

EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF

EQUIP: KEY RESEARCH THEMES

April 2017

INTRODUCTION

EqUIP, the Europe-India Platform for the Social Science and Humanities, is a network of research funding and support organizations from Europe and India specifically dedicated to strengthening research collaboration in the social science and humanities (SSH). 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.

DEVELOPING A EUROPE-INDIA RESEARCH AGENDA

The EU-India roadmap for research collaboration has not, to date, included topics that might need SSH-led research methods or expertise. A key element of EqUIP activities has been to identify such thematic priority areas that would benefit from Europe-India collaborative SSH research. The process was led, as far as possible, by an expert working group of academics who refined partner priorities into five broad thematic areas of interest. These broad thematic areas in turn shaped a series of expert symposia which were held between October 2015 and October 2016, to further develop and refine them and foster expert networks.

The EqUIP Series of Symposia

- Inequalities, growth and place/space
- Digital archives and databases as a source of mutual knowledge
- Sustainable prosperity, wellbeing and innovation
- Social transformations, cultural expressions, cross-cultural connections and dialogue
- Power structures, conflict resolution and social justice
- Summary symposium to draw out cross-cutting thematic priorities

For further information, please see <http://equipproject.eu/activities/symposia/>

A. Inequalities, growth and place/space

The expert working group identified Inequalities, growth and cities/ urbanization as a thematic area, but relationships with the rural and peri-urban were included through reference to place/space. Environmental sustainability was also considered cross-cutting. Social or cultural encounters, within and between communities, cities and regions, were also felt to be central to this topic. While there would be overlap with issues around inequality addressed in Theme C, a separate theme on inequalities in the context of economic opportunity, environmental change and changing demographics was felt to be important.

B. Digital archives and databases as a source of mutual knowledge

Providing researcher access to primary sources and datasets was also raised as a potential area for international collaboration, requiring the political will, technology and methodological expertise to increase access to, and use of, digital sources, big data and new media. There was felt to be demand for digitized printed and aural source material such as oral histories on lived social and cultural practices, and tribal languages.

C. Sustainable prosperity, wellbeing and innovation

The Expert group also felt issues around health, sustainability, education and social innovation were a related area of focus, with social innovation linked to both education and health policy and practice. Attention to gendered outcomes and actors across this theme. Sustainable prosperity was felt to capture broader notions of inclusion and prosperity (i.e. beyond economic) while the term wellbeing recognized the range of economic, social, environmental and cultural factors affecting physical and mental wellbeing.

D. Social transformation, cultural expressions, cross-cultural connections and dialogue

This thematic area was focused on issues around cross-cultural connections through creative practice, religion, languages and literatures, with identity, language, shared histories, diversities and diasporas at its core. The development of new cosmopolitan societies and diasporas within and across India and Europe was also felt to provide an opportunity to look at cultural dialogue and connections.

E. Power structures, conflict resolution and social justice

The expert group also suggested issues around enabling and understanding conflict resolution and social justice were standalone issues. While structural issues around social diversity, power and gender thread through this theme— linking to Themes A and C, issues around societal conflict and peace building provided a distinct area of focus. It was recommended that these issues could link closely to issues around societal reform, whether top down (state processes) or bottom-up (such as social movements).

The final Summary Symposium was developed to enable experts who had intended these previous five thematic symposia to come together to identify cross-cutting and priority topics where there would be genuine added value in European-Indian research collaboration. These discussions and recommendations have informed the development of the first multi-lateral Europe-India SSH call for research projects.

FIRST MULTI-LATERAL EUROPE-INDIA SSH CALL FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS

EqUIP partners have been negotiating the development of the first multi-lateral Europe-India SSH call for research projects. This will bring together a number of social science and humanities research funders from India and Europe to support excellent and innovative research into sustainability, equity, wellbeing and cultural connections, with the emphasis on Indian and European dimensions, in both contemporary and historical contexts. Funders have strongly encouraged interdisciplinary approaches across social sciences and humanities (SSH) to address the themes of this call. The call will launch in the Summer of 2017.

STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION THROUGH THE FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

While EU-India inter-governmental agreements on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) cooperation have provided a framework for negotiating co-funding for certain H2020 topics by the Government of India, there have been no such agreements with SSH-led research funders in India. Given the potential for growth of SSH collaboration with India (see Policy Briefing 1), EqUIP recommends that in the short term the Commission consider funding Indian SSH researchers as an exception on topics of key common concern where there would be clear benefits to joint perspectives. The EqUIP bottom up agenda has provided an alternative mechanism for identifying these potential areas of common interest, which have clear synergy with policy priorities under Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges, particularly

- Europe in a changing world – inclusive, innovative and reflective societies
- Health, demographic change and wellbeing.

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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