a package approach, researchers and organisations can effectively align their goals, resources, and activities to maximise the impact and outcomes of their Horizon projects. **Tomas Garuolis** and **Spyridon Pantelis** also highlighted the [ETIPs \(European Technology and Innovation Platforms\)](#) as an example where working groups enable the collaboration of experts from various organisations, both industry and academia.

## The PANTERA project

**Mattia Cabiati** from [Ricerca sul Sistema Energetico \(RSE-Italy\)](#) provided an overview of the [PANTERA project](#), which aims to create a European forum for stakeholders in smart grids, storage, and local energy systems. The project facilitates interactions between stakeholders from different countries through regional desks, the so-called "PANTERA 6+1 approach" which aims to organise and synchronise efforts of different actors to strengthen national participation rate in smart grid R&I activities and investment. Mattia also emphasised the importance of connecting to international initiatives active at global level like [MISSION INNOVATION](#) and [ISGAN](#) as well as to European ones like the [EERA JP Smart Grids](#). Being involved in such activities allows to get updated information about the most relevant topics in the R&I domain as well as it allows to bring at higher levels specific country's needs. Moreover [DERLab](#), an association of EU research laboratories active in the energy field could support R&I actors in their needs of finding and collaborating with research infrastructures, often indicated as a key point in being successful in getting R&I Eu funding.





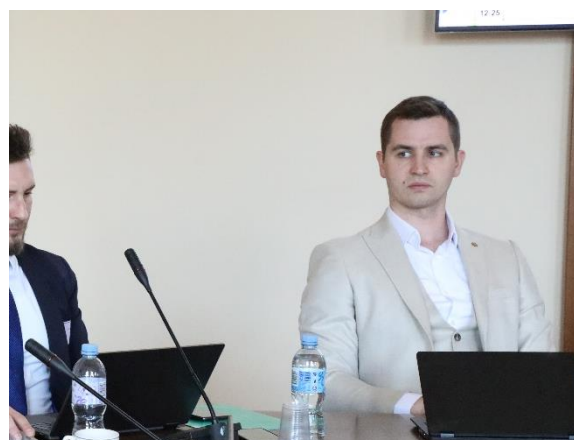
**Venizelos Efthymiou** PANTERA coordinator, FOSS Research Centre of University of Cyprus, presented the EIRIE platform in support of the R&I European ecosystem, which serves as a multi-functional collaborative platform for knowledge and data related to R&I activities in Europe. It brings together various entities such as [JRC/SETIS](#), DERLab, [DG Research](#), [IEC Standards](#), and [ETIP SNET](#). Venizelos discussed

the pyramid structure and design principles of the platform and invited participants to join and access its resources. He underlined that the EIRIE platform is at the beginning of its journey, open to welcoming everyone and eager to foster collaboration and innovation. The presentation conveyed a sense of enthusiasm for the project's progress while expressing anticipation for future development and growth.

**Anna Mutule**, the Head of the Smart Grid Research Centre at the Institute of Physical Energetics in Latvia, shared examples of the Best Practice Desk results. She mentioned also [Confluence](#), a team workspace tool that fosters knowledge sharing and collaboration by providing a central location for creating, collaborating, and organising information. Anna Mutule encouraged participants to visit the relevant pages and access the links provided. She finally invited participants to participate in the survey and engage in Q&A sessions through the slido.com platform.

According to the [Slido results](#), the primary reasons for low R&I activity in smart grids, storage, and local energy systems are **inadequate funding** and **low policy priority**. Regarding Horizon Europe, 60% believed it to be too competitive and favoring more advanced countries, while the lack of access to matchmaking platforms was not seen as a significant factor. Finally, it is widely agreed among the audience that national institutions and agencies should address shortcomings in the existing support services, as highlighted by the score of 3.4.

**Mečislovas Kaulakis**, Innovation Project Manager, Litgrid started the presentation with an introduction to [Litgrid](#), the Lithuanian electricity transmission system operator, highlighting its activities in RES integration, synchronisation to CEN, and R&D. He also emphasised the importance of collaboration, noting that it benefits all parties involved by facilitating knowledge exchange, sharing risks, reducing administrative expenses, and creating new business opportunities for growth. As an example of collaboration, it was mentioned that Litgrid actively participates in the [ENTSO-E task force "Demonstration & Innovation Coordination" \(TF DIC\)](#), which aims to foster collaboration among transmission system operators.





**Andrei Morch** Research Scientist from SINTEF Energy Research presented the outcomes of the PANTERA project, highlighting the technical priorities for addressing future challenges. He emphasised the importance of Smart Grid Technologies, including Advanced Metering Infrastructure, observability and controllability functions for DSOs, and flexibility and Big Data technologies. He also mentioned concerns about standardisation, potential lack of technical expertise, and the need for technology-neutral markets. The role of National Contact Points and the mission of the EIRE platform were briefly discussed.

### **Panel discussion: opportunities to increase participation in joint R&I activities.**

The second part of the panel discussion brought together **Mečislovas Kaulakis**; **Rolandas Urbonas**, Senior Research Associate at the Lithuanian Energy Institute; **Vytenis Barkauskas**, the Head of Energy Security and Innovations at the Lithuanian Energy Agency. By sharing their perspectives, they delved into the opportunities for international research collaboration that can contribute to advancing the clean energy transition in Lithuania. The session was moderated by **Andrei Morch**, Research Scientist at SINTEF Energy Research Energy.

**Mečislovas Kaulakis** emphasised the benefits of a strong Baltic region and the importance of agreement on energy security issues for collective strength. **Rolandas Urbonas**, Senior Research Associate, Lithuanian Energy Institute stressed the need for more extensive discussions to enhance understanding and accelerate goal achievement at a lower cost. **Vytenis Barkauskas**, Head of Energy Security and Innovations at Lithuanian Energy, acknowledged that the energy transformation is underway but emphasised that its full magnitude has not been fully grasped yet. He anticipated numerous innovations and exciting developments leading up to 2030. **Mečislovas Kaulakis** shares about the lack of collaboration between neighbouring countries and reiterates the importance of regional, national, and international cooperation to achieve common goals. **Andrei Morch** also highlighted the value of regional coordination and proximity in developing technical aspects, emphasising the significance of replicability, and drawing inspiration from neighbouring countries.

### **Closing remarks**

In conclusion, **Ivan Matejak** thanked the participants and reflected on the need for a major push from the European Commission to provide more structure and foster collaborative regions, as the benefits of EU membership have not been fully realised by all countries.