

Latest research and innovation developments in China

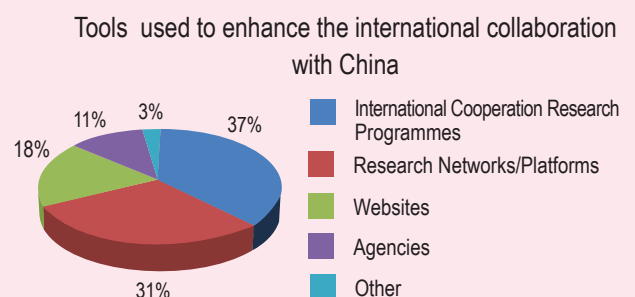
Having succeeded in recent decades in establishing itself as “the world’s factory” and one of the biggest recipients of foreign direct investment, China is now becoming a world-leading high-tech country and a rising Research and Development (R&D) power. The Chinese government has attached great importance to Science and Technology (S&T) development for national economy growth. In the past few years, China has gone from having a very low level of R&D expenditure to becoming in 2006 the second highest R&D expenditure country in the world after the US. Since 1999, China’s spending on R&D has increased by more than 20% each year. In 2005, it reached 1.3% of gross domestic product (GDP), up from 0.7% in 1998. Spending by central government in 2006 reached 71.6 billion RMB. In addition, China’s scientific publication in terms of research peer-reviewed articles is rising. In 2006 China generated 9% of world scientific publications, with an increase of 100% in comparison to 2002. China is now ranked roughly at the level of UK and Germany, ahead of France, and by 2010 will be second to the US.

Statistics on the number of EU researchers participating in Chinese research programmes

The ChinaAccess4EU project has conducted a first bi-annual survey to around 2000 project stakeholders based in Europe and China. Up to the date of this newsletter 38 answers have been received, out of which 17 European researchers have been involved in research programmes with China (35% of which are coordinators). Out of these 17 people, eight provided the name of the funding programme (out of which only one person has been involved in a Chinese government funding programme, and the other seven have been involved in bilateral funding programmes). Meanwhile, the ChinaAccess4EU project team is in the process of increasing the sample of survey responses.

Main findings from the ChinaAccess4EU bi-annual survey regarding EU researchers’ participation in Chinese programmes

In terms of the tools used by EU researchers to enhance international collaboration with China, 37% of the survey respondents used international cooperation research programmes, and 31% used research networks or platforms. Other tools include for example websites or agencies (see the graph on the right side). The existing bilateral programmes of European countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Switzerland, France, Germany, UK) with China are also facilitating such collaborations.



Main findings from the ChinaAccess4EU bi-annual survey regarding EU researchers' participation in Chinese programmes

In terms of the major barriers encountered by EU researchers for participation in Chinese programmes, language and cultural differences (29%), as well as lack of transparency of Chinese programmes (25%) are the two main identified barriers. Other barriers include for example lack of suitable Chinese partners, and lack of interest to participate in Chinese research programmes by EU researchers (see the graph on the right side).

To improve EU researchers' participation in Chinese programmes, the recommendations made by the survey respondents include the following:

- Provide more information and communication on Chinese funding opportunities through research networks, websites, forums and workshops/conferences;
- Increase EU-China researcher exchanges;
- Have access to more information in English about Chinese programmes;
- Enhance the involvement of industry partners;
- Launch joint calls on specific topics with China;
- Encourage Chinese researchers to invite European partners when submitting applications to Chinese programmes;
- Set up Joint Labs to bridge EU and Chinese research communities.

Major barriers encountered for participation in Chinese programmes



Success Story

Several Chinese major research programmes under MoST and NSFC provide researchers from the EU the possibility of participating in Chinese research projects, such as 863 Programme, 973 Programme and programmes funded by National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC). In 2009, it was reported that French scientist Vincent Deubel participated in a research project entitled "Negative regulation of virus-triggered IFN- β signaling pathway by alternative splicing of TBK1". Vincent Deubel is acting as Director General of Institut Pasteur of Shanghai, Chinese Academy of Sciences in partnership with Shanghai municipality. This project was supported by the 973 Programme and NSFC.