

EU-INDIA S/T COOPERATION DAYS

NEW DELHI, 4-6 NOVEMBER 2009

KEY NOTE SPEECH

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the organisers for initiating the EU-India Science and Technology Cooperation Days and for the opportunity to introduce this session on the EU 7th Framework Programme for Research.

I welcome the presence of numerous delegates from both the European Union and India which is a very positive sign of the commitment to develop scientific cooperation ties.

Allow me first to start positioning the scientific cooperation of the European Union with India in the general context of our research strategy and the developing European Research Area.

Europe's research strategy in a fast-changing world

Today, there is a general consensus that the world is becoming multi-polar, more interconnected and more competitive. This change has affected science and technology over the last decades as shown by many indicators. For instance, emerging economies such as India are catching up with the "big three" - USA, Europe and Japan - in producing scientific publications.

European leaders have recognised that the best way to sustain our prosperity in this changing world is to achieve an effective "knowledge triangle" based on an improved interaction between education, research and

innovation. What we call the Lisbon strategy consists in developing a more dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy capable of sustainable economic growth and respect for the environment.

Following the Lisbon agenda, all EU Member States have increased their investment in research as from 2000, up to overall €229 billion in 2007. However, the share of EU Gross Domestic Product for research expenditure has stagnated at around 1.85% since 2000, which is below the European target of 3%. It is largely the result of too low private investment.

The intensity of research investment within industrial sectors is generally lower in Europe than, for example, in the US. In the current time of economic crisis, it is crucial to maintain the commitment to invest in knowledge, if we want to be able to tap the benefits when the economy starts to recover. To support public and private sectors' effort, we need to create an innovation-friendly European single market, giving perspectives of return on investment and a European Research Area.

So what is the ERA?

The European Research Area - ERA - is an area where we work together and wish to join forces to increase our scientific excellence. It is an area where researchers, technology and knowledge should circulate freely and in which the EU Member States may coordinate their efforts and join national research programmes to increase their impact. That Area converts gradually into an “internal market for research” for the European scientific community.

Last December, the EU Member States' governments signed up to a joint vision of the European Research Area by 2020. It is a vision of a European open innovation system which offers the right balance between competition – which ensures excellence – and cooperation – which ensures critical mass and impact.

We are working together with the Member States and the research community to make this vision a reality. Last year, the Commission launched five new initiatives where actions are needed to further develop the ERA concept.

One of these initiatives focuses on developing a coherent international cooperation strategy with a global dimension and an integrated approach. Its main objectives are first to contribute to sustainable development worldwide; second to foster Europe's excellence in science and technology.

Moving to the lines of action, I will first quote the integration of Europe's closest neighbours into the ERA and also the geographic and thematic targeting of research co-operation with key countries and economies such as India.

By strengthening the international dimension of the European Research Area, we also wish to better interact with the various regions of the world. It requires taking into account the outside research state of play, the trends and the priorities of the countries we want to cooperate with.

I am convinced that the S&T cooperation with India will be seen as critical in the broader context of the development of our political and economic relations.

Turning to our main instruments for science and innovation, I am glad to say that we meet a lot of enthusiasm among Indian researchers to participate in international research networks, in particular through projects supported by the EU 7th Framework Programme for Research.

The 7th Framework Programme and its Specific Programmes

The 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development is the EU main instrument for funding research in Europe. It has been designed as a driving force for realising the European Research Area. In total, a budget of 54.5 billion Euros is available over seven years until 2013.

The 7th Framework Programme is organised in four specific programmes.

First, the Cooperation programme brings together our best talents from across Europe to research and develop answers to economic opportunities and societal challenges, in a wide range of thematic areas such as food and biotechnology. It funds collaborative projects among scientists, research institutes and the private sector in each specific theme.

Second, the Ideas programme introduces a new mindset in supporting and conducting research in Europe, at the frontier of knowledge but without any national borders. It funds competition between individual researchers in cutting-edge fundamental science. As a component of the Ideas programme, the new independent European Research Council - ERC - has been set up to support investigator-driven frontier research.

Third, the People programme aims at attracting and motivating the best scientists to work across Europe or beyond for the benefit of European research. It funds training, mobility and career development of researchers.

Fourth, the Capacities programme ensures that Europe can rely on excellent capacities for conducting research and enhancing innovation, in all parts of Europe. It supports in particular the development of major European research infrastructures and the research potential of European small and medium-sized companies.

A "fifth component" devoted to nuclear research activities is also organised in a Framework Programme under the EURATOM Treaty.

International dimension of the 7th Framework Programme, relevance to India

The 7th Framework Programme is open to international cooperation on a scale that has never been seen in previous programmes.

Three basic principles guide the international collaboration across all themes under FP7:

1- Programming that includes 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;

2-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;

3-Partnership and dialogue: the principle of partnership will be a particular focus of the specific international cooperation actions for third countries.

In order to increase our international Scientific & Technological cooperation with India under the FP7 thematic programmes, we presently use:

1. the "general opening" of calls,

and other instruments such as

2. the "targeted opening"

3. the "Specific International Cooperation Actions" – SICAs

4. the "Coordinated calls"

5. specific seminars and workshops.

Regarding the use of those instruments, I am glad to say that we meet a lot of enthusiasm among Indian researchers to participate in international networks.

1. I will first underline the crucial "General Opening" of FP7 for non-European country participation. Since India is recognised as an "International Cooperation Partner Country", Indian Organisations may participate to all FP7 research activities and can also receive funding.

2. The "Targeted Opening" offers the opportunity to involve partners from selected regions or countries in FP7 research consortia in specific fields. For example in the energy field, four targeted opening calls, which are of interest to Indian organisations have been launched in 2009 covering biomass and carbon sequestration topics.

3. The SICAs - Specific International Cooperation Actions address the specific needs of emerging and developing countries by means of dedicated cooperative activities.

The topics labelled as SICA provide for the compulsory participation of research entities from different selected "International Cooperation Partner Countries" amongst which India.

In FP7 calls for proposals in 2008, there were several SICAs topics of relevance for India : we can mention some important subject areas such as the discovery and development of new vaccines, strategies for improving reproductive health, integration of disease and health systems response and road safety of vulnerable users in emerging economies.

4. a Coordinated Call for research proposals is an instrument allowing to run in parallel calls issued by a funding agency of an European country and by the Commission. They foresee the alignment of content, resources, timing, evaluation criteria and procedures. India and the Commission each spend €5 million annually for such calls. So far, 3 coordinated calls have been launched with India in 2007 and 2008 in Computational Materials Science, Food and Nutrition Research and Solar Energy Research and new ones are on the drawing board.

5. Concerning seminars and workshops, 17 EU–India events have been organised these last years in various fields to identify areas of common interest on various topics as energy, ICT, transport, social sciences and humanities.

For example, in the ICT domain, various workshops have been organised to prepare future participation of Indian organisations in FP7. These workshops aim at identifying topics of coordinated calls or SICA calls for proposals. In social sciences, just to name another example, a workshop on culture of governance and conflict resolution was held in Delhi and Shimla in November 2008. It was aimed to discuss and compare research conducted in Europe and India on issues of common interest. A SICA call targeting India on the themes addressed at the workshop is now being planned for the 2010 Social Sciences Work programme.

What is the state of play of Indian participation in the 7th Framework Programme?

Allow me to provide you with up-to-date information on Indian participation in the 7th Framework Programme. Overall, the Indian participation has significantly increased in comparison to FP6. A total of 826 Indian organisations have so far participated along with European and other international scientists in the submission of projects in response to FP7 calls. 171 have been retained for an overall funding of about €26 million with an average success rate of more than 20%. The number of proposals involving Indian participants has been notably high in the following themes: nanotechnologies and materials, health, ICT, transport and social sciences.

Under the 'People' Specific Programme, 40 Indian researchers have received International Incoming Fellowships to carry out research in Europe. 21 Indian institutions have been short-listed for funding under the 'International Research Staff Exchange Scheme - called IRSES.

Over these first years of FP7 implementation, India has permanently been in the front-line, among the non-European countries, for proposal submission and selection, being almost at the same level of China and behind the US and Russia only. India also participates in the Galileo satellite navigation system project and has become a full partner in the International Thermonuclear Reactor – ITER – for nuclear fusion.

There is a large potential for further developing scientific cooperation ties because India holds strong competencies in a very large variety of scientific fields and technological areas.

What does the Capacities-INCO programme bring to enhance EU-India S&T cooperation

Finally, let me describe a number of very specific support actions funded by our International Cooperation Programme:

First, the INCO-BILAT project called EUINEC aims at the development of S&T partnerships within the framework of S/T promotion Platforms for Countries which are part of an S/T cooperation agreement with the EC.

In this context, the project EUINEC focuses on India/EU S&T cooperation to increase the mutual awareness about research priorities and cooperation opportunities through the establishment and reinforcement of

information services, assistance in forming research partnerships, promotion events focusing on priority research areas to enhance future actions. The project started in November 2008 and has already launched several of the planned activity tools. EUINEC receives a total EC funding contribution of half a million euro.

Second, the INCO-ACCESS4 project called INDIA GATE aims at increasing the awareness and dissemination in the Member States of access opportunities for European scientists and researchers in national research programmes managed by non European countries.

The INDIA GATE project contains a mapping of access opportunities in India, the dissemination of the results to European research organisations and multipliers, the monitoring of European participation in Indian programmes.

It will identify, along with Indian research and innovation funding programmes, possible obstacles that inhibit EU researchers and organizations from taking part in the identified opportunities and make the information available in a user-friendly manner to stimulate, encourage and facilitate their future participation.

The expected results should lead to a better mutual understanding of the respective research systems. The project is still in the negotiation phase, but it should start at the beginning of 2010. It will receive a funding contribution of around half a million euro for the Framework Programme.

Third, the international ERA-NET projects aim at coordinating national programmes on international S&T cooperation. Their objective is to increase the cooperation and coordination of research programmes carried out at national or regional level in the Member States and Associated countries and the targeted non-European countries.

The NEW INDIGO is an ERA-NET project, which started in January 2009 and which will provide opportunities for research programme owners and managers from Europe and India to develop joint research activities.

It currently receives a total EC funding of around two and a half million euro, which represents a substantial effort.

A networking pilot platform will be launched by the NEW INDIGO consortium, taking advantage of existing bilateral programmes in India and in Europe and enhancing existing networks or clusters.

New INDIGO will significantly contribute to the development of high quality research activities between India and the European Union through:

- The identification of research priorities of mutual interest and benefit between the EU Member States and India,
- The management of a pilot joint call, which will help structure high quality collaborative research by not only supporting research projects but also by providing the mechanism for future extended programmes and actions,
- and the strengthening of national and international standards of S&T programming and programme management.

In this general context, I would like to underline the importance of the roundtables which are organised for Indian and European researchers during these two conference days.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope that the FP7 Info-Days organised in New Delhi with the help of various FP7 support actions will raise the awareness of a large number of researchers from India about the opportunities offered by the 7th Framework Programme.

I do hope that this type of event will lead to an increased number of applications from Indian researchers in the next round of FP7 calls for proposals.

The agenda of this FP7 Stakeholder conference is well designed to review the prospects for further strengthening bilateral S/T cooperation. I wish you fruitful discussions and profitable networking.

Thank you.

Robert Burmanjer
Head of Unit (RTD/D3)
Specific International Cooperation Activities
DG Research
European Commission