

## SUPPORTIVE INITIATIVES OF BRUSSELS BASED STAKEHOLDERS

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### Abstract

The presentation will provide information on services and activities of the Czech Liaison Office for Research, Development and Innovation (CZELO) in Brussels. The intensive environment in which the CZELO staff is working will be introduced as well. It includes not only the partner liaison offices, but also Brussels offices of many European and international companies, associations, organizations, groupings etc. Last but not least, the cooperation with the representatives of the European institutions.

Keywords: Research, Innovation, Education, Cooperation, Support to Czech Researchers

### 1 INTRODUCING CZELO

Czech Liaison Office for Research, Development and Innovation (CZELO) in Brussels supports the successful integration of the Czech research into the European research cooperation, particularly through the EU Framework Programmes for Research, Development and Innovation. The office provides free services to researchers from all fields and all research bodies in the Czech Republic. CZELO is a project managed by the Technology Centre of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and financially supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic (MEYS). The first project (1P05OK464) was implemented in the years 2005 – 2008 and supported from the National Research Programme (1P – Regional and International Cooperation in Research). The project CZELO2 (OK08005) was financially supported by the MEYS programme EUPRO (European programmes) and ran until 31 December 2012. The project CZELO3 (LE13018) started on 11 March 2013 and will run until 31 December 2016. It is financed by a grant from EUPRO II (Programme of international cooperation in research and development) of the MEYS CZ. More emphasis is put on the field of innovation and on higher involvement of enterprises (application sector) in research projects. To other significant elements belongs an increased attention to the field of tertiary education, specifically through EU ERASMUS+ programme.

CZELO offers the following free of charge services:

- providing targeted and timely information on European research and opportunities for participation in international research consortia (Newsletter CZELO, Web CZELO);
- preparing and facilitating meetings of Czech researchers with relevant officers of the European Commission for the promotion of research topics and project proposals (CZELO miniworkshops and small scaled partnering events);
- promoting systematically Czech research and its results, partner capacities and specific offers for collaboration (CZELO Bulletin in English);
- organizing information days about Czech research and development for the European institutions (European Parliament, European Commission, EU Council and others), organizations based in Brussels and partner offices;
- providing basic support infrastructure and assistance for meetings of Czech researchers with potential project partners in Brussels.

Based in the heart of the so-called European Quarter (near DG RTD, European Parliament and many other offices), the CZELO office is easily accessible by all means of public transport. Therefore it offers possibilities of face to face contacts with experts directly involved in the preparation of European RTDI

policies and in the management of European research and educational programmes. To other advantages that should be mentioned here belongs the cooperation with similarly focused foreign institutions. Regarding the national level, CZELO is an integral part of the Czech regional and sectoral contact organizations providing information and services on EU RTDI cooperation, funded also by MEYS (National Information Network, NINET) and is in everyday close contacts with the National Information Centre for European Research (NICER) where all Czech National Contact Points (NCPs) for the current Horizon 2020 programme are concentrated.

In March 2014, a short publication was released with the aim to introduce on 24 pages the main CZELO services and activities and help offered (including the logistic support). Examples of specific cooperation and implemented actions, useful links and practical information are given as well. The publication is available in printed and electronic version.

## 2 COOPERATION WITH FOREIGN PARTNERS

One of the most important elements of CZELO everyday work and a significant condition of the office efficiency is the active cooperation with foreign partners operating in the field of European programmes (RTDI as well as higher education).

### 2.1 Informal Group of Liaison Offices (IGLO)

Priority is given to the networking activities within the membership in the Informal Group of Liaison Offices (IGLO). At present, there are 24 of them, representing either the whole country with various responsibilities or single institutions or associations (based on membership fees):

- countries
  - ELO (Estonian Liaison Office for EU RTD)
  - HunOR (Hungarian Liaison Office for Research and Innovation)
  - MOST (Moldovan Office for Science and Technology)
  - ROST (Romanian Office for Science and Technology)
  - SwissCore (Swiss Contact Office for Research, Innovation and Education)
  - SOST (Spanish Office for Science and Technology)
  - RCN (Norwegian Liaison Office for EU RTD)
  - SLORD (Slovak Liaison Office for Research and Development)
  - DANRO (Danish EU Research Liaison Office)
  - FNRS (Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique, Vallonia, Belgium), FWO (Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, Flanders, Belgium)
  - Enterprise Ireland (Irish EU R&D Liaison Office)
  - KoWi (European Liaison Office of the German Research Organisations)
  - CZELO (Czech Liaison Office for Research, Development and Innovation)
- institutions
  - PolSCA (Polish Science Contact Agency of the Academy of Sciences)
  - VINNOVA (Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems)
  - FILi (Finnish Liaison Office for EU Research and Development, with delegates from the Academy of Sciences and TEKES)
  - CNR (Italian National Council for Research)
  - ENEA (EU Liaison Office of the Italian National Agency for New Technologies, the Energy and the Sustainable Economic Development)
- associations
  - EOC (European Office of Cyprus)
  - NetherER (Netherlands House for Education and Research)
  - SBRA (Slovenian Business and Research Association)
  - CLORA (French Club des Organismes de Recherche Associés)
  - TuR&Bo (Public-Private Partnership of Turkish Research and Business Organizations)
  - UKRO (UK Research Office)

To the main activities of IGLO network belongs: information sharing, partner searching, bilateral consultative meetings (specifically on the occasion of national expert presence in Brussels),

organization of joint activities and collaboration through 8 working groups. It is also a suitable platform for promotion of Czech research and innovation capabilities. To the joint IGLO activities belong:

- IGLO Open: a regularly monthly event on hot topics from RTDI field with speakers usually from European Commission, organized by individual offices in accordance with an agreed timetable (usually it is once in two years for each office); CZELO held its IGLO Open on 1 April 2014 on the theme “EIT and KICs: Recent development”; it is also possible to organize an IGLO Open Special (outside the timetable) – CZELO will be hosting such event on 20 June 2014 on FET (Future and Emerging Technologies) – the Czech experts can propose topics for these events in case of interest (please contact CZELO)
- ERA-in-Action: special workshops for invited experts from IGLO member countries to discuss problems and challenges related to the implementation of framework programmes (FP); the representatives of the European Commission and other organizations participate as well, but only with an observer status; the outcomes of these events are communicated to the EC in form of recommendations as a background for future decision making; CZELO was actively involved in organization of workshops on the following topics: project financial audits, synergies between FPs and structural funds, simplifications of FPs, open access to research data, mobility and impact assessment of FPs. To each of them Czech experts (one or two) were invited; an ERA-in-Action on first experience with H2020 projects will be organized in autumn 2014
- IGLO Working Groups: targeted at key aspects of FPs and other instruments, agreed on within IGLO; there are currently 8 working groups (Implementation of FPs, Innovation, Science Mobility, Industrial Partnerships, European Research Council, Structural Funds, Space and Security, International Cooperation), two of them are co-chaired by CZELO; some meet every month, some every two months and some ad-hoc depending on on-going development in the field; please contact CZELO in case of interest to exchange views or best practices or to explore how other countries deal with certain issues
- IGLO Partner Search: in parallel to official partner search tools, like CORDIS and some NCPs search pages, this IGLO instrument offers direct access to more partners through filling in a template development by IGLO members; it is then circulated through a special mailing list of contact persons established in every IGLO office and afterwards widely distributed to respective stakeholders (by the means of newsletters, sending directly to specific experts or by placing it on the web)

## 2.2 Other partners

There are numerous offices established in Brussels to lobby in favour of their mother organizations in the field of research, innovation and higher education. Also many European as well as international associations and other legal bodies and grouping have either their seat in Brussels, or have recently opened their liaison offices there. The common characteristics of all of them are: giving visibility to their organization by holding various events, by preparing advice papers or press releases, by organizing study visits including meetings with the representatives of the European institutions and of national authorities etc. And last but not least, most of the European institutions are based in Brussels, for CZELO the most important partner is the European Commission.

### 2.2.1 European Union Institutions

The division of competencies within the three most important EU institutions is the following: Council of the EU – decision making, European Parliament – decision making and consultation, European Commission – legislative proposals and implementation. CZELO closely cooperates with research attaché at the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic (CZ) to the EU Šárka Brábníková by means of intensive exchange of information. She is responsible for the research policy issues within the Council of the EU by participating on behalf of the CZ in the Research Working Party, Joint Research and Atomic Questions WP and for Space WP.

Regarding the European Parliament, the two most important partners for CZELO are the ITRE Committee (Committee for Industry, Research and Energy) and STOA panel (Science and Technology Option Assessment). In the past CZELO organized together with STOA two one-day conferences (on

impact assessment and on biodiversity). Lobbying is also done through direct contacts with individual Members of the EP and through various Inter - Parliamentary Groups (e.g. water, climate, innovation). But for the field work and support to researchers done by CZELO, the intense contacts to the project and policy officers of the different Directorates General (DG) of European Commission are of utmost importance. The key role of course belongs to DG for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) – responsible for the policy and strategy planning of the H2020 and horizontal issues like Innovation Union, the European Research Area and many others, followed by DG for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT, formerly DG INFSO) and DG Joint Research Centre (JRC) that provides scientific support to EU policies and can even be a partner in FP projects through its seven research centres. CZELO organizes for the Czech and Slovak officers informal Research Lunches with the aim to exchange information, to lobby for Czech evaluators and for Czech speakers at the events organized by the EC.

Due to recent developments under H2020 programme when the expert level has been moved from DG RTD to other competent DGs, CZELO established new contacts - within DG for Environment, Energy, Enterprise, Transport, Climate etc. Regarding the higher education, close cooperation is realized with DG Education and Culture (DG EAC) which is also responsible for European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). And for regional policy and structural funds, CZELO also cooperates ad-hoc with DG for Regional Policy (DG REGIO) – organizing side events within the European Week of Regions and Cities (OPEN DAYS): last year this thematic CZELO workshop covered social innovations. More and more important are also Executive Agencies established with the aim to manage European projects (in some cases including the evaluation process) – to these belongs the Research Executive Agency (REA), Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized enterprises (EASME), European Research Council Executive Agency (ERCEA) and Innovation & Networks Executive Agency (INEA).

#### 2.2.2 *European Associations and Organizations*

As mentioned above, many European associations have their seat (or liaison office) in Brussels. Their work is similar to that of IGLO: based on working groups, publishing statements and advice papers, lobbying for its members, collecting information and organizing events. CZELO follows closely their activities, using them as a source of information for Czech research community. With some of them closer contacts has been established, especially with those where Czech or Slovak experts are working. In many of these associations there are Czech institutions involved as members – the question is how they use this membership for their own profit, that is, how active they are.

In the field of research and education, to the most active associations belong:

- EUREKA Secretariat (responsible also for the implementations of EUROSTARS programme)
- COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology)
- EARTO (European Association of Research and Technology Organizations)
- ERRIN (European Regions Research and Innovation Network)
- LERU (League of European Research Universities)
- EUA (European University Association)
- ACA (Academic Cooperation Association)
- EASAC (European Academies Science Advisory Council)
- Science Europe (think tank that emerged from European Science Foundation covering research policy level)
- Science|Business

There are also quite a number of smaller players, representing fewer members than the one mentioned above (non-exhaustive list):

- EuroTech Universities
- Coimbra Group
- Access EU

In the past few years, following the new strategic approach especially within the Innovation Union, structuring of the European Research Area and the new instruments of the FPs, their Brussels offices were established. This involves the secretariats of Joint Programming Initiatives (e.g. JPI Oceans), the seat of Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the EIT (e.g. Climate KIC, ICT Labs) or the offices of programmes and initiatives established under the article 185 and 187 of the EU Treaty (e.g. the Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme – AAL).

### 2.2.3 National associations and individual institutions

More and more national stakeholders are being aware of the assets of being more visible in Brussels and therefore made an important decision to establish their office there. Regarding the national associations or research institutions, it is usually the case of bigger Member States – Germany being the one on the lead. They have their own activities based on lobbying, organizing trainings for their colleagues and writing draft proposals as well. They cover only the research or education topics relevant for their institution, so the real expertise within the Brussels office is possible. It is also easier for them to have intensive contacts with relevant EC officers and MEPs. Just to name a few: Germany – Helmholtz Association, Max Planck Society, Leibniz Association, DLR, Fraunhofer, BayFOR, DAAD; UK – University of Wolverhampton, Technology Strategy Board; Spain – A4U (Alliance of four Spanish universities); The Netherlands - TNO. Bilateral contact with these offices is important for CZELO, as it is an asset for Czech project managers coming for a training period in Brussels to meet relevant experts working for these associations.

## 3 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are some aspects that should be considered as basic requirements for successful integration into the European and international research cooperation. The following points are related to the text above, are not exhaustive and do not include the level of project proposal drafting. They target especially the visibility of research institutions and some organizational issues.

1. well structured and updated web pages (even in English) - potential European and international partners will check it as a first step
2. direct link at the home page to the overview of participation in European and international projects
3. direct link at the home page to the overview of membership in European and international organizations
4. research teams profiles ready to be send to potential partners (CZELO template in English is available on CZELO website)
5. full use of all contacts for the involvement in European projects (from previous cooperation – even bilateral, conferences etc.)
6. utilization of membership in European and international organizations / associations
7. synergies within the university / research organization (SF, European and international projects should be managed by one project department)