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**Analysis of knowledge diffusion and EU-Neighbouring Countries research networks based on the outcomes of interviews with INCO projects' consortium members**

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### **OBJECTIVE**

The aim of this analysis is to find out how the cross-border knowledge transfer activities affect innovation activities and thus regional economic performances, and how they should be improved to develop mutually profitable relationships among EU and neighbouring countries. The analysis of barriers hampering to knowledge spread and research networking allows to formulate policy recommendations for strengthening knowledge flows within EU territories and their wider neighbourhood regions.

### **MAIN RESULTS**

Based on the responses of 24 participants of the INCO projects several conclusions concerning the state-of-art of knowledge diffusion and EU-Neighbouring Countries research networking activities can be generated.

One of the findings of the present analysis is that the INCO projects is one of the effective instruments to promote FP programmes participation in neighbour regions of the European Union and to spur cross-border STI cooperation between EU and neighbouring countries (NCs). Knowledge diffusion and research networking are carried out through conferences, workshops, seminars and information days, specially designated web-sites and portals, dissemination of newsletters and other networking activities.

It also can be concluded that INCO projects promote policy dialogue, setting up of new partnerships for future international research cooperation and the research or technological EU-Neighbouring Countries networks as well as enhanced contacts among policy makers, research community & industry.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The following recommendations to overcome obstacles identified in the analysis of INCO projects' consortium members are proposed.

### **Administrative barriers**

With regard to raising awareness and communicating good practice of regulatory frameworks encouraging international STI cooperation and fostering ethical standards for conducting research at a national level it could be advised that national policy stakeholders responsible for setting legal and regulatory frameworks within the EU and NCs raise the awareness of the political decision makers of the need to stimulate regulatory frameworks for STI cooperation as well as of existing barriers and threats which require urgent action.

To reduce legal constraints such as IPR and licensing barriers hindering cooperation need to be removed (e.g. for international mobility, protection and utilization of intellectual property, transfer of funds as well as scientific equipment, shipping of scientific material and samples etc.) and appropriate national legal frames should be designed according to international standards. Emphasis should be put on both the protection of each other's knowledge and on the trans-national access to it allowing international exchange of scientific data and results while guaranteeing the rights of individual partners.

National rules for import and export of scientific material are one of the significant issues hampering international S&T cooperation with NCs. It could be recommended to simplify juridical procedures and to bring national regulation in accordance with international law.

To increase capacities of National Information Points and National Contact Points for the EU RTD Framework Programme and for international cooperation in general terms it could be recommended to national policy stakeholders in the EU and NCs to assess and advance the support structures for European and international STI cooperation, building on existing good practice. In order to allow the STI community to make the best use of European and international STI cooperation efforts need to be undertaken at a national level to provide professional and easily accessible services in terms of information dissemination and consultancy.

To improve financial support for international cooperation can be used the following joint initiatives involving the European Union and NCs partners:

- coordinated calls: launched and evaluated in parallel in the EU and neighbouring country;
- joint calls: launched, evaluated, selected and funded jointly by the EU and the NC;
- contributions from the Union to programmes of international organisations to cover the participation of the Union's entities in those programmes.

The 7th Framework Cooperation Programme (FP7) has been launched the coordinated calls EU-Russia. They foresee twin projects to be financed by the European Union and the Russian funding agency respectively. Two calls are published – one by the European Commission according to European rules and the other by the Russian Authorities under its own rules.

It could be recommended to the national policy stakeholders and to the EC to set up collaborative EU-NCs competitive innovation funding programmes as an indirect or explicit means to stimulate the development of innovative companies. Such collaborative competitive innovation funding programmes should financially support joint R&D projects designed to lead in the mid-term to innovative products, services or processes of significant economic and/or societal value. Such programmes constitute a valuable incentive that could either explicitly require or indirectly stimulate the creation of innovative companies.

EU-funded FP7 Coordination and Support Activities such as ERA-NETs stimulating the coordination of programme owners, or INCO-NETs and BILATs fostering stakeholder dialogues for the benefit of bilateral/regional STI-cooperation can be utilized to design and test joint activities for national EU and NCs owners/ managers of innovation programmes. Such competitive innovation funding scheme is already under implementation in the context of the ERA.NET project for Russia ([www.eranet-rus.eu](http://www.eranet-rus.eu)).

### **Insufficient capacity of involved institutions**

The full openness of EU Framework Programmes for participation of NCs could encourage cooperation with European research networks and simplify access to international networks and platforms for researchers.

Setting up the contacts with some national authorities and institutions in EU MS that possess considerable experience and worldwide recognition in innovation management activities and in entrepreneurship development could be beneficial in order to increase competences of innovative companies in the Neighbourhood countries. Therefore, training courses on innovation management and entrepreneurship could be set up within academic or innovation related institutions in NCs, involving experts from both EU MS and Neighbourhood countries, with financial or indirect support (e.g. incentives) from the national authorities.

It would be recommended to the national policy stakeholders to initiate demand driven mutual learning activities on a framework setting for investments in innovation through a dialogue with representatives of the science community as well as the business and financial sectors in both the EU and NCs.

Such mutual learning activities should focus on legislative, tax and IPR issues, as well as on the coherence and coordination of the whole framework, in order to identify good practices, success stories but also barriers and failures in both EU Member States and Neighbourhood countries. To implement such international exercises, joint workshops or even smaller conferences could be proposed, which could be organised in the scope of INCO activities funded within the EU RTD Framework Programme or at a bilateral level, based on the partnership of individual EU Member States and Neighbourhood countries.

Basing on the experience of INCO projects participants it could be recommended to the EU and NCs stakeholders to encourage joint twinning activities between research centres, institutes, European and national technological platforms and other national/regional technology networks in NCs and the EU providing the appropriate framework conditions and incentives or seed money for launching them. The European Technology Platforms (ETPs) experience and the best practice can be replicable into the activities of their NC's partners to organise Technology Platforms and initiate cooperation among them. Such platforms provide a framework for stakeholders led by industry to define research priorities and action plans on a number of technological areas where achieving growth, competitiveness and sustainability.

Available innovation stimulation instruments at the EU level should be used more intensively for the cooperation. Appropriate stimulation measures and sufficient financial resources should be made available to take maximum advantage of the EUREKA and EUROSTARS programmes for the EU-NCs innovation cooperation.

### **Personnel factors**

To increase personnel skills of researchers national policy stakeholders should set up joint EU-NCs training activities in science management as a mutual learning exercise and as a way to share the good practices already in place in several EU Member States. The linguistic barriers could be reduced through promotion of more knowledge of foreign languages, also through modules and disciplines taught in a foreign language in universities.

It could be recommended to set up incentives for twinning arrangements for training young researchers such as joint graduation programmes like international sandwich fellowship programmes, cosupervising PhD theses ('these en co-tutelle'), etc., between Higher Education or Research Centres in EU and Neighbouring countries. It would be useful to establish EU-Neighbouring countries a joint mobility programme for researchers (including pre-docs) based on university networks operating joint programmes, especially Joint Doctoral Programmes, ideally leading to Joint PhDs.