



USING SCIENCE DIPLOMACY FOR ADDRESSING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

JOINT INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMMING AS A CASE OF SCIENCE DIPLOMACY

JOINT INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMMING IS A COMMON BUT UNDERRATED CASE OF SCIENCE DIPLOMACY. IT ENGAGES FUNDING AGENCIES AS INTERMEDIARY ORGANISATIONS THAT ARE COMPELLED TO OPERATE AT THE INTERSECTION OF SCIENCE POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

International research collaborations have seen an enormous rise in recent years, but should not be taken as a given. Numerous issues need to be resolved, such as finding legal frameworks to initiate and safeguard collaborations, defining a programme and its goals, purpose, scope of resources to be invested, specifying a target group of eligible academic and non-academic actors, deciding what kind of procedures or even organisations should be set up in order to serve the very purpose of international programming, and not least: what scientific quality is required and how can it be ensured?

To tackle these the challenges of joint international research programming, science policy actors from different nation states and/or international organisations, more so than foreign policy actors, must reach a common understanding before and during international research programmes. This requires bridging the lifeworld experience of staff from foreign offices and research ministries, from funding and regulatory agencies and from members of the academic community that either evaluate or apply for funding.

Three main challenges must be addressed in joint international research programming: (i) How can norms and, in particular, habits from domestic science programming be attuned internationally, when different cultures meet in the absence of hierarchical steering? (ii) How can the logics and habits of politics and science be attuned, provided that actors from these two systems have different expectations about the purpose of scientific research: e.g. whether new knowledge should rather serve scientific or societal purposes or whether collaborations should primarily improve the relations of states? Amidst variegated domestic governance arrangements and belief systems of actors, a pressing challenge is (iii) to attune beliefs in and approaches to administrative evaluative procedures, not least to safeguard the quality and confirmability of evaluations.

These challenges seem to be occurring in particular, when countries show greatly differing levels of socioeconomic development and political stability. If e.g. actors' constellations often change due to political upheavals, the prospects of stable planning are often limited.

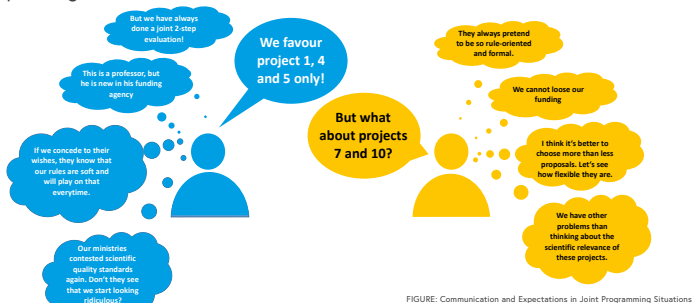


FIGURE: Communication and Expectations in Joint Programming Situations

Let's not comprehend science diplomacy as an existing matter, but rather as a dynamic communication process at the intersection of international affairs and science policy.



KEY FINDINGS OF THIS CASE STUDY

- » There is no standard prescription for how to set up joint international research programmes. Continuous exchange of best practices helps actors to find common ground, based on stable expectations.
- » Research project funding agencies are key actors in joint international research programming. These agencies mediate between science and foreign policy goals as well as between politics and science. Their staff are science diplomats par excellence.
- » Deciding upon a joint international programming procedure means doing diplomacy on a concrete level of inter-institutional and face-to-face communication.
- » Domestic policy decision-makers sometimes contest decisions made in joint international programming, which can harm actors' mutual expectations of future actions.
- » Actors that can resort to clear and uncontested procedural rules that are derived by domestic institutional settings will be recognised as reliable international partners.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Create public awareness that joint programming is an important and direct form of science diplomacy.
- » Incentives exchanges on joint programming procedures and discussions on quality standards as a form of diplomacy.
- » Support the international self-governing of joint programming, domestic policy decisions should not spontaneously backfire on mutually agreed decisions.
- » Accept that there are no fixed standards of administrative processes and research quality when developing and developed countries collaborate. And still procedures can help create stable expectations.

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