



Enhancing Scientific Cooperation between the European Union and Central America

Fortaleciendo la cooperación científica entre la Unión Europea y América Central



## ENLACE Travel Grant Scheme

Report on the third call



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**ENLACE – Enhancing Scientific Cooperation between the  
European Union and Central America**

[www.enlace-project.eu](http://www.enlace-project.eu)

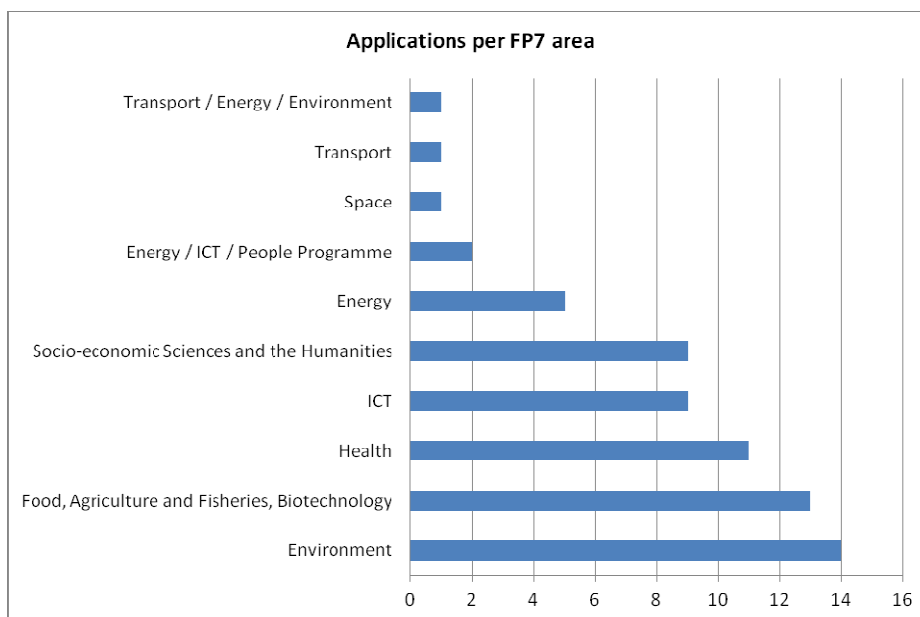
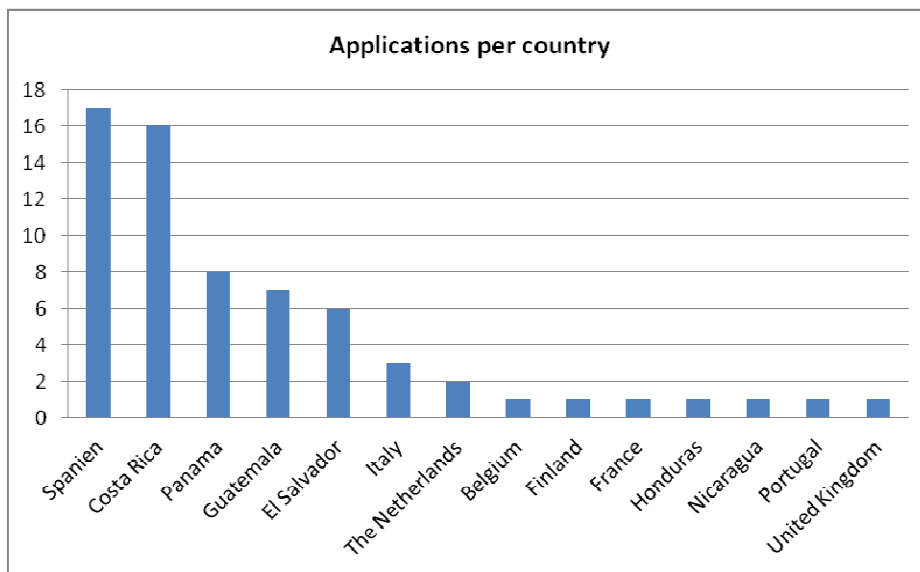
**Travel Grant Scheme  
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Author: LAI

## 1. General information on the third call

The aim of the travel grant scheme is to promote exchange between Central American and European researchers as well as to encourage contacts between research institutions so that they may explore possibilities for joint participation in the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7).

The third call was launched from the 9th of March until the 10th of May 2012. Its aim was to support researchers from Europe and Central America to meet their counterparts from the other region for a joint preparation of a project proposal / cooperation in one of the upcoming FP7 calls of the Cooperation Programme or of the People Programme. 12 grants á €3.000 were available. 66 researchers from Belgium, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Finland, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Nicaragua, Panama, Portugal, Spain, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom (39 from Central America and 27 from Europe) applied for a grant.

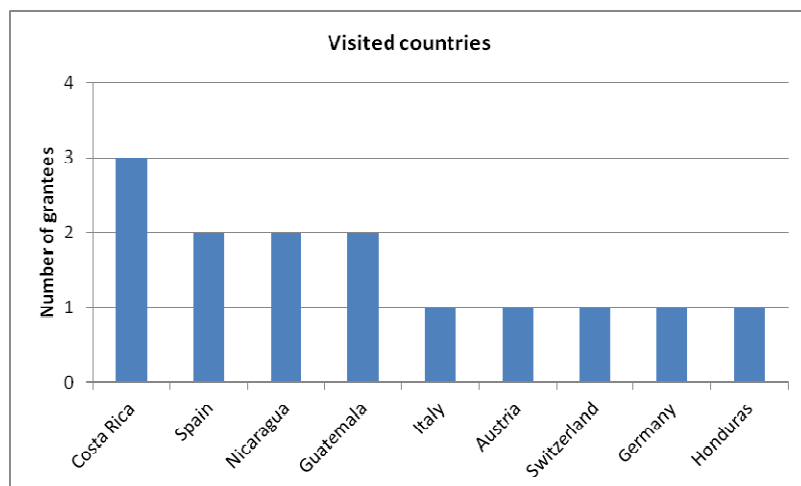


The Austrian Latin America Institute carried out the formality and eligibility check of all applications. 60 candidates passed the first step of the selection process. The evaluation of the 60 remaining applications was realized by three partners of the ENLACE consortium: CSUCA (Central American University Superior Council), APRE (Agenzia per la Promozione della Ricerca Europa) and UPC (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya). The members of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) finally selected 12 grantees taking into account the objectives of the call, the quality of the applicants, the advice from the evaluators, a balanced regional and thematic distribution and the priority for female researchers.

Funded grantees per country			
	Female	Male	Total
Costa Rica	1		1
El Salvador	1	1	2
France	1		1
Guatemala	1		1
Italien	1	1	2
Panama	1		1
Spain		3	3
The Netherlands	1		1
Total	7	5	12

Funded grants per FP7 area	
Environment	2
Health	3
Space	1
KBBE	3
Health, ICT, Nanosciences, Nanotechnologies, Materials & New Production Technologies	1
SSH	2
Total	12

After their stays in Europe, the grantees had to give report on the realized activities and spent costs. Most of the ENLACE grantees visited one country in Central America or in Europe. Two of them went to two countries. Six European grantees went to Central America and six Central American grantees came to Europe.



In general, the grantees were very busy during their stays realizing different activities: discussion of the outline of the research project, identification of collaborative research lines, identification of project partners for a FP7 project, identification of case studies for the joint project proposal, proposal writing, joint (field) research, field visits, presentation of the own institution (including strategy and capacities, main research lines and facilities), presentation of a lecture or a research project, participation in a round table discussion, gathering information on the FP7 calls, participation in a seminar on writing research proposals, getting to know new methods and software and dissemination of the project. For almost all grantees networking was among the most important activities, i.e. meetings with additional researchers, universities, companies, NGOs, grassroots initiatives, official authorities, local stakeholders. These meetings helped to get to know R&D needs and to assess the interest for collaborative future projects.

According to the grantees' reports the main outcomes of their journeys were the compilation of a project proposal, the establishment of new networks, and the possibility to get an insight view of the partner institution and the work they are performing. Moreover, one grantee also could initiate an institutional agreement with the Central American partner institution. The reports underlined the importance of international cooperation in the field of C&T and the possibilities for personal meetings to establish successful networks. Nevertheless, one grantee remarked, that special training in other countries does not make sense, if the gained knowledge cannot be applied in the home institution due to the missing of basic equipment.

## **2. Results of the evaluation by the grantees**

The participants of the third call of the ENLACE travel grant scheme were asked to fill in a questionnaire to evaluate the grant scheme. Ten out of the twelve selected grantees returned the questionnaire.

### **Dissemination of the grant scheme and selection process**

The selected researchers got to know the grant scheme through different sources: through their universities or colleagues at their university, through CSUCA or they found the information in the internet. All grantees stated, that the information regarding the grant scheme on the ENLACE website as well as the rules and regulations for the participation in the grant scheme were clear and comprehensible for them.

Additionally all grantees declared the selection criteria as justifiable, for most of them the selection process was clear and transparent and they were sufficiently informed about the results of the selection. Nevertheless, two grantees observed that it would have been good to know the score of the evaluation results.

### **Organization / Administration**

In general, the grantees positively evaluated the organization of the travel grant scheme. One grantee noted that the time between the information on the results of the grant scheme and the call for proposals of the FP7 was very short and therefore it was challenging to organize the journey. Also the communication with the ENLACE team was well validated. As the grantees have already defined the visits to the counterpart institution in Central America and Europe before, they mostly did not need any support for the elaboration of the travel agenda.

Seven selected researchers indicated that the amount of the grant (€3.000) was sufficient, for three of them this was not the case. One grantee stated that he lost too much money on currency exchange, as this was not part of the eligible costs. Moreover, another grantee mentioned that the daily rates have been too low for travelling to Europe. Although 3000€ is an adequate amount for this type of mobility support, another grantee only could manage to stay for the planned period due to the hospitality of the European counterpart. Moreover, for one grantee a mutual visit to the partner institution would have been good in order to get a better perspective on the collaboration possibilities for a joint research project.

### Short-term benefits

All grantees who filled in the questionnaire declared their stays in Europe or Central America as personal benefit because of different reasons, for example:

- Networking with partners and research groups in order to
  - get partners for a joint future research project.
  - get to know European/national research programmes.
  - get the possibility for applying for a Marie Curie grant and benefit from this contact.
  - get updated information.
  - strengthen the own professional career.
- It was possible to get detailed information on the FP7 and how to apply for a FP7 call as well as how to write a successful project proposal.
- Although collaborative work in spite of the distance is important, it cannot replace the dynamic and commitment which arises in personal meetings.

Besides personal benefits, the grantees' journey to Central America or Europe also brought benefits for their institutions, for example:

- It was possible to realize networking activities not only of interest for the grantee but also for the colleagues in the home institution.
- It was possible to give visibility to the own institution and also to spread information on the FP7 in Central America.
- The grantee's home institution benefits from the visit at the partner institution due to the participation in joint research projects and furthermore due to the strengthening of the institutional research lines.

Beside the contacts to the visited partner institutions, nine out of ten grantees also were able to establish further contacts mostly to other researchers/research institutions but also to public institutions, NGOs and international organizations in the visited country. In general it became clear that further networking mainly works through the already existing contacts. Two grantees stated that it would have been helpful to have a list of researchers by research line and who want to collaborate with Central American counterparts. If the grantees are able to maintain the contacts in the future, most of them assume that they will benefit of the further established contacts through joint research projects (also to be submitted in other funding schemes).

Most of the grantees assume that the cooperation with the Central American/European counterparts will have future benefits for them:

- Regarding research:
  - The partners' research lines are complementary and therefore it is possible to approach scientific problems from another perspective.
  - It is possible to strengthen the comparative character of the research.
  - Improvement of the quality of the research output.
- Regarding knowledge transfer and teaching:
  - The contacts will facilitate also teaching visits and further trainings.
  - Besides knowledge and technology transfer, which is the most important impact of the collaboration, the training of human resources is a crucial asset of the cooperation (among others students will benefit from the gained knowledge).
- Due to the cooperation it will be easier to succeed in getting funding for further collaborative research or for teaching and student/staff mobility between Latin America and Europe.
- Due to the established contacts in Central America it also will be possible to integrate grassroots development initiatives in the projects.

For most grantees it was also possible to get a better insight view on the FP7. Regarding the preparation of a joint project proposal for one of the upcoming FP7 calls, five grantees stated to have started a joint

proposal. Finally, only two grantees confirmed that the project proposal also has been submitted. Due to different reasons the other grantees were not successful: lack of time for preparing the proposal; still missing of a further partner institution; it finally became evident that the research line of the Central American partner did not fit to the research outline of the project proposal.

### **3. Conclusions**

In general it can be stated, that the ENLACE travel grant scheme is a good opportunity to promote the exchange between Central American and European researchers as well as to enhance contacts between research institutions from both regions. For the grantees, their journeys to Europe and Central America brought benefits for their personal and institutional work and gave an impulse to research in Central America. Due to the visits at the partner institutions the grantees got an insight view on the work of their counterparts. Opportunities for joint future cooperation, mainly in the area of research but also for education and teaching were also facilitated. The project proposals are consolidated through personal meetings between the partner institutions as doubts can be reduced. Moreover, the direct contact to research partners also creates space for new and innovative ideas. Already existing contacts could be strengthened due to personal meetings but also new contacts could be established.