

# Outlining the **Platform for Funders**

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## **1 Introductory Note / Motivation**

Due to the rapid expansion of its research and development of expertise, promoting research cooperation with India is a priority in the bilateral research policies of most European countries and in the international science, technology and innovation (STI) policy of the European Union (EU).

There are bilateral S&T agreements between the Department of Science & Technology (DST) of the Government of India and the relevant stakeholders in many European Countries. As a consequence there are bilateral calls for collaborative research proposals with matching funds from both sides. A number of bilateral calls with European MS/AC have also been implemented by other departments of the Indian Government, as the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Department of Information Technology (DIT).

On the European level, the STI cooperation gained momentum after the signature of the EU-India S&T Agreement in 2001.

Since then the EU-India STI collaboration was broadened steadily. The India-EU Joint Statement of November 2007 indicated that the efforts should aim to create a joint infrastructure for advanced research and funding systems for the promotion of S&T collaboration.

The outstanding role of the EU/MS – India relationship is underlined by the decision of the European Strategic Forum for International Cooperation (SFIC) and the Ministry of Science and Technology (MST) in 2012 to establish a joint Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda (SRIA) and an overarching “Group of Senior officials” (GSO) to harmonise the research cooperation between both regions. Some thematic areas are already discussed in the context of the SRIA namely water, energy, health and ICT and bio-economy. For each of these thematic areas the set-up of working groups as part of the GSO governance structure is planned. The thematic working groups on water, health and energy have already started their work whereas the ones on bio-economy and ICT are still in the planning phase.

INNO INDIGO is a horizontal ERA-Net with India and is the successor project of New INDIGO (2009-2013), which successfully implemented schemes for EU-India transnational calls for proposals (New INDIGO Partnership Programme). These calls have developed from simple networking and mobility funding towards the funding of research projects open for Small and Middle size enterprises (SME) involvement. Through these activities the EU-India STI cooperation has already been put on a smooth basis by the regular publication of joint

transnational calls. The applied call mechanisms proved to be applicable even with changing funding partners, thematic scopes, funding amounts and funding instruments.

Within the lifetime of INNO INDIGO the implementation of three calls for proposals is foreseen. One crucial task will be to develop a strategic call agenda in order to enhance the foreseeability of these joint calls and provide the funding organisations tools to plan their participation far in advance of the publication of the call.

INNO INDIGO will also build on the new political background and the setting-up of the Group of Senior Officials (GSO). Whereas the GSO will be responsible for political action, the ERA-Net INNO INDIGO will (if required) assist the GSO by transforming political decisions into tangible cooperation through joint funding of research and innovation and bi-regional workshops.

The experiences from the past five years will be used in order to further enhance EU-India cooperation, as well as in order to support / further develop above mentioned bilateral / multilateral activities. There are various new elements addressed in the INNO INDIGO ERA-Net with a certain relevance for the platform discussion as e.g. how to bring ideas to market, how to support young researchers, how to develop new forms of collaboration etc.

To conclude: By the various approaches of joint funding it has been examined and proven, that new EU-India funding mechanisms are technically feasible, they are attractive, they add value to the collaboration and their results are positive. The next step would be to reach a higher relevance of the mechanisms and to create higher impact and outreach aiming at the development of a persisting, non-project-based institutional implementation.

The platform for Funders will be implemented in order to combine the main tasks:

1. Discussion, preparation and management of joint calls. Preparation of strategic call agenda in order to enhance the foreseeability and planning for interested funders.
2. Enhancing relevance especially in terms of the outreach to countries / regions / funding organisations not yet involved in European-Indian STI collaboration
3. Offer a platform for the initiatives discussed within the GSO framework

4. Including new elements: Enhance the exchange of information especially with regards to the involvement of innovation players in order to move towards market oriented research
5. Paving the way for sustainable trans-national funding programmes without EC funding

## **2 The Platform for Funders**

### **2.1 Objectives of the Platform for Funders**

The platform for funders is the “Heart” of INNO INDIGO. Beyond the preparation and implementation of joint calls one central aim of the platform is to optimize the outreach of INNO INDIGO and facilitate the networking of funding organizations in Europe and India.

It will offer opportunities for interested funding organizations to participate in all steps taken towards the implementation and management of EU-India transnational calls. The ERA-NET New INDIGO has attracted a number of national funding agencies. This was important to gain experiences, approve and adjust tools and methods in existing strategies for the call management. Within the INNO INDIGO process of the future joint calls the strategies for an enhanced management structure will steadily analyzed and optimized also in order to develop common governance principles.

There will be made substantial efforts in order to monitor running funded research projects, to evaluate the joint funding mechanisms and their results.

A parallel strategic dialogue will consider input from other relevant sources like the Indian government, the European Commission or the EU-MS/AS (also in the context of the GSO) and it will allow a kind of foreseeability for funders to plan their participation in the funding.

Furthermore scenarios on new forms of collaboration e.g. between India and thematic ERA-Nets as well as the EU-India STI funding situation after the second ERA-NET with India (> 2016) will be developed (see especially 2.4.2 and 2.4.4).

On the other hand the dialogue with the science community, innovation actors and funders will be enhanced (supported by WP1). More information is found under 2.4.1.

**The participation in the platform meetings does not imply a systematic commitment in EU-India transnational calls for proposals. The participation in the joint calls is the sole decision of the funder, based on its respective national agenda and the money available.**

## **2.2 Members of the platform**

The members of the platform are national Funding Organisations and/or ministries or Regions, with ability to commit funds to calls for proposals. It is the aim on one hand to answer to the requests of the funders already participating in the consortium of ERA-Net and with experiences from former New INDIGO calls and on the other hand to attract new funders that do not have experiences in multilateral calls with India or even do not have bilateral programs with India.

## **2.3 Joint Calls**

The implementation of joint calls for proposals is the central aspect to be discussed within the platform for funders. The aim is to implement at least three joint calls focusing on collaborative research projects.

Joint calls for proposals are the elixir for a living European Indian collaboration. Looking back to 5 years of this lived collaboration one can prove this matter by simple numbers:

- 28 European-Indian projects have been funded under New INDIGO (plus seven funding contracts under preparation)
- 602 days of visits for meetings, joint laboratory work, staff exchange and workshops
- A funding volume of more than 10 Mio. €
- 13 countries involved
- About 120 research institutions involved
- 59 young scientists involved

### **2.3.1 Thematic Areas**

The thematic areas of the new calls will be agreed upon mutual interest and following the symmetric approach of New INDIGO. The thematic priorities identified and discussed in the context of the SRIA such as bio-economy, energy, health and ICT as well as the discussions of the Group of Senior Officials (GSO) will also be considered in the platform discussions.

### **2.3.2 Strategic Agenda for joint calls**

Another central aim is to draft an overall call strategy to create a foreseeability for the interested funding organization in order to plan and organize their participation as early as possible and hence to assure a smooth and on time implementation with a transparent call schedule.

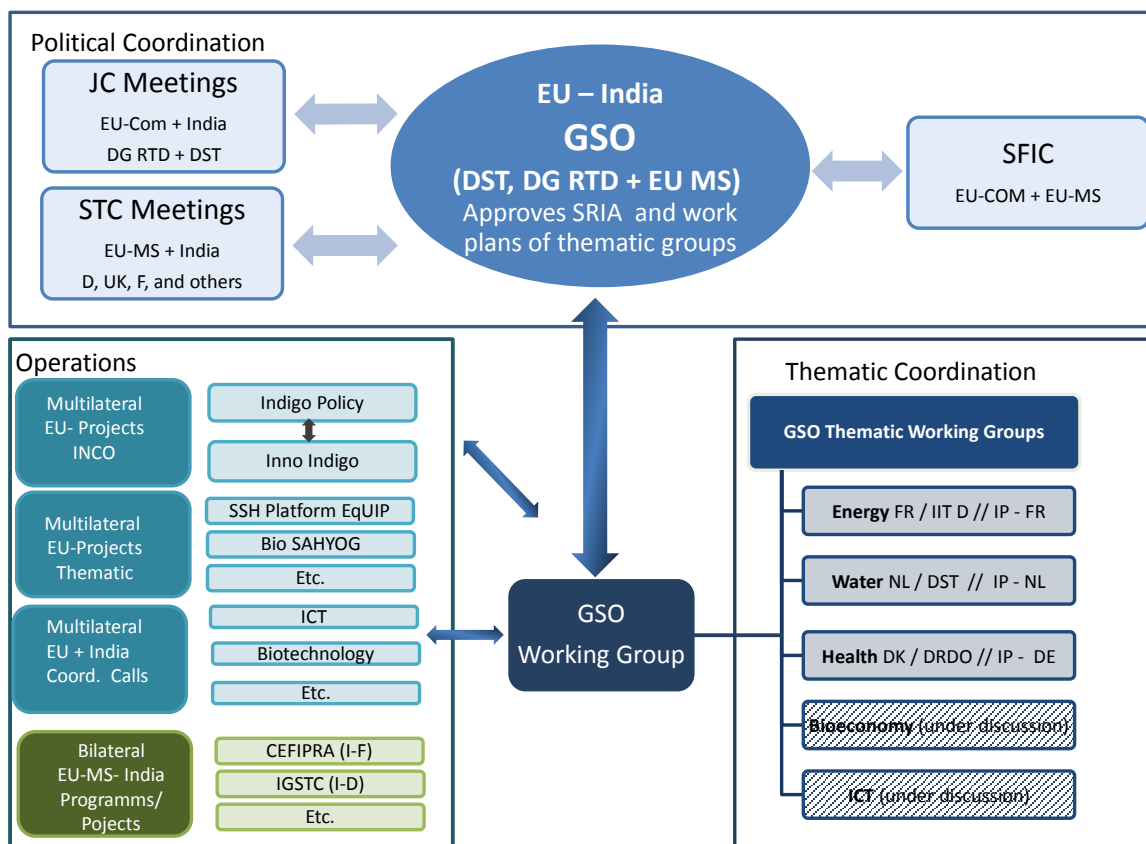
## **2.4 Interlink between the Platform of Funders and the GSO**

INNO INDIGO will closely work together with INDIGO POLICY. The projects foresee the support of GSO Working Groups and Thematic Groups. All activities that could be of use for the thematic groups will be provided to the respective European and Indian chairs.

Vice versa the outcomes of the groups will be used to feed the platform for funders' discussions in order to catch up with their recommendations.

In case the GSO will decide for any funding initiative INNO INDIGO will offer the Platform for Funders' tools to support this initiative in terms of dissemination, implementation and management.

### Structure of Indo-European STI Partnership – Key Mechanisms



## 2.5 Involving external experts - integration of new elements

INNO INDIGO will contribute to the development and integration of new elements into multilateral funding programmes. This will be done on the one hand through the gathering and analysis of existing data and on the other hand through fostering a broad exchange between science leaders and innovation actors from industries, clusters, academia and policy in order to encourage their transnational collaboration in the context of joint calls.

The aim is to provide all relevant information elaborated through the activities of other INNO INDIGO WPs and stimulate the discourses within the platform meetings. In the following paragraphs the main issues to be broached will be described in further detail.

### 2.5.1 Innovation

It is of great importance to understand the Indian and European market needs in order to set up joint initiatives that will strengthen the European-Indian STI collaboration. This will be done through the involvement of industries, clusters of excellence and regions as important funding partners with strong links to the regional industry on both sides (Europe and India). Industrial involvement and success will create relevance, Networks of excellence are



measured settings to link academia to industry, and “regions” are in Europe as well as in India drivers, actors and funders of innovation processes.

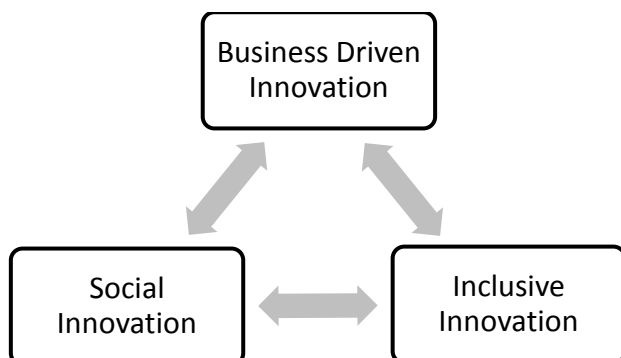
These activities will be supported by INNO INDIGO WP1 “Assessment” through analyses of existing data on innovation drivers and interviews with representatives of industry / clusters / regions.

The result of this exchange and analysis will be summarized and translated into action plans feeding the platform for funders.

An important aspect of the platform meetings will furthermore be information sessions / panel discussions that will be organized with relevant actors from regions, clusters, SMEs and in order to consider their feedback in new calls and receive profound insight in the practical cooperation of research and innovation. All innovation related issues will be discussed with regard to a balanced combination of the three types of innovation demonstrated in the INNO INDIGO INNOVATION TRIANGLE (IIIT).

Combining the European and Indian key aspects of innovation INNO INDIGO deals with three types of innovation:

- 1) Business driven Innovation for boosting competitiveness.
- 2) Social innovation covering societal challenges and needs
- 3) Inclusive innovation targeting the Indian social challenges and needs and opening new ways of collaboration (e.g. affordable health)



The discussions within the platform for funders should contribute actively to more market related research and development and more industry participation within the research projects. One should note here that in many areas there are different needs for innovation in both regions but still interlinked though added values for both sides. It is one aim to find the common interests.

### **2.5.2 Connecting Scientists**

Starting in New INDIGO there have been ongoing discussions on the involvement and support of young Indian and European scientists. There is one task in the INNO INDIGO to discuss and draft a strategy on joint PhD programmes.

The involvement of young scientists in the joint calls for proposals will be further discussed in the platform for funders.

### **2.5.3 Paving the way for new forms of European Indian STI cooperation**

#### **- Linking up with other ERA-Nets / other projects and initiatives**

There have been activities towards thematic ERA-Nets in New INDIGO resulting in the participation of the Indian DBT in one call of the INFECT- ERA ERA-Net. It must be the leading aim to further network between Indian funders and thematic ERA-Nets. Furthermore it is important to exchange information and experience with other horizontal ERA-Net about innovation calls, ERA-Net PLUS mechanisms and their cooperation beyond the lifetime of the ERA-Nets.

A priority is the close cooperation with the sister project INDIGO POLICY. But there are and will be further projects related to India which will be considered and updated on INNO INDIGO's activities in order to exchange information and use synergies.

#### **- Opening up of existing bilateral programmes**

Some discussions on opening up of bilateral calls between India and European MS / AC have been going on and first experiences with the actual realization have been gathered. Still there are some further steps to take and strategies to draft in order to reach a mutual understanding and ease the process of opening bilateral calls.

Challenges and opportunities of this tool have to be discovered.

- **Outlining the collaboration beyond the ERA-Net**

EC funding has had an important role for the ongoing enhancement of European-Indian STI cooperation. Nevertheless the aim was and still is to establish a funding programme which will work independently from any EC funding. The joint calls for proposals published under New INDIGO have already proven that there are mechanisms established and there is an atmosphere of mutual trust that would allow for a self-sustained programme. There is Task 3.3 under INNO INDIGO to draft a strategy and head towards a joint call beyond the lifetime of the ERA-Net.

The platform for funders will be asked to discuss this matter and reach consensus for one first approach.

Joint Interest Group for Asia:

As some European projects (BILATs, ERA-Nets) have the objective to implement sustainable programmes for joint calls beyond EC-Funding as well there will be regional Joint Interest Groups considered in order to synchronise these efforts. The next step might be to organise a meeting of a Joint Interest Group (JIG) back to back with a platform for funders meeting in order to discuss possible synergies, opportunities and challenges.

Focused projects will be past and ongoing ERA-Nets with Korea, Japan and India.

Aims:

- Building on experiences from multilateral / bilateral programmes; use best practice
- Building up a strong group of MS / AC funders with enhanced network
- Implementing one tool for all calls: use best practice and draft common strategy / call calendar
- Using of less resources (time / financial) to organise joint calls through synergetic meetings

## 2.6 Meetings

The platform for funders meetings are crucial for the networking, exchange of information and the discussion and planning of EU-India transnational calls, or opening up of bilateral calls. The central aim of the INNO INDIGO consortium is to prepare these meetings as careful as possible and provide all necessary input in order to stimulate and support the

discussions within this platform. As the participation of a high number of funders is highly welcome travel and accommodation of all funders interested in the participation will be reimbursed by INNO INDIGO.

There will be two different types of meetings:

#### **2.6.1 Big platform meetings**

Once a year there will be implemented a big platform meeting. The aim is to involve new funders in discussions and to involve science community and innovation players.

#### **2.6.2 Small (virtual) platform meetings**

Once a year (as well as on demand) there will be a smaller (virtual) platform meeting in order to discuss remaining open questions on calls under preparation or already running as well as to discuss funded research projects.

The agenda would e.g. include:

- i. Any issues concerning the preparation and implementation of the joint call.
- ii. Evaluation and monitoring of running projects and calls: in case of any special incidents within one project or in case of very successful projects the funders should consult on the continuation of the respective proposal or on ways how to support the researchers.