



# Publishable Summary

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## 1. Publishable summary

The BIO CIRCLE project is a network of National Contact Points for the “Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology” theme (FAFB) of the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) or BIO NCPs. The BIO NCPs are located in 18 Third Countries and 5 European countries. The aim of BIO CIRCLE was to increase the participation of researchers from outside Europe in research projects under FP7 and to strengthen the collaboration between European and Third Countries researchers. BIO CIRCLE has been active over a period of 28 months.

To fulfill its main aim BIO CIRCLE has carried out the following activities. On the one hand, the capacity of Third Country BIO NCPs was built. This was done through an initial **NCP training** and later through **working visits** of Third Country BIO NCPs to their European twin partners (France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy and The Netherlands) or in other countries (Austria, Spain). During the working visits, Third Country BIO NCPs visited the offices of their European ‘twins’ while they also visited research organisations to get a better understanding of the research system and to establish contacts for future collaboration.

On the other hand, the (networking) capacity of Third Country researchers was built. To do this, Third Country BIO NCPs prepared Dissemination Action Plans for the organisation of Infodays/Trainings for their researchers in their own countries. Successful **Brokerage Events** were organised on 7 October 2009 and 13 September 2010 in Brussels, together with the European Infodays on “Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Biotechnology”. Each Third Country BIO NCP supported the travel costs of 2 researchers for both the events. The second year also saw the organisation of additional **Info days and Trainings** in Third Countries – in time for the preparation of proposals for the 2011 call under the FAFB-theme. All the presentations are downloadable from the project website <http://www.biocircle-project.eu/>. Most Third Country partners organised **National Roundtables** for the identification of research lines of common interest and mutual benefit. The proposed research lines were the basis for the **Common Roundtable** that was organised on 15 September 2010 in Brussels, in coincidence with the second BIO CIRCLE Brokerage Event and the “KBBE towards 2020” Conference organised by the European Commission in Brussels on 14 September 2010. The results were summarised in the Recommendations for the European Commission for future Work Programmes. The overview of the most important research institutions in Third Countries has also been updated in the website. Currently, 288 profiles are visible in the online database (**Partner Search**) – and more can be added at any time by individual researchers.

The project activities were promoted through a variety of tools, including the **BIO CIRCLE website** with its many features (including Country info pages, with country specific information), a project **leaflet** in 5 languages, a project **Video** and 4 online editions of the project newsletter. The project and its events (trainings, roundtables) were also published on various other websites and promoted through the local networks of the Third Country BIO NCPs. The Intranet (limited access through the BIO CIRCLE website for the partners) has been the main depository for project-related documents for the BIO CIRCLE partners.

Through these activities, BIO CIRCLE has intensively fostered international cooperation with major partner Third Countries under the ‘FAFB’ theme. This was done by extending and reinforcing the BIO NCP network to Third Countries. Improved international cooperation was also achieved by enlarging the FP7-FAFB knowledge-base and networking capacity of hundreds of Third Country researchers worldwide and by thus getting them involved in KBBE-proposals. Future cooperation was further incentivised by the provision of research lines for insertion in future Work Programmes.

BIO CIRCLE has thus effectively supported the implementation of the bilateral S&T agreements in place between the European Union and the partner Third Countries.

## 2. Work performed and main results

The BIO CIRCLE project is a network of National Contact Points for the “Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology” theme (FAFB) of the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) or BIO NCPs. The BIO NCPs are located in 18 Third Countries and 5 European countries. The aim of BIO CIRCLE was to increase the participation of researchers from outside Europe in research projects under FP7 and to strengthen the collaboration between European and Third Countries researchers. BIO CIRCLE is a 28 months project.

To fulfill its aim BIO CIRCLE has carried out the a number of activities that can be broadly categorised into two groups: capacity building of Third Country BIO NCPs on the one hand, and capacity building of Third Country researchers and networking with the European research community the other hand. These are described in the following sections.

### Capacity building of Third Country BIO NCPs

Capacity building of Third Country BIO NCPs has started from the very beginning of the project with an NCP **training** session in Brussels, that was part of the kick-off meeting. During the project, each Third Country BIO NCP was ‘twinning’ to one of the five European partners whom they could contact for specific advice on NCP issues. To make them more familiar with the daily NCP activities in Europe, **working visits** of a couple of days were organised for Third Country BIO NCPs to the office of their European twin BIO NCP. This proved helpful in understanding what tools, such as databases, skills, such as training skills, and knowledge are used by European BIO NCPs in their daily work. During the working visits, Third Country BIO NCPs visited research organisations to see examples of research infrastructure, to get to know the strengths in research of the hosting country, to establish links with researchers for future collaborations with researchers back home, or rather to meet researchers with whom they had already been in contact. In one case, arranged by the BIO NCP from Kazakhstan, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed for future cooperation between the Parco Tecnologico di Padano, Italy, and the Ministry of Industry of Kazakhstan. In another case, the working visit of the Canadian BIO NCP to the Institute of Chemistry and Technology of Polymers (ICTP), Pozzuoli/Napels, Italy, served as an opportunity to further strengthen collaboration already initiated under a COST initiative. In yet another case, the working visit of the Argentinean BIO NCP was combined with a summer school organised by the Greek BIO NCP. Some Third Country BIO NCPs brought along researchers (or are researchers themselves) which made working visits to research institutions more interesting. Overall the working visits have been perceived as very useful to establish meaningful, long-lasting contacts with European counterparts.

The work of the Third Country BIO NCPs has further been facilitated by the production of the **Good Practices Guide**, that summarises all basic information on taking part in FP7 and the FAFB theme.

### Support to Third Country researchers and networking with their European counterparts

Right from the start of the project, each Third Country BIO NCP have prepared a Dissemination Action Plan that described how many and what kind of trainings, infodays, roundtables etc would be organized in their own country. The Dissemination Action Plan turned out to be a practical tool, for the whole consortium, to know which activities were being planned.

Dissemination of the activities for Third Country researchers, for European researchers and other interested parties such as information multipliers and research staff, was done through a variety of means: the **project website** ([www.biocircle-project.eu](http://www.biocircle-project.eu)) has served as a main focal point for information on planned activities. On the homepage of the website, the project **video** can be

viewed. To facilitate the access to internal project documents for the project partners, the project website also has an intranet section. A **leaflet** was prepared and translated in five languages and distributed in all participating countries. Four editions of the project **newsletter** were published online highlighting new events, success stories and new forms of cooperation between Europe and the rest of the world (take, for instance, the example of the concept 'twinning' of research projects as initiated by Canada and the European Commission, that was later also followed by Argentina).

In every one of the eighteen participating Third Countries, at least two **infodays and trainings** have been arranged addressed to researchers. The major focus of these events was FP7 and, often, the new call for proposals under the KBBE theme. Most of these trainings occurred already in the first year, but some countries started somewhat later. Also, a number of countries organised additional trainings when there was a need for it. India, for instance, because of its vast size, organised trainings in the different corners of the country.

Often linked to these trainings/infodays were **National Roundtables** that Third Country BIO NCPs set up to collect research themes that are of interest to both Europe and the Third Countries. During these meetings, national experts discussed their topics with European representatives. Eventually, all the research themes were bundled, discussed by a selection of Third Country and European experts during a **Common Roundtable** in Brussels on 15 September 2010. The final document, "Recommendations for the European Commission for Future Work Programmes", has been presented to the European Commission.

Networking of Third Country research with Europe was facilitated in different ways. First, efficient contact amongst the participating BIO NCPs ensured the establishment of direct links between researchers. Second, the BIO CIRCLE website showcases profiles of Third Country research in an online database. Currently, 288 profiles are visible and more can be added in the future. Third, the previously mentioned working visits by Third Country BIO NCPs to European research organisations was a powerful way to linked researchers. Fourth and last, the BIO CIRCLE consortium organised two large, international Brokerage Events in Brussels on 7 October 2009 and 13 September 2010. These events were organised conjointly with the European Infoday on KBBE (at the occasion of the new call for proposals) organised by the European Commission. Both events saw the participation of ca 500 people, including researchers and information multipliers. The aim of the Brokerage Events were to let European researchers present their research ideas for the new call for proposals to Third Country researchers, who were invited and financially supported by BIO CIRCLE to come to Brussels (two per country for each Brokerage Event). The face-to-face meetings have been a successful way of starting new collaborations, some of which have resulted in new KBBE proposals.

### **Management of the project**

Project partners have met on a regular basis during the project to allow for the effective and efficient management of this large consortium. Project meetings were always organised in concomitance with other project activities, such as Brokerage Events, working visits etc.

## **3. Impact**

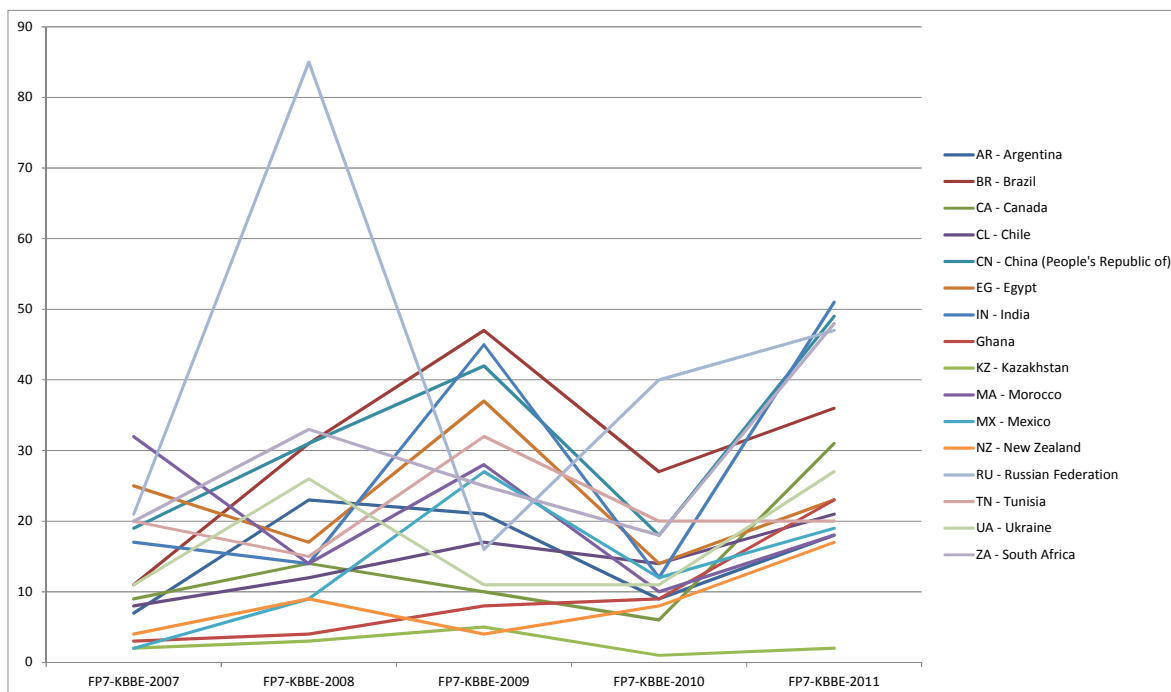
BIO CIRCLE has successfully fostered international cooperation with major partner Third Countries under the 'FAFB' theme. First, this was done by extending the BIO NCP network to Third Countries. Connections have been created that did not exist beforehand, between European BIO NCPs, between European and Third Country BIO NCPs, as well as amongst the Third Country BIO NCPs themselves. One of the impacts has been an increased collaboration between industrialised partner countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the USA and Europe) on topics of mutual

interest. Similarly, BIO CIRCLE has provided a platform to exchange positive experience, such as the application of the ‘twinning’ concept.

Second, international cooperation under KBBE was enhanced by better information provision and assistance by Third Country BIO NCPs to their research communities. The NCP trainings, working visits in Europe, and the availability of the Good Practices Guide, has had a positive impact on the BIO NCP network for the years to come under FP7 and beyond. The BIO CIRCLE activities have also contributed to a stronger institutional basis of the NCP-network in many countries.

Third, the knowledge-base of a large number of Third Country researchers has been enlarged. Through the trainings, infodays roundtables organised by BIO CIRCLE, hundreds of researchers worldwide now know the way FP7 and their number is expected to grow. Furthermore the participation of researchers increased under the FAFB theme. Access to FP7 has become easier for many Third Country researchers. Whether the average quality of submitted proposals has increased is hard to say at this point – future evaluations by the European Commission will perhaps shed light on this. The knowledge-base is expected to grow in the years to come, through the continued assistance offered by the Third Country BIO NCPs, as well as by the successor of the BIO CIRCLE project (BIO CIRCLE 2).

From the table below it is possible to analyze the participation in all proposals “Food Agriculture Fisheries and Biotechnology” from the FP7 KBBE 2007 call to the FP7 KBBE 2011 call. All the Third countries involved in BIO CIRCLE starting from 2008 to 2011. It’s clear that all the third Countries improved their own participation in the years analyzed. Almost all the countries registered a slight increase since the beginning of FP7 KBBE calls taking into account that the number of participation depends also on how attractive and interesting are the topics for the third countries. And this data is visible from the table because the increasing or the decreasing is almost the same for all countries.



Fourth, the networking capacities of Third Country researchers have been improved. Through their BIO NCPs, they now have direct access to European research networks. Fifth, related to this, the researchers who have participated in the BIO CIRCLE events or who have visited the website, are better aware of the European research interests and how these fit with their own national interests.

Sixth, the Recommendations provided to the European Commission contain research lines that will be important to consider for international cooperation in the coming years. It is expected that some of these lines will be reflected in the upcoming calls for proposals.

Last but not least, the above mentioned impacts all directly or indirectly support the implementation of the Bilateral S&T Agreements that the European Commission has signed with the Third Country partner countries. The cooperation fostered under BIO CIRCLE has brought together the Third Country research communities with their European counterparts.