

ALCUE NET Policy Brief on NCP information and communication needs

Background

In November 2015 the ALCUE NET project (WP6) ran an online survey led by DLR, MEC and ZSI on the information status and needs of NCPs in the community of Latin American States and the Caribbean (CELAC). The survey was heavily promoted by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Uruguay (MEC) reaching 71 full responses from more than 15 CELAC countries. The survey was constructed on the hypothesis that NCPs in Latin America and the Caribbean are at very different levels regarding their knowledge and experience in consulting researchers on H2020, also having very distinctive training and information needs.

The objective of the survey was to:

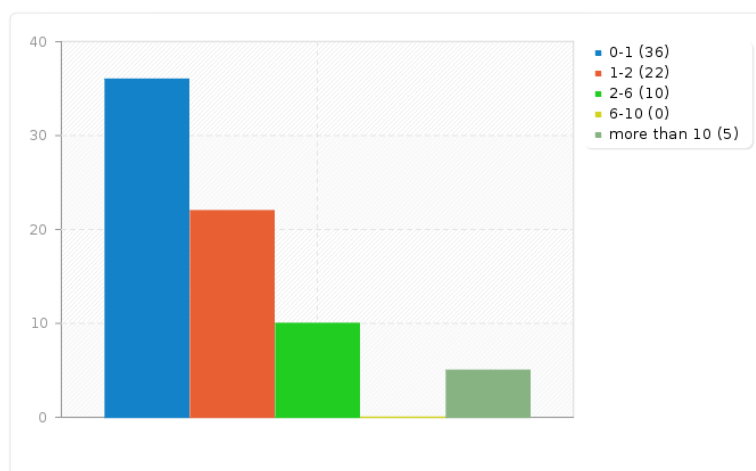
- Identify information and knowledge gaps according to specific demands
- Learn about CELAC NCP needs and challenges to adapt future trainings
- Improve their access to quality information and NCP trainings

Results

Information status & consultations of CELAC NCPs

Whereas the majority of NCPs feels fairly well informed about their duties as NCPs, the average number of consultations received by a single NCP is low, with 36 NCPs indicating only 0-1 consultations per month. Reasons mentioned are the low diffusion of information on H2020 and on the NCP support system in CELAC as well as a perceived lack of linking opportunities for CELAC researchers. At the same time only about half of the NCPs feel more than fairly competent to provide guidance for participation in H2020.

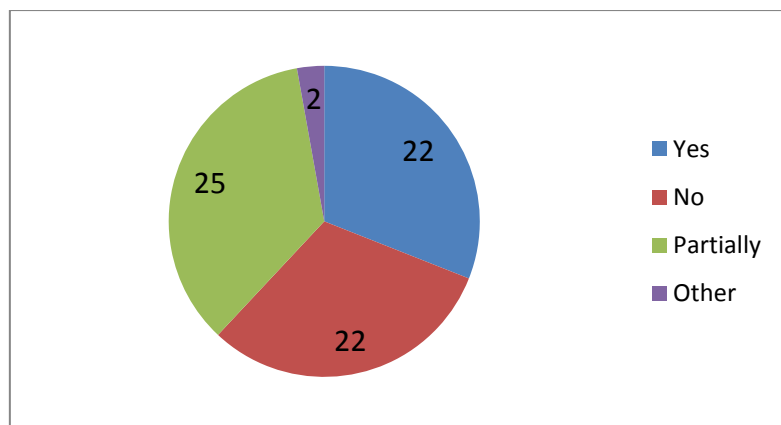
Figure 1, # of consultations per month



NCP trainings & information exchange

Less than half of the NCPs received detailed training and instructions at the beginning. 21 NCPs out of 71 had not participated in any NCP training yet, and some received only basic information. Information sometimes remained with the trained national NCP coordinator and was not shared with thematic NCPs. Information channels are not always clear and systematic. The quality of access to information which is needed for NCP work was rated “good” by 38 NCPs, but only “moderate” or “poor” by 33 NCPs. A high number of NCPs do not feel well connected with other NCPs in their thematic field.

Figure 2, Do you feel well connected with other NCPs in your thematic field?



Asking for explicit information needs, the most common nominations were: (1) Guidance on choosing relevant H2020 topics and types of action; (2) Training and assistance on proposal writing and (3) Assistance in partner search.

Main challenges

- Lack of area-wide training opportunities for NCPs (also in national languages)
- Low visibility of NCP system due to low integration with the respective national communities
- Restricted interest of CELAC researchers in H2020 due to missing links in Europe
- NCPs are often nominated with political instead of technical background

Recommendations

- Increase coverage of NCP trainings, especially for countries with younger NCP systems such as Guatemala or Bolivia, considering thematic staff where feasible.
- Design trainings based on the identified CELAC NCP needs, e.g. on open calls, ongoing H2020 projects, thematic priorities and proposal writing, fostering the practical implementation of H2020 projects.
- Establish systematic communication channels and central contact points to assure a prompt information flow, e.g. on new work programmes, towards (and between the thematic) NCPs.
- Provide essential information in Spanish and Portuguese.

Although there certainly is a lack of more inclusive capacity building for the whole region, it is important to mention that the situation differs a lot between countries since some NCPs gave a very positive feedback.