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LEAP-RE

Long-Term Joint EU-AU Research and Innovation Partnership on Renewable Energy

Research & Innovation Action

D6.5 Analysis of legal options

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1. Executive Summary

Deliverables **D6.5 Analysis of legal options and D6.4 Financial model of the future partnership** were elaborated in close alignment.

LEAP-RE paved the way for a formal AU–EU platform for R&I in renewable energy. With Horizon 2020 funding ending in 2026, long-term continuation requires a permanent structure to manage co-funding, coordination, and resources.

The suggested solution is a Brussels-based INPA (International Non-Profit Association), offering a flexible, transparent, and internationally recognised framework. It would provide stable governance, sustain co-funding, handle fundraising and finances, and preserve coordination and institutional knowledge, with balanced AU–EU representation and streamlined decision-making.

This deliverable **D6.5 Analysis of legal options** describes the formation of LEAP Energy INPA to be established under Belgian law as a non-profit international association with statutes that clearly define its international utility purpose, prohibit any distribution of profits or patrimonial advantages, and strictly separate membership, governance, and funding functions. Covering the period 2026–2030, its legal architecture should be anchored in a governance structure comprising a sovereign General Assembly responsible for key decisions such as statutes, strategy, budgets, accounts, and appointments, an Executive Board overseeing management, implementation, and legal representation, and an operational Bureau or Secretariat handling day-to-day functions. To ensure balanced EU–AU representation, the statutes should embed parity or near-parity principles in Board composition, include co-chairing and rotation mechanisms, and allocate seats by institutional category while preventing either side from holding a default majority without mutual consent.

2. Context and Introduction

Launched in 2020, LEAP-RE has become a key partnership for Africa–Europe cooperation in renewable energy R&I, supporting over 45 projects and engaging more than 240 organisations across 33 countries while building a structured bi-continental collaboration framework. In addition to funding projects, it has developed core services such as an online platform, capacity-building initiatives including Renewable Energy Schools, policy dialogue activities, and strategic roadmaps. As the programme matures, sustaining these functions beyond the current grant requires a stable institutional setup. Following an assessment of governance options, the creation of a Brussels-based International Non-Profit Association (INPA) has been identified as the most practical solution, offering a balanced, mission-driven structure aligned with AU–EU policy frameworks and flexible enough to expand membership, activities, and funding. Without such institutionalisation, risks include network fragmentation, loss of coordination, weakened co-funding, and reduced long-term impact, making the establishment of a permanent legal entity essential for the sustainability and effectiveness of the partnership.

3. Purpose of Deliverable D6.5

T6.2 Partnership Governance (Task lead: FFG, Duration: M24 - M72) of WP6 Building the Partnership focuses on designing and validating governance structures that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the LEAP-RE joint platform beyond the project's lifetime. It involves analysing a wide range of partnership models for international research and innovation collaboration, including established EU frameworks (such as ERA-NETs and Joint Undertakings) and newer Horizon Europe approaches, as well as broader international models. Drawing on partners' prior experience, the consortium will assess and compare public-public, public-private, and multi-actor partnership formats, ultimately selecting the most suitable governance instrument. A draft governance scheme will then be developed, covering legal form, organisational structure, decision-making processes, financial arrangements, and statutes, and will be refined through stakeholder consultation before formal approval and presentation.

In parallel, the task addresses the financial and legal foundations required to operationalise the future partnership. This includes evaluating different financing models, engaging stakeholders to ensure feasibility and alignment, and developing a multiannual financial plan based on the selected governance approach. Legal considerations will be carefully examined, including whether a dedicated legal entity is necessary to run the platform or whether alternative arrangements are sufficient. Potential legal structures will be explored alongside constraints and enabling factors, ensuring that the final governance model is both practical and adaptable to future needs.

Deliverable D6.5 Analysis of legal options describes the decision-making process towards the governance model of the future partnership (2021–2024) as well as the alignment and synergies with **D6.1 Value proposition**, which analysed potential partnership models and instruments, and **D6.4 Financial model of the future partnership**, which derived the financial model, constituting statutes and financial management principles.

D6.5 highlights the four potential scenarios of the future partnership and the proposed governance model and legal structure for the LEAP Energy INPA.

4. Legal framework

4.1 Governance design principles

The future partnership shall have centralised responsibility for administrative, financial, reporting, and strategic coordination functions, in accordance with applicable rules and delegated authority, to ensure consistency, accountability, and efficient implementation.

The governance model should be built on parity, transparency, and functional separation of roles. EU and AU institutions should share strategic ownership, while funding decisions remain insulated from political steering and technical evaluation follows clear conflict-of-interest rules. It should also embed multi-level governance by connecting continental, national, regional, and stakeholder inputs in a structured way rather than relying only on a top-level board.

4.1.1 Core governance

The Joint Partnership Assembly should be the highest decision-making body for strategic matters such as approving the partnership vision, annual priorities, and major revisions to the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda. To keep EU-AU interests balanced, the Assembly should use parity-based representation and rotating co-chairmanship between an EU and an AU institution. Its role should be political and strategic, not operational, so that technical call management remains independent.

The Joint Strategic Board should translate strategy into operational direction and ensure coherence across funding lines, thematic priorities, and geographic participation. It should include representatives of funding organizations, policy bodies, and possibly observer seats for the European Commission and African Union-linked institutional stakeholders, reflecting the Horizon Europe expectation of strategic coordination and policy coherence. This board should also supervise annual work plans, partnership monitoring, and alignment with national and regional energy priorities.

The proposed membership categories and incentives for membership are described in detail in chapter 7.4 of D6.4 Financial model of the future partnership.

4.1.2 Multi-level governance

The model should explicitly connect continental governance with national and regional implementation. This is especially important for Africa's diversity and Europe's multilevel policy landscape, because it helps align the partnership with local needs, infrastructure constraints, and deployment pathways.

A good design would allow each participating country or region to designate a focal point for policy alignment and feedback. These focal points would feed into the Strategic Board, comment on annual work plans, and help identify synergies with national programmes.

This creates a vertical governance chain from local and national concerns to continental strategy, which is one of the main strengths of multi-level governance approaches.

As described in chapter 8 of D6.4 Financial model of the future partnership, in order to minimise fragmentation and increase the attractiveness of participation for National Funding Agencies and institutional partners the governance framework needs centralised Secretariat functions, harmonised financial and administrative procedures, shared reporting and monitoring systems and an integrated strategic planning.

4.1.3 Funding and joint AU-EU calls

Calls should be managed by a dedicated Calls Steering Committee, but with a clear firewall between strategic guidance and project selection. In LEAP-SE's successor logic, funding organisations jointly select projects from the independent evaluation ranking, while respecting national eligibility and funding constraints. This is the right model to preserve fairness while accommodating heterogeneous funding rules. The same logic can be retained and strengthened by publishing a joint call handbook, harmonized selection principles, and a transparent record of any national deviations.

To improve balance, the committee should apply a dual legitimacy rule: every call decision should be valid only if it reflects both EU and AU funding-side support, even when the exact financial contributions differ. That prevents one region from dominating outcomes through budget size alone and keeps the partnership genuinely co-owned. The committee should also publish ex ante criteria for thematic fit, geographical coverage, TRL distribution, and inclusion of underrepresented countries or institutions.

Detailed descriptions on possible contribution mechanisms of National Funding Agencies (NFA) are provided in chapter 7.5 of D6.4 Financial model of the future partnership.

4.1.4 Stakeholder co-creation

LEAP-RE should not rely only on funding agencies and ministries; it should institutionalize a Stakeholder and Innovation Forum that supports co-creation, not just consultation. This forum can bring together universities, utilities, SMEs, regulators, civil society, local authorities, and practitioner networks across both continents, mirroring the broader engagement logic used in other Horizon Europe partnerships. Its outputs should feed into strategic agenda-setting, call topic design, and dissemination priorities.

To make engagement meaningful, the forum should operate through thematic platforms, regional dialogues, and annual partnership assemblies. It should also include mechanisms for early input on emerging issues such as green hydrogen, grid integration, just transition, skills, and regulatory barriers. That would make the governance model more adaptive and more useful for real-world energy deployment, not only research coordination.

4.1.5 Accountability and learning

A Monitoring, Learning, and Impact function should sit across all levels of the model. It should track not just funded outputs, but also equity indicators such as EU-AU participation balance, country diversity, stakeholder reach, and the distribution of benefits across regions. Regular learning reviews should then feed into strategy revisions, ensuring the partnership can adapt over time rather than repeating the same priorities.

To reinforce legitimacy, the model should also include a compliance and ethics layer covering conflicts of interest, transparency in selections, data governance, and role separation between evaluators, funders, and political overseers. This is especially important in co-funded partnerships where trust depends on visible procedural fairness.

4.2 Legal option for LEAP Energy INPA

As a Belgian **INPA**, the legal framework should be built around a not-for-profit, international-purpose statute, a clear organs-of-governance structure, and strict rules separating membership, management, and funding decisions. Under Belgian law, the INPA needs statutes that define the purpose, governance bodies, and membership rules.

4.2.1 Legal architecture

The statutes should state that the INPA serves an international utility purpose and cannot distribute profits or patrimonial advantages to members, founders, or directors except to pursue the stated non-profit purpose. If the partnership expects any ancillary commercial activity, such as event services or publications, that must be expressly authorized in the statutes and kept subordinate to the non-profit purpose.

4.2.2 Governing bodies

For a partnership like LEAP Energy, the INPA should typically have **at least three core bodies: a General Assembly, an Executive Board, and an operational Bureau, including a Secretariat or Management Unit**. The General Assembly should remain the sovereign body for approving statutes, strategy, budgets, accounts, board appointments, and major membership decisions. The Board should handle overall management, implementation of GA decisions, budget execution, and legal representation of the association.

To reflect balanced EU-AU interests, the statutes should require parity or near-parity in the Board and co-chairing arrangements, with rotation rules for chair and vice-chair across EU and AU representatives. A good legal design is to divide Board seats by institutional category rather than geography alone, but require that each side cannot hold a majority by default, unless explicitly justified and approved by both constituencies. This keeps the INPA legally neutral while still embedding political balance in the internal rules.

Regarding the important issue of stakeholder involvement, chapter 4 of **D6.4 Financial model of the future partnership** describes the stakeholder value proposition and expected contributions. Hence, funding agencies, the private sector or philanthropic organisations will play an important role in financial contributions for joint calls, call steering and operational activities. The proposed governance structure is described in the next chapter.

4.2.3 Proposed structure

Level	Body	Main role	EU-AU balance
1	**General Assembly**	**Approves strategy, annual work plans, and major governance changes**	**Equal EU and AU representation, with parity rules in chairing and agenda-setting**
2	**Executive Board**	**Provides strategic oversight, resolves cross-cutting issues, monitors implementation**	**Co-chaired by EU and AU leads, with balanced membership across funding and policy actors**
3	**Bureau: Secretariat and Management Unit**	**Manages operations, reporting, communication, and follow-up**	**Jointly staffed or jointly supervised by EU and AU institutions**
4	Stakeholder and Innovation Forum	Brings in research, industry, civil society, and local actors	Open, diverse, and geographically balanced participation across Europe and Africa
5	Calls Steering Committee	Decides funding selections from ranked lists within agreed eligibility rules	Funding agencies from both regions participate equally in call-level decisions

4.2.4 Membership and representation

The statutes should define membership categories carefully: founding members, full members, associated members, and observers. Full members should be limited to organizations with a formal role in funding, policy, or implementation, while observers can include the European Commission, African Union-linked bodies, partner networks, and stakeholder platforms without voting rights. That allows broad participation without weakening the legal clarity of the association.

Representation rules should ensure that EU and AU constituencies both participate in the General Assembly and nominate Board members through their own internal processes. Membership rights should be linked to institutional commitment, financial contribution, or governance responsibility, but not to profit-sharing. If needed, the statutes can create regional colleges or blocs for nominations so that the governance remains balanced even when membership grows unevenly.

4.2.5 Decision rules

The legal framework should distinguish between three types of decisions: strategic, financial, and operational. Strategic decisions, such as adopting work programmes or amending partnership priorities, should require a qualified majority in the General Assembly and a double-majority safeguard, meaning support from both EU and AU members. Financial decisions, especially annual budgets and call envelopes, should be adopted by the Board or a dedicated committee under rules approved by the General Assembly.

For competitive funding decisions, the INPA statutes should allow the creation of a Calls Steering Committee, but make clear that it does not replace the Board or General Assembly. Its role should be limited to overseeing call procedures, validating compliance, and recommending funding selections based on ranked evaluations. This separation is important because Belgian association law expects the board to manage the association while allowing internal committees to be delegated specific tasks.

4.2.6 Compliance framework

The INPA will need a compliance framework covering accounting, annual reporting, beneficial ownership-style transparency where relevant, conflict-of-interest rules, and internal control procedures. Belgian associations are subject to bookkeeping and annual-account filing obligations, and larger associations face more extensive reporting and audit requirements. The statutes and internal rules should therefore include mandatory disclosure of conflicts, recusal procedures, and approval thresholds for related-party decisions.

The legal framework should also include an explicit clause on liability, stating that directors act collegially and within the limits of their mandate, and that they must follow the association's internal rules and delegated authority. It is also prudent to define who can sign contracts, who can open bank accounts, and which acts require dual signatures. For a cross-continental partnership, this avoids ambiguity in day-to-day operations.

4.2.7 Suggested statute clauses

A practical statute package for LEAP Energy INPA should include:

- Purpose clause: international research and innovation cooperation on sustainable energy

- Membership clause: categories, admission, suspension, and withdrawal
- Governance clause: General Assembly, Executive Board, Secretariat, Committees
- Representation clause: balanced EU-AU nomination and co-chairing
- Voting clause: ordinary majority, qualified majority, and double-majority for key matters.
- Finance clause: budget, contributions, audits, and non-distribution
- Delegation clause: authority limits for committees and management
- Conflict-of-interest clause: disclosure, recusal, and sanctions
- Dissolution clause: asset lock to another public-interest purpose
- Language and seat clause: Belgian registered office and official languages as needed

4.2.8 Recommended legal framework drafting approach

The legal framework could be drafted in two layers:

1. Elaborate the INPA statutes for the legally required core rules,
2. Identify a set of internal rules of procedure for the detailed governance system in order to keep the statutes stable and legally robust, while allowing the partnership to adapt call procedures, stakeholder forums, and working groups without repeated notarial amendments. This approach is also consistent with how many Belgian INPAs organise governance in practice.

5. Annex

5.1 Decision making process of the Future Partnership

The decision-making process of the Future Partnership (2021–2024) combined vision building, foresight methods such as scenario building, a value proposition, a stakeholder consultation, and iterative structuring to define the foundations of the AU–EU LEAP Energy partnership.

Initial vision setting

The first workshop in Nairobi in November 2021 established the strategic rationale and core priorities. Participants agreed that stronger AU–EU cooperation is necessary to tackle shared challenges such as renewable energy deployment and achieving the Paris Agreement targets. Key barriers identified included weak political commitment, unequal access to technology, and fragmented research collaboration.

To address these, stakeholders defined several priority directions, such as:

- Integrate renewable energy into national and regional policies
- Build long-term joint research and innovation platforms
- Position the partnership as a central forum for policy dialogue and coordination

A strong emphasis was placed on leveraging African innovation ecosystems. This included supporting SMEs and start-ups, fostering innovation clusters, linking energy to other sectors, and ensuring access to funding and private sector participation. Proposed operational tools such as a centralised platform for matchmaking, project visibility, and knowledge sharing reflected a practical, service-oriented approach.

Structuring objectives through foresight

The second workshop in Pretoria in October 2022 translated this vision into structured objectives and actions. Using a back casting methodology (starting from a desired future and working backward), participants defined short-, medium-, and long-term goals across four dimensions, i.e. Technology and services, Community and stakeholder engagement, Long-term funding and Governance.

This method enabled participants to bypass current constraints and identify concrete milestones, policy needs, and implementation steps required to achieve long-term impact.

Short-term decisions

In the near term, the focus was on building a solid foundation for the partnership:

- Develop a sustainable governance structure.

- Map stakeholders, benchmark existing initiatives, and identify synergies.
- Introduce continuous improvement tools (e.g., SWOT analysis, monitoring systems).
- Clarify complementary roles of public and private sectors, with public actors ensuring coordination and funding frameworks, and private actors contributing market insight and innovation direction.

Medium- and long-term direction

For the longer term, participants outlined a gradual institutionalisation pathway:

- Medium term: establish a flexible, ´light´ governance structure, potentially supported by a virtual centre and stronger alignment across stakeholders and funding schemes.
- Long term: evolve into a more formalised partnership with an independent agency, governmental backing, and a lean secretariat responsible for implementation and monitoring.

The ultimate objective was to ensure sustainable impact through coordinated R&D, long-term funding, and tangible outcomes such as innovation uptake, business creation, and job generation.

5.1.1 Vision building in 2021 and 2022

The first Vision building workshop took place on 23–25 November 2021, in Nairobi, Kenya. Organised by LGI, workshop participants stressed that stronger AU–EU cooperation is essential to address global challenges such as renewable energy adoption and meeting the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C target, despite barriers including limited political will, unequal access to technologies, and insufficient joint research frameworks. They highlighted the need to integrate renewable energy into national policies, establish long-term research platforms, and position LEAP-RE as a key forum for multilateral dialogue and policy influence. Harnessing African innovation was identified as critical, with emphasis on supporting SMEs and start-ups, building innovation clusters, linking energy to other sectors, and ensuring dedicated funding and private sector engagement, alongside connections to initiatives like ENRICH in Africa to scale solutions. Proposed LEAP-RE services included a centralised platform for project visibility and matchmaking, co-development of priorities and investments, and enhanced knowledge-sharing through training, workshops, and communication tools, alongside structured support to promote African innovation and provide practical resources and repositories.

In a second Vision building workshop on 6 October 2022, in Pretoria, South Africa, organised by FFG and LGI, four groups co-created the main short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives of the future Partnership, as well as measures and high-impact activities regarding

- Technology and Services

- Community Building and Stakeholder involvement
- Long-term Funding
- Governance and long-term Partnership

The foresight workshop used the back casting methodology planning and envisioning a desirable future end-state working backward to the present. By bypassing current constraints, it helped to identify the intermediate milestones, actionable steps, and policy changes required to achieve ambitious, long-term goals.

Workshop participants identified a range of high-impact short-term actions to support the preparation of a sustainable governance structure for LEAP-RE. Participants emphasised learning from existing partnerships and institutions through stakeholder mapping, benchmarking, and the identification of synergies and shared objectives. A strong focus was placed on continuous improvement, including the use of SWOT analysis, monitoring mechanisms, and learning from past challenges. The importance of aligning public and private sector roles was highlighted, with public actors ensuring long-term funding frameworks and coordination, while private sector actors contribute market insight and innovation priorities. Strengthening collaboration between these sectors and ensuring a diverse funding base were seen as key enablers.

For the medium to long term, the workshop proposed establishing a flexible “light” governance structure, potentially supported by a virtual centre, alongside stronger strategic alignment across stakeholders, funding schemes, and thematic priorities. In the longer term, participants envisioned a more formalised partnership supported by an independent agency with governmental backing, a clear value proposition to international bodies, and a lean but effective secretariat responsible for implementation, monitoring, and stakeholder engagement. The ultimate goal is to ensure sustainable impact through long-term funding, coordinated R&D efforts, and tangible outcomes such as innovation uptake, enterprise creation, and job development.

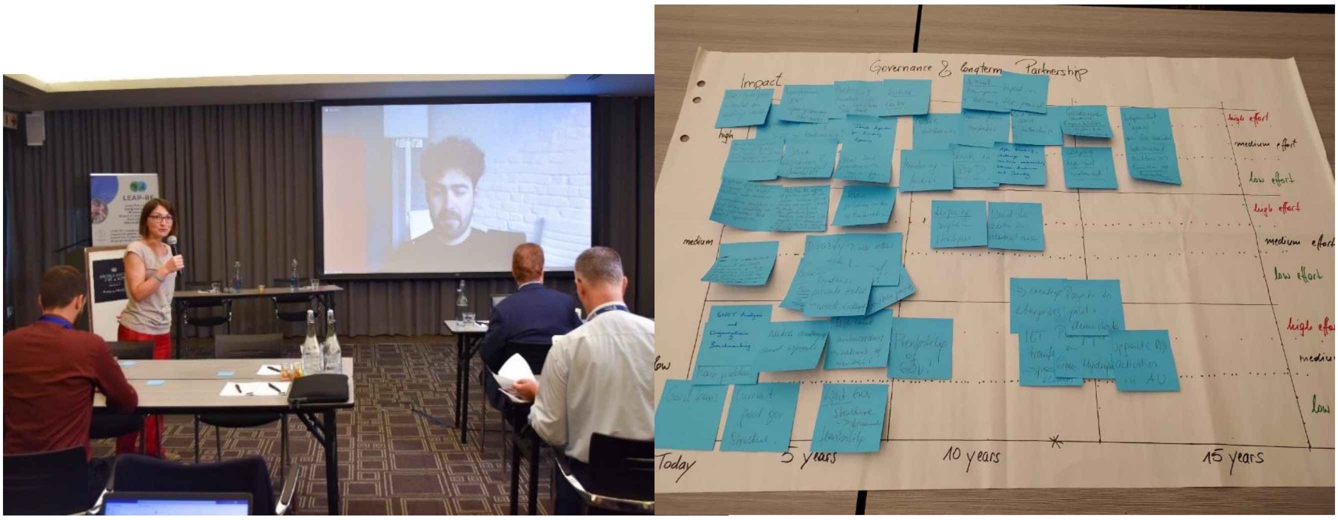

Photo: Elli Tzatzanis-Stepanovic, FFG (Austria) explaining the foresight workshop process

5.1.2 Value proposition in 2023 and 2024

In three online value proposition workshops, organised by LGI, on 7 September 2023 addressing the private sector, on 29 January 2024 targeting funding agencies and on 30 January 2024 jointly with project portfolio partners, stakeholders' needs and expectations have been collected for a lasting AU-EU partnership in R&I for renewable energies. The goal was to define the value proposition of the future partnership in order to inform its long-term strategic role and business model.

5.1.3 Stakeholder consultation in 2024

A Stakeholder consultation workshop, organised by LGI and FFG, took place on 8-11 October 2024 at the Stakeholder Forum in Milan, Italy.

The results of the working **group discussion on Governance** (represented by 4 female experts and 2 male experts, three representing Africa, three representing Europe) were, that the future partnership shall be an umbrella organisation with a balanced representation of EU and AU representatives. Ideally, it shall work under a blended mechanism as a private-public partnership comprising different organisations and shareholders, among others, the EU Delegation, African policymakers, regional governments in Africa, development agencies, funding agencies, businesses and community-based organisation (SMEs, NGOs, cooperatives, etc.)

The holistic and long-term aspect of the partnership is important, so different crucial thematic priorities could be tackled, such as Food, Health, Water, Renewable Energies, etc. and initiatives and projects involved could have continuing impact.

Photo (left to right): Magda Moner, Joint Research Centre (Italy), Susan Onyango, Geo2D (France), Nicobert Elouga, MINRESI (Cameroon), Djilali Tassalit, CDER (Algeria) and Rachele Nocera, MUR (Italy), Photo credit: Elli Tzatzanis-Stepanovic, FFG (Austria)

5.1.4 Long-term partnership scenarios

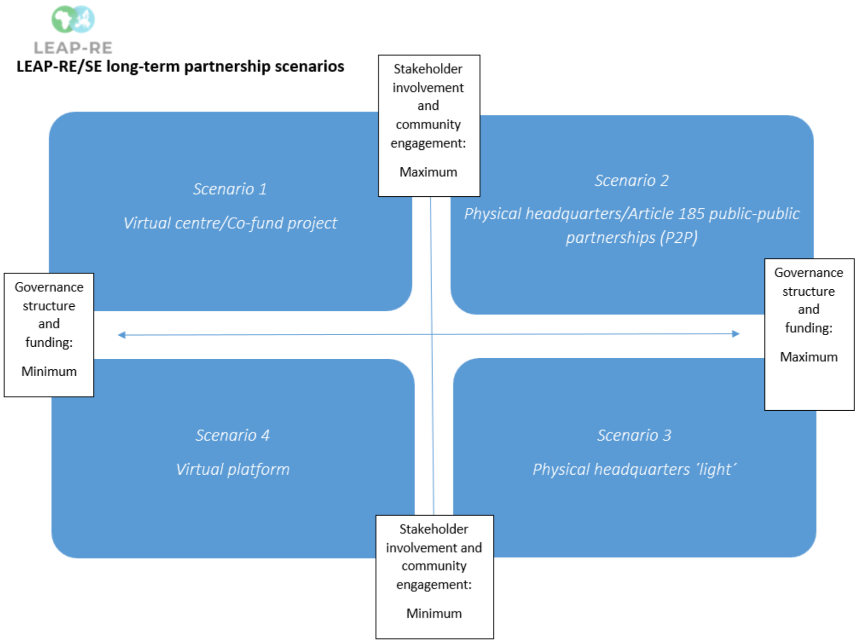

Figure 1: Four possible partnership scenarios suggested by FFG, according to Stakeholder involvement and community engagement (max-min) and Governance structure and funding (max-min)

Dependent on the future level of stakeholder and community engagement as well as the governance structure and long-term funding the following four possible scenarios were identified as result of the decision-making process (see Figure 1).

- Scenario 1: A **Virtual Centre/Co-fund Project** with minimal governance and funding requirements but high stakeholder engagement.
- Scenario 2: A **Physical Headquarters with Article 185 Public-Public Partnerships (P2P)**, requiring substantial governance and funding, alongside strong community engagement.
- Scenario 3: A **"Light" Physical Headquarters** that provides sufficient governance and funding but involves limited stakeholder engagement.
- Scenario 4: A **Virtual Platform** model with minimized governance/funding and stakeholder/community involvement.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Program under Grant Agreement 963530.

Description of the four partnership scenarios

Scenario 1: Virtual centre **Stakeholder involvement and community engagement: High-Maximum** **Governance structure and funding: Minimum-Low** **Key facts:** High stakeholder involvement, Enlarged community beyond LEAP-RE/SE programme partners and critical mass built, Regular virtual activities for matching and twinning of stakeholders, as well as clustering webinars to share research results and best practices, Promotion of results, projects, services using LEAP-RE/SE app and existing social media accounts, Cooperation with other communities, Synergies and collaboration with job platforms, Scientific communication on climate change and digital services, Collaboration with the 5 Regional Centres for RE in Africa, Involvement of experts as well as non-technical energy practitioners like lawyers, financial managers in capacity building activities, Provide a tool where all the projects will be inserting the experiments/demonstration sites and all the innovation products produced linked with the geographic position and project **EC funding is available in the form of a co-fund project**

Scenario 2: Physical headquarters **Stakeholder involvement and community engagement: High-Maximum** **Governance structure and funding: High-Maximum** **Key facts:** Coordination infrastructure supported by the member states in the AU and EU, High stakeholder and government-level involvement, Organisation of Capacity building Forums, Dissemination of results through publications and workshops, as well as participation in conferences, Synergies and possibilities for increased collaboration with multilateral organisations, NGOs and associations, Lobbying activities for the national governments and regional governance bodies in term of R&I and RE agendas, Organisation of international events with other projects/programmes, Development of knowledge management and communication units to support research uptake and exchange of knowledge and skills, Expert pool for governmental support of science based policy, Membership fees Article 185 initiatives are long term public-public partnerships (P2P) established on a voluntary basis by EU Member States that are also eligible for a substantial financial contribution from the EU Research Framework Programme. They are established through the EU ordinary legislative procedure and require a Dedicated Implementation Structure (DIS).

Scenario 3: Physical headquarters ´light´ **Stakeholder involvement and community engagement: Minimum-Low** **Governance structure and funding: High-Maximum** **Key facts:** Long-term secretariat with lean management and vertical transparency and exchange of information, High-level (government-level) involvement, Governance ensures funding and is responsible for long-term financing: Funding agencies are responsible to follow-up and ensure long-term projects and align a joint agenda for funding, Governance structure ensures flexible agreements and high level ambassadors promote a committed network of members with active core member EU-AU innovation observatory on RE, Empowerment by promoting cooperation between universities and stakeholders of innovation ecosystems,

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Involvement of universities and start-ups to collaborate in RE implementations and upscaling **No funding from the EC**

Scenario 4: Virtual platform **Stakeholder involvement and community engagement: Minimum-Low** **Governance structure and funding: Minimum-Low** **Key facts:** Central virtual community platform with online clustering activities for matching and twinning of stakeholders, Capacity building webinars to share research results and best practices, Promotion of results, projects, services using LEAP-RE/SE app and existing social media accounts, Focus on online services, such as technology infrastructure roadmaps established for R&I, portfolio of scientific breakthrough technologies that actors can easily use and improve, Exchange and matchmaking possibilities (i.e. community clusters) for African scientists within Africa, Promotion of success stories and on-demand trainings, Periodic newsletters **No funding from the EC**

5.2 Value proposition in D6.1 published in October 2025

D6.1 analyses the different partnership scenarios and legal entity options, including European Partnerships and other types of legal entities.

Most probable scenarios of the four possible scenarios were Scenario 1, a Virtual centre or Co-fund project, reflecting the situation with LEAP-RE and LEAP-SE projects. Scenario 3, a Physical headquarter ´light´, was considered very probable as well, assuming that long-term funding can be ensured, even if stakeholder and community engagement is not ideally and highly available.

Scenario 2, a public-public partnership according to Art 185/187 of TFEU and the EIT Regulation for 2021-2027, was not a plausible nor realistic scenario. This option needed to be strategically discussed and accepted on a high policy level with the EC.

Scenario 4 was not a preferred scenario as a minimum amount of stakeholder involvement and community engagement was anticipated and a minimum to no funding would have been assumed.

The Value proposition in D6.1 gives an overview of legal entity types and describes the following recommendations.

1. The partnership should directly formalise its structure by establishing an **INPA (international nonprofit association under Belgian law) to ensure continuity beyond current funding, ideally by Q1 2026**. This entity would provide a stable framework to maintain operations, strengthen collaboration among existing members, and attract new stakeholders while enabling access to additional funding opportunities such as Horizon

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Europe. It would also support core activities and partnerships, while adopting a distinct name that reflects LEAP-RE's legacy without causing confusion.

2. At the strategic level, **LEAP-RE should strengthen alignment with key policy frameworks and stakeholders, including EU institutions (such as DG RTD, DG INTPA, and JRC) and broader Africa-EU initiatives**. Active engagement with policymakers, funders, and partners will ensure the initiative remains relevant and responsive to evolving energy and sustainability priorities. At the same time, LEAP-RE should consolidate its efforts around its unique strengths, focusing on bridging the gap between research and market readiness and supporting its portfolio of funded and upcoming projects.
3. Looking ahead, the partnership should prioritise supporting **high-TRL projects in reaching commercialisation by building stronger lab-to-market mechanisms and connecting innovators with market actors**. It should also deepen collaboration with similar initiatives to create synergies and avoid duplication, for example through formal agreements. Finally, diversifying funding sources—including private sector, philanthropic, and blended finance—will be essential to ensure long-term financial sustainability and match funding approaches to the maturity of different projects.

The recommended governance model for LEAP-RE prioritises inclusivity, flexibility, and balanced participation between African and European stakeholders. It proposes a distributed structure without a physical headquarters in the short to medium term, supported by a non-profit association format. This structure would include a general assembly, a board of directors, and thematic working groups to ensure both strategic oversight and operational responsiveness. Core governance principles include equal AU–EU representation, broad stakeholder inclusion across sectors, adaptability to evolving challenges, and alignment with key policy frameworks such as the AU Agenda 2063 and EU initiatives.

A key recommendation is to formalise **LEAP Energy through the creation of an international non-profit association (INPA)**. This legal structure would enable continuity of activities beyond the project's funding period, support collaboration among existing and new partners, and facilitate access to additional funding opportunities. The association would also act as a platform for partnerships and synergies with other initiatives, while maintaining core functions such as thematic coordination and project support. Establishing this entity by early 2026 is advised to ensure a smooth transition, with the flexibility to evolve into more complex governance arrangements over time.

5.3 Financial Model of the future partnership in D6.4

Bringing together key stakeholders and funding agencies across Africa and Europe in one partnership, and as its Horizon 2020 funding ends in 2026, long-term sustainability depends on establishing a permanent structure. The preferred solution is the creation of a Brussels-based

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International Non-Profit Association (INPA), offering a flexible and recognized framework to ensure governance continuity, coordinated stakeholder engagement, financial accountability, and sustained co-funding mechanisms. This future entity will support ongoing collaboration through a balanced governance model and a diversified financial approach combining membership fees, public and project-based funding, service revenues, and strategic partnerships, as outlined in the implementation plan for 2026–2030.

References

Deliverable 6.1 Value proposition

Deliverable 6.4 Financial Model of the future partnership

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