



Summary of conclusions and recommendations
INCONTACT South East Asia Regional Dialogue Meeting
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EU-South-East Asia S&T and development cooperation

The progress in EU- South-East Asia development cooperation is one of the main prerequisites for further S&T cooperation between the EU and South-East Asian countries. To this end, EU S&T cooperation with South-East Asia could be aligned with development cooperation policies and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Thus, development programmes and programmes implemented within S&T cooperation should be perceived as the main political and economic priorities for mutually beneficial between EU countries and the countries of the South-East Asia.

The consequences of the 2009 global economic and financial crisis have caused significant menace to smooth socio-economic and S&T development in most of the South-East Asian countries. National development and S&T programmes in most South-East Asian countries are still lacking appropriate financial resources. The challenge is finding the balance between the level of funds to finance the partnerships, including aid partnerships, and the outputs the partnerships produce. Thus, coherence between S&T priorities and development needs should be established.

Challenges and barriers for South-East Asian countries' participation in FP7

Financial support challenge

The difficulty Southeast Asian researchers face in finding appropriate European research partners with whom they can establish research consortia to bid on FP7 calls for proposals is perhaps the single greatest obstacle to increased EU-Southeast Asia cooperation under the Framework Programmes.

Clear understanding of Program Objectives

In most of Southeast Asia, the role of the EU has traditionally been perceived as that of a donor, and this has contributed to unrealistic and false expectations about the objectives of

FP7 and what the Programme can offer Southeast Asian researchers. Many Southeast Asian researchers approach the Programme on the assumption that it is a “bottom-up” funding mechanism to which they are free to submit proposals of their own choosing.

Information Flow

Most Southeast Asian countries are relatively new to involvement in Framework Programmes and as a result have not developed the European networks necessary to being able to receive relevant and timely information on upcoming calls for proposals. European researchers often benefit from receiving early information on upcoming call topics through a variety of informal channels which gives them time to form consortia which may in fact be close to final formation by the time Southeast Asian researchers are made aware of the call topics.

Managing Expectations

FP7 promotion efforts must therefore strike the right balance between informing researchers about opportunities for collaboration while at the same being realistic in managing the expectations of the research community. Furthermore many of the FP7 support actions devote an inordinate amount of effort in delving into the minutiae of project administration and financial management while neglecting to provide highly relevant information on how to identify and contact strong European consortium leaders.

Proposal preparation

Southeast Asian researchers who successfully identify a consortium and are able to convince the consortium to take them on board often face in number of challenges in proposal preparation. Research partners in Southeast Asia often belong to organization or companies with little or no experience in Framework Programmes and have few domestic or in-house resources to draw on in terms of making decisions concerning such things as person month rates and indirect cost models, and as a result find difficult to contribute in a productive manner to the consortium building process, and may in fact ultimately find themselves at a disadvantage once the consortium is fully formed choosing a cost model their organization cannot support or being under funded.

Geographic and financial constraints

In forming consortia there is typically a need for one or more face to face meetings to develop work packages, assign tasks and develop the project budget. Travel to Europe by Southeast Asian researchers for such a meetings is often prohibitively expensive and difficult to justify for a meeting of one or two days. Being unable to participate in these meetings can put the Southeast partners at a disadvantage in terms of developing a complete understanding of the project objectives from the outset.

Project implementation

Experience has shown that Southeast Asian researchers are perfectly capable of active and productive involvement in FP7 funded projects and in many cases derive significant benefit through their participation. However the administrative requirements of FP7 funded projects often pose significant challenges to Southeast Asian researchers, and while these may not be unique, they are often felt more acutely by Southeast Asian project partners.

Human resources

As outlined in the section above, Southeast Asian researchers often have very limited administrative human resources who can support their participation in an FP7 funded project. Southeast Asian involvement in projects may depend very much on one individual who is also responsible for a number of other international projects. The result is that Southeast Asian researchers can spend an inordinate amount of time in completing the administrative requirements of a project without having the benefit of financial and administrative support services from their own organization.

Impact of cooperation

The Capacities pillar of FP7 has and continues to support a number of projects intended to strengthen the STI policy dialogue between the Europe and the countries of Southeast Asia, and have been successful in beginning to put in place the necessary support structures, such as NCP networks, to increase understanding and awareness of opportunities offered by FPs for Southeast Asian researchers.

However there is considerable overlap in the objectives of these projects and it is not always evident how effective the policy and priority setting and priority setting mechanisms developed by some of these projects are in implementing bi-regional thematic priorities.

The way forward

The FP7 could be perceived by South-East Asian countries as a tool to implement research for both development and S&T programmes. It should not be considered as a post-development instrument, but participation in the FP7 may stimulate South-East Asian research community to generate local solutions for development programmes. The "Horison 2020", like FP7, is also meant to address global issues. Thus, there would be a synergy between "Horison 2020" and objectives of the aid partnerships, which are designed to contribute to capacity building. The task of the EU would be translating the objectives of the "Horison 2020" into the common language and to form a mutually shared perception.

EU S&T cooperation programs are capable of enhancing S&T development in South-East Asian countries, which strengthens the EU- South-East Asian countries' cooperation. On one hand, some incentives could be introduced to support S&T cooperation within aid partnership. On the other hand, the development cooperation programmes could be brought very close to S&T cooperation between South-East Asian countries and EU. More specifically, S&T cooperation should be also one of the priorities of aid partnerships. Finally, the research, implemented and supported by the FP7 could identify the problem areas and attract partners' attention to launch activities in fragile sectors.

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