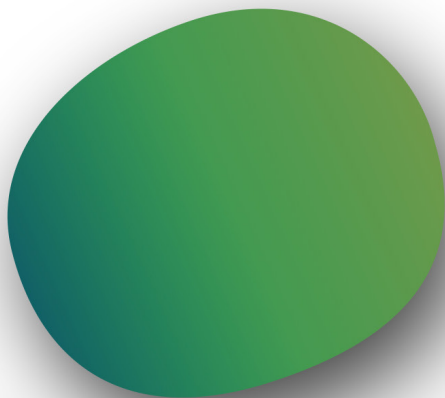




SCOPING REPORT ON EXISTING COLLABORATION AND FUTURE INTERESTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



SCOPING REPORT ON EXISTING COLLABORATION AND FUTURE INTERESTS AND OPPORTUNITIES
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Deliverable 2.1

Report prepared by Lucy Parnall and Elio Perez Calle

Arts and Humanities Research Council, AHRC

April 2015

Task Partners: AHRC, DLR, ICSSR, ZSI



This project has received from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 613236



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is the result of an international collaborative effort. The production of this report has been led by Lucy Parnall and Elio Perez Calle (AHRC) and has received the inputs of Jennifer Striebeck (DLR), Mahesh Madhukar (ICSSR) and Kaisa Granqvist (ZSI).

We would like to thank the people who submitted the answers of the partner organisations to the EQUIP survey and provided further information when necessary, as well as the people who provided suggestions for our expert group and participated in the shortlisting: Siru Oksa (AKA), Pierre-Olivier Pin (ANR), Margot Brezi (APRE), Torsten Fischer

(DFG), Jennifer Striebeck (DLR), Ben Sharman (ESRC), Gopinath Ravindran (ICHR), Bharat Bhusan (ICSSR), Mahesh Madhukar (ICSSR), Davor Kozmus (MIZS), Anne Westendorp (NWO), Merethe Sandberg Moe (RCN) and Florian Gruber (ZSI). Their responses, apart from providing the raw data for this report, also contained suggestions and recommendations which have been included in this document.

We want to acknowledge the input provided by our colleagues at the AHRC and we would like to thank the RCUK India office and especially Geeny George and Nafees Meah whose inestimable assistance was extremely helpful.

Lucy Parnall and Elio Perez Calle

Background

This report is the result of a scoping survey and background analysis on European - Indian Research Collaboration in the Social Sciences and Humanities. The EqUIP (EU-India Social Science and Humanities Platform) partners, plus some additional organisations in India, were asked to provide information on their research activity - particularly their research priorities regarding European - India collaboration - their peer review processes; recent and current collaborative activity they are supporting with India/Europe; and, where possible, a brief description of the impact of collaborations identified. The information received varied greatly in detail, but still revealed some interesting insights and useful aspects to consider moving forward. In addition to the partner survey, background information on research funding in India, European Commission investments in European – India research collaborations and learning from the New INDIGO programme have been included to provide a broader landscape to the survey responses.

Key Recommendations

The report demonstrates a large interest in increasing the level of collaboration in the Social Sciences and Humanities between India and Europe. The themes identified provide a broad and inclusive basis for scoping potential activity further and enabling multi-disciplinary approaches. It is essential that as these are developed the full range of Humanities and Social Science disciplines (as well as other sectors if

relevant) are included in these scoping activities to ensure a balanced input.

It is recommended that further work is done to formulate a common process that could be used for any follow on activity and that EqUIP continues to maximise its learning from existing experiences of transnational collaboration to identify the most effective mechanism ensuring clarity of roles, process and communication. In order to acquire a better view of the Indian research landscape regarding the Humanities, it is recommended that Indian partners such as the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) and the University Grants Commission (UGC) are invited to be associate partners of the EqUIP project and that they are active partners in the workshops/symposia.

As EqUIP looks to the future it is recommended it continues to look at the opportunities Horizon 2020 offers in terms of enabling future research collaboration.

Research priorities

A total of 38 research priorities and strategic areas were identified and described by the partners. With the assistance of several academic experts these have been organised into five broad thematic areas:

› **A. Sustainable prosperity, well-being and innovation.**

Health, Sustainability, Education and Social Innovation are the main foci of this thematic area, but it is important to note the high level of cross linkages across these areas. Social innovation for

example links to education and health. Gender, although not specifically mentioned in the priorities, was considered an important aspect to make explicit across this theme. Although broad, the topics in this area have cohesion around applied research to address social challenges. This thematic area should look to the future and be solution-focussed and has complementarity with Horizon 2020 Societal challenges.

› **B. Inequalities, growth and place/space.**

Inequalities, growth, and cities/urbanisation are the core of this thematic area. Whilst cities and rapid urbanisation were seen to provide a particular focus, the significance of the rural aspect was emphasised in the context of development and growth and not just in the context of movement from rural to urban areas. The natural environment was seen to be a fundamental cross-cutting aspect of this thematic area, for example, through the impact of environmental degradation/natural events on the movement of peoples.

› **C. Social transformation, cultural expressions, cross-cultural connections and dialogue.**

This thematic area has identity, language, shared histories, diversities and diasporas at its core. Both the past and future should be part of this thematic area ensuring a strong Social Sciences and Humanities relevance to all the included topics. Creative practice, religion, languages and literatures are included in this thematic area and cross-cultural connections operates as a unifying theme.

› **D. Power structures, conflict resolution and social justice.**

This thematic area is concerned with enabling and understanding conflict resolution and social justice. It

is organised around the topics of social diversity and structures, gender and conflict. The complexity of this theme may lead to tension between those scholars that study the reform of existing structures through State processes (such as international law studies) on the one hand, and those who study bottom-up changes (such as activism) on the other. It is recommended that both approaches are accommodated.

› **E. Digital archives and databases as a source of mutual knowledge.**

The cornerstone of this thematic area is the access of researchers to primary sources, which requires both the political will to make them available and the technology to store, format and organise them in a repository that can be remotely accessed. Therefore there is an important methodological component in this thematic area that is also strongly linked to the concept of 'the digital', metadata and the use of new media in research.

A number of research symposia/workshops based on these themes will be organised by the EqUIP partners. While A to D are sufficiently defined to proceed to scoping workshops/symposia, E requires more elaboration as recommendations from academic experts diverged from what the partners had defined as priorities. Further discussion on how to frame this theme and whether it should be a symposia/workshop topic is required. Additionally there are some partner priorities around methods, tools, and enablers that can be considered in relation to all themes.

The analysis of the priorities drew a few conclusions that extend across all the themes:

- It is essential that interdisciplinarity across both the Social Sciences and Humanities is fully embedded in all themes and future activities
- In developing the themes we should avoid disentangling Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) e.g. at sub topic level, because we want to

encourage this integration and cohesion across all themes

- The need for more reflection by Indian researchers on Europe was highlighted across themes
- It was noted that some themes are more 'India' in scope – whilst this was felt to be appropriate it was noted that opportunities to consider these issues in a European or global context should not be missed.

Peer review and collaborative activity

Information provided on peer review was at a high level but the individual processes of organisations did not vary greatly. Whilst more work is needed to define a possible common process it is felt that this should be achievable with no major obstacles. A number of past collaborative activities were identified as the most successful for international collaboration: [HERA](#) (Humanities in the European Research Area), [NORFACE](#) (New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Cooperation in Europe), [DFG-ICHR](#) (German Research Foundation-India Council for Historical Research) **bilateral calls with peer review**, [Digging into data](#), [ORA](#) (Open Research Area in Europe for the Social Sciences), [New INDIGO](#), and the [Rising Powers Research Programme](#). (Note: not all these encompass European – Indian collaboration, or Social Science and Humanities but may provide useful models of working).

A number of questions were asked in the survey to identify particularly effective ways of working based on the experience of the partners of India – Europe collaboration, as well as the key challenges identified during these collaborations and the most positive

and challenging experiences of participating in joint decision making procedures.

International collaboration in research funding is a very complex endeavour. Detailed analysis of the information provided by the EqUIP partners led to the identification of five key areas in this respect:

› **Establishing roles, responsibilities and priorities**

Partners recommend agreeing on a common purpose and process. Establishing clear timetables, roles and responsibilities and developing transparent and inclusive methods for all those involved (including any applicants) is required to avoid misunderstandings that may lead to bad experiences. The value of partner interaction between key personnel, relationship building and identifying common interests and a common purpose should not be underestimated.

› **Communication and clarity**

Communication and clarity is the cornerstone of successful collaboration; communication via phone may be challenging, as it is written communication in general when translation is needed. It is also advised that tacit knowledge is difficult to share, and therefore knowledge exchange, communication and sharing best practice are vital. Flexibility is needed when establishing common initiatives, as well as keeping an open mind, being tolerant and aware of intercultural diversity.

› **Peer review and decision making**

European and Indian funders have different ways of delivering their peer review process; therefore matching individual European and Indian peer reviews can be challenging. Partners agreed that, despite its limitations, joint decision making procedures are useful, and that all participating bodies must be included in the making of multi-lateral decisions in a process based on mutual trust.

It is recommended that a template covering all steps of the evaluation process, including a clear set of rules, is drafted; this template would be agreed by all partners and govern the decision making process. It is also important to ensure that all participating bodies are included in the making of multi-lateral decisions. A detailed timeline, agreed by all the partners, is also recommended to avoid misunderstandings and delays in the application procedure.

A single point of submission would make the application procedure more efficient. Requiring applicants to submit proposals both to an organisation in Europe and another in India increases the workload for applicants and creates difficulties for processing proposals. A detailed timeline, agreed by all the partners, is also recommended to avoid misunderstandings and delays in the application procedure.

› **Finances**

Problems may arise with resources and costs as well administrative barriers to money transfer and problems derived from currency. It is important to bear in mind that different partners might hold different approaches to financial reporting which can be an additional challenge to international collaboration.

› **Considerations on bilateral and multilateral collaboration**

Regarding decision making, multilateral agreements can pose additional challenges because of the need to involve all partners in decision-making procedures. It is also necessary to align those procedures in a way that is satisfactory to all partners while adhering to their respective guidelines. This might be more difficult in this case because of the relative inflexibility of multilateral schemes, and might require more time to be invested in the discussion of the agreement.

Level of collaboration and impact

The impact and added value examples were the last pieces of information provided by EqUIP partners. There are three key areas in which previous collaborations had a particularly important impact and therefore should be considered in potential future undertakings:

› **Development of the discipline and academic capacity building:** Apart from the development of new, applicable knowledge, this implies the introduction of new research methodologies.

› **Research follow up, promoting further jointly funded projects, networking and mobility:** This includes the extension of the research activities by mobility of researchers and networking and building on the associations to move forward opportunities for new relationships and research, and also new grounds for further pilot programmes and the allocation of funding for new research topics.

› **Further understanding:** of how the partner organisation and its researchers work and the considerations required when engaging with the respective agency and country. Trust building, which has a positive impact on administrative and science policy, is also a closely related need.

The situation of Social Sciences and Humanities research in India

The report demonstrates a level of established

European - Indian collaborations across the Social Sciences and Humanities; however, there is some disparity in the level of bilateral and multilateral activities of funding organisations when considering the Social Sciences and Humanities separately.

This disparity is confirmed both in the case of collaborative programmes and individual researcher-led projects, as most of the collaborative links established between Indian and European researchers are focused on the Social Sciences rather than the Humanities. It is noted that - unlike the AHRC in the United Kingdom or NWO Humanities in the Netherlands, for example - there is no single, large-scale funder for the Humanities in India, though there are two smaller organisations covering some aspects of the Humanities - the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) and the Indian Council of

Philosophical Research (ICPR). It should also be taken into account that there is not a single definition of the "Humanities", for example some disciplines that may be considered as such in Europe might in turn be covered by the umbrella of the Social Sciences in Indian national programmes. It is also noted that there is much less funding available in India for publications in the Humanities than in Social Science.

We recommend further consideration of whether the experiences collected in the case of Social Science research collaboration can be applied in the case of the Arts and the Humanities and whether different approaches are needed when considering future EqUIP activities. This may include developing partnerships with the non-governmental sector in India (e.g. Sir Ratan Tata Trust) or facilitating the development of a variety of approaches.