

Focus, Coordination and Customisation: European Partnerships for Global Research Cooperation – Status and Areas for Improvement

Status: European Partnerships – Global Research Cooperation Implemented!

European Partnerships have established global Research, Technology and Innovation (RTI) collaborations with more than 60 non-EU countries. Together they have reached and involved more countries than directly addressed by Science and Technology Agreements¹ (20), the European Neighbourhood Initiatives² (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia) or (16) countries associated³ to the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

With these non-EU countries, European Partnerships realised more than 720 formal relations with their contracts, 310 of them under Horizon 2020 alone.

Today, European Partnerships are well-reputed and established coordination nodes around the globe, in particular in many research areas with a common global challenge such as climate change, water and food. Single partnerships, like in materials research, count for more than 50 collaborating countries and regions. In health, partnerships collaborate with global organisations like the WHO or UN organisations. With their coordination and implementation of research activities, they lead the tackling of joint global health challenges, as for instance in the area of antimicrobial resistance or neurodegenerative diseases.

A series of interviews conducted with practitioners revealed the growing relevance of European Partnerships and also areas to improve the support for the continuous success of their globalisation:

Areas for Improvement: Focus, Coordination and Customisation for a Sustained Global Research Cooperation

With the already existing substantial global cooperation links, EU partnerships are well-established and well-suited ambassadors, even door openers for entries in global R&I markets as well as usable

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm?pg=countries>

² https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/node_en

³ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/3cp/h2020-hi-list-ac_en.pdf

instruments for the globalisation of Europe's research and innovation cooperation. They should be considered and utilised more consistently as such. Areas of improvement to that regard include:

- ***Coordination of EU Member States, European Partnerships and Commission should be ensured***

Globalisation activities of European Partnerships should be included into standard coordination processes of the EU Member States, the Commission Directorates and the EC External Action. Concerning foreign relations, European Partnerships are comparable to other means of international RTI cooperations. Regular and structured coordination processes need to be discussed and applied. Their design may also relate to the "Strategic Coordination Process" which is currently under discussion⁴. Clear communication of objectives (see below) will support endeavours for matching the right partners smoothly into the activities of the corresponding network.

- ***Partnerships should more explicitly state cooperation goals – differentiated measures of cooperation should be implemented and communicated accordingly***

The Commission should encourage European Partnerships to communicate more clearly their motivations for global outreach activities. In pursuit of differentiated motivations (e.g. search for excellence, science diplomacy⁵, development cooperation, European sovereignty) with differentiated activities, the respective participation modalities for global partners should expressly follow these motivations. This will support an adequate handling of European Partnerships in EC External Action matters.

- ***Global openness of partnerships needs clear ethical standards***

Where European Partnerships are open to global partners, participation rules need to encompass ethical standards for responsible research cooperation⁶. This may refer to European values, wherever relevant. In detail this may include, but is not restricted to credibility of scientific conduct, freedom of science and speech, non-discriminatory behaviour, limitations to the use of personal data, respect of IPR (or granting of open access, respectively), exclusion of dual use etc. Standards to that regard may be discussed among partnerships and/or between the participating EU Member States and the Commission.

⁴ e.g. <https://www.era-learn.eu/documents/wk-8928-2020-init.pdf>

⁵ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-1357-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

⁶ <https://www.who.int/about/ethics/code-of-conduct-for-responsible-research>;
https://ec.europa.eu/research/openscience/pdf/facsheet_integrity_code_2017.pdf;
https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/coc_research-resource-poor-settings_en.pdf<https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/>;
https://www.bmbf.de/files/10_2_2_Bonn_Declaration_en_final.pdf;
<https://www.scienceeurope.org/news/bonn-declaration/>;
<https://allea.org/allea-welcomes-bonn-declaration-on-freedom-of-scientific-research/>

- ***Participation in calls are a result of the successful globalisation of European Partnerships rather than their beginning. Adequate measures require appropriate resources and funding.***

Successful initiation of global partnerships requires preparatory activities prior to participating in joint funding calls or research coordination. This concerns e.g. the identification of specific, mutually beneficial research and cooperation subjects in the scope of the European Partnership, the matching of research teams, and the establishment of functional policy levels, contractual and administrative cooperation modi.

Instruments/action and formats/initiatives such as the former INCO BILAT or INCO-Net projects can support the globalisation of partnerships⁷, especially in the frame of coordination mechanisms like Senior Official Meetings. Significant time investments are needed to establish cooperation with partner organisations in third countries. The Commission and the EU Member States should finance respective work tasks of European Partnerships accordingly.

- ***Partnerships on equal terms?***

Rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all approach, different administrative and political practices of global counterparts should be respected. The Commission should establish modes of administrative cooperation that relieve global partner countries of administrative, reporting and auditing obligations towards the Commission.

In fact, the Commission and the European Partnerships should consider collaboration formats like administrative “variable geometry”, suiting each global partners’ individual cultural, political, and administrative needs, facilitating access of desired research players to the European Partnerships.

A Workshop on April 22nd, 2021 with representatives from different partnerships shall initiate a discussion on issues related to the globalisation of partnerships. Participation is open to all stakeholders of partnerships from the European Member States and the Commission. <https://www.era-learn.eu/news-events/events>Contact:

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⁷ [Policy coordination through the SOM process](#) in the tradition of former EU-LAC