

# International Cooperation Activities of the Seventh Framework Programme's, Capacities Programme - Interim Evaluation

Report of the Expert Group

Brian Warrington – Rapporteur  
Andrea Ricci - Lena Tsipouri - Ralf Wilken

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Research and Innovation  
Directorate D – International Cooperation

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Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011

ISBN: 978-92-79-19451-1

DOI: 10.2777/45181

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*Printed in Luxembourg*

PRINTED ON ELEMENTAL CHLORINE-FREE BLEACHED PAPER (ECF)

# The Expert Group on the Interim Evaluation of the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme

We, the undersigned, the Expert Group on the Interim Evaluation of the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programmes, are pleased to present our report to the European Commission.

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# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>10</b>
1.1. Background .....	10
1.2. Objectives and Questions to be Addressed .....	10
1.3. Scope .....	11
1.4. Methodology .....	11
<b>2. Background to International Science and Technology Cooperation in the EU</b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1. Evolution of EU Policy .....	12
2.2. The Strategic Forum for International Cooperation (SFIC) .....	13
2.3. Bilateral S&T Agreements .....	13
2.4. The Framework Programme .....	14
2.5. The International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme - Intervention Logic ...	17
<b>3. The International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme in Figures</b> .....	<b>20</b>
3.1. Calls and Projects Dataset .....	20
3.2. FP7 Inco Calls and Budget .....	20
3.3. Applications and Success Rate .....	21
3.4. Funded projects .....	21
3.5. Consortia and EU vs Third Country Participation .....	22
3.6. EU MS / AC Participation .....	24
3.7. Distribution of Project Effort .....	25
3.8. Distribution of Project Funding .....	26
<b>4. Specific Activities</b> .....	<b>27</b>
4.1. Introduction .....	27
4.2. The INCO-NET Activity .....	27
4.3. The BILAT Activity .....	32
4.4. The ERA-NET Activity .....	37
4.5. The Access4EU Activity .....	40
4.6. The INCO-NCP Activity .....	43
<b>5. Achievements and Issues</b> .....	<b>47</b>
5.1. Introduction .....	47
5.2. Support to Policy Dialogue .....	47
5.3. Capacity Building .....	50
5.4. Networking and Partnership Building .....	52
5.5. Assessment and Monitoring .....	55
5.6. Dissemination and Outreach .....	57
5.7. Coordination with Other Community Instruments .....	60
<b>6. Main Findings and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>62</b>
6.1. Short-term Recommendations .....	62
6.2. Medium-term Actions .....	64
6.3. Perspectives for the Future .....	69
<b>Annex A. Methodology</b> .....	<b>77</b>
A.1 Evaluation Team .....	77
A.2 General Approach .....	77
A.3 Sources of Information .....	77
A.4 Questionnaires .....	78
A.5 Limitations .....	78
<b>Annex B. List of FP7 International Cooperation Calls</b> .....	<b>79</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>80</b>

# Executive Summary

## Background

This report presents the findings of a team of external experts engaged by the European Commission to undertake an interim evaluation of the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme of the Seventh Framework Programmes (FP7).

The Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP) was launched in 1983, and has been the key financial instrument to promote EU-led international cooperation in S&T. It aims to build upon the initiatives of the Member States in order to tackle sub-criticality in European research and development, and has been a powerful mechanism for catalysing European science and technology that could only be realised through action at the European level.

The Sixth Framework Programme (2002 - 2006) saw the general opening of the FP to all third countries, including those falling into the category of industrialised countries. Europe's continuous endeavours to realise its ambitions regarding the European Research Area (ERA) concept have been another powerful driver towards increased international cooperation in S&T. In order to address better this evolving EU policy, the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) differs significantly from its predecessors and is based on two main thrusts. The previous dedicated budgets for international cooperation have been discontinued in favour of integration of an international dimension into each of the Themes of the Cooperation Programme. The thematic initiatives are complemented by a suite of coordination and support actions which form part of the Capacities Programme. New funding instruments have been introduced to promote the new approach, to improve the coordination with third country research actions, and to improve geographic and thematic targeting.

This evaluation has reviewed the achievements and issues of the various International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme. It has looked at the Activities both from a vertical as well as from six horizontal perspectives – support to policy dialogue, capacity building, networking, assessment, dissemination and coordination with other Community instruments. One of the main constraints of the evaluation has been that insufficient time has elapsed for the activities to have had any real effect on participation of third countries in FP7, thus limiting the possibilities of a proper impact assessment.

The Expert Group finds that the International Cooperation Activities made a significant contribution to the main principles and objectives highlighted in the Strategic European Framework for International Science and Technology Cooperation<sup>1</sup>, while recognising that there are opportunities for improving the effectiveness of its various initiatives.

The report concludes by summarising the main findings and making a number of proposals for improvements to the programme at both strategic and operational level, as well as putting forward a number of policy options for future consideration.

## Opening up the ERA to the world

The EU's strategy for international S&T cooperation uses the term 'third countries' to collectively group all countries not associated to the Framework Programme, leading to lack of clarity regarding the strategic direction and prioritisation of international cooperation endeavours. It is suggested that this terminology is replaced by a more sophisticated approach, and some recommendations in this regard are made in the final chapter of this report.

One of the cardinal aims of the EU's international cooperation initiatives is that of fostering S&T cooperation with key third countries, generally considered to be those with which the EU has a Science and Technology (S&T) Agreement in place. For these countries a targeted bilateral approach was adopted, allowing focused and intensive efforts tailored to the particular situation of the targeted country. Third countries participated enthusiastically in these activities, often taking the lead and exhibiting a high degree of ownership of the initiatives and facilitating the engagement of their research community in the process. One of the main shortcomings of the bilateral initiatives was the low degree of interaction with the established policy dialogue process between the EU and the third country in question, but this is an implementation issue rather than a reflection of the programme design.

Scientific cooperation was also pursued with countries that are not signatory to an S&T Agreement with the EU, this time based on multilateral initiatives working with groups of third countries on a geographical basis. In order to participate fruitfully in the Framework Programme, many of these countries would benefit from investment in scientific infrastructure and development of human resources. A number of the international cooperation projects endeavoured to seek complementarities with EU aid programmes such as the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Instrument (DCECI) and the European Development Fund (EDF) to tap these funds for capacity building initiatives in the area of science and technology. However, much of the work in this area is still at a preliminary stage and continued coordination with EU aid programmes is called for.

The International Cooperation Activities made great strides towards widening the ERA and making it more open to the world by engaging

a total of over 70 third countries in its various projects, and involving a broad range of third country organisations including policy-makers and research agencies.

## Main Findings

The international cooperation projects endeavoured to bring a new dimension to international cooperation through a broad suite of activities aimed at a variety of stakeholders. At the political level, the projects offered support to and promoted the policy dialogue process between third countries and the EU. At the other end of the spectrum, numerous activities targeting the research community catered for more down-to-earth requirements such as providing information on participation in FP7, or opportunities for networking with EU partners.

Developing and emerging third countries were invited to participate in FP7 on an equal footing with the member states, enjoying the same terms and conditions as European organisations without being requested to contribute financially to the programme. Purposely avoiding a high-handed approach, Europe clearly demonstrated its determination to work closely with third country researchers, treating them as equals and thus making Europe more attractive as a research partner.

A significant barrier to achieving greater participation of industrialised countries in FP7 arises from the fact that these are generally not eligible for funding under FP7 regulations, highlighting the need for alternative funding mechanisms such as coordinated calls. An excellent initiative was the reciprocal opening up of the US National Institute of Health (NIH) programme to EU researchers and the FP7 Health Theme to US researchers, and time will reveal to what extent this mutual opening has succeeded in boosting

participation levels. More initiatives such as this are required to provide the mechanisms to bring to fruition the partnerships catalysed by the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme.

A significant number of networking activities were organised, bringing together a large number of organisations from different sectors both from within the EU as well as from third countries, and facilitating access of European organisations to knowledge, resources and markets worldwide.

In an endeavour to make it easier for Europe's researchers and universities to work with the best scientists and research infrastructures in the world, the International Cooperation Activities promoted a number of mapping exercises to identify third country research entities of outstanding calibre. However, the value of this exercise was somewhat diminished because the resulting information is scattered over a number of websites thus reducing its accessibility to potential users. It has not been possible to ascertain to what extent the information has been utilised by European researchers looking for third country partners.

The projects actively promoted FP7 and facilitated the participation of third country researchers through the organisation of information days, brokerage events, conferences, and other dissemination activities. They also assisted third countries to develop their internal Contact Point structures to enable them to assume responsibility for further promoting FP7.

One of the key initiatives undertaken in many of the projects regarded a number of workshops aimed at establishing common research priorities. These were carried out with the participation of both European and third country organisations using a bottom-up approach, and were open to various sectors, thus promoting interaction and synergy between public authorities, industry and civil society to make EU action in these policy fields more efficient. These priority-setting exercises often gravitated towards global challenges such as combating climate change, sustainable energy and biodiversity, thus reinforcing the global science and technology agenda. The priority-setting exercises, however, revealed the need for a more coherent strategy within the European Commission regarding the utilisation of the results of such activities.

The experience of participating in the International Cooperation Activities doubtlessly proved to be an eye-opener to policy-makers and scientific communities in less advanced countries. Exposure to the formal methodologies, coordination mechanisms (such as the International Learning Network workshops) and sharing of best practice employed in the projects was without doubt of benefit to those involved. Third country participants in ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus Activities also profited from direct involvement in the management and evaluation of research funding programmes, paving the way for improved framework conditions under which international research is conducted.

## Coordination of Member States

Unfortunately, Europe still presents itself in many third countries as individual member states plus the European Commission, and there is little evidence of progress towards the ideal of Europe 'speaking with one voice'. The recently established Strategic Forum for International Cooperation should help in the development of a more coherent approach

and greater integration of initiatives of the individual member states and of the European Commission.

The International Cooperation Activities also provided an opportunity for member states to learn more about each other's initiatives in the area of international S&T cooperation. However this is only a first step towards strengthening the coordination of member states' and EC actions aimed at reinforcing strategic S&T cooperation with partners worldwide.

The ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus Activities enabled member states to pool their financial resources to develop cooperative research programmes, and garnered a lot of support and participation from member states. However, despite the high level of participation, the initiatives were not an unqualified success, and the level of funding contributed by the project partners for joint calls is substantially lower than that routinely raised in thematic ERA-NET projects. Furthermore, in many cases the joint calls were to date relatively modest in their ambitions rather than funding excellent research, although some of the projects are planning to launch proper research calls in the future.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

This interim evaluation of the Specific International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme was undertaken as part of the evidence-based interim evaluation of the Seventh Framework Programme, as indicated in the Article 7 of Decision No 1982/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013).

## 1.2. Objectives and Questions to be Addressed

The aim of this interim evaluation is to measure the performance, adequacy, coherence, consistency and added value of the Specific International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme and its activities, as well as to highlight possible weaknesses, limits or redundancies. It also aims to propose policy options for possible improvements to the programme.

The evaluation addresses the following three main points:

1. the quality of the coordination and support activities underway, the quality of implementation and management, as well as pro-

gress towards the stated objectives of the programme.

2. how the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme have contributed to the new approach of the international dimension of FP7 and its mechanisms.
3. to what extent the activities of the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme contributed to the principles and objectives highlighted in key policy documents.

In relation to the points 2 and 3 above, the evaluation exercise intended to answer more specifically the following key questions:

- To what extent did the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme provide leverage and contribute to the overall strategy of the internationalisation of the Framework Programme?
- What are, if any, the unintended collateral benefits of the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme?
- To what extent did the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme contribute to the main principles and objectives highlighted by the Communication on a Strategic European Framework

for International Science and Technology Cooperation, in particular in:

- widening the European Research Area (ERA) and making it more open to the world;
- ensuring coherence of policies and complementarity of programmes;
- fostering strategic Science and Technology (S&T) cooperation with key third countries;
- developing the attractiveness of Europe as a research partner;
- strengthening the coordination of member states' and EC actions aimed at reinforcing strategic S&T cooperation with partners worldwide;
- creating additional synergies between public authorities, industry and civil society to make EU action in these policy fields more efficient;
- facilitating access to knowledge, resources and markets worldwide;
- having a positive influence on the global science and technology agenda by pooling of resources to achieve critical mass;
- improving framework conditions under which international research is conducted and promote the European model of convergence to reinforce the effectiveness of information society policies;
- making it easier for Europe's researchers and universities to work with the best scientists and research infrastructures in the world.

### 1.3. Scope

This evaluation exercise is limited to those international cooperation activities funded through the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme.

International cooperation projects funded through other programmes (such as the FP7 Cooperation Programme) are outside the scope of this study.

### 1.4. Methodology

The interim evaluation of the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme is based on data, information and evidence gathered from a broad base of sources. It was conducted through a combination of desk-based research and fieldwork, including visits to partners and stakeholders both within member states as well as in other countries outside the EU.

Information was sought through a variety of mechanisms including face-to-face meetings, telephone interviews and email. These were supplemented by attendance at project meetings and conferences.

The methodology is explained in more detail in Annex A.

## 2. Background to International Science and Technology Cooperation in the EU

### 2.1. Evolution of EU Policy

European policy towards international cooperation in Science and Technology (S&T) has been continuously evolving in response to changing economic, social and political realities. Increasing economic globalisation, demographic changes, the rise of new economic powers and the acknowledgement of global challenges such as energy and climate change proved to be compelling drivers for a change in the European perspective.

S&T cooperation provides an important opportunity for the EU to put its scientific and technological expertise to the forefront in meeting its political, social, economic and humanitarian commitments in fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals. S&T also has a role to play in the implementation of international agreements to which the EU is a party, such as those on biodiversity and climate change.

In parallel with these external factors, Europe's continuous endeavours to realise its ambitions regarding the European Research Area (ERA) concept have been another powerful driver towards increased international cooperation in S&T.

Recent years have seen a heightened level of strategic thinking and a push in the right direction both on the part of the EC as well as that of the member states. The following publications from recent years provide valuable insights into the latest thinking regarding the EU's policy objectives and approach towards international cooperation in S&T.

#### **Strategic European Framework for International S&T Cooperation (April 2008)**

In its Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament (A

*Strategic European Framework for International S&T Cooperation*)<sup>1</sup>, the EC identified a number of general principles and approaches which would guide its initiatives and activities. In particular, it states the following:

- Europe cannot cooperate with all countries on all topics. Choices of research topics and third country partners have to be made.
- A critical mass of resources in support of these choices has to be guaranteed.
- Cooperation with scientifically advanced partners will differ in nature from that with countries which are developing their science base; but both types of cooperation are needed.

#### **CREST OMC Working Group on Internationalisation of R&D**

In early 2007 a CREST Expert Group was convened within the framework of the Open Method of Coordination to discuss and make recommendations on international cooperation in S&T. The expert group met seven times between February and November 2007, and included representatives of twenty-one member states and associated countries. The group submitted its *Analytical Report on Policy Approaches towards S&T Cooperation with Third Countries*<sup>2</sup> in December 2007.

The report presented strong arguments and made numerous actionable recommendations for a more coherent and coordinated approach towards international cooperation, recognising the place of Europe in a globalised S&T community and a desire for member states to work more closely together, as well as for establishing methodologies and mechanisms for collating data and information relating to third country research policy, programmes and activity.

One of the key recommendations of this report was to set up a sustainable strategic dialogue on internationalisation of R&D with the participation of member states and associated countries and the European Commission.

### Opening to the World: International Cooperation in S&T, Report of the ERA Expert Group

Following the publication of the green paper *The European Research Area: New Perspectives*<sup>3</sup> by the European Commission, several expert groups were set up to discuss and propose measures on the six ERA dimensions identified in the green paper, with one of these groups focusing on international cooperation in S&T.

Among other things, the expert group conducted an in-depth study of the S&T Agreements between the EU and third countries and urged more involvement by the member states in such agreements, as well as stronger coordination between the S&T Agreements and the FP7 instruments related to international cooperation.

The expert group recommended the setting up of a European Strategic Forum for International Cooperation (SFIC) to act as a focal point for the development of a coherent approach to international cooperation.

## 2.2. The Strategic Forum for International Cooperation (SFIC)

At the European Council meeting of 2nd December 2008 (Competitiveness Council Conclusions), the European Commission tabled a proposal for the establishment of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC) to drive forward the European Partnership for

S&T cooperation. The SFIC met for the first time in February 2009 to select a chairperson and take preliminary consideration of its mandate to identify common priorities which could lead to coordinated or joint initiatives, and coordinating activities with respect to third countries and within international fora.

To implement its mandate, SFIC has developed a step-by-step approach, starting with a geographic and a thematic pilot initiative on "EU S&T cooperation with and vis-à-vis India" and "energy research (in close coordination with the SET-PLAN)" respectively, that means in areas where cooperation between SFIC members could provide added value. Additionally, SFIC will explore a strategic approach in view of multi-lateral and bi-regional research cooperation. Experiences gained in this process will serve as basis for a broader-based EU international S&T cooperation strategy.

## 2.3. Bilateral S&T Agreements

The EU<sup>(1)</sup> is signatory to S&T Agreements with nineteen third countries. These agreements target key partner countries, primarily what are generally considered to be the industrialised countries and the emerging economies, together with other countries from the neighbourhood region and Latin America. These agreements are pursued through bilateral meetings (policy dialogue) attended by high-level delegates from both parties, which are referred to as Joint S&T Cooperation Committee (JSTCC) meetings. Such meetings are normally held annually or every two years.

For a more detailed analysis of the S&T Agreements the reader is referred to the Report of the ERA Expert Group on International Cooperation in S&T<sup>4</sup>.

(1) Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the S&T Agreements signed by the European Community are now referred to as S&T Agreements of the European Union.

## 2.4. The Framework Programme

The Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP) has been, since its launch in 1983, the key financial instrument to promote EU-led international cooperation in S&T.

### 2.4.1. The Sixth Framework Programme (FP6)

The Sixth Framework Programme (2002 - 2006) saw the general opening of the FP to all third countries, including those falling into the category of industrialised countries. The latter are not generally eligible for funding, whilst developing and emerging countries enjoy funding conditions on a par with EU member states and associated countries. This general openness was followed by a change in the overall philosophy from the former S&T international cooperation policy, which had been more focused on cooperation with developing countries and with those of Central and Eastern Europe.

The report on the evaluation of the Sixth Framework Programme<sup>6</sup> refers to the participation levels of third countries including industrialised countries in the FP, and makes the following comments (page 25):

*Table 4 shows more details about the Commission contributions to FP6 participants outside the European Community. Some 7% of these contributions went to developed countries, of which by far the largest part to the US. During the course of FP6, €2.5 million per year, however, represents a very narrow link to the strongest scientific nation on earth. Arguably, cooperation with the developed economies can build on co-funding from their side. The Russian Federation and China are the major beneficiaries. Given its size, India gets surprisingly little. Again, the tenuousness of the FP link to the major developing world economies is striking.*

*This should be seen as a warning signal: the EU is failing fully to exploit the potential offered by the FP's collaborative research activities as the means to connect with the world's most dynamic and fastest growing research nations.*

The report goes on to make the following recommendation:

*The 'Third Country' terminology must be abandoned as it stands in the way for strategic thinking. It should be replaced by three strategies: one for EU FP collaboration with the developing countries; one for collaboration with growth economies; and one for collaboration with industrialised countries outside the EU. The budget for cooperation with the major existing (such as US and Japan) and emerging economies (including India, China and Brazil) should be increased dramatically....*

### 2.4.2. The New Approach in FP7

In order to address better the evolving EU policy regarding international cooperation in S&T, the approach in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) is significantly different to that of its predecessors, with a move away from dedicated budgets for international cooperation in favour of integration of the international dimension in each of the Themes of the Cooperation Specific Programme. New funding instruments have been introduced to promote the new approach, to improve the coordination with Third Country research actions, and to improve geographic and thematic targeting.

The changes are explained in the European Commission's Staff Working Document *A New Approach to International Cooperation in the EU's 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme*<sup>7</sup>:

*Three basic principles have been adopted in order to expand the international collaboration:*

*Programming: unlike previous RTD framework programmes, FP7 includes both a broad opening ('mainstreaming') of international research collaboration in both programmes and in research themes across the whole Framework Programme and a programming of specific priorities for third countries and regions in different calls for proposals across the thematic work programmes;*

*Targeting: by defining specific actions for collaboration with third countries and regions in each of the thematic programmes, FP7 ensures that budgets for international cooperation are built in at the level of each of the relevant calls for proposals;*

*Partnership and dialogue: the principle of partnership will be a particular focus of the specific international cooperation actions for third countries and regions under FP7. The Specific International Cooperation Actions will aim at a fair level of participation for third countries in the collaboration with their European partners.*

## Implementation of the New Approach in the Cooperation Programme

The Commission staff Working Document *A New Approach to International Cooperation in the EU's 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme (2007-2013)*, SEC(2007)47 12.01.2007, clarifies how the new approach would be implemented in the Cooperation Programme as follows:

1. Through the opening of all topics in the thematic areas to all third countries. This includes, in addition, new dedicated actions and calls for third countries (mainly industrialised and emerging economies).
2. Specific International Cooperation Actions (SICAs) in each thematic area dedicated

to third countries where there is mutual interest on the basis of both the S&T level and the needs of the countries concerned.

## Implementation of the New Approach in the Capacities Programme

The staff Working Document goes on to explain how the new approach would be implemented in the Capacities Programme through three main instruments: the INCO-NETs, the BILATs and the ERA-NETs.

### 2.4.3. FP7 and Key Actors in the European Commission

Responsibility for management and implementation of the Framework Programme within the European Commission is shared amongst a number of different Directorates General. The Joint Research Centre is responsible for the implementation of the direct programmes in FP7, DG Information Society for the ICT Theme and the Infrastructures part of the Capacities Programme, DG Enterprise for the Space and Security Themes, DG Energy for part of the Energy Theme, DG Mobility and Transport for part of the Transport Theme, and DG Education & Culture for the People Specific Programme. DG Research is responsible for the remainder of the Framework Programme, and includes a number of thematic Directorates (Health, Transport, Environment, Energy, etc.) focused on the respective areas.

The various DGs and the thematic Directorates within DG Research are responsible for the Specific International Cooperation Actions (SICAs), which are calls for proposals requiring the participation of third countries in project consortia. Each thematic directorate is responsible for determining the topics, target country or region, and budget allocated to each SICA, and SICAs can address both scientific research as well as coordination

and support actions. The International Cooperation Directorate within DG Research (Directorate D) is responsible for the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme, which does not fund research projects but focuses on coordination and support actions.

The work programmes of the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme<sup>8,9,10,11</sup> state that the capacities programme will be the vehicle for the overall coordination of the international cooperation activities under the different programmes of the Framework Programme. As one might imagine, with such a distribution of responsibilities, coordination of initiatives could prove to be a challenge, and the Commission internal forum 'Research in International Cooperation' (RIC) forum was established in 2007 as a vehicle for such coordination.

#### 2.4.4. Financial Allocation for International Cooperation

The FP7 has a financial allocation of €53.2 billion over the period 2007 – 2013. Of this, €185 million is earmarked for international cooperation activities under the management of the International Cooperation Directorate within DG Research.

The Cooperation programme has a budget of €32.4 billion covering the ten Themes. Some of this will be utilised for international cooperation activity through SICAs and other international cooperation activities, at the discretion of the thematic directorates, since there is no ringfencing of funds for such activities.

#### 2.4.5. International Cooperation Partner Countries

In order to facilitate participation by third countries in FP7, all low- and middle-income

countries (using the World Bank definition) are eligible to participate in the FP and to receive funding according to the same rules for remuneration applicable to member states and associated countries. These countries are collectively referred to as the International Cooperation Partner Countries, or ICPCs.

Countries other than member states, associated countries and ICPC countries may participate in the FP but are not generally eligible for funding, although there are a number of exceptions to this rule, such as when the participation of the third country partner is considered essential for the success of the project. Similarly, industrialised countries may be funded if specific provision is made in the work programme at topic level, or at Theme level due to reciprocal opening of research programmes in a third country, as is the case for the US in the Health Theme.

The ICPC countries are grouped according to geographical criteria as follows:

- Africa (48 countries, includes South Africa)
- Caribbean (14 countries)
- Pacific (15 countries)
- Asia (23 countries, includes China and India)
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia (12 countries, includes Russia)
- Latin America (17 countries, includes Brazil and Mexico)
- Mediterranean Partner Countries (9 countries)
- Western Balkan Countries (although today most of these have joined FP7 as associated countries).

## 2.5. The International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme - Intervention Logic

### 2.5.1. Objectives

International cooperation in S&T presents a huge challenge due to the differences in the state of readiness, scientific potential, capacity and willingness of the targeted countries to participate in collaborative research with the EU.

The objectives of the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme as stated in the relevant Work Programmes<sup>8,9,10,11</sup> are the following:

- To 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;
- To 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;
- To address specific problems that third countries face or that have a global character, on the basis of mutual interest and mutual benefit.

### 2.5.2. Activities

The International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme has employed five main instruments for funding activities during the pe-

riod of this evaluation. The instruments are officially referred to as *Activities* and for the sake of consistency this is the terminology that will be used throughout this document.

The Activities are the following:

1. **INCO-NET:** bi-regional coordination of S&T cooperation including priority-setting and definition of S&T cooperation policies;
2. **BILAT:** bilateral coordination for the enhancement and development of S&T Partnerships;
3. **ERA-NET 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).

### 2.5.3. Actions

The International Cooperation Directorate in its work programmes proposes a number of activities and actions which should be undertaken by the projects, although not all actions are relevant to all Activities. The actions advocated in the work programmes fall into six broad categories which are explained briefly below:

#### 1. Support to Policy Dialogue

Policy dialogue is the term given to a high-level discussion between the EC and a third country or group of countries pertaining to a particular geographical region. One of the key objectives of these discussions is to promote collaboration in science and technology, and to develop

action plans and roadmaps to guide the development of such collaboration.

In the case of countries which are signatory to an S&T Agreement with the EU, policy dialogue is pursued through the Joint S&T Committee (JSTCC) meetings referred to earlier. In the absence of an S&T Agreement, policy dialogue may be pursued through bi-regional discussion between the EU and a group of countries pertaining to a particular geographical region. Examples of such policy dialogue platforms include the Monitoring Committee for Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation in RTD (MoCo), and the Steering Committee for Western Balkan Countries, which focus exclusively on S&T. Other dialogue platforms such as the EU-Latin America and Caribbean forum (EU-LAC) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have a broader scope but also include discussion on S&T.

In order to have fruitful policy discussions, it is necessary to establish and maintain a base of information which describes the research landscape of the third country, as well as indicators relating to S&T collaboration between both parties. This will facilitate informed discussion, highlight any issues which need to be addressed, assist in prioritisation of activities and provide feedback on any actions underway.

The EU already maintains a database of research indicators and information on the research landscape for the member states, associated countries, and most of the industrialised and emerging countries. This information is accessible through the ERAWATCH portal. However, more detailed information on third countries is required to inform the policy dialogue process with these countries. With respect to developing countries, it is often the case that little or no information is available, and compilation of such information constitutes a fundamental objective of the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme.

## 2. Capacity Building

In order to facilitate the participation of third countries in the framework programme, the third country must have a functioning Contact Point<sup>(2)</sup> structure with the knowledge and skills to disseminate information on FP7 calls, and to provide information and assistance to researchers interested in participating in the framework programme.

Capacity-building activities seek to address these requirements as follows:

- by providing the necessary advice and assistance in setting up a Contact Point structure;
- training and mentoring for Contact Points, as well as twinning visits to more experienced NCPs;
- training for members of the research community (e.g. in project management, preparing project proposals, etc).

## 3. Networking and Partnership Building

The International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme advocates the following actions with the aim of providing opportunities for third country research organisations to meet prospective partners and to join consortia:

- Organisation of workshops, brokerage events and thematic conferences
- Travel grants for third country researchers to travel overseas to attend brokerage events, for lab visits, fact-finding missions, etc.

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(2) Throughout this report the term National Contact Point (NCP) is reserved for FP7 contact points in EU member states and associated countries, whereas Contact Point is the corresponding term used in the case of third countries.

#### 4. Assessment and Monitoring

Establishing appropriate indicators and compilation of statistics on an ongoing basis is important for the policy dialogue process to inform the development of action plans, to monitor the effectiveness of any actions underway, and to understand the evolution of the landscape over time. While such indicators are readily available in the EU and industrialised countries, they are much harder to come by in other instances.

#### 5. Dissemination and Outreach

This category includes activities such as development of websites, newsletters, information sessions, seminars and conferences.

#### 6. Coordination with Other Community Instruments

These actions are aimed at coordination with activities carried out through Community external policy instruments (*Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)*, *European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)*, *the Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Instrument (DCECI)*, etc.) In particular they seek to develop synergies with programmes supporting capacity building in the area of science and technology.

## 3. The International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme in Figures

### 3.1. Calls and Projects Dataset

Most of the data presented in this section refer to calls for proposals published under the 2007/2008 and 2009 work programmes.

Calls relating to the 2010 work programme closed in January 2010, and at the time of going to press, grant agreements for the selected projects had not yet been finalised. With the exception of the first three tables, data presented in this section do not include the 2010 projects.

### 3.2. FP7 Inco Calls and Budget

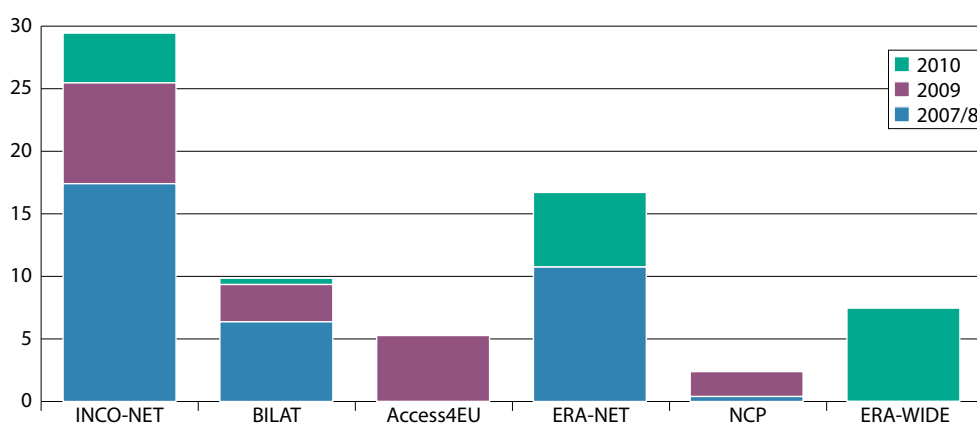
The table below summarises the calls and funding relating to the various Activities under the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme.

Figures for 2007-2009 are based on grant agreements, while figures for 2010 are budgeted figures. Further details may be found in Annex B.

**Table 3.1: International cooperation funding by year and Activity**

Work programme	INCO-NET (M€)	BILAT (M€)	Access4EU (M€)	ERA-NET (M€)	NCP (M€)	ERA-WIDE (M€)	Total (M€)
2007/8	17.5	6.4	-	10.8	0.4	-	35.1
2009	8.1	3.0	5.3	-	2.0	-	18.4
2010	4.0	0.5	-	6.0	-	7.5	18.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>71.5</b>

**Figure 3.1: International cooperation funding by year and Activity**



### 3.3. Applications and Success Rate

The table below presents the consolidated figures relating to the proposals submitted and the success rates for the various country groups for the period 2007-2010. While there is some variation in the success rates among the different country groups, this does not appear to have any real significance.

Success rates for proposals are high compared to those typical of FP7 calls.

### 3.4. Funded projects

The table below summarises the number of projects and related funding for the various calls.

Figures for 2007-2009 are based on grant agreements, while figures for the 2010 work programme are tentative figures.

It is interesting to note that the average EC contribution for the 2007 INCO-NETs was €2.9 m per project but this was reduced to €1.6 m in the 2008 work programme.

**Table 3.2: Consolidated figures for proposals submitted and success rates for the period 2007-2010.**

Country group	Eligible		Main List		Success Rate
	Applicants	Requested Contribution € m	Applicants	Requested Contribution € m	
Member States	951	107.9	385	45.9	40%
Associated Countries	195	12.9	72	4.5	37%
Third Countries	664	63.6	276	25.7	42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,810</b>	<b>184.4</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>76.2</b>	<b>40%</b>

**Table 3.3: Average EC contribution to different Activities and projects.**

Year of Work programme	Activity	Number of projects funded	Total EC Contribution € m	Average EC contribution € m
2007/8	INCO-NET	6	17.5	2.9
2007/8	BILAT	13	6.4	0.5
2007/8	ERA-NET / Plus	5	10.8	2.2
2007/8	Inco-NCP	1	0.4	0.4
2009	INCO-NET	5	8.1	1.6
2009	BILAT	6	3.0	0.5
2009	Inco-NCP	1	2.0	2.0
2009	Access4EU	11	5.3	0.5
2010	INCO-NET (top-up)	4	4.0	0.8
2010	BILAT	1	0.5	0.5
2010	ERA-NET	3*	6.0	2.0
2010	ERA-WIDE	16	7.5	0.5

\*: ... publication of the report ... proposal is ... under ...

### 3.5. Consortia and EU vs Third Country Participation

The tables below present figures for the total number of partners and coordinators from member states and associated countries (MS/AC) and from third countries in each Activity.

The INCO-NETs are the largest projects with an average of almost 20 partners in each project, with some consortia involving as many as 30 partners. This is not surprising since this is a bi-regional activity which attracts a good number of partners both from the member states / associated countries as well as from the third countries within the region. There is a good balance between participants from both regions. All projects are coordinated by European partners.

Next in terms of average number of participants is the ERA-NET Activity, which includes both projects targeting a region as well as some tar-

geting a single country. This Activity has the highest percentage of member states / associated countries partners, reflecting the high level of interest of these countries and their willingness to contribute funds towards joint research activities with the target third countries. Once again all projects are coordinated by European partners.

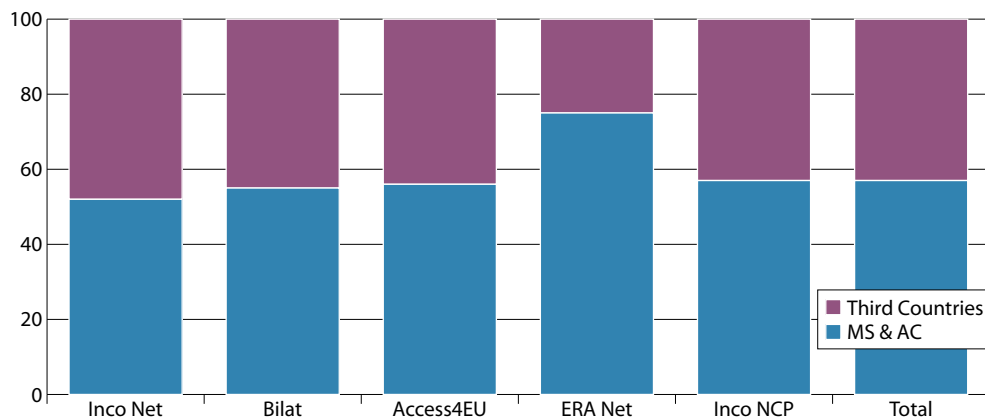
The BILAT projects are significantly smaller than the INCO-NETs and ERA-NETs, with several projects consisting of a single partner. There is a fair balance between member states / associated countries and third country partners, especially bearing in mind that each project is targeting a single third country. In this Activity the tables have turned, with 72% of projects coordinated by a third country partner. This reflects the level of ownership taken by the third countries in efforts to increase their level of participation in FP7.

The Access4EU projects once again consist of small consortia, with only 18% of these coordinated by third countries.

**Table 3.4: Distribution of Project Partners**

Activity	Number of Projects	Total Partners	Average Partners / project	Number of partners		% of partners	
				MS / AC	Third Countries	MS / AC	Third Countries
INCO-NET	11	216	19.6	113	103	52%	48%
BILAT	18	76	4.2	42	34	55%	45%
Access4EU	11	64	5.8	36	28	56%	44%
ERA-NET	5	72	14.4	54	18	75%	25%
Inco-NCP	2	21	10.5	12	9	57%	43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>43%</b>

**Figure 3.2: Distribution of Project Partners**



**Table 3.5: Project Coordinators**

Activity	Number of Projects	Number of coordinators		% of coordinators	
		MS / AC	Third Countries	MS / AC	Third Countries
INCO-NET	11	11	0	100%	0%
BILAT	18	5	13	28%	72%
Access4EU	11	9	2	82%	18%
ERA-NET	5	5	0	100%	0%
Inco-NCP	2	2	0	100%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>32%</b>

### 3.6. EU MS / AC Participation

Table 3.2 below shows a ranked list of the EU member states and associated countries which have the highest participation in terms of the number of partners from each country participating in the international cooperation projects. Seven member states are not participating in any projects.

The projects are dominated by three of the most populous member states, together with Austria and Greece which despite their limited size also have a very high participation rate. In contrast, the UK has a very low participation rate despite being one of the largest member states.

**Table 3.6: EU member state and associated country participation levels**

Country	INCO-NET	BILAT	Access4EU	ERA-NET	INCO-NCP	Total
France	13	5	8	9	1	36
Germany	12	6	7	8	2	35
Italy	7	10	5	2	2	26
Austria	9	5	2	6	0	22
Greece	11	1	4	4	2	22
Turkey	8	1	0	5	1	15
Spain	9	1	0	2	0	12
Belgium	5	4	2	0	0	11
UK	5	1	2	1	0	9
Hungary	2	2	2	2	0	8
Sweden	4	1	1	0	2	8
Romania	1	3	0	3	0	7
Portugal	4	0	1	1	0	6
Finland	3	0	0	2	0	5
Bulgaria	2	0	1	2	0	5
Estonia	2	0	0	1	1	4
Netherlands	3	0	0	1	0	4
Poland	2	1	0	1	0	4
Slovenia	2	0	0	1	0	3
Malta	2	0	0	1	0	3
Croatia	2	0	0	1	0	3
Luxembourg	0	1	1	0	0	2
Israel	1	0	0	0	0	1

### 3.7. Distribution of Project Effort

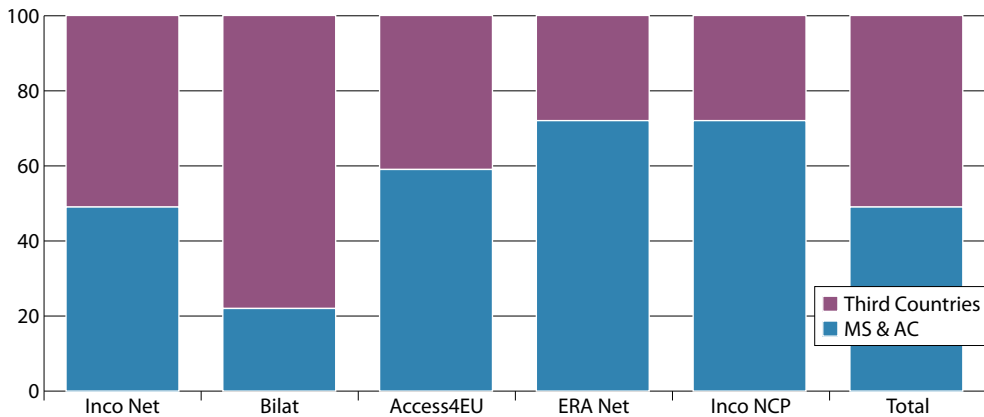
The contribution of EU and third country partners in terms of person-months of effort is tabulated below. There are marked differences between the different Activities, with a predominance of member state/associated

country input in some cases and with third countries dominating in others. To some extent the distribution mirrors the distribution of partners as shown in Table 3.4 above, with the exception of the BILAT Activity where the person-months for third countries are much higher than would be expected from the number of partners.

**Table 3.7: Distribution of Project Effort between EU MS/AC and Third Countries**

Activity				Person-months		Person-months %	
	Projects	Total person-months	Average pm / project	MS / AC	Third Countries	MS / AC	Third Countries
INCO-NET	11	4,044	368	1,983	2,061	49%	51%
BILAT	18	1,832	102	406	1,422	22%	78%
Access4EU	11	732	67	434	299	59%	41%
ERA-NET	5	1,609	322	1,159	450	72%	28%
Inco-NCP	2	205	103	148	58	72%	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>8,422</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>4,104</b>	<b>4,317</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>51%</b>

**Figure 3.3: Distribution of Project Effort between EU MS / AC and Third Countries**



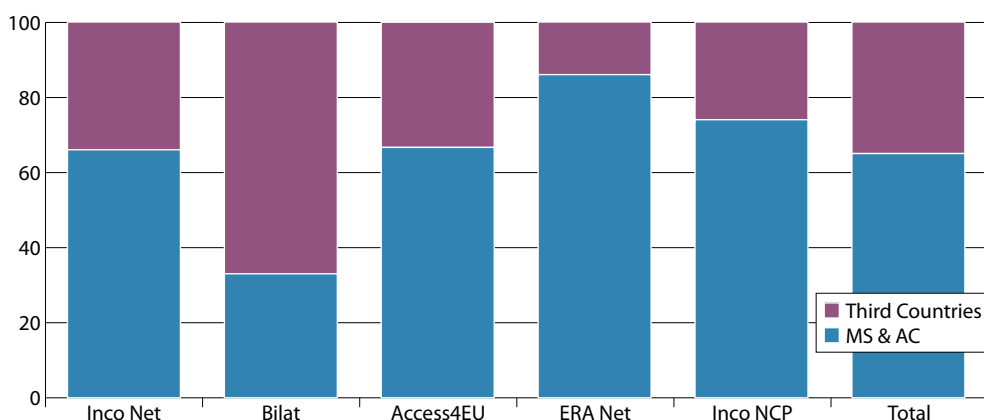
### 3.8. Distribution of Project Funding

Allocation of funding between member states / associated countries and third countries roughly follows the distribution of effort, but is biased in favour of the member states / associated countries partners largely as a result of the generally higher personnel costs in these countries compared to third countries.

**Table 3.8: EC Contribution to EU member states/associated countries and third countries**

Activity				EC contribution € m		EC contribution %	
	Projects	Total person-months	Average pm / project	MS / AC	Third Countries	MS / AC	Third Countries
INCO-NET	11	25,593	2,327	16,841	8,751	66%	34%
BILAT	18	8,869	493	2,941	5,927	33%	67%
Access4EU	11	5,311	483	3,531	1,778	66%	34%
ERA-NET	5	10,833	2,167	9,342	1,521	86%	14%
Inco-NCP	2	2,372	1,186	1,754	618	74%	26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>52,978</b>	<b>1,127</b>	<b>34,409</b>	<b>18,595</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>35%</b>

**Figure 3.4: EC Contribution to EU member states/associated countries and third countries**



# 4. Specific Activities

## 4.1. Introduction

During the period under review, the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme launched calls and funded a number of projects corresponding to the following five key lines of action:

1. **INCO-NET:** bi-regional cooperation between the EU member states / associated countries and third country regions;
2. **BILAT:** bilateral coordination between the EU member states / associated countries and individual third countries;
3. **ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus:** projects supporting the coordination of national policies and activities of member states and associated countries in the field of international S&T cooperation;
4. **Access4EU:** projects supporting access of EU research organisations to third country programmes;
5. **INCO-NCP:** supporting the trans-national cooperation among National Contact Points (NCPs).

This section presents an analysis of the results and achievements of the various Activities, as well as discussing shortcomings and issues.

## 4.2. The INCO-NET Activity

### 4.2.1. Objectives

The INCO-NET Activity targets groups of third countries on a geographical basis. It aims to establish platforms for S&T cooperation and has the following objectives<sup>12</sup>:

- to bring together relevant policy makers, researchers, the private sector and other stakeholders from the EU and from third countries that belong to the targeted region in order to identify S&T priorities and support the definition of S&T cooperation orientations;
- to implement awareness and dissemination activities dedicated to strengthening the participation of the targeted countries/regions in the Framework Programme, including the support for Contact Points in third countries;
- to carry out strategic analysis of S&T trends and mapping of research capacities in the targeted region, including their links with corresponding EU research counterparts;
- to systematically monitor and review cooperation activities in order to provide feedback and updating of S&T policies and priorities.

### 4.2.2. Consortia and Partner Profiles

#### Countries with an S&T Agreement

Although countries which are signatories to an S&T Agreement with the EU have an Activity specifically dedicated to them (the BILAT Activity), they are also eligible to participate in INCO-NET projects targeting their geographical area. When eligible to participate on this basis, such third countries almost invariably choose to do so.

As a general rule, these countries are often the larger and more scientifically advanced countries in the region, and often assumed a somewhat dominant position in the consortium. However, their participation may also be beneficial to the other partners provided that they are willing to provide a mentoring role to other less advanced

third countries in the region. On their part, the benefits of participating relate to the opportunity of playing a leading role in the regional context, both in their relations with the EU and in the framework of intra-regional cooperation.

### Type of Partner

While across the Activity there is a balanced participation in terms of EU member states / associated countries and third countries, in several projects the numerical dominance of the former can be a cause for concern, especially with regard to project coordination.

With reference to the nature and category of participating institutions, there is a marked difference between third country and European partners. While third countries are in general represented by Public Bodies (Ministries or related public administrations), EU countries are primarily represented by agencies, universities and academic institutions. The issue raised by the different nature in representation is not one of competencies, but rather of institutional credibility and the ability to effect change, particularly when it comes to the policy dialogue component of the project activities. To be effective, policy dialogue requires at the outset the involvement of actors that enjoy the required legitimacy, and in most INCO-NETs the asymmetry between European and third country actors may appear to present an obstacle in this respect.

However, the crucial factor here relates to the proper understanding of the role of the INCO-NETs in supporting policy dialogue. Supporting policy dialogue is a technical task that does not require the empowerment of the INCO-NET partners to actually run the policy dialogue itself, and consequently, it is not the task of the consortium partners to conduct the policy dialogue. The only

thing that matters is their ability (i) to interpret correctly the policy orientations arising from the policy dialogue, (ii) to professionally translate such orientations into concrete and effective actions and (iii) to feed the dialogue with analytical inputs from the research base. However, in practice, it appears that some of the EU partners involved in the policy dialogue dimension of the projects tend to interpret their mandate as one that empowers them to steer the policy dialogue. This happens to varying degree across most of the INCO-NETs and appears to be the result of an insufficiently clear definition of the role of the project partners in the policy dialogue process, combined with the ambition of some EU partners to play an active and recognisable role in actually running the policy dialogue.

On another note, industry representatives are rarely present in the project consortia, thus limiting the potential for concrete industry involvement. Nevertheless, the projects have organised a number of initiatives (e.g. specific workshops) to promote the dialogue between the academic and public R&D community and industry.

### 4.2.3. INCO-NET Project Activities

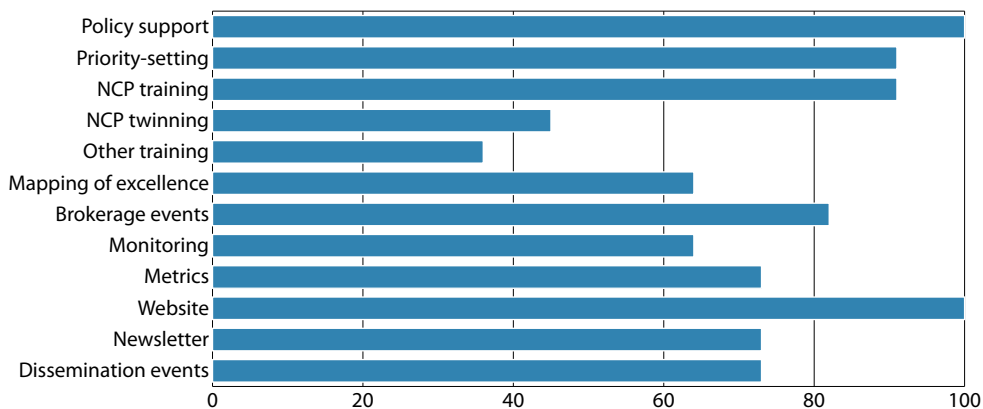
The International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme work programmes specify a number of activities which the projects are expected to undertake. The list of endeavours covers the following five broad categories:

1. Support to policy dialogue – activities to support the policy dialogue process, priority-setting workshops;
2. Capacity building – training and development of FP7 Contact Points in third countries, training for researchers and project managers on FP7 rules and administration;

3. Networking and partnership building – activities such as mapping of third country competencies, partner search activities, brokerage events, fact finding missions, travel grant schemes;
4. Assessment and monitoring – metrics and indicators, monitoring of cooperation, setting up S&T observatories;
5. Dissemination – information sessions, seminars and conferences, websites, newsletters, publications.

Figure 4.1 below gives an indication of the broad range of activities undertaken by the INCO-NET projects.

**Figure 4.1: Percentage of INCO-NET projects undertaking different types of activity.**



#### 4.2.4. Support to Policy Dialogue

In line with the main objectives of the INCO-NET Activity, support to policy dialogue was tackled at a high priority and significant resources were allocated to related activities, such as joint priority-setting workshops. Identification of research topics of importance and relevance both to the member states / associated countries, as well as to the third countries participating in the projects, constitutes an important input into the policy dialogue and serves as a basis for future joint collaborative research initiatives through the development of FP7 SICA topics by Thematic Directorates in DG Research and the other DGs.

The identification of these common research topics is seen as one of the most tangible and immediate result of the project, and all INCO-NETs have accordingly deployed significant resources in order to generate ideas that can eventually be transformed into SICAs.

With the new approach to international cooperation in FP7, the role of the DG Research thematic directorates and the other DGs sharing responsibility for FP7 has assumed great importance since they determine the funding and calls to be dedicated to international cooperation. In the case of ICT, very concrete initiatives are independently launched and implemented by DG INFSO, covering the

entire process of international cooperation including joint identification of policy priorities, mapping of opportunities, design of targeted initiatives, and project funding. In many instances the INCO-NET community would welcome a more systematic collaboration with related projects.

The results of the INCO-NET prioritisation exercises are routinely forwarded to the relevant EC institution (either DG Research thematic directorates or other DGs according to the specific topic), since it is the prerogative of these institutions to decide the topics and target regions of SICA calls. However, it is only in a minority of cases that the research priorities proposed by the INCO-NET projects were utilised as intended. This often results in a general sense of frustration among all partners and even within the wider stakeholder community.

In an endeavour to address this situation and develop a more coherent strategy regarding cooperation with third countries, the International Cooperation Directorate within DG Research established the Research in International Cooperation (RIC) forum in 2007. This brings together senior officials from the different directorates with responsibility for the framework programme. However, coordination between the different EC players presents quite a challenge and it appears that there is still some way to go before the desired results are achieved.

The European Commission needs to develop a more coherent strategy with regard to the identification of topics for SICA calls issued by the thematic directorates. It should agree on a clear process and establish roles and responsibilities for the various EC actors involved in the matter. The future undertaking of prioritisation activities within the international cooperation projects should be tailored to the agreed process.

Although the situation varies across the INCO-NET projects, the general perception amongst the project partners is that the presence of the European Commission staff could be reinforced and made more effective, particularly in respect of the following points:

- the issuing of high level, top-down direction to guide the cooperative process of priority identification. In practice, it is widely agreed that the frustration referred to earlier could be at least partly avoided if the process of priority identification was streamlined, in its early stages, through the availability of guiding criteria (e.g. thematic, disciplinary etc.);
- the physical presence and proactive participation of European Commission officers at the events dedicated to priority identification. Such presence and participation currently varies considerably, with very concrete contributions in some cases and very limited input in others;
- the systematic involvement of the thematic Directorates and other DGs in the priority-setting process.

#### 4.2.5. Networking Activities

The identification of suitable partners with whom to prepare a project proposal is recognised as one of the most useful activities that International Cooperation projects should provide. With this objective in mind, all the INCO-NETs implemented a variety of activities such as mapping of scientific excellence in third countries, organisation of scientific conferences, brokerage events and travel grant schemes. The general perception is that the most effective mechanisms are those based on a face-to-face contact between potential partners, while matchmaking activities based on virtual contacts are often deemed ineffective.

#### 4.2.6. Assessment and Monitoring

Assessment and monitoring activities were addressed in several projects, but practical implementation and conclusive outcomes are so far rather disappointing. In some cases, monitoring activities which were underway have even been discontinued (e.g. the annual monitoring of the participation of EECA countries in FP7).

On the positive side, mapping exercises are mostly carried out according to plan, although these are one-off exercises and future updating is only rarely contemplated. Specific actions were undertaken in respect of identified needs, such as for instance the assessment of the availability and quality of S&T statistics in EECA countries, or the critical (ex post) review and analysis of proposals submitted to FP7 with a view to the identification of success factors.

In conclusion, more effort and increased coordination is needed to generate original and valuable results in terms of both methodological approaches (e.g. dedicated indicators, common to all international cooperation initiatives) and their systematic use (establishing a visible linkage between indicators and priority setting). For this to happen, the ultimate utility of monitoring and evaluation activities should be further discussed with the INCO-NET participants, in order to raise their level of motivation on this particular dimension of the INCO-NET projects.

#### 4.2.7. Dissemination

Third country partners and stakeholders frequently expressed their desire for more information regarding opportunities for participating in FP7 as well as information on events (conferences, workshops, brokerage

events, etc). A similar request relates to having access to results of previous or ongoing research projects.

#### 4.2.8. FP7 Administrative Procedures

Administrative and financial procedures regulating international cooperation contracts are unanimously considered to be exceedingly complex and demanding. Most project coordinators expressed strong criticism regarding this point, as well as citing problems associated with delays in reimbursement of expenses. What was touted as a significant reduction in complexity in FP7 as compared to FP6 led to disappointment on the part of project partners.

Another major criticism related to the inconsistent interpretation of financial regulations by different parties within the EC, leading to confusion and uncertainty on how one should proceed under such circumstances.

A number of third country partners remarked that alternative sources of funding (Global Environment Fund, World Bank, Asian Development Bank) are more attractive to prospective beneficiaries than the framework programme on account of the administrative burden associated with the latter.

#### 4.2.9. Conclusions

1. The achievements of the INCO-NET Activity are mixed, with very positive results in some areas despite the challenges posed by the broad target region and heterogeneity of the partner countries. This complexity is compounded by the fact that many of the target countries are not very advanced in technological terms, or may not be fully committed to allocating the resources (including

FP7 Contact Point personnel) necessary to promote participation in FP7. The large consortium size presents additional challenges to these projects.

2. There is much scope for additional INCO-NET activity, both in terms of continued efforts in the current projects, as well as new initiatives in geographical areas and countries which are not participating in current projects. However, this has to be carefully assessed within the context of the other demands, objectives and priorities of the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme. While the INCO-NET Activity should be maintained, it is suggested that explicit provisions should be introduced in the relevant regulations to make sure that the mandate, scope and modus operandi of the projects evolve over time to accommodate the dynamics of the bi-regional S&T cooperation landscape.

## 4.3. The BILAT Activity

### 4.3.1. Objectives

The BILAT Activity is targeted at countries which have an S&T Agreement with the EU. Such agreements have been signed with key partner countries, primarily countries that are considered to be industrialised, emerging economies, or strategic partners from the neighbourhood region and Latin America.

The objectives of the BILAT Actions are as follows<sup>13</sup>:

- Improving the process of providing information on programmes and funding designed to promote cooperation between Europe and the specific third countries;

- Identifying and demonstrating mutual interest and benefit in S&T cooperation between the EU and specific third countries;
- Sharing best practices via joint fora such as workshops, and presenting the state of the art and the prospects for cooperation in particular fields.

### 4.3.2. Partner Profiles

This Activity is restricted to third countries which have signed (or are in the process of negotiating) an S&T Agreement with the EU, implying that the funded projects would be expected to contribute in some way to the implementation of such agreements and to the work of the Joint S&T Cooperation Committee (JSTCC).

The first BILAT call of 2007 was flexible regarding the consortium composition, with the only requirement being that the consortium should include at least one participant from the target third country. This aimed to achieve third country ownership of the projects, to ensure an element of local knowledge, and to facilitate the effective implementation of the project activities.

The openness of the conditions regulating participation in the first call may have been driven by a desire to allow different compositions of consortium setup with a view to assessing the validity and effectiveness of the different configurations. The selected projects did in fact include a wide variety of project consortia ranging from single partners to consortia involving as many as ten partners. Third country project partners ranged from ministries and agencies to higher education institutions and commercial companies. There are no ministries of EU member states involved as partners, although there are a number of agencies with delegated responsibilities to support their governments in international S&T cooperation policies and their implementation (programme owners and/or managers).

In the case of the third countries which had already developed an institutional knowledge regarding the framework programme through similar projects in the past, being the sole partner in the project did not present a problem. In the case of less experienced countries, however, the absence of an experienced European partner to act as focal point could be a source of difficulty in achieving some objectives of the project.

As explained later, the BILAT projects generally lacked strong links to the JSTCC, at least partly due to the fact that the consortium did not always include the third country organisation responsible for the follow-up of the S&T Agreement. The 2009 work programme for the second BILAT call addressed this need by stipulating that the consortium should include the relevant authority (or its authorised delegate).

### 4.3.3. Project Funding

The BILAT projects target a variety of third countries of different sizes and scientific potential, demanding different categories and levels of activity

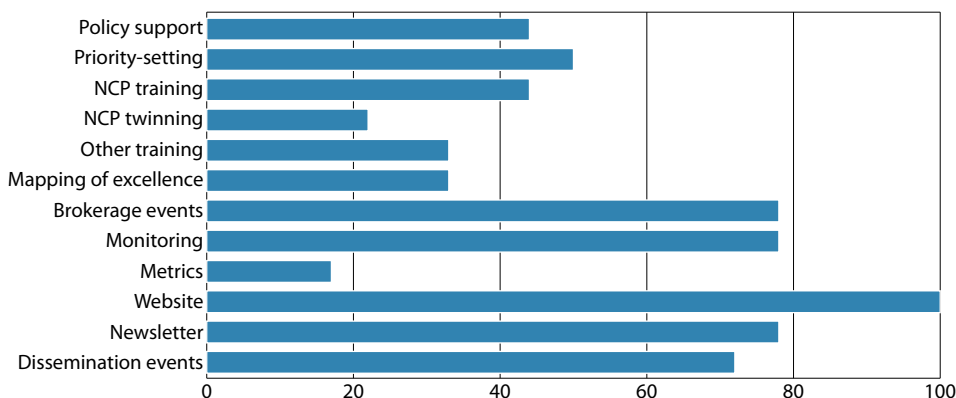
and having different potential in terms of collaboration outcomes. Despite this variable landscape, the same level of project funding was applied to all projects. A strong case could be made to have project funding tailored to the needs, potential for scientific cooperation, and the planned activities with the specific third country.

While it may seem strange that the EC is providing financial support to industrialised countries to promote their participation in FP7, such countries constitute important partners for the EU and the financial assistance provided pays dividends in terms of increased S&T cooperation with these countries. Nevertheless, the principle of reciprocity should be more strongly encouraged by the JSTCC in charge of the S&T policy dialogue, and accordingly, the co-funding should be more systematically applied for the BILAT projects.

### 4.3.4. BILAT Project Activities

Figure 4.2 below shows the range and frequency of the different categories of Activity undertaken by the BILAT projects.

**Figure 4.2: Percentage of BILAT projects undertaking specific types of activity.**



#### 4.3.5. Support to Policy Dialogue

There is little evidence that BILAT projects are systematically integrated into the policy dialogue process between the EU and third countries. Despite this, there are a number of coordinators both from member states as well as from third countries who have expressed themselves very willing to contribute to this process. A number of these have taken the initiative and submitted unsolicited recommendations to the JSTCC meetings which are responsible for discussing and implementing the S&T Agreements.

This lack of harmonisation between the project and the JSTCC may be partly the result of a lack of common understanding of the general principles of the policy dialogue between EU and third countries. The work programmes may not have been sufficiently clear on the expected role of the projects in providing support to the policy dialogue meetings, with the consequence that only a minority of the projects refer to the bilateral policy dialogue, or provide it with any direct support.

#### 4.3.6. Capacity Building

Third countries have different approaches regarding how they fulfil the need for a Contact Point structure. Some have nominated several Contact Points at a national and regional level, as well as having dedicated Contact Points for the various FP7 Themes. At the other extreme, countries such as Japan and USA do not have FP7 Contact Points at all. In many cases, the individuals nominated as Contact Points often take on this role in addition to their existing workload, and rarely benefit from additional remuneration other than funding to cover expenses such as travel.

All the BILAT projects have organised capacity-building activities targeting a wide audience, often combining training with partner search and matchmaking activities. There is a continuous demand for such training as a result of new appointments or changes in third country FP7 Contact Point staff.

Different training approaches were observed in the various projects, including some instances of exchange of experience and good practices between projects from the same region aiming at a more efficient use of resources. Nevertheless, it appears that there is too much development of new material rather than reuse of training material that had already been developed in other projects.

Benchmarking of training activities is not common, although a number of industrialised countries expressed an interest in benchmarking themselves against other third countries.

#### 4.3.7. Networking and Partnership Building

For most projects one of the key objectives is to facilitate cooperation between Europe's researchers and the best researchers and research institutions in the relevant third country. Consequently, a number of activities are designed to support this goal, and most of the BILAT projects include activities for networking and partnership building such as matchmaking and brokerage events, scientific missions, partner search, etc. A few projects are operating travel grant schemes to enable researchers to attend workshops and similar events in other countries.

In a minority of cases such activities are not undertaken at all in the project since this requirement is adequately catered for through the efforts of the third country's Contact Point network. These projects prefer to focus their efforts

on policy-shaping work designed to influence thinking on international research cooperation within governments and not just focus on the research community which has vested interest in these matters.

A study carried out by the Australian FEAST organisation<sup>20</sup> reveals the importance of face-to-face meetings, finding that almost 90% of Australian FP participants had entered into their current project via an existing relationship with an EU-based colleague. Many of these relationships were established via a lab visit or a sabbatical. Although care should be taken not to place too much weight on this isolated study, it nevertheless serves to indicate the importance of networking events in facilitating the formation of consortia.

#### 4.3.8. Assessment and Monitoring

Analysis and review of past and ongoing international scientific cooperation is addressed in most of the BILAT projects. A number of projects have also compiled a significant amount of data on scientific agreements and projects, and have published the information on their website.

At least one project has adopted a holistic approach and plans to integrate information on S&T agreements, ongoing cooperation within FP7 and an inventory of existing task forces between EU and the third country into an observatory.

A variety of quality control mechanisms have been used to obtain feedback and to measure the effectiveness of project dissemination efforts. Some have prepared specific reporting templates, feedback forms and surveys addressed to the subscribers of a newsletter with a view to compiling statistics on submission of partner profiles. Others have focused on compiling figures of participation in FP7

projects, with many projects making use of the FP7 CORDA database as a source of data. This begs the question of whether this activity largely duplicates similar analyses undertaken by the Commission services in this area.

Assessment of the impact of the projects financed under the FP so far is rarely if ever undertaken in the BILAT projects, and should be an achievable goal considering the proximity of these projects to the scientific and technological research communities of their countries. Such results would provide valuable information to policy makers, and should be strongly encouraged in order to support a base of evidence to inform the design of future calls.

#### 4.3.9. Dissemination

Most of the websites are well structured in terms of design, access and navigation, and convey a professional image. However, the information and content available on the websites is not always up to date, possibly because updating of content may not have been adequately foreseen in the project plans. Nearly all websites have statistics about traffic to the website, with such data often indicating an impressive number of hits.

A number of websites have their content in the language of the third country and may have only limited content translated into English. While this is appropriate for the third country researchers, the point is made that such websites are also relevant for European organisations and it would be preferable if the full website were available in both English and the third country language.

Organisation of dissemination events is common and numerous expert meetings, workshops, info days and video-conferences have been organised. A few of the BILAT projects

are running in countries which are not new to the framework programme and where there is already a good level of awareness amongst the research community. Such projects are not organising information events but instead are focusing their efforts and resources on other activities such as training of researchers. This tailoring of project effort and resources to the particular requirements of the target third country contributes towards the optimisation of project impact.

Most of the projects are also contributing a variety of e-newsletters, e-mail alerts, flyers, brochures and information packages. Some projects are experimenting with other mechanisms such as information platforms.

#### 4.3.10. Coordination with other EC Instruments

Most of the BILAT projects involve a broad range of activities related to the promotion of FP7, the research community, bilateral S&T cooperation, FP7 Contact Point capacity development and S&T policy. It appears that this spectrum of activities already presents quite a challenge for many projects, and few have taken a broader view on Science, Higher Education and Technology and Innovation.

There are, however, a number of projects which are planning to work with other EU institutions such as EuropeAid and the European Business and Technology Centre (co-funded by the EU) to strengthen the FP7 Contact Point system in the third country, to increase participation in FP7 and to encourage the creation of an EEN (European Enterprise Network) contact point.

Other projects intend to link their activities with relevant programmes such as COST, the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme, ERASMUS,

and the European Enterprise Network. However, at the time of the evaluation there were no specific results to report in this area.

#### 4.3.11. Conclusions

1. The BILAT Activity faces a conceptual challenge by targeting a range of industrialised, emerging and developing countries which merit a different approach in accordance with the varying scientific potential and level of development of the target country. Industrialised countries have little need for capacity-building activities or coordination with EU Aid Programmes, while such activities constitute an important component of projects working with developing countries. This calls into question the logic of using a single Activity to promote S&T cooperation with this diverse group of countries.
2. In response to this variety of third country situations, project activities vary significantly from one project to another, having generally been tailored to the landscape and specificities of the third country.
3. In most cases the BILAT Activity has delivered positive results despite a modest level of project funding. Significant achievements have been registered in various areas including capacity building in third countries, disseminating information on FP7, gathering intelligence on third country scientific potential, facilitating the development of partnerships between European and third country researchers, and monitoring of scientific collaboration.
4. There is much scope for further additional bilateral support actions and the BILAT Activity should be retained, but a redefined Activity with a careful choice of tasks should lead to more significant results.

## 4.4. The ERA-NET Activity

### 4.4.1. Objectives

The ERA-NET Activity aims to promote the coordination of national policies and activities of member states / associated countries concerning international S&T cooperation<sup>14</sup>. Its overriding objective is to reduce the fragmentation within the European Research Area by increasing coordination between national research programmes across the EU Member and Associated States.

The stated objectives of this Activity are as follows:

- Reducing fragmentation across member states by joining forces in research programmes targeting key third countries to achieve critical mass, and to ensure the better use of scarce resources;
- Addressing global issues common to many EU Member or Associated States;
- Developing common governance principles (e.g. with respect to ethics, good practices);
- Bringing together national programmes which deal with cooperation with third countries, and enabling them to 'speak with one voice'.

### 4.4.2. Partners and Partner Profiles

The countries that are most active in ERA-NET projects are those where responsibility for international S&T cooperation is vested in a single national entity, or where the responsible entities already had a history of close cooperation.

The ERA-NET Activity has a higher percentage of member states / associated country partners than the other international cooperation Activi-

ties, reflecting the high level of interest of these countries and their willingness to contribute funds towards joint research activities with the target third countries. All projects are coordinated by European partners.

With reference to the type of organisation participating in the projects, the only eligible participants are those which are owners or managers of research programmes.

The quality of the partner organisations alone is not a guarantee of success, and it is clear from the ERA-NETs under consideration that much depends on the individual assigned to the project. In some cases prominent organisations appoint relatively junior and inexperienced staff, leading to a diminished contribution to the project.

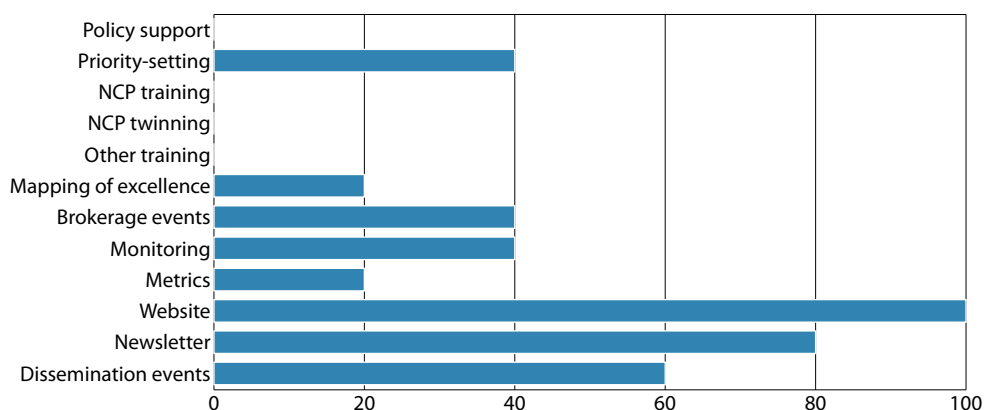
During the evaluation it became clear that EU partners who already had a pre-existing relationship with the target third country or region brought with them important regional knowledge and experience which contributed to a speedy start to the project.

### 4.4.3. ERA-NET Project Activities

In contrast with the INCO-NET and BILAT projects which have a broad approach towards building cooperation, the ERA-NET projects have a strong focus on establishing a (pilot) joint call. As a consequence, the range of activities undertaken in these projects is more restricted, as can be seen in Figure 4.3.

Activities related to policy support and capacity-building are not relevant to these projects. Priority-setting exercises were undertaken in some projects as part of the process leading to the development of a work programme for the joint calls, while a small number of projects included activities such as mapping of third country excellence, as well as networking and brokerage events.

**Figure 4.3: Percentage of ERA-NET projects undertaking specific types of activity.**



Dissemination through websites and publications formed part of all projects, but with different degrees of added value, timely maintenance and inputs. Information posted on the projects' websites and the content of newsletters did not always meet the desired standard.

#### 4.4.4. Strengths and Achievements

1. The ERA-NET Activity is looked upon very favourably by researchers, since it provides an opportunity for third country research organisations to participate in EU research projects which is seldom provided by other programmes. Bilateral programmes limit cooperation to two countries only and thus the multilateral element is missing, while the framework programme provides opportunities for multilateral cooperation but is characterised by a low success rate. ERA-NET calls allow for higher success rates and easier access than FP7, thus increasing opportunities and reducing frustration.
2. The ERA-NET projects allow more freedom in the selection of topics for research than other initiatives such as FP7 SICAs and 'Targeted Opening', where the EU takes the lead and foreign partners have a limited role in the governance of these schemes.
3. The majority of ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus projects succeeded in launching joint calls within the projected time frame. The ERA-NET Plus project successfully launched a real joint research call, while the rest launched pilot calls focusing on mobility and partnering activities.
4. The identified priority research areas differ from one project to another, and reflect the interests of the participating countries. Such agreement on research priorities contributes to the success of the projects and highlights the common interests driving the partnership.
5. The projects successfully agreed on the rules of participation and evaluation methodology to be used in the joint calls. The evaluation procedure was organised effectively in all calls and the final selection was agreed amongst the different partners without friction.
6. The research teams which have submitted proposals to the joint calls are of high quality, despite the fact that the joint calls

funded through the ERA-NET projects are often limited in scale and lack ambition in terms of research objectives.

#### 4.4.5. Weaknesses and Issues

1. A number of ERA-NET projects have undertaken analytical work which may duplicate similar efforts undertaken in INCO-NET projects.
2. Monitoring processes for the projects funded through the joint call are not clearly defined. Furthermore, the funded projects may extend beyond the end date of the ERA-NET project itself, presenting additional difficulties to ensure that the projects are properly monitored and evaluated.
3. In the case of partners who are participating as observers, it is not clear what their roles, expectations and rights are. A number of observers have the potential to become strong partners if they decide to join the cooperation scheme after having understood its merits and problems after the initial period of implementation. The role of observers should be clarified in the future.
4. The level of funding contributed by the project partners for joint calls is substantially lower than that routinely raised in thematic ERA-NET projects.
5. There has been no real progress towards joining forces in research programmes targeting key third countries to achieve critical mass and to ensure the better use of scarce resources.
6. The joint calls issued by ERA-NET projects are based on the virtual common pot approach, which means that partner countries do not actually contribute funds to the call, but

rather guarantee a level of finance reserved for the funding of research organisations from their own country. This often creates administrative difficulties when projects selected for funding include one or more partners from countries where the financial allocation has all been used up.

7. Progress towards a real common pot does not appear likely in the near future, since countries are unwilling to contribute funds which may then be allocated to a research organisation from another country.
8. Many of the joint calls implemented in the international ERA-NET projects to date are relatively modest and are limited to summer schools, mobility grants and exchange of personnel rather than research for excellence. However, some of the projects are planning to launch proper research calls in the future.
9. Since the funding available for the pilot call stage is relatively low, the overhead and costs associated with the administration of the call is disproportionately high.
10. The lack of project funding to cover administration costs in the ERA-NET Plus projects was highlighted by partners as a major weakness in the Activity. In the case of third countries with no experience in multilateral funding schemes, such cost may present an unforeseen overhead and may jeopardise the programme or its effective implementation.

#### 4.4.6. Sustainability

In order to maximise the value of the investment in the current ERA-NETs, it is important that the initiatives do not dissipate once the current projects come to an end. Unfortunately, however, it is unlikely that these consortia will be able to

sustain their partnership, in particular since increased funding is necessary to progress to ambitious research projects and a real common pot.

It is being suggested that the European Commission may be able to provide assistance through one of the following mechanisms:

11. Provide an opportunity for ERA-NET projects to progress through a call for proposals for ERA-NET Plus or a new scheme.
12. Offer technical assistance to each consortium to identify how it can be channelled into other schemes. Alternatives would include thematic ERA-NETs, SICAs or coordinated calls in the most promising topics, specialised schemes in the spirit of former Art. 169 (now Art. 185 under the new Treaty of Lisbon), handover to other organisations (e.g. BSEC for Black Sea).

#### 4.4.7. Conclusions

1. The ERA-NET Activity provides an important opportunity for developing joint funding programmes which enable researchers in Europe to get to know their colleagues in foreign countries as well as enabling third country research organisations to participate in international research projects, with an encouraging success rate for proposals submitted under these programmes.
2. Agreement on the rules of participation, evaluation methodology and selection of proposals was not an issue, highlighting the validity and feasibility of the approach.
3. EU member states have made very limited progress towards joining forces in research programmes targeting key third countries to achieve critical mass and to ensure the

better use of scarce resources.

## 4.5. The Access4EU Activity

### 4.5.1. Objectives

The ACCESS4EU Activity was developed with the following objectives<sup>10</sup> in mind:

- to help develop the reciprocity aspect of the S&T Agreements by identifying the programmes open to EU researchers and promote their participation;
- to increase the awareness and dissemination within the member states and associated countries of access opportunities for European researchers and research organisations in national research and/or innovation programmes managed by third countries;
- to provide information and reports which would be useful to the Joint Committee meetings of the S&T Agreements (JSTCC).

This Activity marks a departure from the general orientation of the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme in FP7, where most of the endeavours are aimed at integrating third countries into the framework programme. In contrast, this Activity seeks to facilitate the participation of EU research organisations in research programmes funded by third countries.

### 4.5.2. Partner Profiles

The Access4EU call was limited to a subset of the group of countries having an S&T Agreement with the EU, specifically the industrialised and emerging countries. The rationale behind this is

that these countries are the ones most likely to have national research funding programmes in which EU countries might fruitfully participate.

As requested in the call, all consortia have at least one partner from the target third country, with the majority having 2 or more such partners. Most of the projects included third country partners such as Ministries, programme owners or other organisations with the required knowledge, expertise and links to programme owners. Such participation is important in order to facilitate the compilation of information regarding third countries' research programmes and the conditions regulating participation by EU countries.

Most of the projects included partners with the required profile and experience, such as having a good understanding of the target audience in the EU, as well as having access to

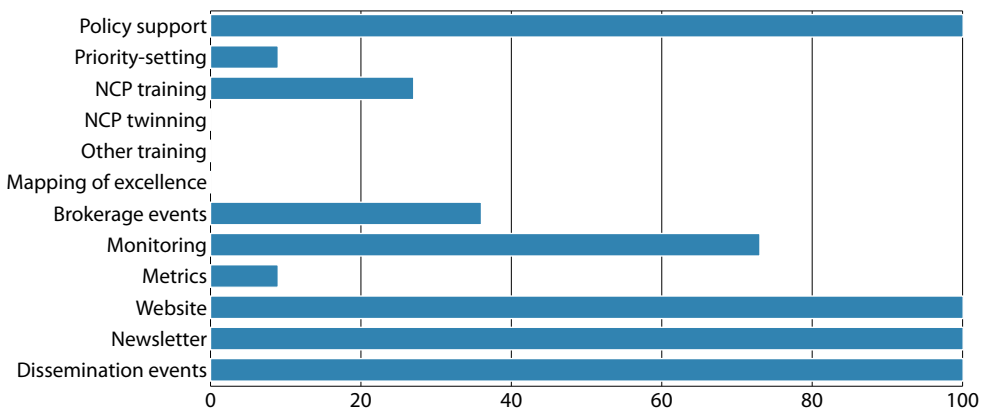
the established networks for promoting participation in research programmes. Most of the projects are coordinated by EU partners, although a small minority are coordinated by third country organisations.

### 4.5.3. Access4EU Project Activities

The projects funded through this Activity have only recently gotten underway, making it difficult to undertake an evaluation on the basis of progress and achievements alone. The exercise has therefore also taken into account the planned activities in order to circumvent this limitation.

Figure 4.4 below shows the Activities undertaken by the Access4EU projects, which adopted a consistent and focused approach towards achieving their objectives.

**Figure 4.4: Percentage of Access4EU projects undertaking different activities.**



## Support to Policy Dialogue

The projects funded under the Access4EU Activity all include the preparation of reports and documents to be forwarded to the JSTC meetings, and dedicate a substantial amount of effort to the following activities:

- Reporting on the third country research landscape;
- the compilation of a list of the relevant research funding programmes together with information on eligibility criteria, rules of participation, funding levels and application procedures;
- to compile an inventory of the numerous bilateral agreements existing between the third country and EU MS/AC.

Despite only having got underway in the last few months, many of the projects have already delivered reports on third country research programmes and additional information regarding which of these are open to EU researchers. These will be followed up with an analysis of barriers to participation, and recommendations to enable greater participation by EU organisations.

## Inventory of funding programmes

Appraisal of third country research landscapes and the compilation of a list of the relevant research funding programmes constitute a fundamental objective of the Access4EU Activity and was prioritised accordingly. Additional items of information such as eligibility criteria, rules of participation, funding levels and application procedures have also been identified.

This undertaking proved to be quite a complicated and challenging task, with the possibility

of a diversity of funding programmes managed by different authorities. To complicate matters, documentation relating to such programmes is often available only in the mother tongue of the third country, and such exercises would have been extremely difficult were it not for the active participation and local knowledge of the third country project partners.

Preliminary results indicate a mixed picture regarding the openness of third country programmes to EU research organisations. Several countries operate funding programmes which, in theory at least, are open to participation by EU researchers, while others do not offer any such opportunities. In several cases, however, some of the schemes which have been identified relate to scholarships and fellowships for EU researchers to undertake research in the third country, rather than for the undertaking of joint collaborative projects.

Information relating to a number of such funds has already been posted on the Access4EU portal.

## Monitoring of Collaboration

Identification of existing research collaboration constitutes another core activity of the Access4EU projects. Once again, obtaining such information may not be a straightforward undertaking and may encounter barriers such as lack of an information repository, as well as administrative difficulties in obtaining access to the data.

## Building Partnerships

The Activity will be delivering a number of matchmaking events dedicated to bringing together European and third country researchers with the objective of forming consortia. Several other events such as conferences will also be

organised, providing additional opportunities for networking and building partnerships since these are attended by both European and third country researchers.

One project will be supplementing the normal broadcast approach with a more focused initiative where a small number of European research organisations will be identified and provided with enhanced support and assistance. This is an interesting idea and, if effective, could prove to be an example for future activities.

## Dissemination

The Access4EU Activity is unique among the International Cooperation Activities in that the funded projects all share a common target audience – EU research organisations. This has made it possible for the projects to coordinate their efforts in disseminating information and promoting participation in third country programmes. The project coordinators have taken full advantage of this opportunity to develop synergy through the development of a joint portal and joint newsletter. They will also be joining forces in the organisation of events.

### 4.5.4. Conclusions

1. The Activity is charting unknown territory and it is not known with certainty what opportunities for participation in third country programmes will result from these initiatives. This endeavour constitutes the first step in understanding the current state of affairs and planning any future actions.
2. Although it is still early to make a proper assessment of the achievements of the Access4EU Activity, preliminary findings indicate that most of the third country research pro-

grammes offer very limited opportunities for participation by EU member states. This may render some of the planned dissemination and networking activities unnecessary and may impact the results of the Activity.

3. The high level of collaboration between the various projects in developing a joint portal, publication of a joint newsletter and coordination in organisation of events is a very positive development not seen in the other Activities.
4. Since the third countries targeted by the Access4EU Activity are also targeted by the BILAT Activity, there is an element of overlap between the actions of the two Activities. This is not in itself an issue, and provided an opportunity for synergy if the corresponding projects join forces in certain areas such as the organisation of networking events.

## 4.6. The INCO-NCP Activity

### 4.6.1. Objectives

The aim of the INCO-NCP Activity is to reinforce the network of international cooperation NCPs in member states and associated countries and of Contact Points in third countries by promoting transnational cooperation<sup>10</sup>:

### 4.6.2. Projects and Activities

The approach adopted in this Activity was to initially fund a single 2-year pilot project which focused on the organisation of regional training events, the development of a wiki tool, and a number of dissemination activities such as project website, info days, newsletters, etc. The pilot project was considered to

be a success, leading to the decision by the European Commission to publish a call for a fully-blown follow-up project as part of the 2009 work programme.

The overall objectives of the Activity remained unchanged, and a single 4-year project was funded with the aim of organising additional activities along the lines of those of the pilot project.

### Annual Conference

One of the flagship events of the project is the annual conference targeted primarily at European and third country international cooperation NCPs and FP7 Contact Points, providing an excellent forum for a plethora of activities including:

- dissemination of information by International Cooperation Directorate staff;
- training activities for NCPs and third country Contact Points;
- presentations on specific international cooperation projects;
- presentations on the research landscape in specific countries.

The annual conference also attracts a large number of partners involved in the various projects funded through the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme, and provides an excellent networking opportunity for all those with an interest in international cooperation in S&T.

Whilst EU member states and associated country NCPs have the opportunity to meet their peers and FP7 officials on a regular basis (e.g.

at NCP meetings, brokerage events, etc.), third country Contact Points lack these opportunities and can be left feeling somewhat isolated. The INCO-NCP Activity fulfils an important requirement in this regard.

At these conferences it has become customary to organise a series of project meetings of the various international cooperation projects immediately preceding and following the conference, to take advantage of the presence of numerous third country FP7 contact points as well as project partners, thus rationalising on project budgets. This also helps to boost the attendance and value of the conferences.

### Contact Point Training Requirements and Delivery

The project delivers training activities for third country Contact Points, both at the regional and the local level, in an attempt to address the specific training needs of this very diverse community. Such training is also provided through the projects of the INCO-NET and BILAT Activities, but there is still a demand for additional training due to the large number of target countries, as well as to appointment of new Contact Points. A questionnaire survey was carried out to help identifying the training needs of the target community, and requests for training from third country Contact Points confirm the requirement for such training. The INCO-NCP project regularly liaises with INCO-NET and BILAT projects to avoid duplication of training delivery.

It appears that many if not most EU research institutions and researchers may be unaware that ICPC third countries researchers are eligible for FP7 funds on the same terms as their counterparts in the EU member states and associated countries. This doubtless constitutes a significant barrier to the participation of third country

organisations in FP7, and highlights the need for raising awareness among NCPs in member states so that they can in turn make this fact known among the research community, for example by including specific mention of such opportunities in their presentations to researchers.

An interesting point which came to light is that third country training requirements are not restricted to knowledge relating to the framework programme, but that many countries also experience a fundamental lack of knowledge regarding the EU in general, EU policies, and EU structures and institutions.

### Twinning Scheme

A key initiative of the INCO-NCP project is the facilitation of knowledge transfer between experienced NCPs in the EU member states, and newly established Contact Points in third countries. Such a mentoring role has not yet been adequately defined and merits attention. It should be based at the outset on the recognition that third country Contact Points are not all on the same level, and that different approaches or sets of mentoring tools may be required.

### Info-Days

The INCO-NCP project will also be organising a number of info-days in various third countries. Although similar activities are also organised through the INCO-NET and BILAT projects, the large number and vast expanse of ICPC countries clearly indicate a need for more endeavours in this sphere. The crucial factor is timing, ensuring that the different projects do not independently organise info-days in the same place within a particular timeframe. Such an occurrence will be avoided by appropriate liaison between the INCO-NCP and other projects.

Irrespective of the demand, however, it is questionable whether the organisation of such activities fits within the scope and objectives of the INCO-NCP Activity.

### Wiki Tool and Website

The strength of a wiki tool lies in the facility it offers to a user community to contribute content and update such content whenever required, and its effectiveness and success correspond to the willingness of the targeted community to dedicate the necessary time and effort to the use of this tool by actively contributing content based on their knowledge and activities.

While the wiki tool has been developed according to plan, it has proved difficult to stimulate active participation of the intended user community. This is not entirely surprising, and a variety of similar attempts elsewhere have also encountered similar difficulties. The content of the INCO-NCP wiki remains limited, with most of the material having been contributed by the coordinator in an effort to catalyse its acceptance and use. It does, however, contain a useful overview of FP7 and information on how to become involved in FP7 projects.

The website has some 700 registered users, while the newsletter is circulated to some 200 users.

### Benchmarking of Contact Points

Benchmarking of third country Contact Points is another topic which merits attention, and the INCO-NCP project is looking into the needs and constraints of a systematic monitoring and evaluation activity. However, monitoring of third country Contact Points is the prerogative of third country authorities, and the project is carefully assessing the extent to which it may reasonably contribute to such an action.

### 4.6.3. Conclusions

1. The INCO-NCP annual conference provides an important networking forum for all those involved in the EU's international cooperation activities in S&T, especially for third country Contact Points who have very limited opportunity to meet their peers and counterparts in other countries.
2. The INCO-NCP project is also delivering a number of training sessions for third country Contact Points, but taking care not to duplicate similar training organised by the INCO-NET and BILAT projects.
3. There is some question regarding whether it is appropriate for the INCO-NCP project to organise info-day activities since it is not clear whether such events contribute to the Activity's central aim of promoting transnational cooperation.

# 5. Achievements and Issues

## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the activities and results achieved by the various Activities from a horizontal perspective, with a focus on the following six categories:

1. **Support to Policy Dialogue** – this category encompasses a range of actions including logistical support, identification of joint research priorities, and provision of reports and intelligence related to S&T in third countries;
2. **Capacity Building** - advice and assistance in setting up a Contact Point structure, training and mentoring for Contact Points, training for members of the research community;
3. **Networking and Partnership Building** - organisation of workshops, brokerage events and thematic conferences, travel grants, etc;
4. **Assessment and Monitoring** - compilation of statistics and indicators related to S&T, international cooperation, etc;
5. **Dissemination and Outreach** - activities such as development of websites, newsletters, information sessions, seminars and conferences;
6. **Coordination with Other Community Instruments** - coordination with activities carried out through Community external policy instruments (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Instrument (DCECI), etc.).

## 5.2. Support to Policy Dialogue

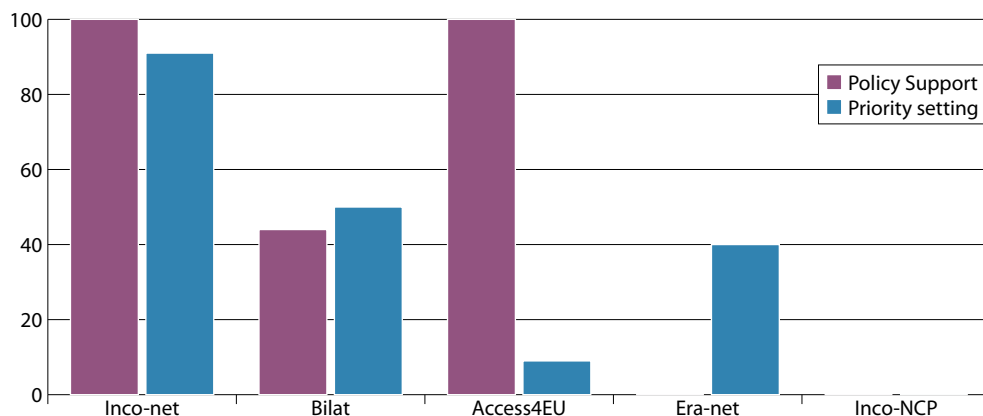
Most of the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme have as one of their main objectives the provision of support to the policy dialogue process. In the case of both bilateral and biregional policy dialogue, this takes the form of drafting of policy papers, undertaking studies, collection of intelligence and compilation of indicators. In the case of the biregional dialogue platforms, policy support includes the abovementioned activities together with the provisions of logistical support in the organisation of the meetings.

Another common objective of some of the International Cooperation Activities is that of identifying research topics of importance and relevance both to the MS/AC, as well as to the third countries participating in the projects. The identification of such joint priorities constitutes an important input into the policy dialogue process and serves as a basis for future joint collaborative research.

### 5.2.1. Achievements

The diagram below shows the percentage of projects funded through each Activity undertaking activities which qualify as providing support to the policy dialogue process.

**Figure 5.1: Percentage of projects undertaking 'Support to Policy Dialogue' actions for different Activities.**



Most of the INCO-NET projects directly supported the policy dialogue process and several have dedicated a work package towards this objective. Numerous priority-setting, mapping and monitoring activities provided the intelligence and reports to guide policy and discussion at the policy platforms.

In the case of the BILAT projects, the emphasis is on capacity-building and networking activities rather than on providing support to policy dialogue. The international cooperation work programmes may not have been sufficiently clear on the expected role of the projects in providing support to the JSTCs, with the consequence that only a minority of the projects refer to the Bilateral policy dialogue, or provide any direct support. However, most of the projects funded through this Activity included activities such as monitoring of collaboration between the third country and EU research organisations, and to a lesser extent compilation of indicators, which result in reports and intelligence which should be of interest to the JSTC meetings. These topics are addressed in greater depth under the appropriate heading later in this section.

In contrast to the BILAT projects, the Access4EU project proposals specifically mention that

they will be preparing reports and documents to be forwarded to the JSTC meetings. Despite having got underway only recently, several of the projects have already delivered reports on third country research programmes together with additional information regarding which of these are open to EU researchers. These will be followed up with an analysis of barriers to participation, and recommendations to enable greater participation by EU organisations.

Forty percent of the ERA-NET projects also conducted quite detailed analyses of the third country funding systems, but these are not shown in the figure above since they were not intended as support to the policy dialogue process as was the case with the Access4EU projects.

### Joint Priority-setting

All the INCO-NET projects have dedicated a significant portion of their resources to priority-setting activities, more often than not having a specific work package focusing on this theme. Prior to conducting the prioritisation workshops, the projects developed a formal methodology to guide the prioritisation process. The activities

usually adopted a combined bottom-up and top-down approach through the organisation of thematic seminars and workshops which brought together policymakers and stakeholders, both from Europe and from the relevant third countries, with the objective of discussing and prioritising common research topics. These workshops generated a lot of enthusiasm within the research community and produced tangible and immediate results, often leading to the development of roadmaps to chart the way forward in collaborative research.

Approximately half of the BILAT projects also included similar prioritisation activities, using an approach similar to that of the INCO-NETs. Priority-setting activities are not relevant to the Access4EU Activity.

Priority-setting as an activity also featured in a number of the ERA-NET projects. However, in this case the scope was limited to the project itself, having the very specific objective of establishing the basis of the work programme which governed the research topics of the joint call. Some ERA-NETs took a long analytical approach to define common priorities, other agreed very quickly trying to be practical and pilot a call in an area of common interest.

Overall, the international cooperation Activities performed effectively in the identification of common research priorities, generally following a formal methodology and ensuring legitimacy and buy-in on the part of third countries through the involvement of both policy-makers and researchers.

### 5.2.2. Issues

The lack of direct coordination between some international cooperation projects and the relevant policy dialogue platform meetings is a cause for

concern. The projects are required to perform the studies necessary to feed the platform with information, and to assist in the implementation of agreed action lines. Clearly, this cannot proceed smoothly without close cooperation between the platform and the project consortium. This is especially so in the case of the BILAT projects, where most projects fail to even make mention of the JSTC forum.

There are instances where the EU partners involved in the policy dialogue dimension of the projects tend to overstep their mandate and manage the policy dialogue rather than providing support to it. This could arise as a result of a clouded understanding of the role of the project partners in the dialogue process.

A related issue that was raised on a number of occasions by third country INCO-NET partners relates to the level of authority and legitimacy of the EU partners. While third country partners normally include government ministries, MS/AC partners are frequently represented by public authorities. This imbalance in institutional authority was perceived by third country partners to reduce the legitimacy of high-level INCO-NET activities such as priority-setting exercises.

In the case of the Central Asian / South Caucasian region, there exists no policy dialogue platform between the EC and the region. The projects in question plan to work round this by organising missions to individual countries within the region to hold discussions with senior officials at a national level.

### Joint Priority-setting

While the various projects performed well and achieved the desired results in terms of joint priority-setting, a problem was encountered in the utilisation of these results to develop SICA calls under the Themes of the Cooperation Pro-

gramme. This was already addressed in some detail in the analysis of the INCO-NET Activity in the previous section, and there is no need to repeat the arguments here.

Suffice it to say that this situation leads to disappointment on the part of the project partners, especially within the third countries, as well as portraying the EC in a bad light. On a positive note, the Environment directorate within DG RTD reported that they find INCO-NETs a very useful mechanism for preparing detailed priority actions for their thematic SICAs, as long as this is done on the initiative of the environment directorate and not vice-versa.

2. The International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme has dedicated significant time and effort to undertaking priority-setting exercises, but often without the prior guarantees or participation of the thematic directorates. Not surprisingly, there has been very limited success in utilisation of the results as input into SICA calls.
3. The International Cooperation Directorate should consider the use of alternative mechanisms, such as ERA-NET/Plus schemes, for exploiting the results of the priority-setting exercises undertaken in the INCO-NET and BILAT projects.

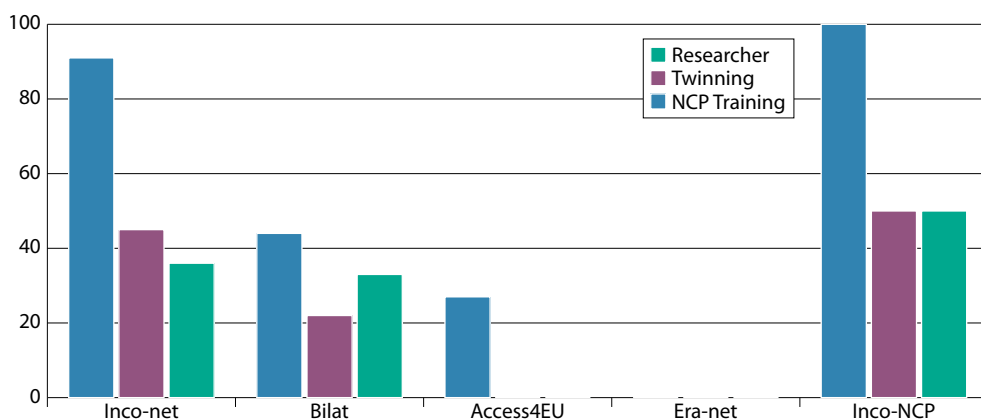
### 5.2.3. Conclusions

1. In the INCO-NET and BILAT Activities there is a strong need to develop closer cooperation between the project consortium and the policy dialogue platform. Project activities should be guided by roadmaps or action plans developed through the platform.

## 5.3. Capacity Building

Capacity-building in third countries presents a major challenge due to the broad spectrum of situations prevailing in the countries targeted by the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme.

**Figure 5.2: Percentage of projects organising capacity-building activities for different Activities**



### 5.3.1. Achievements

The INCO-NET Activity primarily addresses countries which do not have a highly-evolved S&T ecosystem. For several of the countries this is their first experience of FP7, and even when there is a Contact Point structure in place, the level of knowledge and experience of the Contact Point personnel is limited. One focus of the projects is therefore on developing the Contact Point structures, providing elementary training to new Contact Points, and further developing the skills of Contact Points who already have a basic knowledge of the FP.

All the INCO-NET projects dedicated substantial time and funding towards this objective through a broad range of activities such as providing help and advice in establishing Contact Point structures, training of Contact Points and multipliers, and assisting Contact Points in setting performance targets. The projects delivered a mix of basic and advanced training tailored to the specific requirements of the country and of the individual. Several projects supplemented this training by organising twinning visits for third country Contact Points to EU NCP organisations to experience at first hand how these operate on a daily basis. In some of the more advanced regions, the projects were also able to deliver some training for the research community on topics such as project management, proposal writing, financial administration, etc.

In contrast to the INCO-NETs, each BILAT project is focusing exclusively on one third country, and can therefore afford to tailor the capacity-building activities more precisely to the needs of that country. These projects address predominantly industrialised and emerging countries, many of which have a long history of involvement in the FP and have a properly-functioning and self-sustaining Contact Point network. Many

such projects have not included any training for Contact Points, but instead have focused any capacity-building efforts on training targeted at the research community.

A number of Access4EU projects are also planning to deliver training for NCPs within the EU, with such training focusing on raising awareness of opportunities for participation in third country research programmes.

The INCO-NCP Activity complements the activities of the other Activities by providing opportunities for training and twinning aimed predominantly at the international cooperation Contact Points in third countries, as well as NCPs in member states and associated countries.

### 5.3.2. Issues

While the Activities can provide the financing and the training for the Contact Points in a third country, it remains contingent upon that country to identify and nominate individuals to perform this role. For several INCO-NET partners this is their first taste of a formal effort by the EU to facilitate their participation in the framework programme, and in numerous cases it is the EU which has taken the initiative to encourage the third country to participate in the programme.

Setting up an FP7 Contact Point structure in a third country thus often proves to be a stumbling block, since the country may not yet be fully committed to allocating the required resources, or may face financial or administrative difficulties in engaging individuals to perform this task. Even when such individuals have been appointed, it often happens that the nominated Contact Points have been allocated the task over and above their other duties, often meaning that they are unable to dedicate a reasonable amount of time to the job.

As a general comment, given the magnitude of the task and the physical size of many third countries, it would be beneficial if more Contact Point training activities were organised. On the other hand, the delivery of training must be matched by the absorptive capacity of the targeted countries which in many cases proves to be a limiting factor. The development of Contact Point capacity is an evolutionary process, with some third country governments initially unwilling or unable to dedicate the optimum level of resource. Incremental success of third country participation in FP7 will encourage governments to increase the resources allocated to this task.

It must be remarked that since delivery of Contact Point training is such a widespread activity, there is a certain degree of duplication of effort such as, for example, in the preparation of training material. There may be advantages in centralising Contact Point training and delivering it either as an EC service or through a specific project. The projects themselves could then concentrate on identifying the training needs of Contact Points and liaising with the training delivery services.

The advantages of such an approach would include:

- standardisation of the training;
- a more consistent and professional delivery;
- reduction in duplication of effort in preparation of training material;
- more regular and cost-effective training (through economies of scale).

### 5.3.3. Conclusions

1. Capacity-building presents a major challenge due to the broad spectrum of situa-

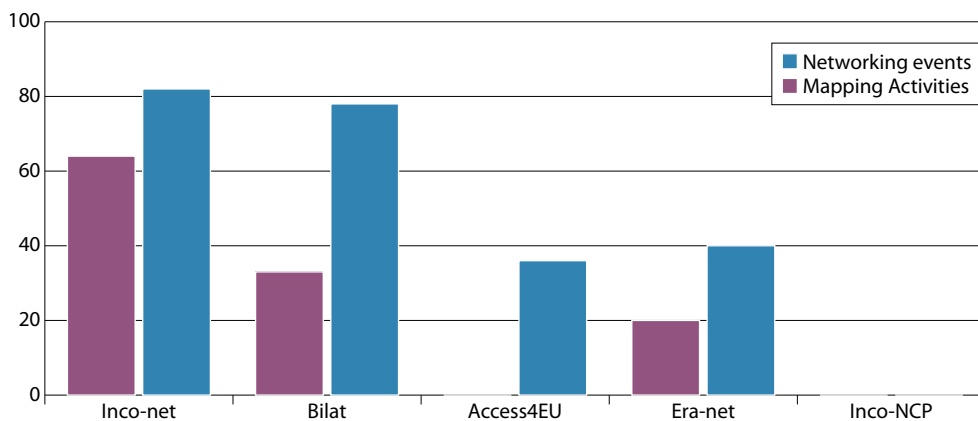
tions prevailing in different third countries targeted by the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme. A major stumbling-block is the lack of a proper Contact Point structure in numerous third countries, even in the case of some countries which have an S&T Agreement with the EU.

2. Most of the projects address capacity-building requirements, and overall the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme have been successful in this regard. In numerous cases the level of training activity is limited by the absorption capacity of the target countries rather than by any factors relating to the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme.
3. Provision of training focusing on the research community is very limited across all Activities.
4. Complementarity between INCO-NETs and BILATs is generally good, with the INCO-NETs focusing primarily on training of national Contact Point structures, while BILATs extended their activities to address regional Contact Point networks as well as including training for researchers.

## 5.4. Networking and Partnership Building

Generating opportunities for potential partners to meet and form consortia with other partners is of fundamental importance to increasing participation of third countries in the framework programme. The international cooperation work programmes therefore advocated a number of activities in order to provide tools and opportunities for facilitating the development of international consortia.

**Figure 5.3: Percentage of projects organising mapping and networking events for different Activities**



### 5.4.1. Achievements

#### Mapping

Mapping of key research institutes in partner countries featured as one of the activities in most INCO-NETs, and to a lesser extent in the BILAT and ERA-NET projects. In most cases this exercise was carried out in a formal manner, starting with the development of a methodology and set of criteria to establish which organisations qualify for inclusion in the database of key institutes. Very often, however, the results of the mapping exercises consist of little more than contact details and a short profile of the identified organisations. The resulting data is normally stored in an online database developed specifically for the purpose and forming part of the project website. These databases come with search facilities to enable enquiries to be made according to criteria such as area of expertise.

#### Networking Events

While compiling a catalogue or database of potential partners in third countries may prove useful to EU organisations seeking such partners, there is no substitute for face-to-face meetings. These

are best facilitated through fact-finding missions, travel grant schemes and brokerage events. They normally have a thematic focus and provide an opportunity for interested organisations to deliver a short presentation on their capabilities to potential partners. Travel grant schemes provide financing for an individual or organisation to visit one or more organisations in a different country to discuss possible collaboration.

Most of the INCO-NET projects included organisation of a small number of scientific conferences and brokerage events in a number of third countries as well as within Europe. A small amount of funding was often ringfenced to assist third country researchers to attend events in Europe. Likewise, the BILAT and to a lesser extent the Access4EU projects are planning to organise similar events.

In the case of the ERA-NETs, a number of the projects organised brokerage events to facilitate the development of consortia interested in participating in the pilot or joint call.

One of the Access4EU projects has developed an innovative approach and will be supplementing the normal broadcast approach with a more fo-

cused initiative where a small number of European research organisations will be identified and provided with enhanced support and assistance to establish cooperation with Russian organisations. This is an interesting idea and, if effective, could prove to be an exemplar for future activities.

#### 5.4.2. Issues

##### Mapping

There is some question regarding the usefulness and cost-effectiveness of conducting mapping exercises to identify the more promising third country research organisations. These activities have a strong focus on Universities and public research institutions, and in the world of academia, scientific publications in the international journals already provide an independent assessment of the scientific expertise in third countries. EU institutions working in a particular area might already be aware of poles of excellence in other countries through this mechanism. On the other hand, certain countries might not have a culture of publication in international scientific journals, and the mapping exercise could be useful in identifying poles of excellence which not enjoy a high profile internationally. The current evaluation exercise was unable to determine whether the results of such mapping exercises are useful to researchers, since such an exercise would involve a more in-depth study, and in many cases not enough time had elapsed to assess the usefulness of this approach.

Another issue relates to the difficulty of establishing criteria for excellence, and then evaluating research organisations against these criteria. In most cases this would call for specialist thematic knowledge beyond the competence of the project teams.

A serious shortcoming is the lack of a centralised repository for the information delivered through the projects. The availability and thus the useful-

ness of such information would multiply manifold if all such information from the various projects were stored in a central repository and in a standardised format. The EraWatch or CORDIS web portals would be a natural home for such a repository. The various projects all advertising the same repository would also make it more well-known to the international research community.

Another question which arises relates to the sustainability and upkeep of the mapping data. It is true that the information in question is not particularly dynamic, since excellent research institutions do not crop up overnight. Nevertheless, some thought needs to be given to establishing a mechanism for maintaining such data in order to maintain its relevance.

##### Networking Events

Although a number of projects organised networking events, or included travel grants for researchers to attend conferences and brokerage events, it is believed that the level of such funding was low in relation to the demand. Furthermore, funding for other travel such as visits to research organisations and attendance at pre-proposal meetings hardly featured in the projects.

While organisation of networking places heavy demands on the project in terms of effort and finance, it should be borne in mind that there are many such events being organised by the EC or through other projects including the thematic NCP network projects, and it is probably more advisable to provide funding in the form of travel grants for attendance at such events.

#### 5.4.3. Conclusions

1. While numerous projects included mapping of research excellence in third countries,

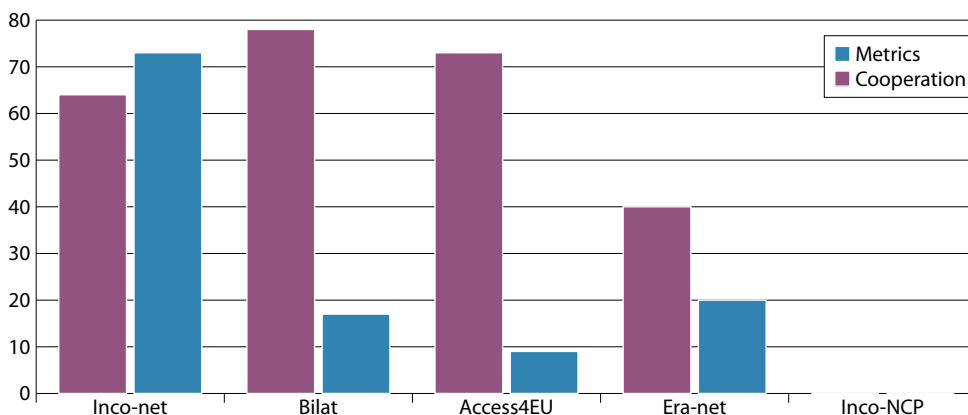
the presentation of such information is not standardised and repositories of such results are dispersed and not easily accessible, thus limiting their usefulness.

2. Organisation of or funding for attendance at brokerage events was included in most projects, but allocation of resources and funding for these events was on the low side when compared to the funding made available through the inco programme.
3. Despite the fact that various actions (sub-programmes) funded under the INCO programme relate to the organisation of networking events, duplication is not an issue and in general the organisation of more activities would be beneficial.

## 5.5. Assessment and Monitoring

Establishing appropriate indicators and compilation of statistics on an ongoing basis is fundamental to a proper understanding of the situation prevailing within a country in terms of research activity. Such indicators are imperative to the policy dialogue process to inform the development of action plans, to monitor the effectiveness of any actions which are underway, and to understand the evolution of the landscape over time. While such indicators are readily available in the EU and industrialised countries, they are much harder to come by in the case of many third countries.

**Figure 5.4: Percentage of projects undertaking of assessment and monitoring actions for different Activities.**



### 5.5.1. Achievements

In response to this need, the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme work programmes have included assessment and monitoring activities in the portfolio of tasks to be undertaken in the projects. The work programmes encouraged projects to include activities such as identification and compilation of S&T metrics, setting up observatories, and establishing an inventory of collaboration between the EU and third countries.

This objective has been addressed to some extent in most of the INCO-NETs, while some of the projects have seen fit to set more ambitious targets in this regard. One project dedicated an entire work-package to the topic of indicators, while several others have organised workshops and seminars on the subject, bringing in renowned experts in the field to address the audience. Relevant deliverables included methodological guidelines, definitions and model templates for S&T statistical surveys.

While the INCO-NETs addressed the objective through a range of activities, the BILATs had a clear focus on developing an inventory of collaborative research taking place between EU and third country partners. This covered both participation by third country organisations in the FP, as well as other instances of collaboration.

In the case of the Access4EU projects, the focus was on compilation of statistics relating to participation of EU organisations in third country research programmes. In the ERA-NET projects, although activities such as monitoring of cooperation are related to the objectives of the Activity, they were in fact only undertaken by a minority of projects.

The examples of collaboration uncovered by the projects served a secondary yet important purpose as examples of success stories to be publicised by the newsletters produced by the projects.

### 5.5.2. Issues

One criticism regarding the assessment and monitoring activities is the lack of standardisation regarding the indicators to be used, and the lack of a central repository where the data is located. The results are not uniformly structured and are dispersed in a multitude of reports, databases and websites, and it will prove very laborious for anyone to utilise these results for analysis, aggregation or comparison.

In recognition of these issues, in October 2009 the EC organised an ILN workshop in order to share good practice amongst project coordinators and streamline the relevant processes. This workshop was definitely a step in the right direction, however there has not yet been a satisfactory conclusion to the matter.

The activities undertaken by the projects in the various actions were largely complementary, but there has been some duplication of effort in INCO-NETs, with several projects analysing the different possible indicators for which statistics need to be compiled.

A third issue relates to the sustainability of the initiative to compile the indicators, with there being a real risk that the initiatives undertaken on this topic will not continue without the future support and funding of the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme.

### 5.5.3. Conclusions

1. The International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme has included numerous efforts aimed at compilation of data relating to participation of third countries in the framework programme, and conversely relating to participation of MS and AC in third country research programmes. Although such activities

have yielded significant results, the information is not uniformly structured and is dispersed in a multitude of reports, databases and websites, and it will be very laborious for anyone wishing to make use of these results for analysis, aggregation or comparative purposes.

2. The International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme has also promoted the idea of establishing indicators and setting up regional observatories to monitor levels of international collaboration on an ongoing basis. Once again there have been significant achievements, but lack of standardisation and the absence of a central repository significantly reduces the value of the resulting data.

## 5.6. Dissemination and Outreach

### 5.6.1. Achievements

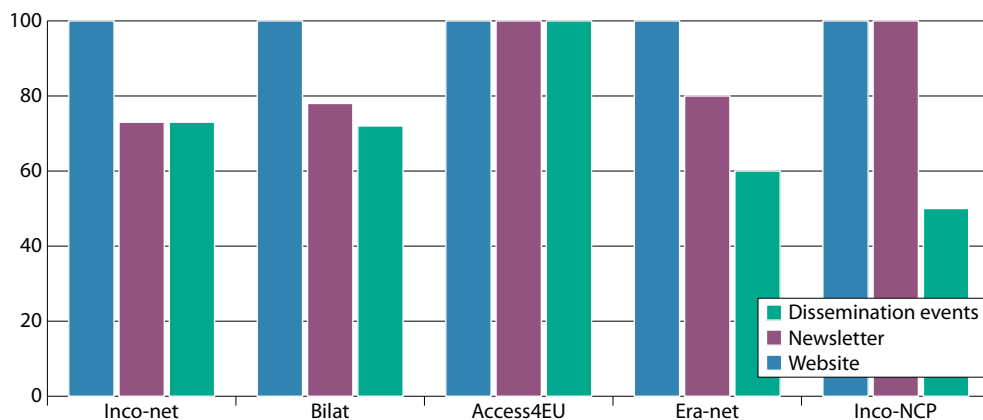
#### Websites

Nowadays it is a *sine qua non* that every project should have a website which, at the very least,

provides basic information about the initiative, its objectives, consortium partners, its main activities and relevant news items such as forthcoming events. Practically all projects fulfil these basic requirements, with a few of the websites offering additional features such as partner searches, or information on the research landscape in the third country or region. The universal language for project websites is English, although several of the projects include a version in a language prevalent in the target region.

An excellent initiative taken by the coordinators of the Access4EU projects resulted in the development of a portal containing information on all the supported projects, presented in a coherent structure. Its main advantage is that there is a single repository for the results of the various projects, and researchers will have a single point of entry to search for the information they require rather than having to trawl through a myriad of websites and databases. The portal will also improve the visibility of the Access4EU Activity and all the related projects, and will be promoted by all the projects rather than by a single project, making it a point of reference for identification of research opportunities in third countries.

Figure 5.5: Percentage of Projects organising dissemination activities.



## Newsletters

Newsletters provide a useful mechanism for disseminating information on the project activities, on FP7, forthcoming calls for proposals, success stories, forthcoming events, and other relevant information. Emailing e-newsletters to researchers is an active approach in contrast to the more passive mechanism of providing information in response to an initiative or query, thus reaching a wider audience. Email alerts serve a similar purpose although having a more restricted topic.

Across the board, it is only a minority of the international cooperation projects which do not make use of this inexpensive mechanism for disseminating relevant information and promoting participation in FP7. Newsletters targeted at the research community in a third country are often in the mother tongue of the country or in a language prevalent in the region.

Once again the Access4EU project coordinators have distinguished themselves by agreeing to publish a common newsletter, although several of the projects also intend publishing their own newsletter focusing on opportunities in their specific country. The joint newsletter will lead to economies of scale and present EU researchers with a compilation of information on opportunities for participating in third country programmes. Such an approach is especially important in the case of the Access4EU projects, since they are all targeting the same European audience. However, this approach may not be equally applicable to the INCO-NET or BILAT projects since under these Activities each project has its own distinct audience.

## Other Publications

Many of the projects have also produced or intend to produce a variety of other publications

including brochures, flyers and guidelines. The universal language is English but a number of these publications will also feature in other languages including Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin, Korean and Arabic. The rationale is that, while potential participants must have a working knowledge of English, it is much easier for them to understand a document when this is available in their mother tongue.

Several of the Access4EU projects plan to produce documents and guidelines with information for EU researchers on how to access the third country programmes.

## Information Sessions and Conferences

Most of the INCO-NET projects include the organisation of information sessions and conferences to promote awareness of FP7 in third countries as one of their fundamental activities. However, the frequency of such events is low and rarely meets the threshold of one event annually in any particular country. The projects which are not organising such events will rely on other activities such as thematic workshops to promote FP7.

In the BILAT projects, there is a mixed picture. A few of the BILAT projects are running in countries which are not new to the framework programme and where there is already a good level of awareness amongst the research community. Such projects are not organising information events but instead are focusing their efforts and resources on other activities such as training of researchers.

Once again the Access4EU projects will be organising a number of information sessions, mainly in EU countries, in several instances calling on the expertise of the third country programme owners to explain the mechanisms, rules and regulations relating to the third country programmes.

The INCO-NCP project will also be organising a number of info-days in various third countries, some of which are already the target of similar activities organised through the INCO-NET and BILAT projects. However, as the frequency of such events is very low this is not a cause for concern.

### 5.6.2. Issues

#### Websites

With the exception of the Access4EU Activity, a liberal approach has resulted in a plethora of disparate websites which, taken as a whole, fail to do justice to the EC's efforts and funding allocated to international cooperation in S&T. Branding is weak, with websites generally lacking a prominent acknowledgement of their source of funding. Links to the EC international cooperation webpage are rarely, if ever, present.

A cursory examination of the INCO-NET project websites will immediately reveal that many are visually unimpressive, often lacking in content, and with room for improvement in their structure and layout. Website document repositories are generally unstructured, and any important documents are not immediately evident. Newsletters developed as part of the project are often not present or not easily located on most websites.

Most of the INCO-NET projects fail to take advantage of the opportunity to develop a portal which will constitute a point of reference for information and documents pertaining to their target region. A good example of the synergies that could be achieved through such an approach is the [www.increast.eu](http://www.increast.eu) website, where country reports, projects, events, news, cooperation, database of key institutions, and contacts relevant to the Eastern Europe and Central Asian region are available in a single location. The information is collected from partners in

five international cooperation projects (Inco-Net-EECA, BILAT-Rus, BILAT-Ukr, ERA-NET Rus, BS ERA-NET). Unfortunately most of the INCO-NET project websites fail to display prominent links to this website.

### Information Sessions and Conferences

Although most of the projects funded through the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme include the organisation of information sessions and conferences to raise awareness of FP7 in third countries, the number of such events is generally limited and may be insufficient in relation to the broad range of target countries and to the lifetime of the projects. This is especially so in the case of INCO-NET projects, which address a number of countries of varying degrees of development and include a wide geographical breadth.

### 5.6.3. Conclusions

1. The International Cooperation Activities have delivered a number of conferences and information events, both within the EU as well as in third countries. Because of the size and geographical spread of the target audience in third countries, there is still scope for a greater level of such dissemination activities.
2. The quality and especially the content of project websites are not always up to standard. Most projects fail to take advantage of the opportunity to develop a portal which will constitute a point of reference for information and documents pertaining to their target region or country. Websites which have their content in the language of the third country sometimes do not have a full English version to ensure the content

is also accessible to the whole European research base.

3. Except for the Access4EU projects, individual project websites fail to convey the message that they form part of the broad programme of international cooperation actions led by the EU. Branding is weak, with websites generally lacking a prominent acknowledgement of their source of funding. Links to the EC international cooperation webpage are rarely, if ever, present.

## 5.7. Coordination with Other Community Instruments

The EU also operates and manages a number of funding instruments mainly aimed at development aid, and structured on a geographical regional basis. These funds are under the administration of the EC's DG Enlargement, (WBC and Turkey), DG Dev (Africa and Caribbean) or DG Relex (other countries).

In the case of the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI), for example, DG Relex and country officials have jointly prepared an action plan for each beneficiary country. Capacity-building in S&T often features as one of the objectives in these action plans, signifying that, in theory at least, part of the funding may be allocated to S&T. However, the funds cover a broad range of applications and in practice there are so many priorities that it is only on rare occasions that some funding is earmarked for S&T. The EU is not in a position to dictate the utilisation of the funds, since the aid is subject to the Paris declaration of 2005, which states that international financial assistance is to be directed to policies decided by the beneficiary countries.

The International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme include activities aimed at

discussing the possible utilisation of such funds for building capacity in S&T in third countries, and the work programmes state as follows:

*Close cooperation will be sought with instruments of the Member states and other Community budget lines and instruments such as those that are designed with a defined geographical coverage to implement particular policies (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Instrument (DCECI), the Instrument for Cooperation with Industrialised and other high-income countries and territories (ICI), Asia and Latin America (ALA), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Development Fund (EDF)).*

### 5.7.1. Achievements and Issues

Almost all the INCO-NET projects take account of this objective, but most address it in a very superficial manner, merely mentioning their intention to explore the possibility of tapping aid funds in order to promote S&T development. There is only one project which has dedicated a sizable amount of effort towards this objective, and undertaken activities such as holding meetings with DG Relex and AidCo to discuss the possibility of utilising development aid funds for building capacity or undertaking projects in S&T.

In the BILAT Activity only a minority of projects have mentioned aid programmes within the context of the project. Once again, the topic was treated very superficially. This item was not addressed in the other International Cooperation Activities.

The financial allocation for the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme is spread over a large number of

countries and over a broad range of activities. The resulting finance reaching each third country is limited and clearly insufficient to make the desired impact. There is also the question of sustainability of such activities, as beneficiaries may find that international cooperation S&T funding may need to be diverted to other countries which have not yet been targeted by the international cooperation projects.

It is therefore imperative that the objective of closer cooperation with other EU funding instruments, in particular the EU aid programmes, is given more prominence both in current and in future projects.

### 5.7.2. Conclusions

1. Progress towards achieving close cooperation between the International Cooperation Activities and EU aid programmes has been very limited, with most projects only addressing this theme in a superficial manner.
2. Sustained efforts are required to encourage emerging and developing countries as beneficiaries of EU aid programmes to utilise even small amounts of this aid towards building capacity and developing expertise in S&T. When relevant, projects should include a significant level of activity aimed at bringing about the necessary culture change.

# 6. Main Findings and Recommendations

This section lists the main findings and puts forward a number of recommendations based on the analysis and conclusions of earlier sections. A number of these recommendations echo the conclusions and recommendations of other reports and studies referred to in Section 2 of this document.

## 6.1. Short-term Recommendations

The following recommendations relate to actions which can be implemented within current projects, or alternatively to initiatives which can get underway in the near future.

### 1. **Utilisation of identified research priorities beyond the Capacities Programme**

Joint priority-setting constitutes an important and popular activity in many INCO-NET and BILAT projects, with the implicit intention that the results will be utilised within the Framework Programmes such as for example through SICA calls in the Cooperation Programme. However, only a small proportion of the established priorities are successfully used in this manner since there is no agreed process for utilisation of these priorities. At times this results in frustration and disappointment on the part of project partners.

- The International Cooperation Directorate within DG Research should spearhead efforts, involving all other DGs with responsibility for the Framework Programme, to develop a coherent strategy with regard to the identification and utilisation of common research priorities. This strategy should also address the approach to be followed for identifying topics for SICA calls in the various Themes of the Cooperation Programme. The future undertaking of prioritisation activities in projects funded by

the International Cooperation Activities should be tailored to the agreed process, and should include the participation of relevant Programme Owners.

- The International Cooperation Directorate should also consider the use of alternative mechanisms, such as ERA-NET or ERA-NET Plus projects, for exploiting the results of the priority-setting exercises undertaken in the INCO-NET and BILAT projects.

### 2. **Training for Third Country Contact Points**

Organisation of training for third country Contact Points presents a major challenge given the magnitude of the task and the physical size of many third countries. Many of the projects engage in delivery of such training for third country Contact Points, resulting in a degree of duplication of effort such as, for example, in the preparation of training material.

- The EC International Cooperation Directorate should organise a consultation on the feasibility of centralising the provision of training for third country Contact Points through a dedicated project or through a service contract, and take a decision accordingly. Such a discussion could be the subject at an Inco NCP meeting, at an ILN meeting or one of the InContact OneWorld conferences.
- The consultation should also address the issue of development and reuse of standardised training material.

### 3. **Mapping of Third Country Excellence**

There is some question regarding the usefulness and cost-effectiveness of conducting broad mapping exercises to identify the more promising third country researchers and research organi-

sations. However, it is recognised that targeted efforts focusing on specific disciplines should yield information that is valuable to researchers in member states.

A related issue regards the accessibility of the resulting information, since there currently exists no central repository for storing the output of such exercises.

- The EC International Cooperation Directorate should restrict mapping exercises of third country research organisations to established research priority areas, and should establish a rigorous methodology for performing such exercises. A decision should be taken on whether such activities can be undertaken through the international cooperation projects, or whether some other mechanism would be more appropriate.
- The EC International Cooperation Directorate should take action to standardise the format of data on third country research organisations, and to establish a central repository and access tool where all such data is to be maintained. Due consideration is to be given to the use of EraWatch or the Participant Portal for such a purpose.

#### 4. S&T and Cooperation Metrics

Key deliverables from the international cooperation projects such as S&T metrics and inventory of collaboration have not been standardised and are archived in diverse locations. While standardisation of such deliverables may not have been feasible before the commencement of the current projects, there now exists a sufficient base of experience and results to allow an informed discussion on the subject and to enable the development of a more favourable approach.

- The International Cooperation Directorate should take action to standardise the format of the metrics compiled by current and future projects, and to establish a central repository for such data (possibly the EraWatch portal). This may be achieved through the establishment of a working group (possibly through the OMC mechanism) to establish a standard set of indicators to be used when monitoring international cooperation.

#### 5. Website Strategy

The quality and especially the content of project websites do not always reach the desired level of excellence. Most projects fail to take advantage of the opportunity to develop a portal which will constitute a point of reference for information and documents pertaining to their target region or country. Websites which have their content in the language of the third country sometimes do not publish a full English version which would ensure the content is also accessible to the whole European research base. There are currently no requirements for websites to be kept online following the termination of a project.

With the exception of the Access4EU Activities, the project websites could just as well pertain to isolated project initiatives, and fail to do justice to the EC's broad international cooperation programme. Branding is weak, with websites generally lacking a prominent acknowledgement of their source of funding. Links to the EC international cooperation webpage are rarely, if ever, present.

- The International Cooperation Directorate of the EC should organise a workshop on the topic of awareness-raising events and tools to discuss their effectiveness and appropriate frequency. The discussions should also address good practice in the development and updating of websites

(quality standards, structure guidelines, content guidelines), and publication of newsletters. Such a workshop could be held at Inco NCP meetings, ILN meetings or as a topic at one of the InContact OneWorld conferences.

- The EC International Cooperation Directorate should develop a strategy for websites funded through the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme leading to the development of a centralised portal to adequately portray the range of activities and projects funded through the programme. This should also address branding issues, acknowledgement of funding source, links to the main portal, etc. This strategy should also include the requirement for websites to remain online for a number of years following the termination of the project.

## 6. Other EU Aid Programmes

Most of the countries participating in INCO-NET projects are beneficiaries of EU Aid Programmes, but limited progress has been achieved in encouraging these countries to allocate even modest amounts of funding for building capacity in S&T.

Sustained efforts are required to encourage emerging and developing countries as beneficiaries of EU aid programmes to utilise even small amounts of this aid towards building capacity and developing expertise in S&T. When relevant, projects should include a significant level of activity aimed at bringing about the necessary culture change.

Projects should also consider establishing *ad hoc* cooperation instruments in close cooperation with the EC services in charge of aid to development.

## 7. Monitoring of Project Progress

Although the Commission Project Officers monitor project activities and deliverables on an ongoing basis, there are instances where problems arise but are not addressed immediately. Stricter monitoring of projects is called for with a focus on the content and timing of the deliverables, together with a mentality of rapid corrective action.

- Project proposals should include a mandatory Monitoring and Evaluation Work Package which includes monitoring of both the processes and the quality of the deliverables. Internal control processes such as quality reviews of deliverables and mentoring of less experienced partners should also feature in the project activities.

## 6.2. Medium-term Actions

The following recommendations relate to actions which can be implemented in forthcoming calls.

### 8. Work Programmes

Each of the International Cooperation Activities targets a variety of third countries or regions of different sizes and scientific potential. These countries and regions require different types and levels of activity and have different potential in terms of collaboration outcomes. The level of project funding should not be uniform across the board, but should be tailored to the tasks to be undertaken to address the needs and potential of the specific third country within a specific project.

- The International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme should be more flexible regarding the level of funding which

may be allocated to a specific project depending on factors such as country size, scientific readiness, etc.

## 9. Project Proposals

The Activities studied have a clear focus in principle but the individual projects sometimes try to respond to more objectives than those foreseen for the individual Activities. This creates a double risk; on the one hand they do not have the resources to do more than what they are expected to do, and on the other it may lead to duplication of effort. Hence, it is strongly recommended to ask applicants to focus exclusively on what is expected from each Activity.

Project proposals and grant agreements vary considerably in the level of detail they include regarding planned actions, with a minority failing to provide an adequate account of their plans. More detailed proposals would enable a more rigorous evaluation, while a more detailed grant agreement would enable better follow-up and monitoring by the European Commission project officers.

- When submitting proposals, consortia should be asked to provide detailed workplans, to set suitably ambitious goals and targets and, most importantly, to justify their choice of activities based on past policy dialogue and on the requirements of the target region. This should stimulate consortia to adopt more innovative approaches, both in terms of the nature of the actions as well as with regard to the composition of the consortia, therefore addressing one of the current concerns, i.e. the risk that existing consortia end up by enjoying a monopolistic position due to the advantages of incumbency.

- The evaluation procedure and subsequent negotiations should try to ensure that the proposals focus strongly on the objectives stated in the Work Programme and avoid venturing into other activities. This should minimise overlaps between projects (e.g. on priority setting between INCO-NETs and ERA-NETs). It is also a responsibility of the Commission to strictly monitor that this focus is respected during project implementation.

## 10. Partnership Building

Although a number of projects organised networking events, or included travel grants for researchers to attend conferences and brokerage events, it is believed that the level of such funding was low in relation to the demand for attendance at such events. Furthermore, funding for related travel such as visits to overseas research organisations hardly featured in the projects.

One of the Access4EU projects adopted the innovative approach of identifying a small number of European research organisations and making a concerted effort to assist these in getting involved in third country research programmes.

- The EC International Cooperation Directorate should strongly encourage the allocation of project funds for travel grant schemes and organisation of or participation in brokerage and other networking events for researchers.
- The focused approach to building partnerships adopted in one of the Access4EU projects should be followed and evaluated for effectiveness, with a possible view to promoting similar approaches in other projects.

## 11. INCO-NET Activity

The INCO-NET Activity targets countries on a regional basis, invariably resulting in a mix of countries of different physical dimension and scientific potential. Larger or more scientifically-advanced countries in the region sometimes assume a somewhat domineering position in the consortium, but their participation may be beneficial to the other partners through the provision of mentoring to the less-advanced third countries in the region.

- The role within INCO-NETs of more advanced third countries should be formalised to include the mentoring of others countries of the region, with specific goals and targets that would also be included in the formal evaluation process.
- Consideration should be given to the use of hybrid instruments such as liaison offices in third countries that could reinforce the physical presence of the EU at a limited cost, and supplement the INCO-NET activities at a more decentralised level.
- Finally, the scientific policy dialogue can play an important role in promoting inter-regional cooperation, thereby promoting science diplomacy.

## 12. BILAT Activity

In the case of the BILAT Activity, most projects focus on capacity-building and networking activities rather than on providing support to policy dialogue. The international cooperation work programmes may not have been sufficiently clear on the expected role of the projects in providing support to the JSTCCs. There is a need for closer cooperation between the project consortium and the policy dialogue platform, with project activities guided by roadmaps or action plans developed through the platform.

- The work programmes should be more prescriptive and should include more detail of what is required from individual projects, preferably based on policy dialogue roadmaps and the activities and intelligence emerging from past projects. There has already been a significant evolution of the work programmes in this direction over recent years, but the process needs to be developed further to achieve greater coherence between the strategic planning process and project activities.
- BILAT projects should be based on the principle of reciprocity which implies that the element of co-funding from the third country should be more strongly encouraged.
- BILAT projects need prescriptive definitions of their tasks that are clearly delimited from the tasks of thematic activities in FP7 (especially coordination and support actions) and from the tasks of the Contact Points in third countries. This should be implemented in the work programmes and be an essential part of the evaluation as well as of the contract negotiation.
- The BILAT projects may offer their respective research diaspora a platform to develop support mechanisms, especially for information dissemination and visibility issues.

## 13. ERA-NET Activity

- The FP7 ERA-NET scheme funds analysis of third country research funding programmes, research institutions, etc. since these activities constitute the required groundwork prior to the formulation of joint calls. In the case of the International Cooperation Activities of the FP7 Capacities Programme, however, the INCO-NET and BILAT Activities already cater for such a requirement and there is no need

for ERA-NET projects to replicate such tasks. The range of activities permitted in the ERA-NET instrument should be rationalised and ERA-NETs should not undertake any analytical work, but should focus on the rules of participation and management of joint calls.

- The role of observers in the ERA-NETs is not clearly defined. Inexperienced partners should be given the chance to participate, but initially their role should be that of observer. After some time has elapsed it should be possible for both the observers and the consortium to clarify and facilitate their role. The International Cooperation Directorate should allow for a small reserve budget in the contract to support those observers, who, after the initial period, may decide to become full partners.
- Monitoring processes of the projects funded through the ERA-NET joint calls are not always clearly defined. A particular problem arises when the lifetime of the funded projects extends beyond the end date of the ERA-NET project itself. Timing of joint calls in the ERA-NET projects should be such that there is sufficient time to properly assess all projects which have been funded. The project should include a final period focusing on this exercise.
- It is important that all participants are convinced that participation in the ERA-NET projects is in the national interest, and is not based on individual interests or hidden agendas. This is easier when both policy makers and programme owners are involved in the consortium, even if the former only have an indirect role in the project. It is important to ensure that the selected research priorities reflect national agendas and not the interests of few researchers, even if these researchers are very influential.

#### 14. Classification of third countries

The continued use of the term 'third country' to describe any country which is not an EU member state or an associated country is inappropriate, and a more refined classification is called for. A similar recommendation was made in the evaluation report of the Sixth Framework Programme<sup>6</sup>.

It is proposed to use a three-tiered classification based on combined economic standing and scientific potential of third countries (infrastructure and human resource), together with a fourth category for the neighbourhood region.

- **Group A:** this would include mainly industrialised countries which enjoy a situation similar to that of the EU in terms of financial resources and scientific potential. Cooperation with these countries is of strategic importance for the EU, but the cost of such cooperation should be shared between both sides;
- **Group B:** this category includes countries which have not yet achieved world-class excellence in S&T, yet have invested sufficiently in the development of their scientific capacity to be currently in a position to participate fruitfully in scientific projects with the EU. Depending on the criteria used to define the group, it is expected that it would include something in the order of 15 to 30 countries. An issue may arise since an S&T Agreement exists between the EU and some of these countries but not with others.
- **Group C:** the third group would include all other countries, whose access to world class cooperative scientific initiatives is currently limited due to an insufficient level of development both in terms of scientific infrastructure as well as in terms of human resources.

EU cooperation with these countries should focus strongly on developing scientific capacity until the required capability levels are attained. However, this should not preclude such countries from participation in specific research areas which have a national or international bearing such as health, agriculture, addressing climate change issues etc.

- **Group D:** by virtue of their physical proximity to the European Union, the neighbourhood countries have been identified as requiring special consideration in the EU's strategy on international S&T cooperation.<sup>1</sup>

Such a classification would need to be based on a cooperation and on a well-defined set of criteria, possibly including macro variables such as R&D expenditure, number of active researchers, selected bibliometric data, etc.

### 15. Speaking with One Voice

The ideal of Europe 'speaking with one voice' remains an elusive, but not impossible, objective. In order to make such an ambition plausible, there must be agreement between the EC and MS on a high-level strategy on international cooperation. Clear objectives must be established regarding cooperation with each of the four categories of third countries mentioned in the previous article. This strategy must be clearly articulated and widely disseminated.

Furthermore, representatives from both the EC and member states should be present at important discussions not only within the EU, but also between the EU and third countries (for example in policy dialogue and JSTC meetings). For practical purposes, member states may be represented by a SFIC delegate at such meetings.

- The SFIC (as representative of the member states) should play a prominent role in articulating a strategy for international S&T coopera-

tion, working with the EC to develop a strategy for each of the four categories of third countries referred to in the previous section.

### 16. FP7 Administrative Issues

During the course of this evaluation, beneficiaries raised the issue of administrative burden at every interview, project meeting and seminar in which the evaluators were present. Criticism included the complexity of administrative procedures, the long payment times, and the limited improvement in what was portrayed by the Commission as a considerably simplified set of procedures in FP7 as compared to FP6. Most of these issues are not restricted to the international cooperation projects, but are the same ones voiced by partners participating in any part of the FP7 programme. However, in the case of the international cooperation projects there may also be additional complexities associated with national legislative issues.

The international cooperation projects are perhaps most vulnerable to administrative issues in the case of third country partners. Delayed payments can result in severe cashflow problems, and can threaten to derail the entire project.

A detailed account of the administrative problems faced by the beneficiaries is beyond the scope of this study, but the following broad statements highlight the main issues:

- inconsistent interpretation of financial and reporting guidelines by different actors within the EC;
- long delays in financial reporting due to complexity of reporting requirements;
- payments for all partners being held up due to failure of one partner to submit the required reporting;

- the inordinate administrative burden relating to management of minor amounts of money.

A considerable improvement could be achieved by radically reforming the cost control mechanism, and moving to a system based on the concept of agreed levels of funding tied to adequate performance levels and deliverables, which would need to be agreed during the negotiation phase. Performance measures should include both quantitative (number of events organised, number of stakeholders reached, etc.) as well as qualitative criteria (quality of deliverables, effectiveness of actions, satisfaction levels of end users, etc).

Following signature of the grant agreement, controls should only aim at verifying compliance with the predefined objectives. Such a revised mechanism should result in a significant reduction in the administrative workload both for the European Commission as well as for beneficiaries.

### 6.3. Perspectives for the Future

The following section discusses possible orientations of international cooperation activities to be explored for the next framework programme. The discussion is structured in accordance with the third country classification scheme proposed earlier.

#### Prioritisation and Financial Perspective

Prioritisation of cooperation efforts with the different categories of third country is a strategic issue and goes beyond the remit of the current evaluation team. Recommendation 15 in this chapter proposes that elements of a strategic nature are best addressed through discussion in the Strategic Forum for International Cooperation (SFIC). The available budget of the Interna-

tional Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme may likewise be apportioned to the different activities to reflect the agreed strategic objectives of the programme.

As a parting note, however, the attention of the reader is drawn once again to the FP6 evaluation report<sup>6</sup> which made the following comments (page 25):

*Table 4 shows more details about the Commission contributions to FP6 participants outside the European Community. Some 7% of these contributions went to developed countries, of which by far the largest part to the US. During the course of FP6, €2.5 million per year, however, represents a very narrow link to the strongest scientific nation on earth. Arguably, cooperation with the developed economies can build on co-funding from their side, The Russian Federation and China are the major beneficiaries. Given its size, India gets surprisingly little. Again, the tenuousness of the FP link to the major developing world economies is striking.*

*This should be seen as a warning signal: the EU is failing fully to exploit the potential offered by the FP's collaborative research activities as the means to connect with the world's most dynamic and fastest growing research nations.*

#### Group A countries

This category comprises the industrialised countries which are broadly on a par with the EU in terms of financial resources and scientific potential. Cooperation with these countries is of strategic importance to the EU, with the objective of increasing the level of scientific collaboration across a broad range of scientific disciplines. It is believed that these objectives could be adequately addressed through bilateral projects loosely modelled on the existing BILAT Activity.

This group comprises a small number of countries, most (or all) of which already have an S&T Agreement with the EU in place, together with an agreed action plan or roadmap charting the way forward towards enhanced cooperation. The international cooperation projects should act as vehicles to assist in the implementation of these action plans. The projects also have a valid contribution to make to the policy dialogue process by undertaking relevant studies, monitoring progress and effectiveness of implemented actions, and providing reports and intelligence, leading to an updating and refinement of the action plans.

Reciprocity and cost-sharing constitute fundamental principles of these initiatives, and should be promoted strongly. The reciprocal opening up of funding programmes is a real possibility, as exemplified by the US National Institute of Health (NIH) programme and the FP7 Health theme.

Under the present scenario, third countries in this category are not generally eligible for funding under FP7, meaning that a crucial success factor will be the availability of financing on the part of the third country to cover the participation of its researchers in the joint activities. Similarly, although third country research programmes may be open to researchers from EU member states, it is uncertain whether these programmes will provide funding for their participation. If this is indeed the case, then caution must be exercised before undertaking awareness-raising activities and promoting participation in third country research programmes.

Coordinated calls provide one possible solution, and allow flexibility in the level of financing according to the willingness of the EU and the third country to put money on the table. Discussions on such initiatives fall within the ambit of the JSTC meetings.

Joint programming initiatives based on the ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus schemes could provide another mechanism for financing of joint research, with the greater part of the financing coming from member state and third country contributions, together with a top-up from FP7 funds. The 'virtual common pot' approach suffers from a number of drawbacks, and a modified approach, such as using the FP7 component as a real common pot, may be advisable. Any such scheme should also cover administrative costs and networking expenses of the partners to facilitate matters. The ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus type actions may either be addressed as discrete initiatives, or may be integrated into the main BILAT-type projects. While the latter option would result in a more coherent approach, it may present logistical difficulty in implementation.

Joint priority-setting exercises may be undertaken to provide input to the JSTCC, and with a view to adoption as SICA calls, as coordinated calls or as topics in the ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus activity.

Understanding barriers to participation in joint research together with identification of suitable solutions is essential, and future international cooperation initiatives should address this objective by undertaking the necessary consultations and surveys with stakeholders and policy makers at an early stage in the project.

Activities and funding schemes aimed at networking and building partnerships constitute an important element of the project. Travel grant schemes for missions, site visits and attendance at brokerage events are advocated both for EU as well as for third country research organisations.

In most cases, the best research organisations and researchers, both within the EU as well as in third countries, are known through publications in international journals, and mapping of

research excellence would in most cases be unnecessary, although there may be exceptions. On a similar note, scientific conferences are already plentiful, and there is no need to organise additional events of this nature.

Maintaining a permanent EU presence as a point of contact in the third country merits attention, as does the establishment of research institutes in these countries. Actions based on the INCO-LAB and INCO-HOUSE Activities should be further

encouraged, assuming that the forthcoming projects funded through the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme yield positive results. Once again these may or may not be integrated into the main project, depending on practical considerations.

In summary, the proposed approach for international cooperation with Group A countries would be a **bilateral** Activity as summarised below:

Category	Proposed activities
Support to policy dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support for and close interaction with the JSTCC, and assisting with the implementation of the related roadmap / action plan</li> <li>• joint priority-setting exercises for utilisation in SICAs, coordinated calls or ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus</li> </ul>
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training of third country Contact Points and multipliers (if requested by the third country)</li> <li>• training of EU NCPs on third country research programmes (if relevant)</li> </ul>
Networking and partnership building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• initiative on barriers to participation</li> <li>• targeted mapping of third country research landscape (only when necessary)</li> <li>• travel grant schemes for attendance at brokerage events, for lab visits, etc.</li> </ul>
Assessment and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining an inventory of collaboration</li> </ul>
Dissemination and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promotion of FP7 in third countries</li> <li>• promotion of third country research programmes in EU</li> </ul>
Other activities which may or may not be integrated into the main project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A scheme or activity based on the ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus scheme, tailored to international cooperation requirements;</li> <li>• INCO-LAB Activity</li> <li>• INCO-HOUSE Activity</li> </ul>

### Group B Countries having an S&T Agreement

While not yet having achieved world-class excellence in S&T, the countries in Group B are nevertheless in a position to participate fruitfully in and contribute to scientific projects with the EU. It is believed that for these countries, a bilateral approach loosely based on the existing BILAT Activity is suitable, and the number of target countries makes such an approach feasible.

In cases where an S&T Agreement is already in place (Brazil, China, India, Russia, South Africa) together with a corresponding action plan, the international cooperation projects should assist in the implementation of this plan as well as contributing to the policy dialogue process (undertaking relevant studies, monitoring the progress and effectiveness of implemented actions, and providing reports and intelligence).

The countries in this category are eligible for funding in FP7 (both SICA and non-SICA calls), so that funding is not an issue to the same extent as it is for Group A countries. Nevertheless, co-ordinated calls should also be pursued strongly with certain countries, since these will facilitate heightened levels of cooperation.

Initiatives based on the ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus scheme provide a mechanism for supplementary financing of joint research, and allow the member state a more direct contribution to the activity. As discussed earlier, a modified approach such as using the FP7 financial contribution as a real common pot may be advisable. The ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus type initiative should ideally be integrated into the main cooperation project, but may be addressed as a separate initiative if integration would result in logistical problems or an excessive number of partners. In the latter case it must be ensured that the ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus type project coordinates with and builds upon the findings and activities of the main project.

Joint priority-setting exercises may be undertaken to provide input to the JSTCC, and with a view to adoption as SICAs, coordinated calls or in related ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus projects.

In some cases the best third country research organisations and researchers will be known through publications in international journals, but it cannot be assumed that this is always the case. Targeted mapping of research excellence may therefore be advocated, bearing in mind the recommendations made on this point earlier in this section. It is also true that for most European

researchers there is a general lack of familiarity with the third countries in this category, indicating that travel grant schemes and funding for missions, site visits and attendance at brokerage events will prove useful.

Since these countries have an S&T Agreement with the EU, action needs to be taken to promote the opening up of third country research programmes to EU researchers, and to raise awareness of available opportunities within the EU (currently addressed through the Access4EU Activity). These activities can form an integral part of the main project. Some thought needs to be given on how to develop expertise on third country programmes within the EU member states, since it is unlikely that this can be taken on by existing inco NCPs.

Working with decision-makers to encourage third countries as beneficiaries of EU aid programmes to utilise part of this aid towards building capacity and developing expertise in S&T is also a valid activity in a number of countries within this category.

Actions based on the INCO-LAB and INCO-HOUSE Activities may also be encouraged for certain countries, assuming that the forthcoming projects have a successful outcome. Once again these may or may not be integrated into the main project, depending on practical considerations.

In summary, the proposed approach for international cooperation with Group B countries having an S&T Agreement would be a **bilateral** Activity as follows:

Category	Proposed activities
Support to policy dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support for and close interaction with the JSTCC, and assisting with the implementation of the related roadmap / action plan</li> <li>• joint priority-setting exercises for utilisation in SICAs, coordinated calls or ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus</li> </ul>
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training of third country Contact Points and multipliers</li> <li>• training of EU NCPs on third country research programmes</li> </ul>
Networking and partnership building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• initiative on barriers to participation</li> <li>• targeted mapping of third country research landscape (only when necessary)</li> <li>• travel grant schemes for attendance at brokerage events, for lab visits, etc.</li> </ul>
Assessment and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining an inventory of collaboration</li> </ul>
Dissemination and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promotion of FP7 in third countries</li> <li>• promotion of third country research programmes in EU</li> </ul>
EU Aid Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working with the decision-makers of EU Aid programmes to utilise funds to develop scientific capacity (when government funding is inadequate)</li> </ul>
Other activities which may or may not be integrated into the main project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A scheme or activity based on the ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus scheme, tailored to international cooperation requirements;</li> <li>• INCO-LAB Activity</li> <li>• INCO-HOUSE Activity</li> </ul>

## Group B Countries not having an S&T Agreement

Once again, a bilateral approach loosely based on the existing BILAT Activity is advocated for this group of countries, even though they are not party to an S&T Agreement with the EU. A key objective of having such an agreement is enhanced cooperation between the signatories, with the implication that EU cooperation with Group B countries which do not have such an agreement should be at a lower level than cooperation with those which do. Otherwise, from the point of view of third countries the S&T Agreement would be a liability, since it would only serve to impose obligations of reciprocity on that country without conferring any related benefits.

In the absence of an S&T Agreement, a policy dialogue forum should be established as one of

the first activities with representation from the EC International Cooperation Directorate, and with the participation of key stakeholders and policy-makers from the third country, to formulate a plan of action.

Activities based on ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus schemes may also be considered, but in any eventual calls for proposals these should be addressed at a lower priority than in the case of similar activities with third countries that are signatory to an S&T Agreement with the EU.

Joint priority-setting exercises may be undertaken with caution, since opportunities for utilisation of the results are limited.

In summary, the proposed approach for international cooperation with Group B countries not having an S&T Agreement would be a **bilateral** Activity as follows:

Category	Proposed activities
Support to policy dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of a forum for policy dialogue</li> <li>• joint priority-setting exercises for utilisation in SICAs or ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus may be considered</li> </ul>
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training of third country Contact Points and multipliers</li> </ul>
Networking and partnership building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• initiative on barriers to participation</li> <li>• targeted mapping of third country research landscape (only when necessary)</li> <li>• travel grant schemes for attendance at brokerage events, for lab visits, etc.</li> </ul>
Assessment and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining an inventory of collaboration</li> </ul>
Dissemination and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promotion of FP7 in third countries</li> </ul>
EU Aid Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working with the decision-makers of EU Aid programmes to utilise funds to develop scientific capacity (when government funding is inadequate)</li> </ul>
Other activities which may or may not be integrated into the main project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A scheme or activity based on the ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus scheme, tailored to international cooperation requirements</li> </ul>

## Group C Countries

These countries have limited competence in the field of scientific research, and EU cooperation with these countries should focus strongly on developing scientific capacity until the required capability is attained. However, this should not preclude such countries from participation in specific research areas which have a national or international bearing such as health, agriculture, addressing climate change issues etc.

A bilateral approach is not feasible due to the large number of target countries, and coordination should be developed with groups of countries, with such grouping being on the basis of geographical proximity as is the case in the INCO-NET Activity. This follows the normal EU approach, as well as taking advantage of existing regional fora irrespective of whether these have a scientific focus or a broader perspective.

Working with decision-makers to encourage third countries as beneficiaries of EU aid programmes to utilise part of this aid towards building capacity and developing expertise in S&T should be tackled in a serious manner.

Understanding barriers to participation together with identification of suitable solutions is crucial, both from the point of view of the third country participating in FP7 and vice versa. The international cooperation projects should prioritise this need and undertake one or more consultations and surveys with stakeholders and policy makers at an early stage in the project.

It is also true that for most European researchers there is a general lack of familiarity with the third countries in this category, with the implication that funding for missions and site visits should prove useful. Travel grant schemes for attendance at brokerage events, and funding for prospective partners to meet up to formulate proposals would also be useful.

Activities related to compilation of scientific and research metrics, and monitoring of collaboration may also be valid but once again should be guided by the recommendations made earlier in this section.

Activities based on ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus schemes may also be considered, but in any eventual calls for proposals these should be addressed at a lower priority than in the case of similar activities with third countries that are signatory to an S&T Agreement with the EU.

Joint priority-setting exercises may be undertaken with caution, since opportunities for utilisation of the results are limited.

The proposed approach for international cooperation with Group C countries would be a **bi-regional** Activity as follows:

Category	Proposed activities
Support to policy dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing support to the policy dialogue process</li> <li>• joint priority-setting exercises for utilisation in SICAs or ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus may be considered</li> </ul>
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assistance to third countries in developing their Contact Point networks through advice and provision of appropriate training;</li> </ul>
Networking and partnership building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• travel grant schemes for attendance at brokerage events, for lab visits, etc.</li> </ul>
Assessment and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• metrics and indicators</li> <li>• maintaining an inventory of collaboration</li> </ul>
Dissemination and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organisation of awareness-raising activities such as info-days in third countries</li> </ul>
EU Aid Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working with the decision-makers of EU Aid programmes to utilise funds to develop scientific capacity</li> </ul>
Other activities which may or may not be integrated into the main project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A scheme or activity based on the ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus scheme, tailored to international cooperation requirements</li> </ul>

The following table provides a comparison of the proposed actions in the various country groups.

Action	Group A	Group B with S&T Agreement	Group B without S&T Agreement	Group C
Set up or provide support to policy dialogue	✓	✓	✓	✓
Joint priority-setting exercises	✓	✓	✓	✓
Training of third country Contact Points	✓	✓	✓	✓
Training of EU NCPs in third country programmes	✓	✓		
Barriers to participation	✓	✓	✓	
Targeted mapping	✓	✓	✓	
Travel grant schemes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inventory of collaboration	✓	✓	✓	✓
Metrics and indicators				✓
Promoting FP7 in third countries	✓	✓	✓	✓
Promoting third country programmes in EU	✓	✓		
Coordination with EU Aid Programmes		✓	✓	✓
ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus type scheme	✓	✓	✓	✓
INCO-LAB	✓	✓		
INCO-House	✓	✓		

## Group D Countries

International S&T cooperation with the neighbourhood countries should be on the basis of the approaches proposed above, according to which Group each particular country falls into. However, neighbourhood countries are the focus of more targeted diplomatic initiatives as well as being able to benefit through the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI).

## The ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus Activity

In the previous text, reference was repeatedly made to a scheme or activity based on the ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus scheme, but tailored to international cooperation requirements. This instrument is being highlighted since it differs from the other Activities in that it cuts across boundaries and may be utilised for cooperation with all country categories in conjunction with the other Activities

ERA-NET projects should be restricted to countries or regions which have not already participated in such projects, and which are not yet ready to undertake an ERA-NET Plus project.

A modified scheme based on the current ERA-NET Plus instrument should be developed for use in countries or regions which are ready for more ambitious cooperation. Consideration should be given to the following:

- allowing project money to cover the cost of networking expenses in order to allow financially weaker countries to participate;
- an EC top-up to the joint call higher than the existing level;
- utilisation of part of the contributions for establishing a real common pot.

# Annex A. Methodology

## A.1 Evaluation Team

The interim evaluation of the International Cooperation Activities of the Capacities Programme was carried out by a team of four independent experts engaged by the European Commission for this purpose and assigned the following responsibilities:

Brian Warrington: rapporteur

Lena Tsipouri: evaluation of ERA-NET / ERA-NET Plus Activities

Andrea Ricci: evaluation of INCO-NET and INCO-NCP Activities

Ralf Wilken: evaluation of BILAT and Access4EU Activities

The three experts assigned responsibility for the evaluation of the individual Activities documented their findings in reports which may be found on the website of the International Cooperation Directorate (<http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm>).

## A.2 General Approach

The interim evaluation was based on data, information and evidence gathered from a broad base of sources, and considered all the projects funded through the International Cooperation Activities to date.

It was conducted through a combination of desk-based research and fieldwork, including visits to partners and stakeholders both within member states as well as in other countries of the world.

Information was sought through a variety of mechanisms including face-to-face meetings, telephone interviews and email. These were supplemented by attendance at project meetings and other relevant fora.

## A.3 Sources of Information

The following sources of information were made use of in the evaluation:

### General information

- EC strategy documents, INCO work programmes, etc.
- Past evaluations of the framework programme, recent Impact Assessments of S&T Agreements in specific countries or regions
- Statistics – extracted from e-corda and collected from project reports
- EC Staff – INCO directorate Staff, contact points from DG Research thematic directorates
- Attendance at / access to documentation of meetings such the International Learning Network (ILN), Strategic Forum on International Cooperation (SFIC), ERA-Watch, etc.

### Project-specific information

- Project documentation – Technical Annex (TA), Evaluation Summary Report (ESR), Description of Work (DoW), project reports, etc.
- project websites and public documentation available on the websites
- EC project officers
- project coordinators and partners
- researchers and other beneficiaries
- attendance at project meetings (management meetings, other project meetings).

## A.4 Questionnaires

In order to assist with the gathering of information from individuals, two questionnaires were prepared, one targeted at project partners and the other at stakeholders and beneficiaries. These questionnaires have the following aims:

- to serve as a comprehensive checklist of the information that is to be collected by the expert evaluators;
- to ensure that a consistent approach is followed by the different expert evaluators;
- to facilitate the preparation of project evaluation reports based on the information gathered through the interviews.

## A.5 Limitations

Annex B lists the international cooperation calls under FP7 to date. Because of lead times associated with the evaluation and negotiation phases of funded projects, as well as the time required to mobilise the partners once a project is officially launched, only the projects funded under the 2007 and 2008 calls have been running for any length of time, making it difficult to undertake an evaluation on the basis of progress and achievements alone. In the case of more recent projects, it has been necessary to take into account the planned project activities in order to circumvent this limitation.

# Annex B. List of FP7 International Cooperation Calls

The following is a list of the calls under the International Cooperation programme of FP7.

Call Identifier	Call Title	Publication Date	Deadline	Budget € million	Target Region
INCO-2007-1	INCO-NET	22/12/2006	02/05/2007	16.8	WBC, MPC, EECA, LARM, Africa & Caribbean Pacific, SEA
FP7-INCO-2007-2	BILAT	15/06/2007	11/09/2007	6.4	Countries with S&T Agreement: Projects funded for Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, India, Korea, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, Tunisia, Ukraine
FP7-INCO-2007-3	ERA-NET/ERA-NET PLUS	02/10/2007	12/02/2008	11.0	Any region or BRIC country. Projects funded for WBC, EECA, China, India, Korea.
FP7-INCO-2007-4	INCO-NCP	22/12/2006	02/05/2007	0.4	
FP7-INCO-2009-1	INCO-NET	03/09/2008	12/01/2009	7.9	Caribbean, Central America, Arabic Gulf, Pacific, South Caucasus & Central Asia
FP7-INCO-2009-2	BILAT	03/09/2008	12/01/2009	3.0	Argentina, Canada, Egypt, Japan, Jordan, USA
FP7-INCO-2009-4	INCO-NCP	03/09/2008	12/01/2009	2.0	
FP7-INCO-2009-5	ACCESS4EU	03/09/2008	12/01/2009	5.0	Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, USA
FP7-INCO-2010-1	INCO-NET	30/07/2009	19/01/2010	4.0	projects funded under 2007-1 to expand their geographical coverage or deepen their activities
FP7-INCO-2010-2	BILAT	30/07/2009	19/01/2010	0.5	Algeria
FP7-INCO-2010-3	ERA-NET	30/07/2009	19/01/2010	6.0	Africa, Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, USA
FP7-INCO-2010-6	ERA-WIDE	30/07/2009	19/01/2010	7.5	ENP countries: Eastern Europe & South Caucasus, Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Syria.

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European Commission

**International Cooperation Activities of the Seventh Framework Programme's,  
Capacities Programme - Interim Evaluation**

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union  
2011 –84 pp. – 17,6 x 25 cm

ISBN: 978-92-79-19451-1

DOI: 10.2777/45181



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ISBN 978-92-79-19451-1



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