

INCO Project Executive Summary

Horizon 2020 is **'open to the world'** and allows the participation of organisations from any third country in the world under certain conditions, which are listed in this report for every instrument of Horizon 2020. Third countries are defined as countries that are neither member states of the European Union, nor associated to Horizon 2020.

Despite the publication by the European Commission (EC) in 2012 of a new strategy aimed at increasing the research and innovation cooperation between Europe and the rest of the world, the first two years of Horizon 2020 have shown **poor integration of institutions from third countries**. The participation of third countries has indeed dropped compared to previous European framework programmes for research and technological development. One of the main reason is that some third countries that were automatically funded before do not benefit from this rule anymore. This report looks into the **measures taken by the EC** – which considers International Cooperation in Research and Innovation (INCO) a high priority – in order to combat this drop. It ranges from setting-up more **co-funding mechanisms** with third countries, to increasing INCO activities by **supporting large-scale and visible initiatives** such as the EU-China Food Agriculture and Biotechnology Flagship. For Swiss institutions, this means that having a link to these large flagships might prove increasingly important in the future to successfully use Horizon 2020 INCO opportunities.

Looking at to what extent Swiss institutions have cooperated with third country institutions via Horizon 2020, it appears that **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions schemes** as well as the **collaborative projects under Part III 'societal challenges'** are instruments where the cooperation with third countries is high. Moreover, our findings show that Horizon 2020 is considered by the Swiss scientific community as a very good way to engage in activities with a broader set of partners and countries and as well as to access new networks. However, **Switzerland is not yet fully exploiting Horizon 2020's potential** for cooperation with third countries. The report highlights that Horizon 2020's INCO opportunities are not well known and there is a lack of promotion on those opportunities. The communication between the relevant Swiss parties involved in INCO should be increased and the report gives concrete **practical suggestions** of what could be done.

Beyond these suggestions at practical level, the report also highlights that **Horizon 2020 could be better embedded into Switzerland's INCO strategy**. For example, the report shows that **Horizon 2020 complements the more long-term partnerships** supported by the Swiss bilateral programmes and acts as a **door opener** to new networks. Hence, promoting the use of Horizon 2020 in countries and regions where Switzerland has conducted exploratory missions between 2013 and 2016 could be of strategic use. Moreover, a **mapping of the areas**

and the type of research covered by the multi-annual roadmaps and the co-funding mechanisms could prove useful to make sure that bilateral initiatives fill in gaps that Horizon 2020 do not cover and hence ensure that Swiss researchers have the widest opportunities possible to cooperate with third country partners. Finally, Swiss Higher Education Institutions should think of establishing **grant support offices** dealing with national, European and global funding. This would ensure that the different funding opportunities are promoted and used as strategically as possible.

As shown in the report, countries like **Germany** – adapting their INCO strategy according to the EC one and to the European Research Area– and **Sweden** – using the EC and ERA initiatives to extend their cooperation with third countries – are interesting cases to observe.

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