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# EU's Horizon 2020 launches CASCADE for South Asia

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Bi-regional coordination of science and technology cooperation to be promoted through CASCADE, providing foundation for future International Cooperation Network program targeting South Asian countries **By Sarah Hannan**

Last week Colombo saw a gathering of high profile delegates from the European Union along with scholars from universities in the UK and Sri Lanka as well as representatives from government and non governmental institutions keen on research and innovation at the South Asian sect of Horizon 2020: Collaborative Action towards Societal Challenges through Awareness, Development and Education (CASCADE) at Taj Samudra Hotel.

## FT Quick Take

- 80 billion funding to be made available for EU headed research and innovation program over a seven year period from 2014-2020
- A dedicated budget of 24.5 billion to strengthen the EU's position in science and further increasing funding of 77% for the European Research Council
- 18 billion budget allocated to strengthen industrial leadership in innovation with major investments in key technologies, greater access to capital and support for SMEs
- 31.5 billion allocated to address societal concerns such as; climate change, developing sustainable transport and mobility, making renewable energy more affordable, ensuring food safety and security, or coping with the challenge of an ageing population

Outlining the objectives of the day's presentations, University of Salford UK Prof. Richard Haigh stated that at the end of the presentation the audience would have a better understanding on Horizon 2020 and tackling the societal challenges and having a clear understanding on the priorities of the EU and how can one contribute towards the objectives laid out in the program. In his welcome speech European Union Ambassador in Colombo David Daly assured that Europe is not in decline and is becoming the biggest economy in the region owing to the largest traders and owns the largest knowledge hub. Despite the difficult conditions faced by most of the member countries EU is back on track and is more resilient economically and politically. "The € 80 billion allocation for Horizon 2020 itself shows the commitment of the EU towards research and development. The necessary framework and parallels have to be drawn for the South Asian region. Sri Lanka is in line with these parallels set out for the region and the Government's policies and budget allocation toward establishing a knowledge hub by increasing the budget allocations for research is well in line with EU's objectives. Research and innovation are keys when establishing knowledge hub in any country. Investing in these fields will allow our researches to take their innovations from the lab to the market. Red tapes have been slashed to increase public access to funding." The EU Ambassador further stated that more than 120 students from Sri Lanka have been benefited from funding and grants from the EU in the past and Colombo and Peradeniya Universities have actively engaged in research and innovation exercises with the EU. **Partnering with EU for research excellence** University of Moratuwa Vice Chancellor Prof. Ananda Jayawardena, while thanking the EU for selecting Sri Lanka to launch their South Asian leg for Horizon 2020, stated: "Nations are in need of wealth creation. In the process of challenging sustainability, population growth and economic growth competing nations have to collaborate in overcoming these challenges when it comes to research and



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innovation. Huge investments of this nature can be very important to support countries to innovate. The Government of Sri Lanka has adapted to our goals and it is the responsibility of our technical colleges and local universities to make use of these opportunities. Horizon 2020's CASCADE project has provided the opportunity for us to get involved in international research, co-authoring papers which in return will increase our rankings as universities at an international level." **Maldives collaboration with EU** Focusing on one of the main strategies set out by the EU in tackling challenges to provide smart and efficient transport systems, the



European Union Ambassador in Colombo David Daly



European Union Delegation Head of Research and Innovation Denis Dambois



University of Moratuwa Vice Chancellor Prof. Ananda Jayawardena



Minister of Transport and Communication for the Republic of Maldives Ameen Ibrahim

Minister of Transport and Communication of the Republic of Maldives Ameen Ibrahim stated: "Maldives needs the EU's support to research and develop effective transportation systems in the country. Maldives has made a demandable progress by growing



University of Salford UK Prof. Dilanthi Amarathunga



University of Salford UK Prof. Richard Haigh



University of Salford UK Research and Development Manager Vera Barron

from GDP \$ 275 to GDP \$ 567 and the life expectancy has gone up from 61 to 74 years. But this progress has come at a price. The capital city is home to over 100,000 people and the city experiences chronic traffic conditions and there is a scarcity of parking space. This rapid growth is threatening the sustainability of our country. Much needs to be done for the people of Maldives to share the fruits of development. In collaboration with the EU on this project we wish to develop an efficient ferry network with land and air connectivity and also focus on developing efficient energy sources." **Structure and goals of Horizon 2020 program** A presentation on Horizon 2020 was done by EU Delegation Head of Research and Innovation Denis Dambois where he outlined the structure, goals and unlocking the European Research Area potential: "Horizon 2020 is the largest and most open program implemented by the EU Research and Innovation program with a funding budget that will be made available for seven years starting from 2014. The funding will be made available for the South Asian region through CASCADE and will focus on three priorities; Excellent Science, Industrial Leadership and Societal Challenges. Horizon 2020 is open to everyone, with a simple structure that reduces red tape and time so participants can focus on what is really important. This approach makes sure new projects get off the ground quickly – and achieve results faster. The EU Framework Program for Research and Innovation will be complemented by further measures to complete and further develop the European Research Area. These measures will aim at breaking down barriers to create a genuine single market for knowledge, research and innovation." **Simplification: Rules for participation** 1. A single set of rules: Adapted for the whole research and innovation cycle; Covering all research programs and funding bodies; aligned to the Financial Regulation, coherent with other new EU Programs 2. One project – one funding rate: Maximum of 100% of the total eligible costs (except for innovation actions, where a 70% maximum will apply for profit making entities), Indirect eligible costs: a flat rate of 25% of direct eligible costs 3. Simple evaluation criteria: Excellence – Impact – Implementation (Excellence only, for the ERC) 4. New forms of funding aimed at innovation: pre-commercial procurement, inducement prizes, and dedicated loan and equity instruments 5. International participation: facilitated but better protecting EU interests 6. Simpler rules for grants: broader acceptance of participants accounting practices for direct costs, flat rate for indirect costs, no time-sheets for personnel working full time on a project, possibility of output-based grants 7. Fewer, better targeted controls and audits: Lowest possible level of requirements for submission of audit certificates without undermining sound financial management, Audit strategy focused on risk and fraud prevention 8. Improved rules on intellectual property: Balance between legal security and flexibility, Tailor-made IPR provisions for new forms of funding, a new emphasis on open access to research publications

**Pathways for Southern Asia via Horizon 2020** "In 1954 the European Organisation for Nuclear Research known as Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN) in Switzerland was established and was the largest facility to be dedicated for research with the collaborative efforts of 21 member states of the EU and few non-EU countries as well," University of Salford UK Prof. Dilanthi Amarathunga stated, at the outset of her presentation. She further added that understanding the European context of Europe 2020 is important. In the growth plan Europe will be converted to a dynamic and competitive region in the next 10 years with three priorities for growth; Smart growth, sustainable growth and inclusive growth. These three areas of growth will further be broken down to seven flagship initiatives:

- Smart growth: Digital agenda for Europe, Innovation Union, Youth on the move
- Sustainable growth: Resource efficient Europe, an industry policy for the globalisation era
- Inclusive growth: An agenda for new skills and jobs, European platform against poverty.

The core parts of the Europe 2020 strategies are responding to economic crisis and addressing people concerns. Horizon 2020 converge the full innovation chain through Excellent Science, Industrial Leadership and Societal Challenges. It has opened up a god opportunity for early, middle and advance researchers and organisations to take part in international collaboration and focus on research areas of common interest sharing mutual benefits. Global challenges are important drivers for research and innovation and is the rationale behind Horizon 2020: studies on

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climate change and infectious diseases; internationally co-authored scientific publications and mobility of the researchers are increased in line with the collaborations. The participating countries need to engage more actively and strategically in International Research Corporation as a principle of general openness. **Finding partners and participating in a proposal** Simplifying the methods to discover partners for research and participate in a proposal, University of Salford UK Research and Development Manager Vera Barron explained that several key aspects need to be taken in to consideration:

- Understand the program objectives and opportunities that are available

Pillar 1: An individual researcher will be allocated around € 2 – 3.5 million. When it comes to training and mobility the individual should be open to work with institutions that will set out intra-disciplinary of the field. Being more agile and being ready to compete by identifying the training gaps will keep you at the top of it. In order to carry out the research necessary infrastructure should be in place. Pillar 2: Deploying existing knowledge and industrial capacity in focus area. Pillar 3: Tackling Societal Challenges

- Positioning your research in the fields of expertise

Identify the niche expertise Address the gaps in possible issues Identify the key stake holders Identify the activities that are already funded Existing projects in the same sphere and possible consortiums

- Find the correct partner

Use existing networks Speak to colleagues at conferences Utilise the CORDIS partner search facility Get in touch with institutions, consortiums which have won projects Attend networking, brokerage events to gather information Join webinars Join EUs evaluators database

- Develop and submit a great proposal

Ensure the scheme is right for your research Download the right work program Make sure your organisation is registered on the Research Participant portal A great proposal will fit the program objectives and the call criteria perfectly and the project partners will be experts in their respective fields. The proposal is genuinely innovative and is exciting to read. Methodology and the work plan have a balanced flow. "Believe in your project idea and remember that you are an expert in the selected field. Timing also plays an important role and enlisting the right partner for your project is a key factor. Always ask for help and should you fail at your first attempt do not give up," Barron observed.

**CASCADE project and its goals** University of Salford UK Prof. Richard Haigh presenting the case study on CASCADE urged that the EU has recognised a need to strengthen linkages with Asian countries. In order to promote regional coordination of science and technology the team will focus to:

- Compile a regional position paper that identifies global challenges and research priorities
- Map and develop an inventory of national and regional stakeholders related to global challenges
- Raise awareness on research and innovation priorities for fostering cooperation and towards building mutual understanding on how to address common global societal challenges



CASCADE will be prioritising in international cooperation of all South Asian countries that took part in previous framework programs and have been specified in the call: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Work Packages will capture the scope of position papers to identify the expertise of the participating country and will have to address the seven societal challenges outlined in Horizon 2020. To date CASCADE has 17 partners which include two



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technical colleges among the other participating universities and institutions. For further information on Horizon 2020 visit <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/> and for CASCADE visit <http://www.cascade-inconet.eu/>. **Pix**

by Upul Abayasekara

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