

FINAL PUBLISHABLE SUMMARY REPORT

Grant Agreement number: 265608

Project acronym: BIO CIRCLE 2

Project title: Reinforcing the international cooperation in FP7 FAFB strengthening the CIRCLE of Third Countries BIO NCPs

Funding Scheme: Coordination and support action

Final publishable summary report

Date of latest version of Annex I against which the assessment will be made:

2012-03-16

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² The home page of the website should contain the generic European flag and the FP7 logo which are available in electronic format at the Europa website (logo of the European flag: http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/emblem/index_en.htm ; logo of the 7th FP: http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm?pg=logos). The area of activity of the project should also be mentioned.

Executive summary

The BIO CIRCLE 2 project started on 1st of February 2011 is a network of National Contact Points (BIO NCPs) for the “Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology” theme (FAFB) of the 7th Framework Programme (FP7). The BIO NCPs are located in 16 Third Countries and 5 European countries. The aim of BIO CIRCLE 2 is to increase the participation of researchers from outside Europe in FAFB research projects under FP7 and to strengthen the collaboration between European and Third Countries researchers. BIO CIRCLE 2 lasted 24 months.

To fulfill its aim BIO CIRCLE 2 has carried out the following activities. On the one hand, the capacity of Third Country BIO NCPs was built. This was done through five trainings for BIO NCPs organized by the German partner (JULICH).

On the other hand, the capacity of Third Country researchers was built. The Third Country BIO NCPs organized Info days and Trainings for their researchers in their countries. Additionally, two successful **Brokerage Events** were organized by the European BIO NCPs on 15th July 2011 and on 16th July 2012 in Brussels together with the European Commission in conjunction with the launch of the two KBBE (Knowledge-based Bio-Economy) calls 2012 and 2013.

The project activities were promoted through a variety of tools, including the **BIO CIRCLE 2 website** <http://www.biocircle-project.eu/> with its many features and the project **leaflet**. The project and its events (trainings, info days) were also published on various other websites and networks promoted through the local networks of the Third Country BIO NCPs.

Through these activities, BIO CIRCLE 2 has intensively fostered international cooperation with Third Countries under the ‘FAFB’ theme. This was done by extending and reinforcing the BIO NCP network to Third Countries. Improved conditions for international cooperation were created 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.

Summary description of project context and objectives

The Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) marked a new beginning for the international cooperation aspect of EU research and represents a crucial instrument for implementing S&T agreements between the EU and Third Countries. Indeed, under FP7, international cooperation was recognized as a strategic element throughout all research activities, including Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology (FAFB). NCPs and Third Countries BIO NCPs were natural counterparts. Third Countries BIO NCPs were an essential interface between the EU and FAFB research communities in Third Countries. According to the official document dated on 12 December 2007 “*Guiding principles for setting up systems of National Contact Points (NCP systems) for the Seventh EU Framework Programme on Research and Technological Development (FP7)*” (<ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/fp7-ncp-guiding-principles.pdf>), the NCP systems of Member and Associated States and similar FP7 contacts in third countries can be considered as an important partners for the implementation and management of FP7”. The quality of the Third Countries BIO NCP skills base had a direct impact on the quantity and quality of information that Third Countries received about FP7 participation. Their skills base had been strong in order to permit that this interface was fully exploited.

The **main objective** of BIO CIRCLE 2 was to foster the knowledge base about FP7-FAFB & the networking capacities of Third Country researchers in order to reinforce their participation in FP7 projects

The concept of BIO CIRCLE 2 was related to three major goals:

1. Disseminate information effectively to Third Country researchers
2. Organize information days and training sessions for Third Country researchers
3. Provide Third Country researchers with efficient networking opportunities

To reach the project goals and carry out the proposed activities, three approaches have been used to create a maximum impact:

- A. BIO CIRCLE 1³ (the previous project) network provided a solid basis for further coordination of S&T activities.
- B. the regional approach allowed involving researchers not only from the BIO CIRCLE 2 partner countries, but also from surrounding countries that were interested in cooperating with EU researchers.
- C. the aim of linking the BIO CIRCLE 2 activities to other international S&T cooperation projects, was to reach out to as many researchers as possible in order to work together on issues of world-wide interest. BIO CIRCLE 2 worked, wherever opportune, with relevant ongoing INCO Projects ensuring a maximum number and geographical coverage of the researchers reached by the activities

1 Disseminate information effectively to Third Country researchers

The dissemination of information had a key role for the success of the project. BIO CIRCLE 2, used efficient communication between EU BIO NCPs and Third Country BIO NCPs, as well as new communication channels between Third Country BIO NCPs and their national researchers. Through training and networking activities, it has been possible to coordinate the agenda of many top-level researchers that work in Third Countries and in the EU. The BIO CIRCLE 2 network thus provided a solid basis for the coordination of S&T activities. During the project, the main information for the BIO NCPs has been disseminated through training sessions. The training were important for the FP7 knowledge of Third countries BIO NCPs. Sharing best practices, ideas and learn more efficient tools were the main objectives of this goal through the four training sessions and one online webinar. This activity was useful for the benefit of the third country BIO NCPs in order to enhance their knowledge on FP7 and all the related aspects. In this way the Third country BIO NCPs assured a good quality of support and assistance to their researchers.

³ BIO CIRCLE 1, the predecessor of BIO CIRCLE2, is a project funded by the European Commission. It started on the 1st of October 2008 and aimed at increasing the participation of researchers from outside Europe in research projects under the Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology theme (FAFB) of the 7th Framework Programme. BIO CIRCLE 1 assisted researchers from outside Europe to improve their visibility and it helped to identify collaborative research opportunities. The specific objective of BIO CIRCLE 1 was to extend the network of National Contact Points (NCP) for the FP7 to the Third Countries Bio NCPs in two years. <http://old.biocircle-project.eu/dnn4/>

2 Organize information days and training sessions for Third Country researchers

The vast majority of Third Country Bio NCP partners organized Information Days and/or Trainings during the first and second year. In total 116 events were conducted during BIO CIRCLE 2.

All the Third Countries, in order to set the activities they were supposed to perform during the project, developed a National Action Plan. It is worthy to mention that most of them reached the targets set out in each National Action Plan, even more than the number planned in the beginning. More than 2400 attendants participated to the events. In general, partners organized Information Days and Trainings targeting mostly researchers but also department and institute managers, personnel of liaison offices and administrative staff and enterprises.

The activities diverge in terms of number of participants and length of the event, depending on the nature of the event (workshop, seminar or information day). The majority of partners (11 of the 13 partners) conducted significantly more national Info days than what was initially committed in the National Action Plan reports.

This is a significant indication of the interest in the Info days and the activity level of the BIO CIRCLE 2 partners. National Information Days and Trainings improved the knowledge of the Third countries researchers about KBBE (Knowledge-based Bio-Economy), giving the opportunity to attend high-level events and assuring a maximum geographical coverage of researchers in their own country. One major impact of these events was that researchers had the opportunity to discuss results achieved so far, the problems they encountered in the execution of projects, and possible solutions for bottlenecks. This helped them to understand the intricacies of FP7 projects with respect to proposal submission, financial rules, IPR issues etc. The researchers, after the good results of FP7, showed keen interest to participate in calls to be published under Horizon 2020 (2014-2020). Overall, networking among Third Countries and European researchers, creating an awareness regarding EU proposals, greater participation in submission of proposals etc. were some of the major impact of organizing Information day and training. Therefore, the information days had an impact on raising awareness on opportunities for the cooperation with European organizations within the FP7 KBBE.

3 Provide Third Country researchers with efficient networking opportunities

The aim was to improve the networking activities toward Third Country participation in FP7 motivating research communities from the respective countries to establish contacts with researchers, research institutions from Europe and jointly submit proposals in KBBE area. Networking is a very strong tool to support not just the interactive communication between researchers, but to increase the impact on the national efficiency of the Project.

Mutual promotion of the BIOCIRCLE 2 project and connected activities through different networking channels increased the visibility of the project internationally and supported the networking capacities of Third Country researchers in order to reinforce their participation in FP7 projects.

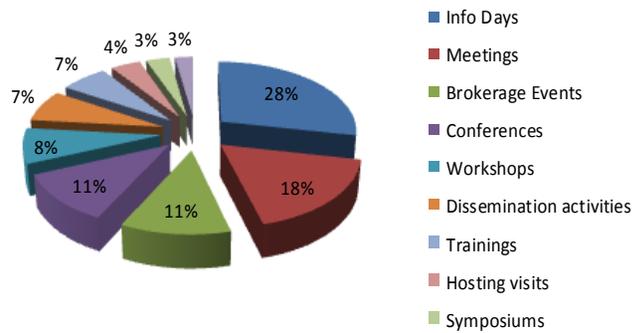
All the partners of the project engaged into the promotion of the BIOCIRCLE2 network, through publications or participations in events at local, regional and international level. Such awareness-raising activities helped improving the visibility of the network to both newcomers and established researchers. Indeed, the publicity activities of the partners were being monitored and reported periodically.

As regard the networking activities 9 different categories have been identified (Info days, Meetings, Training, Brokerage Events, Workshops, Hosting visits, Conferences, Dissemination activities, Symposiums).

Those categories allowed a better picture about the activities done and used by the partners through the period of the project.

A total amount of 62 “Reinforcing links” events were reported within the two years of BIO CIRCLE 2 project: 20 Hosting visits and 42 Working visits, having place most of them during the second year. These activities allowed fostering collaborations and joining research efforts within FP7 FAFB theme and other cooperation opportunities such as multilateral International initiatives and BILATS (bilateral projects between two countries which support the coordination for the enhancement and development of S&T Partnerships, mainly focused on providing information on programs and funding and sharing best practices). The chart n°1 below shows 4 main events which were used to improve the possibilities of networking which takes 68% of the total event numbers. While Info Days were the most popular, Symposiums and Hosting visits were the least of all as a tool for promoting the Project. It can be said that BIO CIRCLE 2 was a successful project which enhanced the contacts among Third Countries researchers and European researchers.

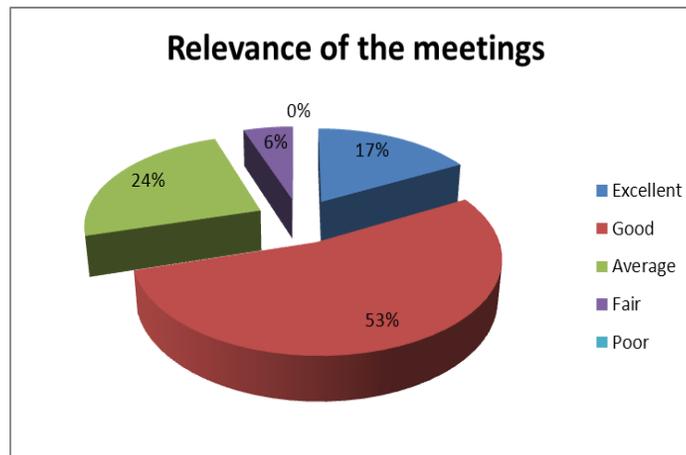
Chart n°1



The networking activities has been strengthened through the 2 brokerage events organized during the project. The Brokerage Events were held in Brussels in coincidence of the calls FP7-KBBE-6-2012 and FP7-KBBE-7-2013. Participants evaluated the event as an informative and successful opportunity to build project consortiums for the themes of the Calls and beyond. The biggest advantage mentioned in the evaluation form was that the Third Country representatives were able to find new contacts with EU Member State researchers and organizations.

Here below in the chart n°2 it is shown how the participants of the brokerage event evaluated the face to face meetings:

Chart n°2



Description of main results/foregrounds

During the 24 months of the project five trainings addressed to the Third Country BIO NCPs have been organized in order to enhance their skills on FP7 issues. Almost all the Third countries organized info days and training sessions for their researchers (in total 116 events). The info days and training were advertised and were made broadly accessible to the relevant researchers and their institutions in the Third Countries or in the relevant regions via the efforts of the corresponding BIO CIRCLE 2 partner. Announcements for the info days and training were also placed on the BIO CIRCLE 2 website (www.biocircle-project.eu).

Working/hosting visits were also a great success for the capacity building of Third Countries researchers and the possibility to increase their opportunities of networking in the hosting country.

The possibility to exchange experience ideas with colleagues and the possibility to interact with the rest of the participants were the mostly appreciated factors regarding the working and hosting visits. In order to measure these factors, feedback forms were distributed during the activities and the information collected were used for the reporting of the projects.

During the consortium meetings, the partners had the opportunity to share their experience gained in the local environment with the rest of the Third Country Partners. The presentations of the events performed during the project (training, info days) are available on the BIO CIRCLE 2 website.

It is also important to highlight in detail the contents, the impact and the feedback of the different events organized during the project. All the events/activities performed were focused on 3 major topics:

Capacity building of Third Country BIO NCPs

Support to Third Country researchers

Networking with their European counterparts

- **Capacity building of Third Country BIO NCPs**

The five trainings mentioned were organised for the benefit of the 16 Third Country BIO NCPs were about:

- **13th July 2011 Brussels** “Financial management of FP7 projects and audit”. In total 31 Third country BIO NCPs attended the training. The participants improved their knowledge on financial rules, financial management and

audit in FP7 projects in the programme Cooperation and received practical experience in budget calculation of FP7 projects and periodic financial reports.

- **22nd November 2011 virtual training** “the next European Framework Programme Horizon 2020”. JULICH organized a virtual training (it is a training method in which a simulated virtual environment is used. In this environment, an instructor is able to explain, show or test certain ability is that can contribute to the learning process). The participants had the opportunity to enrich their knowledge about the state-of-the-art of the next European Framework Programme in order to strategically plan ahead their participation possibilities
- **5th and 6th July 2012 Online webinar** on “the content of the Consortium Agreement in FP7 projects”. The participants of the training had the opportunity to enrich their knowledge of possibilities on how to secure the relationship among project partners beyond the Grant Agreement. The training was held in two consecutive days during different times to allow participation of NCPs from different time-zones around the world. More than 20 participants from Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Ghana, Hungary, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Malta, Nigeria, Russia and Ukraine took part.
- **18th July 2012: training in Brussels** on “Increasing visibility within Europe and active networking leading to success stories”. The objective of this training was to show options, ways and means to enhance the visibility of Third Country researchers within the European Research Area and the scientific community in general. This was aimed at facilitating an increased active networking, leading to successful cooperations within the Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology/Knowledge Based Bio-Economy area.
- **4th December 2012:** “strategic workshop” in Athens. The objective of this workshop was to describe and prepare national Bio-Economy profiles in order to develop specific regional strategies for the involvement in Horizon 2020 with special emphasis on the implementation of the Bioeconomy Strategy. The workshop gave an update on the current state of play of Horizon 2020 and the strategy for the internationalisation of research. Special emphasis was put on the active involvement of partners from industry and the general importance of the Public-Private-Partnership instrument.

- **Support to Third Country researchers**

Each Third Country BIO NCP prepared a National Action Plan that described how many and what kind of trainings, info days, working visits would be organized for the duration of the project.

In almost every one of the 16 participating Third Countries, at least one info day and training for researchers have been arranged. The major focus of these events was FP7 and, often, the new call for proposals under the KBBE theme.

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) 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.

- **Networking with their European counterparts**

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 2 website showcases profiles of Third Country research in an online database. Third and last, the BIO CIRCLE 2 consortium organized, two international Brokerage Events in Brussels on 15th of July 2011 and on 16th of July 2012. The aim of the two Brokerage Events was 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 2 to come to Brussels. The face-to-face meetings have been a successful way of starting new collaborations, some of which have resulted in new KBBE proposals.

The Chart n°3 below summarizes all the activities performed during BIO CIRLE 2:

Chart n°3

1.	Capacity building of Third Country BIO NCPs	5 trainings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 13 July 2011- 22 November 2011- 5-6 July 2012- 18 July 2012- 4 December 2012
2.	Support to Third Country researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 116 infodays and/or training session-
3.	Networking with their European counterparts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Brokerage event 15th July 2011- Brokerage event 16th July 2012- 20 hosting visit- 42 working visit

Potential impact and main dissemination activities and exploitation results

BIO CIRCLE 2 has successfully fostered international cooperation with partner Third Countries under the 'FAFB' theme. This was done through the main activities foreseen in the project which brought to a stronger and more efficient BIO NCPs network in Third Countries. Another added value can be considered the increasing of collaboration among industrialized countries. For example the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada stated how the partnership with key EU member states (Germany, Spain, France, UK and Italy) increased between the years 2005 and 2012. In the table n°1, for example, it is possible to see this success and how the participation with the European counterparts slightly grew.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
France	17	29	33	29	38	58	49	50	303
UK	18	31	29	30	34	31	44	24	241
Germany	10	28	22	25	17	16	20	35	173
Italy	8	9	7	5	5	6	17	12	69
Spain	8	7	14	12	13	17	19	29	119

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 have had a positive impact on the BIO NCP network for the years to come under FP7 and beyond. The BIO CIRCLE 2 activities have boosted the international cooperation. Efficient communication channels have been set up in the BIO CIRCLE 1 project between EU BIO NCPs and Third Country BIO NCPs, as well as new communication channels between Third Country BIO NCPs and their national researchers. Through training and networking activities, it has been possible to coordinate the agenda of many top-level researchers in Third Countries and in the EU.

The knowledge-base of a large number of Third Country researchers has been enlarged. Through the trainings, info days, working visits and the Brokerage events organized by BIO CIRCLE 2, hundreds of researchers worldwide gained a better knowledge FP7 and their number is expected to grow. According to the Third countries partner the participation to the brokerage events allowed to learn more about the calls and meet responsible and project officer from EC. The face to

face meetings were very important to learn about institutions and researchers activities. It was also a unique opportunity to meet most of the other NCP's which are not member in the BIO CIRCLE 2.

The networking capacities of Third Country researchers have been improved. Related to this, the researchers who have participated in the BIO CIRCLE 2 events are better aware of the European research interests and how these fit with their own national interests.

The cooperation fostered under BIO CIRCLE 2 has brought together the Third Country research communities with their European counterparts.

The project activities were promoted through a variety of tools, including the BIO CIRCLE 2 website with its many features (including Country info pages, with country specific information, video), a project leaflet in 5 languages, 5 online editions of specialized publications. The project and its events (trainings, info days, working and hosting visits) were also published on various other websites and promoted through the local networks of the Third Country BIO NCPs.

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 incentivized by the provision of research lines for insertion in future Work Programmes. BIO CIRCLE 2 has thus effectively supported the implementation of the bilateral S&T agreements in place between the European Union and the partner Third Countries.

The previous project BIO CIRCLE 1 has settled solid bases for improving the results achieved. Using the weaknesses and the previous experience it was easier to highlight the positive or negative aspect. This allowed having a more focus on the real needs of the Third countries.

The international cooperation under National Contact Point KBBE was indeed enhanced by a better information provision and assistance by Third Country BIO NCPs to their research communities. The NCP trainings, working visits in Europe has had a positive impact on the BIO NCP network for the years to come under FP7 and beyond. .Certainly with the end of BIO CIRCLE 2 it was possible to state that the lessons learned were mainly focused on the importance of giving training, allowing either the European researchers either those from Third Country to meet each other. Another important aspect was related to the Work Programmes with more open calls to the Third Country; in this way the possibilities and the opportunities for no-European researchers raised.

The knowledge-base of FP7 has been enlarged through the trainings, info days organized by BIO CIRCLE 2 and its access has become easier for many Third Country researchers.



The address of the project public website as well as relevant contact details

<http://www.biocircle-project.eu/>



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