

Co-ordinating Research Collaboration with China: Experiences at the European and national levels

ACO Conference

“Paradoxal China: Western Perception, Eastern Realities?”

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Why China?

- Stimulating research collaboration with China is a top priority in most European countries (CREST Working group survey 2007; CO-REACH)
- China has become a key player in the global science, technology and innovation arena (OECD Review China's Innovation System, August 2007)
- China's international partners in international research collaboration need to respond to China's strategic policy and increasing level of ambition



Development of China's S&T Policy

- **Late 1970s: Opening-up and start of reform period**
 - Four modernizations, including science & technology
- **Mid 1990s: Development of more market-oriented high-quality R&D system**
 - Increase of involvement of private partners
 - Reform of research institutions into R&D divisions
- **Present: Ambition to become top 5 Innovative country**
 - 11th Five Year Plan of Economic & Social Development (2006-2011)
 - The National Program 2006-2020 for the development of science and technology in the medium and long term (MLP)
 - “to become an innovative country by 2020 (& narrow gap with US, Japan, European countries)”



MLP Development goals (by 2020)

- Increase R&D expenditure to 2,5% of GDP
- Increase contribution to economic growth from technological advances to 60%
- Reduce dependency of foreign technology to less than 30% (now: 60%)
- Enterprises & business sector driving mechanism of innovation process
- Become one of the top five countries in terms of innovative power by 2020



Backdrop in 2003: Sino-European research collaboration

- China actively seeking to build a strategic partnership with Europe (2003 Policy paper)
- Research collaboration with China is a top priority in most European countries
- Landscape of Sino-European research collaboration was and is highly fragmented:
 - Trans-national level (European Commission)
 - National level (bilateral funding schemes)
 - Institutional level (funding organisations & research institutions)
- Bilateral funding schemes are truly bilateral (linkages between schemes or national initiatives are very scarce)



CO-REACH ERA-NET

In the context of the FP6 ERA-NET scheme an initiative to support the bottom-up co-ordination of national research programmes within Europe and build the European Research Area

Two primary objectives:

- Pan-European co-ordination vis-a-vis China
- Stimulating European research collaboration with China



CO-REACH Social Science Call

- Multi-lateral thematic research programme in the field of Social Sciences & Humanities (Cultural Heritage)
 - Demography Family & Welfare
 - Cultural Heritage
 - Law, governance & policy-making
 - Participation, co-determination, employment & the quality of life
 - Labour market change, migration & social cohesion
- 7 Participating countries (6 from Europe & CASS from China)
- Budget on European side approx. € 2M
- Duration of pilot phase: 2 years
- Over 100 proposals submitted in pre-registration phase
- Joint assessment & selection procedure



CO-REACH: Added value?

Positive experiences:

- Successful implementation of multi-lateral research funding programme
- Platform function: becoming a gateway to Europe
- Spin-off: co-ordination at the national level

Constraints:

- Diversity of institutions within network
- Limited coverage: massive activity beyond CO-REACH
- Deeply rooted national traditions & cultures
- Co-operation vs competition



Co-ordination at the national level

2008 new strategic China policy in the field of basic research collaboration adopted by OCW, KNAW & NWO:

- **Politics of scale:** enhancing critical and financial mass
- **Strategic choices:** Identification of Dutch strengths and priorities in bilateral and multi-lateral co-operation with China
- **Increasing in-depth knowledge and expertise** on the Chinese research & innovation system
- **Increasing visibility & exposure** of Dutch research in China
- **Mutual learning** between national partners (finding synergies)
- **Research funding:** launch of JSTP in 2009
- **‘Single gateway to basic research in the Netherlands’**



New China policy: initial outcomes

- Chinese counterparts respond positively to co-ordination and the joint forces in the Netherlands

Unique selling points include:

- Multi-party co-operation in both countries on the basis of joint decision-making throughout the entire process of policy development, programme design and selection of joint research projects
- Joint identification and selection of thematic & cross-cutting priorities
- Long-term commitment and transparency in the collaboration
- Continuous efforts to enhance mutual understanding and trust



Reflections

- China is a **key player** in the global science, technology and innovation arena
- Research collaboration with China offers **strategic opportunities** for excellent research collaboration on the basis of mutual benefit and reciprocity
- The Netherlands and Europe should **position** themselves and **identify the most appropriate thematic focus and modalities** for stimulating joint research
- **Tailor-made approach** is instrumental for successful collaboration with China
- All stakeholders involved should undertake to find the right **balance between co-operation and competition**

