

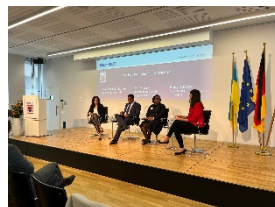
## Tackling the Global Challenges Together – The Potential of Association and Widening Schemes

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Global challenges do not stop at borders – and the Framework Programme is of utmost importance to address these challenges jointly. How can we enhance cooperation between EU Member States and beyond? What motivates non-EU countries to associate to the Framework Programme and could widening instruments be adapted to become more attractive for both widening and non-widening countries? How can research infrastructures enable and promote collaboration? Experts from different fields discussed [what is needed to tap on the potential of association and widening](#).

### Intro

In his welcome, [Johannes Bade](#), Head of Unit Higher Education, Research and the Arts of the Representation of the State of Hessen to the EU (kindly hosting the event), stressed the importance of the EU's international partnerships and the role of infrastructures within it – an important matter for the State of Hessen as well (where GSI/FAIR is located). He underlined the popularity of Horizon Europe and advocated the extension of association to the Framework Programme.



[Ioannis Legouras](#), Director of the Helmholtz Office Brussels, emphasized that science is not limited to single states and that cross-border cooperation in research is key to a sustainable future, as well as research infrastructures. The answers to global challenges inevitably rely on the power of scientific cooperation.

### Policy Impulse

In his talk, [Stefan Weiers](#), Head of Sector for Widening and ERA in the European Commission, stressed that the budget for widening countries has tripled as well as their participation in the Framework Programme has increased up to 20.5% since FP7. However, he raised concern about the countries' remaining uneven development and considered it as a key challenge for the further progress towards cohesion within Horizon Europe and beyond. A diversified portfolio of widening actions including a reinforced NCP network is crucial for tackling these disparities in R&I performance. For the future he encouraged more efforts for complementary investments from Member States. A diversified approach towards research infrastructures could further support the cohesion efforts. Strengthening relations with associated countries and continuing negotiations with like-minded countries is an ongoing mission still to be accomplished.

## Talk: “Enablers for Cooperation”

Moderator Kristine August (Helmholtz Brussels) talked with Ioannis Legouras about mechanisms that promote cooperation. Referring to an opinion poll of the beginning, Ioannis Legouras stated that trust and funding are main pillars of a successful internationalization strategy. When asked about the importance of “widening” for Helmholtz, he highlighted that the FP10 considerations on widening are not only a policy statement, but also reflect current practices at Helmholtz: EU projects of Helmholtz Centres have so far received around 2% of the total Horizon Europe funding – in the widening schemes Helmholtz is just as involved. The experience of the Helmholtz European Partnering Programme has once again confirmed that cooperation on equal terms and the linking and expansion of networks are of crucial importance. Furthermore, he pointed out that it is important to continuously support the Framework Programme’s emphasis on excellence. Overall, there is a necessity of interdisciplinary research and an increased global thinking. Including both associated and non-associated countries is key to address current innovation gaps. A better integration of research infrastructures into these approaches would be welcomed – as they bring together researchers from all over the world and support both excellence and innovation.

## Round Table: “Tackling Global Challenges Together”

During the Round Table, Ewa Kocińska-Lange, Director of the NCBR Office Brussels, Paul Creary, Head of Research & Innovation at the UK Mission to the EU, and Eudy Mabuza, Senior Science and Innovation Representative at the Mission of South Africa to the EU discussed “widening” and “association” and explored the options beyond.

Ewa Kocińska-Lange pointed out that trust between partners is key to any expansion of scientific relations. Paul Creary expressed the view that the UK’s association to the Framework Programme can rebuild trust in EU - UK R&I collaboration. Eudy Mabuza added that regional specific knowledge and data – e.g. regarding climate change – massively benefits global collaboration. Furthermore, the panellists mentioned that networks resembling “closed shops” can indeed be problematic for new partners to join. They also underlined the importance of knowing (and mapping) the own capacities before (strategically) entering international collaborations and partnerships. Research infrastructures were regarded as a key to global collaboration. In this context, the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) in South Africa was presented as an example for a global project involving partners from several continents.

Referring to potential improvements, Eudy Mabuza highlighted that the perspective of so-called developing countries is not yet sufficiently considered – despite aiming to include non-European partners some calls are written in a Eurocentric perspective. Furthermore, researchers from non-EU countries may face difficulties obtaining visa. Responding to the idea of further enhancing the “widening” instruments, Ewa Kocińska-Lange emphasized the diversity within the group of the so-called “widening countries” some of which are already performing close to the EU-12. Along these lines she also mentioned that it was necessary to consider them as an integral part of the Framework Programme – and not as limited to widening schemes. Paul Creary, in turn, highlighted the role of transparency and legal regulation forming the basis of transnational research.

The expansion of association to the Framework Programme, with the prospect of working more closely with like-minded non-EU countries in the future, was generally much welcomed. At the same time, some concerns regarding regulations of implementation and research security were expressed. The panellists respectively concluded with a demand for more funding, scientific excellence based on trust and openness to the world as well as for the voice of so-called developing countries to be heard – for global challenges cannot be solved unilaterally.