21 September 2017 | On Friday 15 September a very successful European Research Day – EURAXESS Event took place in Ahmedabad attended by more than 150 participants to learn more about the cooperation on research and innovation between the European Union and the Member States and India.

The event was organised by EURAXESS India, part of EURAXESS-Researchers in Motion, a tool of the European Commission to facilitate the mobility of researchers in all fields, in close cooperation with the Research and Innovation Section of the EU Delegation to India. The local partners, IIT Gandhinagar and Marwadi University (Rajkot), were instrumental in making the event a real success.

Participants represented European Academic and Research organisation of 9 different Member States including representatives from leading universities and research institutes (Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Italy and UK) as well as scientists, academia, industry and SMEs from Indian side, mostly from Marwadi University, ITT Gandhi and other higher education institutions in Gujarat.

Throughout the day, presentations were made on concrete research opportunities in Europe, with
testimonies of successful participants and room for interactive question and answer sessions and networking opportunities. The event's ultimate aim was to contribute towards increasing the number of Indian researchers and innovators participating in the EU's Research and Innovation Programme 'Horizon 2020' (2014-2020) and in the bilateral schemes offered by Member States and their leading institutes and universities.

'Horizon 2020' is one of the biggest research and innovation programme, open to the world, with a budget of almost EUR 80 billion, spread between 2014 and 2020, to fund mobility grants for scientists and collaborative research projects among researchers and innovators from Europe and beyond including India.

The Head of Section for Research and Innovation, Tania Friederichs, recalled the importance to cooperate on research and innovation to address the societal challenges that both Europe and India are facing, in particular to combat climate change and achieve the energy targets. The EU's expertise on water technologies, waste water management and air pollution were also mentioned as areas of mutual interest. The EU stressed that Horizon 2020 was open to the world but unfortunately, so far, India had not sufficiently taken advantage of the many opportunities offered in Horizon 2020. Dr Vivek Dham presented in detail the conditions of participation in the different pillars of Horizon 2020, with a focus on the European Research Council (ERC)’s grants supporting investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) mobility schemes for researchers (PhD, Post-Doc and Staff Exchange etc.) and for collaborative research on societal challenges.

In seeking cooperation with the EU in ‘Horizon 2020’, the need for scientific excellence to bring solutions to common problems was underlined.

Ainhitze Bizkarrelegarra-Bravo, EURAXESS India Country Representative, presented EURAXESS--Researchers in Motion, the European Commission initiative supported by 40 European countries offering on-line concrete job opportunities in the European Research Area and delivering information and support services to professional researchers. EURAXESS supports researcher mobility and career development, while enhancing scientific collaboration between Europe and the world.

On Erasmus+, Mr Sanjeev Roy, expert on higher education, made a very comprehensive and attractive presentation of the EU's Erasmus+ programme, highlighting the multiple opportunities offered in terms of fields (from management to medicine). He also highlighted that Indian students, with 63 scholarships in 2017, were the second largest beneficiary of the EU-funded Erasmus Mundus Programme and encouraged the audience to continue to seek grants as it was really very rewarding to study for a while in a different cultural environment. The representative of the Marie Curie Alumni Association in India, Dr Praveen Kumar from INSPIRE faculty at CSIR-CSIO, Chandigarh and the EURAXESS Science Slam India finalist 2015 and Erasmus Mundus alumni, Dr. Shreejata Gupta, SERB National Post Doctoral Fellow at Cotton University, Guwahati confirmed the enriching experience.

Given the success and interest to cooperate with Europe, it was agreed to come to look more
concretely on cooperation opportunities in areas of interest, once the call for proposals for the coming years in the ‘Horizon 2020’ work programme 2018-2020 will be published on 27 October 2017.

Gujarat is a vibrant state and one of India's fastest-growing and foreign investor friendly states. Its commitment to promote science has made it emerge into a knowledge hot-spot in India and an attraction for European researchers and this was as very visible during the Europe Research Day-EURAXESS Event.

To conclude, Tania Friederichs, Research and Innovation Counsellor at the Delegation of the European Union to India said, "Our doors and Horizon 2020 are open to India. My role today is to encourage you to look actively for research and innovation opportunities with your European counterparts."

Also Member States confirmed that if Gujarati are interested in research, the doors of the Institutes and leading Universities will be a good destination to improve the researcher's career.

To close the event, EURAXESS India presented the EURAXESS Science Slam India 2017, a competition open to all career levels researchers from universities, research institutes, private sector or related careers, in all fields of research including Social Sciences and Humanities, Life Sciences and Engineering, of any nationality and age based in India. Researchers have until 10 October 2017 to submit a video-entry and win their next research trip to Europe. This competition is part of the 5th EURAXESS Science Slam taking place in Brazil, China and India. The audience will choose the first prize winner at the live finals on 8 December in Kolkata.

Tania Friederichs, Research and Innovation Counsellor at the Delegation of the European Union to India. Photo credit: EURAXESS
Group photo of participants and resource people at ERD2017. Photo credit: EURAXESS

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