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EU Framework Programme: Call for Evidence response form

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The closing date for this call for evidence is 4 January 2011

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✓	Other (please describe): UKCDS is a collaboration between 7 Government departments, 5 Research Councils and the Wellcome Trust.

This response has not been approved by UKCDS members. It was not circulated to members for approval because of time constraints and because a number of UKCDS members are submitting their own responses covering a greater breadth of questions.

This response has been prepared by the UKCDS secretariat based on **its experience as INCO NCP and nominated expert on the INCO Programme Committee** with some input from some members. Consequently, this response focuses on issues relating to International Cooperation within the Framework Programme. The document provides a detailed response to question 12, before addressing a few other questions less comprehensively.

Question 12: How should FP8 engage with countries outside the EU or associated to the Framework Programme in addressing global challenges?

12.1 Background

In FP6, International Cooperation (INCO) with countries other than MS was funded through a dedicated INCO funding stream. In FP7 this changed and the FP was 'opened up' for 'third countries' (all countries other than MS and AC) to participate in more fully. However, there are criteria, which in part depend on the type of call, about which countries are eligible for funding from the EU.

Inviting developing and emerging third countries to participate across FP7 on an equal footing with the member states is welcome, as it demonstrates Europe's determination to work closely with third country researchers, treating them as equals, and thus making Europe more attractive as a research partner. The disadvantage of this approach is that the way in which third countries can participate

varies and can be complicated, and the rules are often not clear to researchers and Governments in 'third countries', and indeed collaborating partners in Member States. Consequently the participation of third countries can vary and the current system can lead to frustration on all sides.

12.2 Current situation

The approach of 'opening up' FP7 has been implemented in the Cooperation Programme by opening all topics in the thematic areas to all third countries. This includes new dedicated actions and calls for third countries. There are also Specific International Cooperation Actions (SICAs) in each thematic area, which name what country or regions should be involved, where there is mutual interest.

In addition to opening up the themes in the Cooperation Programme, there are the 'International Cooperation Activities' of the Capacities Programme. This has employed five main instruments for funding activities between 2007-2010:

1. **INCO-NETs:** bi-regional coordination of S&T cooperation including priority-setting and definition of S&T cooperation policies;
2. **BILATs:** bilateral coordination for the enhancement and development of S&T Partnerships;
3. **ERA-NETs and ERA-NET Plus:** supporting the coordination of national policies and activities of member states and associated countries in the field of international S&T cooperation;
4. **Access4EU:** Supporting the EU access to third country programmes;
5. **INCO-NCP:** Supporting the trans-national cooperation among National Contact Points (NCPs).
6. **ERA-Wide:** strengthening the capacity of research centres in ENP countries, which are not associated to FP7, through networking with research centres in MS and AC, training and strategy development

12.3 INCO in FP8

We would suggest that the objectives of the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme should remain objectives for international cooperation in general in FP8:

- Support European competitiveness through strategic partnerships with third countries in selected fields of science and by engaging the best third country scientists to work in and with Europe;
- Enhance the production of knowledge and scientific excellence by enabling European universities, research institutions and firms to establish contact with their partners in third countries, thereby facilitating access to research environments outside Europe and promoting synergies on a global scale;
- Address specific problems that third countries face or that have a global character, on the basis of mutual interest and mutual benefit.

However, these objectives should also explicitly include reducing global poverty and improving the development opportunities for low income countries.

The question of whether FP8 should revert back to the FP6 approach of ring fencing money for cooperation with third counties, which is simpler to understand, promote and monitor; or if it should continue with the approach adopted in FP7, in which

international cooperation is mainstreamed, can be argued both ways. To some extent it will depend on the overall structure of FP8 (see suggestion under question 11 for differentiating between European Grand Challenges and Global Grand Challenges).

Mainstreaming international cooperation, rather than making it a separate part of the programme expresses the right message: that the EU is part of a global scientific endeavour. However, the Commission should consider setting a target for International Cooperation. This may be an inspirational target that expresses the EU's desire to work with the rest of the world, but should be backed up by a mechanism to help achieve the target. For example, having a dedicated call for international cooperation, such as in FP6, as well opening up the Framework Programme may enable this. The target could be set according to the type of country (see below), to ensure that it is not only developed and emerging economies that are substantively included.

There are also a number of lessons that need to be learnt from FP7 and considered carefully as FP8 is developed:

12.4 Lessons to take forward

Given the FP7 has adopted a new approach to INCO it is inevitable that it won't be perfect immediately. However, lessons from the Interim Evaluation report need to be addressed and also considered during planning for FP8.

12.4.1 Need for a more coherent strategy in FP8

Under International Cooperation in the Capacities programme over 71 million Euros have been spent on the types of activities listed above (INCO NETs, BILAT, etc). The interim evaluation of this programme has revealed there has been duplication between many of these activities, and that some are likely to have limited impact. For example, the aim of a number of these activities has been to identify common research priorities between the EU and other regions or countries, with the purpose being to inform the thematic calls emerging from the Cooperation theme. However, a lack of a coherent strategy from the Commission for utilising the results of these activities has meant that very few have been taken up by programme committees or other DGs, limiting the value of these activities and causing frustration amongst those involved. And in the case of ICT, DG INFSO has independently undertaken many of the activities (joint identification of policy priorities, mapping of opportunities, etc) that the INCO instruments have been funded to do.

Perhaps as a result of INCO being dispersed throughout the programme there is now a range of committees with responsibility for International Cooperation on some level, including:

- The Strategic Forum for International Cooperation (SFIC): A committee of MS established in 2008/09 to drive forward the European Partnership for S&T cooperation.
- Research in International Cooperation (RIC)– an internal Commission forum established to improve coordination between the various DGs with responsibility for international cooperation in research (eg DG Information

Societies, DG Education and Culture, DF Energy, et), the thematic Directorates and the International Cooperation Directorate within DG Research.

- INCO Programme Committee – A committee of MS who discuss and approve the work programme for International Cooperation in the Capacities programme.
- Cooperation Programme Committees – Programme committees for each of the thematic areas under the Cooperation Programme who are responsible for discussing and approving each theme work programme - including the international cooperation elements of it.

Before FP8 is agreed on, there needs to be a review and consolidation of these committees, and clear levels of responsibility and reporting of committees with overlapping remits need to be established early on to avoid confusion and duplication.

12.4.2 Level of Participation

The level of participation of third countries should continue to be monitored. It seems that there is slightly higher participation from third countries in FP7 than in FP6, but there is certainly scope for further improvement – and the EC, in the presentation 'Four years of FP7: Figures, trends and lessons' made to the RIC in November 2010 shows some themes are lagging in terms of international cooperation (eg ICT, NMP, TPT, ENERGY). As previously suggested, a target could be set for participation from outside the EU in FP8 to ensure it is not too Eurocentric. However, a mechanism to deliver this target would be necessary – for example, a minimum number of calls that require third country participation or a dedicated INCO research call.

12.4.3 Categorisation of countries

The interim evaluation of INCO activities in the capacities programme of FP7 suggest that countries other than MS and AC should not be named 'third countries' but should be classified into groups based on their combined economic standing and scientific potential. Whilst the Commission may want to encourage some internal differentiation of approach to different countries, we suggest that labelling the 'group A, B and C', as recommended, should be avoided, not least because of the message this will send out. Countries labelled as 'C' by the EU may be offended by this; and in addition countries may have pockets of excellence in particular disciplines within them. We would suggest FP8 takes a more nuanced approach to cooperation with countries with varying levels of scientific competence – a more flexible, differentiated approach that takes into account the context of the cooperation, but does not seek to publicly 'label' countries according to the Commission's assessment of them. The agreed definitions of High Income, Middle Income and Low Income countries could be used. If a target for the level of international cooperation was to be adopted, it could be different for different types of countries – to ensure that participation from low income countries is not limited by participation of middle and high income countries.

12.4.4 Sustainability of INCO activities in Capacities Programme
The sustainability of the activities funded under INCO in the capacities programme in FP7 is an issue that needs to be considered when designing FP8. Many INCO activities involve mapping the science and policy landscape in third counties, building links at a policy and research level, and training people in third countries in understanding and accessing the FP. These are time-limited projects funded for a few years and yet in many cases an argument can be made for them being longer-term activities. It should be considered how some of the work funded under INCO in the Capacities Programme of FP7 can be consolidated and perhaps scaled down to provide something more sustainable rather than a series of one-off projects. For example, rather than projects providing training for 'third countries' on the FP, a central service could provide ongoing training and support to countries the require it, enabling longer-term relationships to be built rather than providing a range of one of courses of varying quality through a range of consultants.

12.4.5 Dissemination and utilisation of information on International Cooperation
This builds on the point above. There have been a wide range of mapping activities and development of websites with information on the funding and policy landscape of third countries. Much of this has been very uncoordinated, of varying quality and often difficult to find (as the interim evaluation states) – there is a need for the Commission to take the lead on ensuring the outputs from Coordinated Support Actions are well communicated, well linked in with similar projects and that they are of good quality and maintained. If these websites remain unlinked and go out of date within a year of funding for these projects finishing, the value of these projects will be limited. The results of the project are also likely to be useful when considering international cooperation in FP8 (including the research priorities identified.)

12.5.6 Research and innovation capacity building
The framework programme should complement efforts by other DGs to strengthen research and innovation capacity in low income countries. Whilst some may argue that strengthening research and innovation capacity in low income countries is not the role of DG Research and the Framework Programme, we would suggest it should be collaborating with DG Development and others over this issue, as this work will be improved if the experience, expertise and networks of contacts of the different DGs are utilised. This has begun to happen, but more should be encouraged in FP8.

12.5.7. Speaking with one voice
The Commission and some Member States have suggested that the EU should speak with one voice when it comes to working with countries outside the EU. Whilst is important that members states are more coordinated in their approach and more aware of each other's activities, we would anticipate that countries like the UK, which has historical and cultural ties with some 'third countries', may wish to maintain bi-lateral relationships with these countries as well as working through the EU, where value can be added.

Main messages relating to International Cooperation

- There has been too much duplication and a distinct lack of join up of activities relating to international cooperation and collaboration in FP7 to date. Activities

at the strategic level have not fed into activities at the implementation level and many overlapping activities have occurred in isolation. FP8 needs to be designed to avoid this and to take account of lessons highlighted in the interim evaluation of FP7.

- The criteria around which countries can participate and be funded, and when, needs to be simplified so that it can be better communicated to researchers in MS, AC and other countries.
- Cooperation and collaboration with 'third countries' needs to be increased – and setting a target for level of engagement should be considered, along with a mechanism to deliver the target.
- The Commission has not focussed enough on the sustainability, dissemination and utilisation of activities aimed at improving international cooperation, for example, policy dialogues and mapping the scientific and policy landscapes of countries. One-off activities that quickly become out-of-date may not be the best use of resources and FP8 might require a different approach.
- Working across DGs has improved to some extent, but more could be done to ensure the FP8 is more integrated into the work of DGs other than DG Research. In particular, DG Development and DG Research could collaborate further on strengthening research capacity in low income countries.

Other questions

Question 10: What are the arguments for and against FP8 moving towards funding research and development which addresses grand challenges?

An argument for FP8 moving towards funding research and development which addresses 'grand challenges' is that these are challenges that cannot be tackled by one or two countries alone. These are challenges that require international cooperation and collaboration – and beyond the MS and AC. If FP8 goes down this route, it will be important to get the international cooperation element of it correct (see discussion above). A draw back of focussing on grand challenges is that smaller issues that are of relevance to the EU or regions within the EU may be neglected.

Question11: Which grand challenges (see above) are best tackled on an EU-wide rather than a national level? Within these areas which particular aspects would benefit from an interdisciplinary focus?

Most 'grand challenges' in science require tackling at a global level. These include: Climate change; energy; water and food security; many health issues; protection of natural resources. BIS may want to consider how defined these challenges should be (eg Energy or low cost, low carbon energy) – and whether there should be a differentiation between European challenges and Global challenges. If the grand challenges were to be defined in this way, then the 'Global Grand Challenges' could require cooperation with third countries.

Question 28: What should be the role of public-private partnerships in FP8?

If there is to be a role for public-private partnerships in FP8, we would recommend that lessons are learnt from previous PPPs before this is developed. For example,

DFID has been involved in a number of public private partnerships in research[1]– and could provide useful learning to advise BIS on this area. And a report produced by the DFID human development resource centre provides lessons from Product Development Partnerships in the area of neglected diseases.[2] Other approaches should also be considered, such as those used by the Technology Strategy Board.

Question 30: What steps could be taken to ensure that knowledge gained from FP8 is disseminated and exploited – and remains easily accessible over time?

Please see response to question 8 with regards to activities funded under INCO.

Question 42: Please add additional comments here in relation to UK interests in the Framework Programme.

In negotiating the next FP, BIS should keep in mind wider Government ambitions. For example, the UK Government remains committed to reducing global poverty and improving the development opportunities for low income countries. The participation of researchers from the least developed countries, and the need for research on international development issues should be argued for in negotiations.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you tick the box below.
Please acknowledge this reply ✓

[1] http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/AboutDFID.asp?page=PublicPrivateResearch
[2] http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/hdrc/lssns-pdps-estb-dev-new-hlth-tech-negl-diseases.pdf.