

International Science and Technology Cooperation in a Globalized World

The External Dimension of the European
Research Area

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Edward Elgar

Cheltenham, UK • Northampton, MA, USA

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Published by
Edward Elgar Publishing Limited
The Lypiatts
15 Lansdown Road
Cheltenham
Glos GL50 2JA
UK

Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.
William Pratt House
9 Dewey Court
Northampton
Massachusetts 01060
USA

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Control Number: 2009941287



ISBN 978 1 84980 164 5

Typeset by Cambrian Typesetters, Camberley, Surrey
Printed and bound by MPG Books Group, UK

12. Informal coordination of international S&T policy: the case of the European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development

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INTRODUCTION

The European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD) is a strong 14-year ‘test case’ of an informal coordination mechanism in international S&T policy among the European Commission and European states. I use the term ‘informal’ in contrast to the coordination mechanisms which are part of the official comitology structure of the European Union (EU) like, for example, the standing committees which are ‘subunits’ of the EU political governance system.

After a presentation of EIARD, I will draw lessons on the positive and negative drivers for such a coordination mechanism and conclude on their usefulness for other international research sectors with a view to the construction of the European Research Area.

BACKGROUND ON THE SCOPE OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

Agricultural research is driven by both ‘scientific motives’ as well as ‘development motives’, with an emphasis on the second driver in the case of agricultural research for development (ARD).

ARD is multi-dimensional in addressing the agricultural development challenges of developing countries and emerging economies (DCEE). The agricultural domain includes crop production and animal husbandry, agro-forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, food, agribusiness and related enterprises, as well as the sustainable management of the natural resources on which farming depends, the animal and human health-related issues, and the socio-cultural and bio-diverse landscapes, food systems and ecologies in which it is embedded.

ARD is closely linked with other research sectors and themes (such as health, energy and environment), but also to social (for example gender) and institutional (for example capability development) issues. ARD provides technological, economic and institutional knowledge and innovations contributing to sustainable development. It encompasses public and private sector research, aiming at producing national and international public goods.

Europe plays a dual role in ARD – as an active research and education provider for partners of DEEC, and as a major donor to international, continental, sub-continental and national ARD institutions. Europe thus holds a special responsibility at the international level regarding ARD.

Europe's comparative advantage in the ARD area is its ability to couple 150 years of practical experience of ARD with a strong research and training capability and extensive engagement in rural development cooperation to address the problems and opportunities facing DCEE in the future.

At a policy level, ARD is a key element of three main EU policies: development cooperation policy, neighbourhood policy, and research policy, the first two contributing to the overall EU external policy. By nature, these policies do not have the same objectives. They can even create conflicting interests, which reinforces the necessity to develop an efficient ARD policy coordination mechanism at European level in order to secure the most appropriate balance between them. This role is played by the European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development since 1995.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EUROPEAN INITIATIVE FOR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Origins of the Initiative

The EIARD is a permanent informal policy coordination platform for the European states and the Commission in the area of ARD. In 1995, the Commission presented a Working Paper to the European Council proposing a European initiative on international agricultural research for development, in order to better coordinate the national and Community efforts in ARD. The EIARD was launched in Vienna in October 1995 during a high level ministerial meeting. In 1997, a Communication of the Commission on EIARD (European Commission 1997) was endorsed by the Council and European Parliament. Since then coordination action is legitimized at the EU level, but also in the international arena where the EIARD helps Europe to 'speak with one voice'.

EIARD members are the EU member states plus Norway and Switzerland as well as the European Commission. National representatives are ARD policy-

makers from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Aid Cooperation, Ministries of Research, and Ministries of Agriculture, and their advisers (research agencies or universities). Commission representatives come from the various Directorates-General supporting ARD, that is, from the Development, Research and the EuropeAid departments of the Commission.

The main goals of the EIARD are to reduce poverty, to promote economic growth, food security and sustainable management of natural resources in DCEEs, to contribute to knowledge generation and to solve global development issues through more effective European investments in ARD, and to support capacity development in those countries.

Coherent, aligned and relevant European initiatives with developing and emerging countries in agricultural research activities and capacity development are therefore promoted and implemented by the EIARD in a coordinated manner at the global, continental, sub-continental and national levels while giving a stronger voice to developing countries in the European and international decision-making processes. It also contributes to providing access for those countries to European knowledge by opening up the European Research Area.

EIARD Governance

The set-up decided by the 'founding fathers' has had a fundamental implication on EIARD's coordination efficiency and limitations. It is therefore important to have a description of EIARD's governance structure.

Each member state is supposed to have a national EIARD network, consisting of ARD policymakers from the relevant ministries and government departments. In fact, few members have such a network. It is the case, for example, for France which established a 'Comité de la Recherche Agronomique International' in 1985 with the task of coordinating the policies and activities of the different ministries and its main research institutions involved in ARD. Each national EIARD network is coordinated by a National Contact Point.

The EIARD is implemented by a European Coordination Group (ECG) consisting of representatives of each member, appointed by their respective governments or the Commission. The ECG is therefore accountable to both individual European governments (through their representatives) and to the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, through the Commission.

The ECG elects an EIARD Chair among its national representatives. The Commission is permanent EIARD Vice-Chair. An EIARD Executive Secretary is provided by one of the member states, and hosted by the Commission's Directorate-General for Research. The Executive Secretary is responsible for the day-to-day management of the EIARD.

A Working Group consisting of voluntary EIARD members ensures the continuing activities of the EIARD, and operates as an 'Executive Committee'. It meets about four times a year, and is fully accountable to the ECG. A voluntary Working Group member leads one of the four areas of work of the EIARD strategy to ensure that its outcomes are achieved in line with the EIARD strategy (so-called Strategy Leaders). The Working Group is assisted by ad hoc Task Forces and Expert Leads who prepare draft reports and positions on specific issues for endorsement by the Working Group and eventually the ECG.

EIARD Areas of Work

The EIARD strategy comprises four main areas:

1. Effective coordination of European policies related to ARD in the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
2. Effective coordination of European investments in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a grouping of 15 international research centres which are major players in ARD. The European Union is the main contributor to CGIAR, which is the single-largest public goods investment in mobilizing science for the benefit of poor farming communities worldwide. In the year 2006 the total budget of the CGIAR was 495 million US\$ of which the EU contribution was 222 million US\$.
3. Effective coordination of European investments in strengthening ARD organizations at the global, continental and sub-continental levels, especially in Africa.
4. Effective coordination between European investments in ARD and investments in rural development in the pursuit of the MDGs.

In these areas of work, EIARD tries to ensure that DCEEs have a stronger voice in the ARD arena and that DCEEs can build up ARD capacities, in particular in terms of institutions, and young and female individuals. During its 14 years of work the EIARD has already achieved significant outcomes at the policy, programme and project levels (see Table 12.1).

LESSONS LEARNT FOR EU INTERNATIONAL S&T POLICY COORDINATION

Positive Elements for Efficient Policy Coordination

Based on the EIARD experience, it is possible to identify four main requirements

Table 12.1 Selected EIARD contributions, 1995–2008

(i) Institutional level

- Coordinating the largest grouping of donors to the CGIAR (45 per cent of the CGIAR budget), EIARD has strongly promoted the need for reform of the CGIAR system, and contributed actively to the reform process through EIARD position papers and its representation on all key governance bodies of the CGIAR. In particular supporting focusing on structural and programmatic alignment in Africa;
- EIARD has strongly supported the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR);
- EIARD has strongly supported the European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD);
- Coordinating European states' contributions to the Global Crop Diversity Trust (GCDDT), a 250 million US\$ fund to provide long-term sustainable support for important genetic resources collections;
- Endorsing of the International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA) 2004 strategy;

(ii) Policy level

- The 'Strategy for EIARD 2005–2010' and the current 'Strategy for EIARD 2009–2013' which provide a strategy to guide the ARD investments of EIARD members;
- Continuing to raise the awareness of decision makers of the essential contributions of ARD to food security and poverty elimination, and maintaining the aggregate level of European support for ARD more or less constant over the last five years;
- The development and adoption of the EU 2005, 2006 and 2007 development policies and strategies on development and Africa;
- The 2008 EC Guidelines on Agricultural Research for Development;
- The 2008 Information Note for EU Delegations on Agricultural Research for Development;
- Contributing to the successful re-negotiation of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, and the subsequent International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;

(iii) Programme level

- Developing the 'Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) – Strategy Pointers (2000)' to guide the EC's financial support for the CGIAR;
- Being instrumental in the design and adoption by the CGIAR of the Challenge Programmes, and the African Regional MTPs;

Table 12.1 continued

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- Supporting the design of the international dimension of the EC's 5th, 6th and 7th Framework Programmes;
 - Under FP6, promoting and facilitating :
 - (a) ERA-ARD (an ERA-NET on ARD)
 - (b) A Strategic Alliance between FARA and EFARD (PAEPARD)
 - The development and adoption of the Food Security Thematic Programme (233 million Euro for ARD for 2007–2010), which include support to EIARD in order to increase its coordinating role;
 - Supporting InfoSys+, an ARD information management system for Europe.
-

for an effective coordination. First, it requires a good 'balance' in the governance between the Commission and the national members (member states). In the case of the EIARD, for example, the Chair and Executive Secretary are provided on a rotation basis by the member states, while the Commission is permanent Vice-Chair and hosts the Executive Secretary.

Second, the coordination structure must demonstrate a clear and recognized added value. In the case of EIARD, Europe 'speaking with one voice' has clearly been able to be a major driver in the reform of the international agricultural structures toward a more efficient system. EIARD offered a equitable consultation platform where the Commission and the member states elaborated common positions on the future of the international agricultural structures and became an internationally recognized political vehicle to successfully support these positions in international arenas, as demonstrated in Table 12.1. Another added value is the exchange of information and mutual guidance which help European decision makers to do their job better. In the case of EIARD, information on the annual financial support of the international ARD institutions from the Commission and the member states is shared through EIARD and helps each member to take its own decision on the best allocation of its support.

Third, it requires active support and a fostering role of an independent agent. In the case of EIARD, for example, the Commission hosts and actively supports the EIARD Executive Secretary since its launching in 1995.

Fourth and finally, the fact that the EIARD is an informal mechanism, and not a compulsory one, brings a positive element since it creates a strong sense of ownership in the Commission and the national representatives.

Main Negative Elements for Efficient Policy Coordination

The main limitation is by far the lack of horizontal coordination within the member states and the Commission, that is, between ministries and Directorates-General which have different and even sometimes conflicting policies. 'Internal coordination' is clearly a prerequisite for efficient 'inter-coordination'. It is therefore essential that each member establishes inter-service structures to address this limitation.

In addition, the fact that EIARD is an informal mechanism also brings two negative elements. First, there is a tendency toward a 'dilution' of the high level political support in member states and the Commission. It is therefore necessary to put in place an active reporting mechanism toward the Council and the European Parliament. Second, the decision-making process is less strong than in formal coordination mechanisms. It is therefore recommended to link the two types of coordination mechanisms, with a formal general structure of national and Commission representatives, on the one hand, and informal coordination sub-structures with only some of the members for specific topics, on the other hand. This is the type of governance structure which has been adopted for the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) which is coordinating the European policies related to agricultural research for Europe.

CONCLUSIONS

Coordination of international S&T policies is a key and vital challenge for Europe, in particular in a competitive globalized world. In the case of agricultural research for developing and emerging economies, Europe has taken initiatives since 1995 to ensure such coordination. Therefore, this policy area is quite suitable to draw lessons from. I conclude that the positive and negative elements, as described in this chapter, have a generic value that could be extrapolated and applied to other international research areas, in particular in areas highly relevant for developing countries such as health, energy and the environment.

NOTE

1. The views expressed in this chapter are purely personal and do not necessarily reflect the position of the European Commission.

REFERENCE

European Commission (1997), *The European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD)*, COM (97) 126 final, Brussels: European Commission.