Why we should all be interested in international research programmes

by Richard French on 29 September 2015

We're a sector hungry for international collaboration, according to a survey of researchers working in social sciences and humanities across 31 European countries – but often lack the skills and infrastructure to take advantage.

Globe lights [https://www.flickr.com/photos/ptwo/8087933921]

The reason for the blockade in cross-border research projects is understandable, if regrettable: researchers don't always know the routes to publishing their work internationally or how to find overseas colleagues in their area. They may not be aware of shared resources that they could use and, when they do happen upon relevant resources, they may not have access to them.

Podcast

Listen to the accompanying podcast [/podcasts/why-we-should-all-be-interested-in-international-research-programmes-29-oct-2015] .

Working collaboratively

But the benefits are clear. By working collaboratively, organisations and their staff can access internationally-held data and resources. They gather skills and knowledge from people working in similar areas EU-wide, can build internationally competitive teams and research groups, and also gain a greater audience for their research.

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We see this approach working in open science for example, which my colleague **Matthew Dovey [/staff/matthew-dovey]** goes into more detail about in **his recent blog [/blog/open-science-many-hands-make-light-work-17-aug-2015]** .

Technology has a big role to play in breaking down these barriers. To support the international work of UK researchers and their organisations, we're working on a number of shared projects funded under the **European Commission's Horizon 2020 [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/]** programme that I would like to share with you.

GEANT: Building a global research platform

As the pan-European organisation that interconnects national research and education networks (NRENs) **GÉANT [http://www.geant.org/Pages/Home.aspx]** provides very high-speed connectivity, identity inter-federation, resource virtualisation, mobility, security and trust, to ensure the digital continuum of services to research and education users in the EU and beyond.

Through the UK NREN, our Janet network, GÉANT enables UK researchers to collaborate safely and securely with their peers in over half the world's countries, including those working in fields such as radio astronomy and biomedical sciences.

OpenAire: Supporting open access

With UK institutions and researchers needing to comply with EU open access (OA) mandates, one of the things we're doing is building services to support the transition. The **OpenAire [https://www.openaire.eu/]** project creates a pan-European research information platform which monitors OA research outcomes from national funders, and the European Commission, so that organisations comply with the mandates.

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Using this information we then transform UK repository records into the OpenAIRE format and make them available on

the OpenAIRE repository platform, effectively simplifying the whole process for UK universities and research organisations

EUDAT 2020: A research data infrastructure for Europe

Researchers need to manage growing volumes of data at the same time as taking advantage of the huge opportunities for data analytics this awards. The **EUDAT project [http://eudat.eu/]** builds a collaborative European infrastructure of research data services, training and consultancy for researchers across Europe; it is currently supporting 32 different scientific communities with services and storage resources.

The resulting services will help European researchers make more of their data: storing, sharing, accessing, securing and using it in the best and most interoperable ways possible.

EGI-Engage: Engaging the research community towards an open science commons

More than 38,000 researchers in 350 data and computing centres worldwide benefit from the work of **EGI [https://www.egi.eu]** – no small change indeed. This international collaboration, involving Jisc and the research councils in the UK, creates and delivers open solutions for science and research infrastructures and is about to get even bigger with the award of funding for **EGI-Engage [https://www.egi.eu/about/egi-engage/]** , the organisation's main project, by the European Commission earlier this year.

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EGI-Engage is designed to support large-scale European research communities of people working closely together, by building the infrastructure needed to collaborate in more digitally-enhanced and open ways. Through co-design and co-creation, we're looking to develop new services to enable better and more open research, such as virtual research environments.

Examples of research communities being assisted by EGI include humanities researchers needing text mining resources and **GridPP [http://www.gridpp.ac.uk/]** , a collaboration of particle physicists and computer scientists from the UK and **CERN [http://home.web.cern.ch/]** .

We anticipate that within three years these communities will see tangible improvements in the collaborative opportunities available to them through digital technology.

About the author

Richard French

I manage the transnational education (TNE) support programme, helping Jisc to deliver a suite of services overseas to support our customers currently engaging in TNE activities.

07469 667210

richard.french@jisc.ac.uk