

BILAT-UKR* AINA

POLICY BRIEF

Coordinated and Joint Calls

A potential instrument to align R&D priorities of Ukraine with the EU

INTRODUCTION

International RTI cooperation in Horizon 2020

The emphasis of international RTI cooperation in “Horizon 2020” (H2020), the successor programme of FP7, is about to change. While it is foreseen to continue the principle of 'general opening' for the participation of non-EU organisations in H2020, the Union will at the same time aim to focus and intensify its cooperation with a number of key partner countries that are willing and ready to establish targeted activities based on common principles and for mutual benefit.

In this respect coordinated and joint calls are, among others, foreseen as potential instruments to complement the general opening approach in H2020 and to deepen targeted cooperation between the European Union and key international partner countries.

This Policy Brief aims to serve as a practical guide on how to establish coordinated calls with the European Commission based on an analysis of coordinated calls implemented together with international partner countries, including with Russia, in FP7.

Coordinated Calls

A *coordinated call* consists of two thematically and organisationally aligned calls between the EU and a partner country, launched in parallel by the Union and the partner country and the projects to be funded are evaluated and selected jointly or in parallel; a *joint call* is launched jointly by the Union and the partner country and the projects to be funded are evaluated and selected jointly. In FP7, only coordinated calls were implemented, with a relatively small number of partner countries (or partner organisations from 3rd countries).

An analysis of the previous cooperation between the Union and Ukraine in FP7 shows that Ukrainian research organisations are competitive and successfully participating in FP7 projects, but also that the international focus in the FP7 work programmes did in most cases not specifically

address Ukraine¹. Also a comparatively low STI coordination intensity between the Union and Ukraine, expressed in terms of lacking co-funding instruments (e.g. coordinated calls), a cautious STI policy dialogue and a slow roadmap process, little progress in terms of reciprocal access etc. can be asserted.

A new strategic RTI internationalisation approach of the European Union

Strategic approach to international cooperation

On 14 September 2012 the European Commission published a Communication² about EU's future strategic approach to international cooperation in research and innovation. Although continued openness in terms of international participation in Horizon 2020 (H2020) is foreseen as a general principle, a more targeted approach with international partner countries is called for at the same time. Firstly, the list of countries eligible for automatic funding will be further restricted. For instance, China, India, Russia, and a number of other countries could in future be excluded from automatic EC funding under H2020. According to the criteria used to determine a country's income level, however, Ukraine does not seem to be affected by this rule change.³ Secondly, the EC will base its approach to cooperation with partner countries by taking account of a set of criteria⁴ (such as research and innovation capacity; access to emerging markets; its international commitments etc.), including the legal and administrative frameworks in place to engage in cooperation (e.g. availability of S&T agreements; IPR alignment and enforcement; reciprocal access conditions etc.), and including lessons from previous cooperation. The Union will also attach importance to the promotion and observance of common principles such as responsible research and innovation; research integrity; peer review of proposals; fair and equitable treatment of IPR; open access etc.

For the European Neighbourhood region, of which Ukraine is a part, a 'Common Knowledge and Innovation Space', including improving the research and innovation competences of these countries, should be developed in close cooperation with the instruments of the European Neighbourhood policies. In H2020, research and innovation funding will focus on excellence, thereby contributing to finding innovative solutions to the challenges the partner countries face. Systematic identification of opportunities should support the development of multi-annual roadmaps for cooperation with key partner countries and regions.

Among the funding instruments for targeted international cooperation

¹ An analysis of all work programmes of the 'Cooperation' programme in FP7 and selected specific 'Capacities' programmes showed that the most targeted countries or groups of countries were 'International Cooperation Partner Countries – ICPCs' (as a group), BRICS (as a group) and high income countries (especially the USA and Japan). Regional cooperation with the Mediterranean Partner Countries, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America was also important, especially in themes of the knowledge based bio-economy, environment and health (Bogliott and Sanguineti, 2012; p. 3). Most of the international cooperation was operationalised via targeted opening and SICA (Specific International Cooperation Action) activities.

² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Enhancing and focusing EU international cooperation in research and innovation: A strategic approach, COM(2012) 497 final, Brussels, 14.9.2012.

³ i.e. it can be expected that automatic funding for the participation of Ukrainian entities in H2020 will be maintained

⁴ see p. 5 of the Communication.

activities in H2020, coordinated calls and joint calls are specifically foreseen

Coordinated calls in FP7

35 coordinated calls have been implemented in FP7⁵. The total estimated budget of these coordinated calls amounts to €84.5m. Russia was the most active contributor, with a joint budget with the EU of €27.5m, followed by Japan (€17m), India (€13m) and Brazil (€9m). From a thematic point of view, the majority of these coordinated calls were in the field of transport, energy and new materials research. No coordinated call was launched between Ukraine and the European Union in FP7.

Preparing a coordinated call

Preparation and Implementation

The preparation and implementation of a coordinated call is a time-consuming effort. It can only be successful and satisfying for all partners if there is high political and administrative commitment on both sides. When coordinating a call, many procedural, regulatory and legal issues, arising from the specificities of both parties' respective systems, have to be addressed and overcome. This requires a lot of flexibility on the side of the international partner country, as for legal reasons the EU procedures cannot be modified very much. Experience has shown that the presence of a dedicated S&T Counsellor at the EU Delegation in the partner country is a very valuable asset for the overall coordination process.

Once the partner country has secured the necessary political and financial commitment, a first informal contact with the responsible country-desk officer in the International Cooperation Directorate and/or the desk officer responsible for international cooperation in the relevant thematic directorate of the European Commission can be established to explore the possibility of conducting a coordinated call in the given thematic area. Various factors will normally be taken into account, such as the thematic directorate's multi-annual plans and priorities for international cooperation as well as the EU's overall relationship with the partner country. In case of a mutual willingness to engage in a coordinated call, an exchange of letters between the responsible thematic units or directorates on the EU and the Ukrainian side would typically follow, which should subsequently be officially endorsed by the EU-Ukraine JSTCC⁶. Further on, the responsible thematic programme committee in FP7 (which involves representatives of the EU member states) would have to give its consent.

It should be noted that any coordinated call has to be taken up in the annual work programme for the thematic area published by the EC. Thus, enough preparation time has to be considered (up to two years)!

For the implementation of a coordinated call, some kind of *'implementation agreement'* between the European Commission and the respective authority of the partner country (e.g. funding agency, ministry) would typically be drawn up and signed. It would include all relevant organisational aspects,

⁵ As indicated in the FP7 work programmes 2007 to 2012.

⁶ "JSTCC": abbreviation for Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee

which are in part commented on below.

Thematic priority setting

Joint and coordinated calls are a suitable instrument for aligning priorities of the EU and the partner country. While it seems that the Union prefers a not too narrowly defined thematic approach, which corresponds to the formulations used for FP calls for proposals, some partner countries normally work on the basis of a more focussed thematic orientation. In the case of Russia, for instance, this is because federal law requires that calls for *tender* are used to fund research (rather than calls for *proposal*, as in the EU Framework Programme).

It can probably be expected that themes (topics) which relate to the global challenges identified in H2020 will most likely be of interest for international cooperation for the EU.

Financial aspects

In FP7, most coordinated calls were implemented with partner countries whose overall scientific and technological potential was commensurate with that of the European Union. In a way, coordinated calls are an expression of an 'equitable partnership'. This implies that, in principle, a balanced financial contribution to coordinated calls is expected, which means an equal share of 1:1 (e.g. €5m on each side). To date, differences in purchasing power parity do not seem to have been taken into account⁷. The minimal budget should probably not be below €3 million on each side, so that it is possible to fund at least a handful of sizeable projects. In a coordinated call, the Ukrainian side would only pay the efforts of the selected Ukrainian participants, while the European participants would be paid by the EU.

Announcement, evaluation and selection

In a coordinated call, the coordination of the publication and submission dates of the call in the EU and in the partner country is of utmost importance. The call publications should clearly refer to each other (e.g. ... *this call is linked to the call published by the European Union in ...*). The European part of the proposal is submitted to the European Commission, while the Ukrainian part of the proposal would be submitted in Ukraine. The more trustful relations both partners have developed, the easier it usually is to find centralised solutions. 'Centralised solutions' also reduce the efforts and transaction costs of the applicants. If no single (centralised) submission system can be negotiated, then it has to be guaranteed that the project applications to the different submission systems can be clearly related to each other (e.g. on basis of the same acronym or the same proposal title). It goes without saying that the proposals must also be aligned content-wise. For the promotion of the call and the provision of information to the potential applicants, a dedicated contact point should be installed and announced.

The evaluation has to be based on professional peer review. A joint evaluation exercise, including evaluators from the European side and from Ukraine, should preferably be implemented. If this is not possible, for

⁷ In case of large differences in PPP, especially if differences in researcher's salaries - which usually constitute the bulk of R&D project spending,- are high it is suggested to explore with the European Commission an alternative division-of-resources approach, based for instance on the same number of personnel months supported at each side.

instance for legal reasons, then the two evaluation processes will have to be conducted in parallel, with the final selection of projects to be agreed by the EU and Ukraine afterwards. The EU can only fund projects which have been positively assessed in its own evaluation exercise and following its evaluation criteria. Since the same might also be true for the partner country, only projects which have been selected by both sides can be funded.

Rules of participation and contracting

If the EU publishes a coordinated call, then the general FP rules for participation will apply, which in practice means that any organisation will be able to participate in submitting a proposal - a pre-selection on the basis of the institutional nature of the organisation (e.g. only academy institutes or only universities) would not be possible.

A Ukrainian “shadow coordinator” might be important for the project, but is not a contractual issue for the EC. Moreover, in case the participants from the partner country do not sign the FP grant agreement, then the conclusion of a separate 'coordination agreement' between the project partners involved from the European side and from the partner country may be mandatory. The 'coordination agreement' would typically cover the same issues as the consortium agreement in an FP project.

CONCLUSIONS

Provided that strong political commitment and sufficient financial resources (estimated to be a minimum of €3 million on each side) exist, a coordinated call for collaborative R&D projects would be an established but administratively complex instrument to intensify the bilateral relations between the European Union and Ukraine in the field of STI.

It is important to note that coordinated calls are one, but not the only instrument for joint initiatives and provide several advantages:

1. Ukraine can directly negotiate the thematic orientation of the coordinated call with the EC by taking her own needs into account.
2. Ukraine would decrease its dependence on the participation of its research organisations resulting from the general openness of H2020 by introducing a dedicated and targeted line of collaborative research funding with the EU.
3. This would give a strong signal to the research communities in both the EU and Ukraine, that bilateral cooperation at a level playing field is regarded as important and that an intensification of STI cooperation is welcomed.
4. This reciprocal respectively joint funding approach would lighten the pressure from the Union to be always responsible and in charge for financing the bilateral cooperation at Community level with Ukraine with EU taxpayer's money.

This Policy Brief explicates which provisions and preparatory measures have to be considered in planning and implementing a coordinated call for collaborative research proposal with the European Commission. Given the fact that H2020 is not yet completely decided and far from being implemented, this Policy Brief should not be seen as a detailed step-by-step

recipe in a cookbook for STI policy delivery, but as an informal basis for reflection about the future of EU-Ukrainian STI relations and about one of the instruments⁸ which could in principle be deployed hereunder with a practical use for researchers from academy and industry from both the Union and Ukraine.

⁸There are also other potential instruments, such as ex-ante and ex-post networking of projects (i.e. “twinning” scheme) or programme-level cooperation, some of which could be preferred by some directorates.

PROJECT IDENTITY

Project Name	Enhancing the BILATeral S&T Partnership with UKRraine * Advanced INnovative Approach (BILAT-UKR*AINA)
Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI), Vienna, Austria (Co-ordinator) • Kyiv State Center for Scientific and Economic Information (NIP) • Centre for S&T Potential and Science History Studies (named after G.M. Dobrov) of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (STEPS) • National Centre for Scientific Research, France (CNRS) • German Aerospace Center – International Bureau of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany (DLR) • Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland (PAN) • Research & Development Engineering and Manufacturing for Automation Equipment and Systems, Romania (IPA SA) • Center of Practical Informatics of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (CPI NASU) • Regional Centre for Information and Scientific Development (RCISD)
Funding Scheme	7th European Framework Programme for RTD of the European Union, Capacities Programme, Coordination and Support Action. Project ID:FP7-311839
Duration	1 September 2012 – 30 June 2015
Website	www.bilat-ukraina.eu
Author	Mr. Klaus Schuch, Centre for Social Innovation
Contact	Ms. Gabriela Cikikyan, project manager at ZSI (cikikyan@zsi.at)
Further reading	<p>Policy briefs on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the internationalisation of Ukraine in STI including recent trends and developments (Policy Brief 1) • Take-up of the EU-Ukrainian JSTCC Thematic Priorities in FP7 (2007-2013) (Policy Brief 2) • Statistics on the number of EU researchers in national Ukrainian R&D programmes (Policy Brief 4)
Disclaimer	<p>The content of this Policy Brief does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed therein lies entirely with the author(s).</p> <p>The author thanks staff from DG Research and Innovation for valuable comments and remarks.</p>

