

EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF

CASE STUDY: EUROPE-INDIA RESEARCH COLLABORATION WITH IMPACT

April 2017

INTRODUCTION

EqUIP, the Europe-India Platform for the Social Science and Humanities, is a network of research funding and support organisations from Europe and India specifically dedicated to strengthening research collaboration in the social science and humanities. It was established in 2014 through a €1.5 million grant from the European Commission (Grant No. 613236) and, to date, has brought together 16 research funding and support organisations from 11 European countries and India to develop stronger strategic partnerships.

The EqUIP platform was established following a multi-lateral call for networking projects between social scientists organised jointly by the Indian Council for Social Science Research, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, UK), the French National Research Agency (ANR), the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (N.W.O).

This short note provides an example of how these projects built on this funding to promote international collaboration and ensure their research had influence and was used amongst policy and practice stakeholders. It illustrates the potential research has to influence policy and practice when researchers are supported to engage with stakeholders.

RESEARCH PROJECT: THE AGE-GLOBE NETWORK

The Age-Globe Network is a multidisciplinary international research network of well-established academics, early career researchers, NGOs and stakeholders addressing critically important demographic issues around ageing and wellbeing in a globalised world in India, UK and Netherlands, focusing on two key themes: 'population, ageing and migration' and 'health and wellbeing'. The network was established through an EU-India Networking Project undertaken by four institutions in three countries; University of Groningen, The Netherlands; University of Southampton, UK; and two institutions from India – Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, and Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

From the outset the network set out to engage stakeholders and ensure policy relevance across these very different socio-cultural, economic and demographic settings. To ensure the project could be applied broadly the researchers used large-scale survey data from all involved countries, asking questions relevant to all three, such as whether caring and living arrangement patterns differed across these settings. The researchers also interviewed older adults living in institutional settings to compare their particular experiences.

While it might have been expected that policymakers might need a wholly different way of thinking about care in India and Europe, the researchers found that western models for understanding and shaping elderly care were appropriate to understanding the India context as well – the same questions mattered. This was true even though within India there were large differences in ageing and living arrangements between states like Kerala and Uttar Pradesh.

ENGAGING WITH POLICYMAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Ageing and wellbeing are areas highly relevant for social policy and public services in India and Europe, and a key element of the project was to engage these stakeholders. Early on in the project the research team hosted a multiple stakeholder workshop at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, to explore how knowledge generated in the study could be shared with non-academic partners such as NGOs and policymakers. The workshop was attended by around 15 NGOs, ten researchers and government officials.

"It was a networking grant, so sharing and building contacts was an important element," explains lead researcher Dr Ajay Bailey. "The primary objective was to carry out the research review – but right at the beginning it was clear that we had to include different levels and stakeholders, such as policymakers, NGOs and others."

The network has also gone on to work closely with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and Indian regional providers of care as key stakeholders in disseminating and understanding both global challenges and local specificities of aging and health. The project's final conference, organised with UNFPA, explored how the research findings could be used to shape a policy agenda and inform policymakers.

PATHWAYS TO IMPACT: BUILDING CONTACTS

An initial challenge for researchers engaging with stakeholders is identifying the right organisations and the right representatives who will be the project's advocate and knowledge broker – willing and interested to engage with research knowledge and able to exchange knowledge on practice, and see the practical implications of research findings. Rather than building up new relationships with external contacts and potential research users from the ground up, the researchers in this network utilised their existing contacts initially to build collaborative relationships. "We looked at which contacts the local research collaborators already had developed, and built on these," says Professor Bailey.

His top tips for engaging with policymakers and research users are:

- Include stakeholders very early in the process - at the stage of defining the project and the research questions.
- Influence is iterative. It is not a simple, linear process of researchers providing the information and policymakers acting upon it.
- Policymakers have their own researchers and their own agendas; researchers need to be aware of these dynamics and engage with those research communities as well.
- Communicating the findings is a key point. Researchers are not schooled in how to communicate science, and should consider using science communicators to translate research into accessible formats (for instance policy briefings). A research team could flag in their original proposal that they will have someone who will oversee this translation process.

ABOUT EQUIP

The Economic and Social Research Council, UK, co-ordinates the platform alongside the Indian Council of Social Science Research. Since its launch the platform has grown with participation of the Indian Council for Historical Research and the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, the University Grants Commission, the India Foundation for the Arts and a number of other Indian research funding and support organisations through its events. From Europe it has also been joined by the Czech Academy of Sciences with engagement from the Irish Research Council. It will continue to expand its membership beyond the EC funding period.

THE AIMS OF EQUIP

- Provide a more coherent overview of current research collaborations between Europe and India in the social sciences and humanities
- Develop best practice approaches and identify challenges for research co-operation between Europe and India in the social sciences and humanities
- Identify opportunities and priorities for future research collaboration between Europe and India in the social sciences and humanities
- Establish networks of pan-European and Indian researchers in the social sciences and humanities addressing cutting-edge research questions.

DETAILS

NAME OF INITIATIVE	EqUIP: Europe-India Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities
COORDINATOR	Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Swindon, UK. equip@esrc.ac.uk Indian Council for Social Science Research, Delhi, India equip2017icssr@gmail.com
CONSORTIUM	The beneficiary partner countries participating in EqUIP are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UK - Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) ▪ India - Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) ▪ Finland - Academy of Finland (AKA) ▪ France - French National Research Agency (ANR) ▪ Italy - Agency for the Promotion of European Research (APRE) ▪ Germany - German Research Foundation (DFG) and German Aerospace Centre (DLR) ▪ Portugal - Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) ▪ Slovenia - Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (MIZS) ▪ Netherlands - Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) ▪ Norway - Research Council of Norway (RCN) ▪ Austria - Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI)
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WEBSITE	http://equipproject.eu/
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