Description of successful networks and key success factors

The IRISS project aims to connect, synergize, and transform the Safe-and-Sustainable-by-Design (SSbD) community in Europe and globally towards a life cycle thinking where there is a holistic integration of safety, climate neutrality, circularity and functionality of materials, products, and processes throughout their lifecycle to meet the EU Green Deal (EGD)[1], EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability (CSS), and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

One of the main objectives of the project is to establish a structure for a gender balanced and sustainable network of experts accessible for all relevant stakeholders, to support the implementation and operationalization of Safe-and-Sustainable-by-Design (SSbD) principles and tools in selected industrial value chains. The idea is to create an EU-led international permanent open and inclusive structure for long-term cooperation between the networking members, engaging partners beyond the consortium, throughout and beyond the duration of the project.
As a first step towards the achievement of this objective, a survey was carried out during the period between June and November 2022 among 31 different European and international organizations and networks dealing with materials and chemicals, to identify success factors associated with the activity of these organizations.

Based on the results of this survey, a project deliverable under the title '***Description of successful networks and key success factors***' has been elaborated, which tries to deduce lessons learned by these organisations and successful initiatives that can be useful for the new structure to be created in the IRISS project.

Regarding the legal status of the networks, two types have mainly been reported: on the one hand networks without a legal constitution, and on the other hand non-profit associations. The survey has demonstrated that both options can be successful for managing permanent materials-related networks. However, the network to be created in the project IRISS will be a permanent structure for continuous cooperation, and to provide services to target groups. For these reasons, a legal constitution might fit best for this purpose, allowing the network to provide services to industry and to participate as a beneficiary in funded projects.

In terms of membership, two types of members have been identified: organizations (companies, universities, RTOs, etc.) represented in the network by people from their respective staff, or, on the other hand, individuals, regardless of which organization they work for. A mixed model is possible in which both organizations and individuals are full members of the network. However, in the case of a non-profit association, this mixed model generates some organizational problems, which must be carefully resolved in the bylaws of the association. For example, it would have to be decided whether organizations and individuals pay the same membership fee or whether they all have the same voting rights in the election of governing bodies.

Regarding the type/profile of members, it is not possible to draw a conclusion from the survey results (see Figure 1). However, it becomes clear that it needs to be assessed, which distribution

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of different stakeholder groups (e.g., large companies, SMEs, universities, RTOs, NGOs, policymakers, etc.) would fit best for the IRISS network's purposes. Furthermore, based on the survey, a potential success factor could be a certain balance between the different profiles of network members in the decision-making bodies.

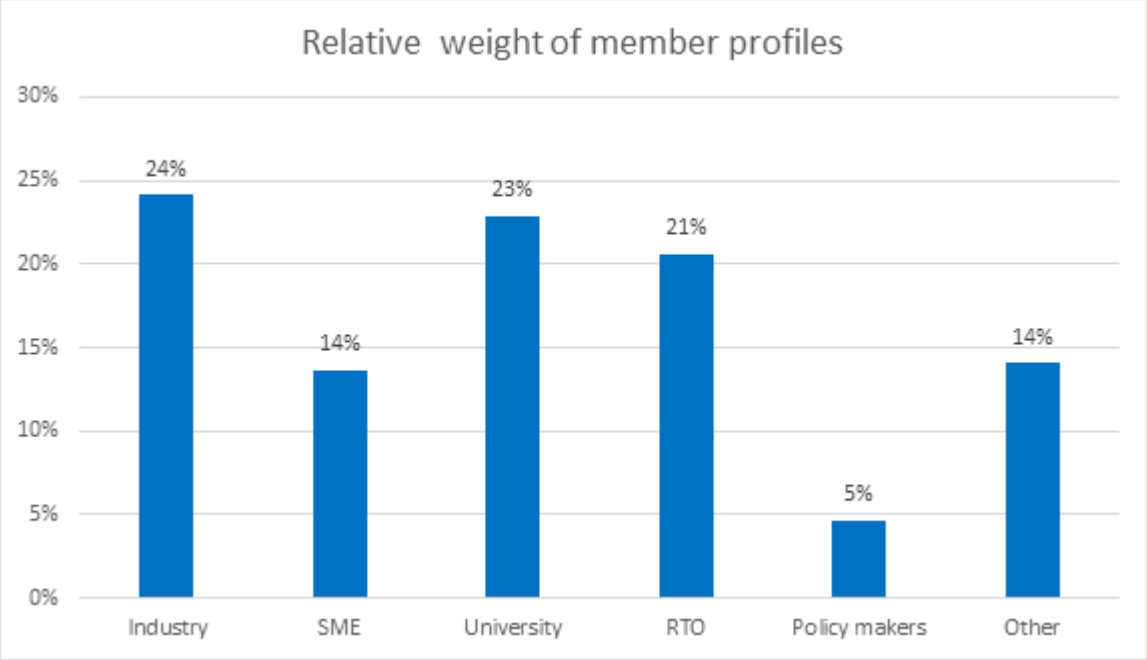

Figure 1.-Average relative weight of the different profiles in the network members

The financial sources of successful networks identified in the survey comprise membership fees, participation in funded projects, as well as revenues from organizing events (e.g., congresses, conferences, workshops). The objective set about the share of income potentially gained by membership fees needs to be tailored to balance the ambition of the IRISS network of creating an inclusive ecosystem versus the need to finance the activities of the network. The second source of income, the participation in funded projects identified in the survey by several successful permanent networks, depends on whether the network has its own staff. The participation in funded projects might be in the role as a beneficiary or indirectly, through its members. The survey did not differentiate between these two options. Furthermore, the organization of events (e.g., congresses, conferences, workshops), as well as services like training or consultancy has been reported as a financing source for successful networks and thus shall be considered in the conceptualization of the permanent IRISS network.

Finally, the survey results highlight the importance of communication aspects to the success of existing materials-related networks. Activities that are common in existing networks answering the survey included: implementing annual general assemblies, organizing thematic working groups and technical meetings, preparing newsletters, gaining visibility by continuous presence on social media channels, and maintaining an up-to-date webpage. However, although the systematic application of communication tools is important for the success of a network, the most

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important is the content. The dissemination of content tailored to the needs of industry, notably including SMEs, will be crucial for the successful implementation of Safe-and-Sustainable-by-Design (SSbD) principles and tools in selected industrial value chains.

Due to the participation of Technology Platforms in this survey, specifically the definition of strategic roadmaps and active and regular participation in the international/national priority setting on materials R&D&I, the support from the European Commission, national financing programmes, and the support and engagement of industrial and scientific stakeholders were identified as key success factors for these types of networks. To enable the IRISS network to become a science-policy-industry-interface, these activities shall be considered in the assessment of services that might be relevant to be provided by IRISS to become a successful materials-related network. Based on the outcome of this report, the IRISS Network scope and legal status will be defined within the next months.

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