

Survey on the Establishment of the CICIP Researchers' Network

October 2020

Executive Summary

- **83 responses** out of an estimate of 230 researchers across all Clusters and the PEC
- Three in four respondents are **very or extremely interested** in the establishment of the network
- Three in four respondents are able to commit **between one and three hours per month**
- Most relevant factors are **knowledge exchange**, mostly within the same field of research, and **future bid development**
- Recommended priorities are **additional resources** to support the running of the network, creation of well-defined **interest groups** and **focus on Early Career Researchers (ECRs)**
- Half of the respondents **never took part in a researchers' network** before

The Survey

The survey run for 11 days from 29th September to 9th October 2020 (see *Annex 1. Questionnaire*). It was sent to all the named representatives for the CICIP Researchers' Network from all the Creative Clusters and the PEC with the request to share it further to all the researchers in the respective groups. 83 anonymous responses were received from across the CICIP. The survey, which was delivered via Microsoft Forms, asked 10 questions in total; an answer was required for all of them. The full data set is available on request.

The Respondents (Q1-4; Q9)

This is the **profile of the respondents**.

- 43% are established researchers, 33% ECRs, 14% PhD students, 7% other
- 89% are employed by HEIs, 5% by IROs, 4% by industry, 2% other
- 51% are working full-time for the Clusters/PEC, 49% part-time
- 49% never took part in a researchers' network before
- Of the 51% who took part in a researchers' network before, 82% had a positive experience, while 18% had a negative experience
- An average of 8.3 responses was received from each Cluster (max 22, min 1)

Interest (Q5; Q8)

There is a clear interest in the establishment of the network among the respondents, with **three in four saying that they are very or extremely interested**.

- 28.9% are extremely interested
- 45.8% are very interested
- 24.1% are moderately interested
- 3.6% are slightly interested
- 0% are not at all interested

The intended commitment to engage with the Network (including meetings, informal interaction etc.) is moderately positive.

- 8% of the respondents are able to commit less than one hour per month
- **52% can spend between one and two hours per month**
- **23% can spend between two and three hours per month**
- 6% can spend between three and five hours per month
- 6% can spend between more than five hours per month

There are negligible differences whether the respondent is an established researcher or an ECR. On the other side, **PhD students** (n=12) show a stronger interest in the establishment of the network (92% are extremely or very interested) and intend to commit a greater amount of time (75% can commit more than two hours per month).

Motivations (Q6)

The most relevant factors for the establishment of a network, among those suggested by the survey, appear to be the following.

- Knowledge exchange **within your primary field of research** (40% extremely interested and 47% very interested)
- Knowledge exchange **outside your primary field of research** (30% extremely interested and 40% very interested)
- **Bid development** (24% extremely interested and 45% very interested)

However, the remaining factors among those that were suggested by the survey also seem to have good support.

- Career opportunities (23% extremely interested and 25% very interested)
- Joint writing of scholarly papers (18% extremely interested and 33% very interested)
- Social interaction (13% extremely interested and 31% very interested)

To be noted that **ECRs showed an even greater interest than established researchers in knowledge exchange within their primary field of research** (92% of the former cohort are very or extremely interested versus 84% for the latter). Conversely, ECRs appear to be less interested than established researchers in knowledge exchange outside their primary field of research (67% of the former cohort are very or extremely interested versus 73% for the latter).

On the other side, perhaps unsurprisingly, 49% of ECRs are extremely or very interested in career opportunities, while only 26% of established researchers are.

Features (Q7)

The network's features that the respondents seem to be mostly interested, among those suggested by the survey, appear to be the following.

- **Presentations by individual researchers** (21% extremely interested and 45% very interested)
- **Thematic groups** (19% extremely interested and 43% very interested)
- **Presentations from all Clusters** on the respective research activities (21% extremely interested and 45% very interested)

- **Contacts list** of all researchers (18% extremely interested and 38% very interested)

On the other side, the remaining factors among those that were suggested by the survey did not seem to attract much support.

- Interactive online platform (13% extremely interested and 23% very interested)
- Creation of a blog (10% extremely interested and 18% very interested)

Additional Priorities (Q10)

When asked to provide further commentary, **71% of the respondents** decided to do so.

These are the **themes** that emerged from the responses (in order of frequency, high to low).

- Matching interests
- Unstructured interaction
- Structured interaction
- Support required
- Sharing of information
- Focus on ECRs
- Writing and bid development
- Career
- Lack of time
- Research directory
- Mailing list
- Networking with industry
- International networks

From a qualitative analysis of the themes listed above, the following picture emerges.

There is a strong interest in **thematic networking**, particularly with researchers operating in the same disciplinary area, to ensure maximum relevance. Quoting some of the respondents:

- “Most participation should be optional, rather than feel obligatory, with people able to pick and choose collaborations/partnerships that feel relevant to them and their research interests.”
- “One could express interest in finding out about a range of topics but be able to filter the least relevant.”
- “The 'themes' covered should arise from participants in the network, rather than being centrally designed.”

Structured and unstructured interactions seem to be equally valued. The following suggestions were among those reported.

- Virtual conferences / annual conference (open to researchers external to the CICP, possibly also from abroad)
- Online seminar programme
- Mix of small and large online sessions
- Idea lunches

- Research speed dating
- Free time online to recreate a coffee-break environment

There is a **clear call for dedicated support**

- To manage and facilitate the network in order to guarantee its viability, “coordinate it and energetically build structures to incentivise knowledge sharing.”
- There is a recommendation “not to undermine/underestimate the time, skill and effort required for an important initiative like this in these times”, particularly considering the lack of time lamented by several researchers.
- “Networks need focus, management and facilitation to be useful and successful.”
- The network is considered to be “a good thing, and needs to be properly acknowledged and supported”, with someone suggesting that “a paid mid-level, longer-term (at least 18 months) role could help to bring researchers together better.”

The network should have a **focus on ECRs**, who are those seen to benefit the most from it, although it must be noted that the ECRs’ responses to Q5 showed the same level of interest and intended commitment of those from established researchers. In addition to this:

- There is a proposal for the network to have a “mentorship initiative where they invite established academics to support ECR prepare their career for the next post.”
- A respondent highlighted studies showing “declining health among doctoral candidates and ECRs”, although they cast doubts on whether a network could effectively address this issue.

Other frequent recommendations are

- Joint writing for **journal articles, bid development** and the creation of **career opportunities** are identified as main goals of the network.
- **Sharing of information** (data assets, methodologies etc.) is considered an essential feature of the network.
- A **researchers’ directory and active mailing list** are also considered useful and easy to set up.

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