

# **Southeast Asia – Europe Joint Funding Scheme Annual Evaluation Report 2**

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## List of abbreviations

ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian nations  
C&D – Communication and Dissemination  
CSA – Coordination and Support Action  
DG R&D – Directorate General for Research & Innovation  
EC – European Commission  
EU – European Union  
FP – Framework Programme  
H2020 – Horizon 2020  
ICSF – International Cooperation Service Facility  
ISF – International Service Facility  
JFS 2 – Joint Funding Scheme phase 2  
KPI – Key Performance Indicator  
MEF – Monitoring and Evaluation Framework  
NCP – National Contact Point  
PSC – Programme Steering Committee  
RFO – Research [and Innovation] Funding Organisation  
WP – Work Programme

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# 1 Introduction

An integral activity of this Specific Contract is the *monitoring of the funded projects under JFS contracts 1 and 2* (cf. Activity 3<sup>1</sup>), which is further broken down into two actions: the *development of a monitoring methodology framework for the projects funded under the JFS calls* (A3.1) and the *implementation of the monitoring* (A3.2).

As outlined in A3.2, its output is the *annual monitoring report* (D3.2) that is based on the MEF (monitoring and evaluation framework) presented in D3.1 that described the target audience, the input required to implement the monitoring, the overall process and timing, and the envisioned output. Consequently, this document represents D3.2 and is comprised of the main results of the second and final monitoring phase.

## 2 Funded projects

Following the methodology described in the MEF (monitoring and evaluation framework, cf. D3.1) and the reporting template elaborated in the first monitoring report, we invited again the coordinators of the *Calls 1 and 2 projects* and, for the first time, *Calls 3 and 4 projects*, i. e. in total 31 individuals to participate in our online survey. 26 invitees responded and actually participated, which translates to a satisfactory response rate of roughly 84 %.

The questionnaire was organised along the dimensions of the evaluation questions that guided the design of the MEF. They are as follows:

1. Composition of research teams working on JFS-funded projects (early career and female researchers),
2. Scientific excellence,
3. Innovation,
4. Networks and mobility,
5. Sustainability,
6. Project implementation, and
7. Additionality.

The results of the monitoring are being presented in this order. The esteemed reader is free to jump directly to the sections they are most interested in, it is not necessary to know the content of preceding sections.

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<sup>1</sup> Activity 3: Monitoring of the funded projects under JFS contract 1 (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Call) and JFS contract 2 (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Joint Call):

Action 3.1: Development of a monitoring methodology framework for the projects funded under the JFS calls

Action 3.2: Implementation of the monitoring

## 2.1 Composition of research teams working on the JFS-funded projects

The purpose of this dimension is to get some insights about the composition of the research team, especially about the share of *early career researchers* and *female researchers*.

The average number of researchers working on a project team amounted to 10, the minimum being 5 and the maximum being 25.

The share of early career researchers has, on average across all surveyed projects, amounted to ca. 33 %.

The share of female researcher has, on average across all surveyed projects, amounted to ca. 43 %.

Conclusion: The shares of early career and more senior researchers seem balanced; the share of female researchers seems adequate high.

## 2.2 Scientific excellence

A key success factor to achieve scientific excellence is growth of the involved researchers in terms of improved skills (both formal or informal) or knowledge (knowledge in their scientific domain, on procedures, on project management, on networking, etc.).

Here, each project coordinator assessed the growth of the involved researchers overall, that of early career researchers, and that of female researchers.

Regarding the growth of the researchers involved in the project overall, roughly 2/3 of project coordinators reported that the skills and knowledge gains were as expected, 1/3 reported that their expectations were exceeded. The same is roughly true for early career researchers and female researchers, vis-à-vis their male colleagues.

To get some sense of scientific excellence, we consider scientific works such as journal articles, both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed, and also asked about conference papers as those are important for some scientific fields.

As the table below shows, almost all peer-reviewed works were jointly co-authored by researchers from both regions (33 out of 34 publications). About 2/3 of all peer reviewed works were published *open access*. Non-peer-reviewed works were clearly not in the focus on the collaborative efforts and amount to only 5 works in total.

Table 1: Published scientific works, including Open Access and bi-regionally co-authored works

Type of scientific works	Number of published works	Number of open access works	Number of bi-regionally co-authored works
Peer-reviewed journal publications	34	23	33
Non-peer-reviewed articles	5	4	1
Conference papers	18	3	11

Two project coordinators reported that their project had generated additional types of scientific outcomes, i. e. one was awarded a grant by a Japanese foundation, the other received the iLab Grand Prix in 2020. One project coordinator reported to have won the national *L'Oreal Thailand: For Women in Science*.

### Scientific excellence: conclusions

The growth of the involved researchers in terms of skill and knowledge gains was quite what the project coordinators expected and sometimes even above their expectations. Collectively, the JFS-funded projects have generated 57 scholarly works, more than half of which were peer-reviewed and co-authored with researchers from both regions.

## 2.3 Innovation

To get a sense of the contributions of the funded projects to *innovation*, we mainly consider tangible outputs in terms of number of patent filings (granted, filed, planned) and the involvement of SMEs – our hypothesis is that their involvement indicates a stronger market-based interest than academically-oriented endeavours without any SME-involvement.

When it comes to innovation output in terms of patent application filings, it is important to note that the period between the conclusion of the JFS-funded projects and the time we conducted the survey was quite short for projects funded under Calls 1 and 2, and definitely too short for those under Calls 3 and 4. That said, **one patent was reported as already *granted*, another one as *filed*. In addition to those two, the respondents reported that eleven patent applications were planned.**

Roughly a quarter of project coordinators reported to have involved a SME. The kind of involvement is fairly broad, i. e. it ranged from the application of research results to advising researchers (in one instance actually a group of 20 SMEs from both regions), to participating in product design and development, to testing and scaling up solutions provided by research, to delivering material needed (e. g. for vaccine delivery).

### Innovation: conclusions

Beyond our expectations, a project has already been granted a patent; another application has been filed. Together with the 11 planned applications, it can be said that some of the projects seem rather active in pursuing intellectual rights. It will be interesting to see future developments.

Overall, 23 % of projects appear to be contributing to innovation by involving SMEs to either accommodate market knowledge in their research endeavours or generate solutions or knowledge that might be relevant for the market.

## 2.4 Networks and mobility

Creating and expanding one's own professional (and private) network is key in many professions, including academia. Mobility may be a means to this end but also provide opportunities to broaden one's horizon and develop an understanding for other cultures. All respondents reported that the following priorities mattered to them (percentage score in parenthesis):

- Broadening researchers' professional network in both regions (80 %)
- Increasing researchers' understanding of partner countries research systems (71 %)
- Enhancing researchers access to research facilities in both regions (77 %)
- Enhancing research data and knowledge exchange between the two regions (**83 %**)
- Enhancing mobility opportunities between the two regions (80 %)

While the development in most of these dimensions met the project coordinators' expectations, one did not: **researchers' mobility opportunities between both regions**. The reason for this may become apparent when looking at the table below, which shows that they were indeed negatively affected by the Covid-19 pandemic: roughly half of them reported to have been hampered in their ability to create connections and communicate with their partners. Furthermore, nearly 80 % of projects were hampered in their ability to conduct empirical research.

Table 2: Statements on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic

<b>The COVID-19 pandemic has ...</b>	Number of affirmations	Share of affirmations (multiple choices were possible)
<i>... hampered your and your partners' ability to create connections.</i>	13	54 %
<i>... positively affected the rate of your encounters through more frequent online meetings.</i>	4	17 %
<i>... negatively affected the rate of communication between partners.</i>	14	58 %
<i>... hampered the project ability to conduct empirical research.</i>	19	79 %

When it comes to undertaking trips to their partner region, the opportunities to travel seem to be equally shared between early career researchers, female researchers, and senior researchers – about 25 % of researchers could go on a trip, despite the pandemic.

Researchers from both regions seem to visit their partner region equally as often, with the exception of senior researchers. There, European researchers seem to travel much more often to SEA than the other way around (37 trips to SEA vs. 10 trips to Europe).

A positive development that could not even be hindered by the pandemic was **trust building**: 100 % of respondents reported their project partners to have gained trust among themselves during the project implementation. With trust being a vital precondition for international collaboration, this bodes well for future joint opportunities.



### **Networks and mobility: conclusions**

While the JFS-funded projects had building and expanding their professional network and using mobility opportunities high on their list of priorities, it is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic still negatively affects – and sometimes blocks – project activities.

Despite the difficulties, roughly 25 % of researchers were able to travel. According to the project coordinators, opportunities to do so were equally shared among early career, female, and senior researchers.

On a positive note, building trust among project partners seems completely unaffected by the ongoing pandemic.

## 2.5 Sustainability

The sustainability dimension has been introduced to gauge the plans and intentions of the project partners with regard to activities beyond the lifetime of the JFS-funded project. Questions range from impact achieved so far to follow-up projects to other joint activities with project partners.

When asked if they would pursue the same topic in a follow-up project, 92 % of respondents confirmed that they would; two projects seem to make it conditional on the outcomes of their project.

In terms of following up with another project, nine respondents reported to have submitted a project proposal – one project has already been granted funding. 27 follow-up projects are still in the works.

One of the major benefits of international collaboration is to expand one's network and gain new collaborative opportunities. 16 out of 26 project coordinators reported to having joint activities beyond the boundaries of the project – they are as follows:

*Table 3: Joint activities among partners outside the project*

<b>Joint activity among partners outside the project</b>	<b>No. of joint activities</b>
<b>joint publications</b>	9 (35 %)
<b>joint technical research (technical analysis, lab work, etc.)</b>	7 (27 %)
<b>joint workshop(s), trainings, or similar</b>	7 (27 %)
<b>joint project proposals</b>	6 (23 %)
<b>careers opportunities</b>	4 (15 %)
<b>joint patent applications</b>	2 (8 %)

When asked if the impact that the project generated on its targeted audience so far met their expectations, the vast majority (~ 70 %) confirmed that it has, 20 % think their impact is beyond expectations, 8 % that their impact – so far – scored below expectations.

As factors hampering their project's impact, the respondents emphasised the Covid-19 pandemic the most. However, there is also a more mundane reason behind this rating: the newer projects in Calls 3 and 4 are still too young to a lasting impact.

When asked how the JFS may help in this situation, the project coordinators responded that there was nothing that could be done at the level of the JFS.

### **Sustainability: conclusions**

All funded projects seem interested in continuing to work on their topic, although two make it contingent on the outcome of their current project. Even though the Covid-19 pandemic makes collaboration harder, nine follow-up project proposals have been submitted so far, 27 are currently in the works. The joint activities taking place outside the project are encouraging.

## 2.6 Project implementation

This section examines a number of aspects that the JFS-funded projects experience during their implementation, e. g. factors that make their work easier or harder, i. e. that support or hinder their progress.

First of all is the support structure in place, be it advice given by either the National Contact Points or the Joint Call Secretariat, or the usefulness of the online application tool, or the clarity of regulations in place. All these items are essential in providing support to project partners.

As the figure below shows, all scrutinised aspects of support have received unfavourable ratings. Interestingly, the least unfavourable rating was given to the web application tool.

Overall, the satisfaction with the support provided by the JFS seems good but there is room for improvement. When looking at the overall picture, two items stand out: a) the *advice given by the Joint Call Secretariat* and the *satisfaction with the clarity of regulations* seem to perform least in terms of overall satisfaction but b) the latter shows the highest dissatisfaction. While the majority clearly rates their satisfaction positively, it cannot be ignored that some project coordinators were unhappy regarding the clarity of regulations.

To understand improvements over time, it makes sense to take a closer look into the individual JFS Calls. It might well be that all involved parties had some learning to do in the early stages of the JFS and, indeed, this hypothesis seems right when looking at Calls 3 & 4 only: It becomes clear that the satisfaction with the support provided recently is considerably higher than for Calls 1 & 2 (see figure below on Calls 3 & 4).

The best rating in terms of satisfaction can be registered for the *advice given by the Joint Call Secretariat* – not a single negative rating was given and only one neutral rating, all others were positive. This means that this dimension of the JFS support has been rated best most recently. Next comes the *satisfaction with the application tool* whose ratings were one negative, zero neutral, and the rest positive. The *advice given by the National Contact Points* has roughly received a similar share of ratings as it has in Calls 1 & 2, while the clarity of regulations has seen a small shift from negative to neutral, which constitutes a slight improvement.

Overall, the biggest improvements from the first monitoring to the second monitoring period has been the satisfaction with the advice given by the Joint Call Secretariat. It will be interesting to see what kind of ratings the JFS support receives by the funded projects in the future.

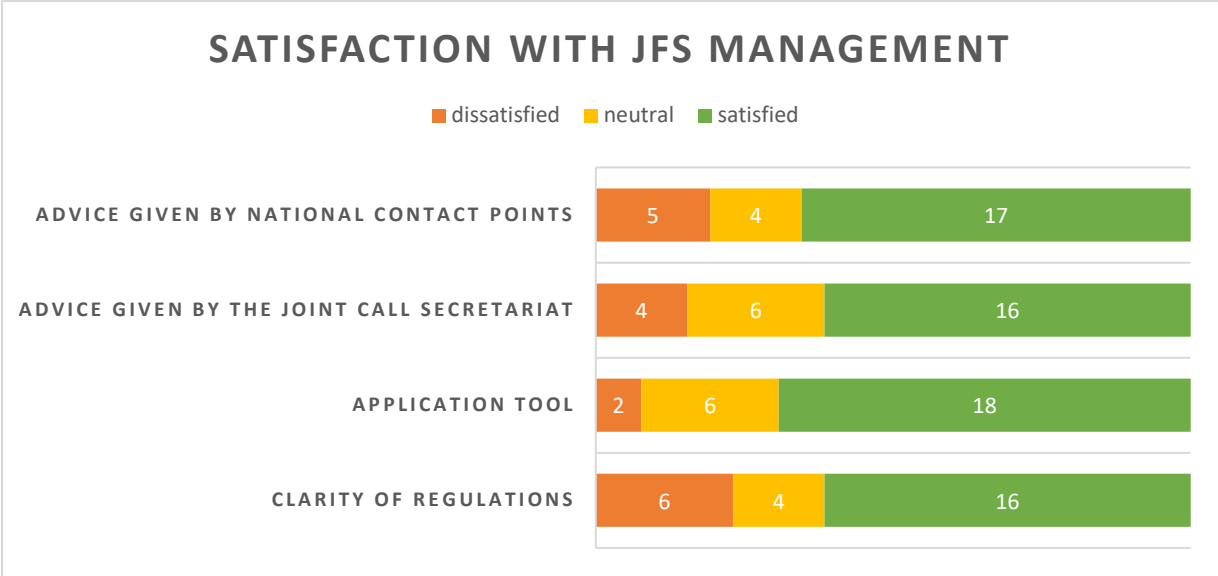


Figure 1: Satisfaction with JFS Support – all Calls

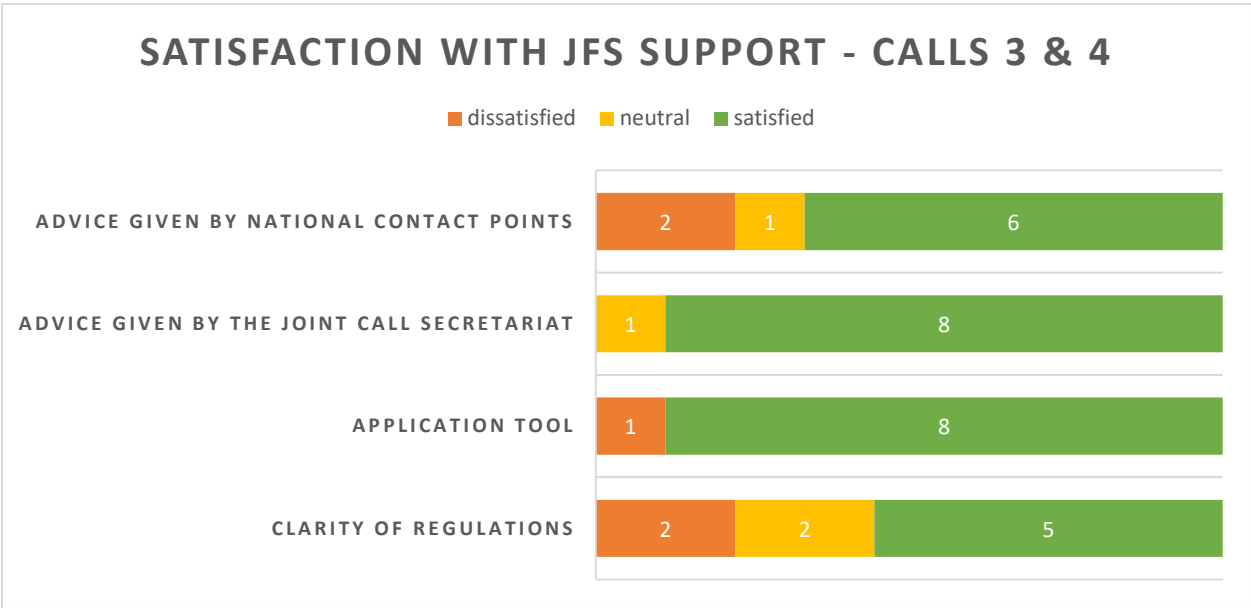


Figure 2: Satisfaction with JFS Support – Calls 3 & 4

Apart from the support provided by the JFS, it makes sense to gauge some of the challenges that the funded projects face. We have looked into three items in particular:

**a) challenges with national funding, such as delays with regards to funding or contracts**

15 respondents reported to having had challenges with national funding. The biggest challenge is owed to the fact that national requirements (e. g. administrative or financial procedures) are not harmonised among countries – existing initiative in ASEAN and Europe may help in this regard – and that even individual university regulations may hinder getting a project up and running. In some

instances, the project start was delayed by several months. Despite only individual partners having been affected, the whole project planning was jeopardised.

**b) did the partners encounter other challenges during the implementation phase of the project**

11 respondents reported to having other types of implementation challenges, some of which are more individual to projects, such as the budget of the European and SEA side being asymmetrical (SEA receiving an unproportionally high amount of funding), or that there are institutional mechanisms in place that are hard to overcome successfully, but the majority of reasons have again to do with the Covid-19 pandemic (next to impossible to travel or ship materials in a timely manner, considerable delays, impossible to conduct field work, etc.). Unfortunately, there is no immediate solution to this problem.

**c) so far, was the project able to complete its works in time and according to the originally planned budgets**

8 respondents reported to having had difficulties to completing their work in time and according to the planned budget, the sole reason being again the Covid-19 crisis.

**Project implementation: conclusions**

Satisfaction with the support provided by the JFS to the funded projects continues to increase, which is a sign that the JFS management learns from past experiences and keeps making it easier and clearer for project partners to apply for funding and to implement their project.

Overall, satisfaction seems high regarding the online application tool but the biggest improvement overtime could be register for the satisfaction with the advice given by the Joint Call Secretariat. The clarity of regulations improved slightly as well but still has the biggest potential for improvement.

Lastly, there are some challenges still in place for the projects, most of which are related to national funding or to the Covid-19 crisis.

## 2.7 Additionality

When it comes to gauging the additionality, i. e. the value added by the JFS vis-à-vis other existing sources of funding, there is a crucial question: “**Would you – meaning the project consortium – have implemented the project without the funding provided by the JFS?**”

It is usually a good sign if the majority of respondents affirms that this is NOT the case. With regard to the JFS funding, this is overwhelmingly so: All but one project coordinators stated that they would not have implemented the project without the JFS funding; the sole person who claimed that they would clarified that they would have done so slower compared to their current project.

To provide more substance to scrutinising the additionality, we also added the question what the project coordinators liked most about the JFS – the majority (14 out of 26) provided an actual answer to this open question. Most of them appreciate the multinational and interdisciplinary nature of the scheme, the relatively low administrative burden during the project implementation, that the application process has become clearer, the global scope of the funded topics, and that the JFS accepts all sorts of costs, which enables mobility between the two regions and the intensive form of collaboration required to successfully tackle global challenges.

The last crucial question to gauge the JFS’s additionality is to ask the project coordinators, whether they would do it again, given the opportunity and if they knew what they now know. This received 92 % confirmation. The two exceptions (project coordinators from Germany) stated that the funding was low but conceded that it was a lot for their SEA partner. While not a 100 %, this percentage is still a clear testament to the value provided by the JFS and implicitly to the idea behind it. On this last point, the next chapter will shed more light from the perspective of the participating R&I funders.

### **Additionality: conclusions**

The participating project partners agree that the JFS provides funding that is complementary to national and other international interventions.

They appreciate that applying is easy and straight-forward, that a wide range of costs is eligible, and that the supported mobility enables collaboration that would otherwise not have been possible – these are key when it comes to jointly tackling global challenges.

Given the hindsight and opportunity, 92 % of project coordinators would do it again (apply for and implement the project under the JFS); the two exceptions stated that their German funding was too low.

### 3 R&I Funders

At the inception of the JFS it was clear that the involved R&I funders (RFOs) had an expressed interest in setting up such a multilateral funding scheme. Several years have passed since, which warrants the monitoring exercise to undertake the effort to gauge, from the perspective of the participating RFO, whether the idea underlying the JFS is still valid today and whether the offered additionality is satisfactory.

Also, the JFS monitoring looked into how satisfied the RFOs are with their involvement in the scheme, the JFS management, and the outcomes of the funded projects.

Out of the 25 RFOs, 23 responded to our monitoring questions, which corresponds with a response rate of 92 %.

To get an overview of the involvement of RFOs in the JFS, the table below lists the calls that were launched until 2021, their topic, and the number of RFOs contributing to the joint funding.

Table 4: Overview of Launched Calls

Call no.	Launch year	Scope	Topic	No. of participating funders
1	2017	STI	Health / Environment & Climate Change	9
2	2018	STI	Bioeconomy / Infectious Diseases	13
3	2019	S&T	Integrated Water Resource Management / Nanotechnologies	11
4	2019	Innovation	Smart Cities / Infectious Diseases (incl. AMR)	10
5	2020	S&T	Nanotechnologies / Infectious Diseases (incl. COVID-19)	11
6	2020	Innovation	Bioeconomy (incl. ICT) / Digital Health	9
7	2021	STI	Sustainable Food Production / Climate Change: Resilience & Adaptation	16

The two key questions that correspond to the **relevance of the JFS** are with respect to the idea underlying the JFS – it is still valid today – and how to the participating RFOs rate the additionality of the JFS, especially vis-à-vis their national funding.

The average rating of the validity of the JFS idea today is 8.2 out of 10 (max.), the *additionality* of the JFS follows slightly behind with an average rating of 7.9 out of 10, which underlines the high relevance not just for the funded projects (cf. previous chapter) but also for the participating RFOs.

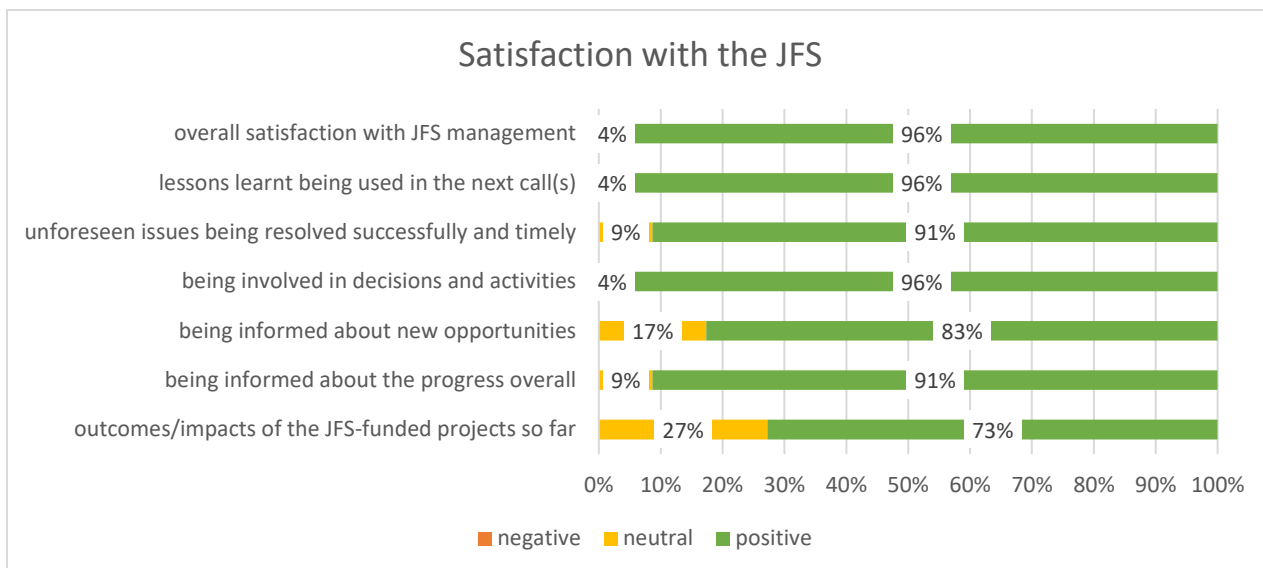


Figure 3: Satisfaction of R&I Funders with the JFS

RFOs have certain needs resulting from their involvement and expectations when providing funding. We have mapped several key elements and asked the RFOs how satisfied they are with each of those elements.

First of all, the **overall satisfaction with the JFS management is overwhelmingly positive – 96 % of RFOs are satisfied or highly satisfied**; only one RFO gave an average rating, stating they would like more interaction among programme partners.

The same is also true for the *involvement of the RFOs in decisions and activities* and *lessons learnt being applied in the next call* – in each instance, 96 % of RFOs were satisfied or highly satisfied.

The vast majority (91 %) was also satisfied or highly satisfied with *unforeseen issues being resolved successfully and timely* and with *being informed about the progress overall*.

A slightly lower rating – but still largely positive – was given to *being informed about new opportunities* (83 %) and *outcomes/impacts of the JFS-funded projects* (73 %). The latter received an average rating from 27 % of participating RFOs. Covid-19 may have played a role in the latter, as was already stated by the funded projects (see previous chapter).

### R&I Funders: conclusions

Overall, the validity of idea underlying the JFS has been confirmed. The same is true for the added value provided by the JFS.

The satisfaction with the JFS seems high, especially regarding its management. Improvements are continuously being made, which should ensure the satisfaction of the RFOs in the future.



## 4 Conclusions

The MEF – Monitoring and Evaluation Framework – was designed to elicit evidence to answer specific monitoring and evaluation questions. Now that the monitoring has gathered concrete evidence twice, it is time to link it back to these questions:

**Q1) *Did Southeast Asian researchers gain access to European scientific networks?***

Considering that the Covid-19 pandemic has hampered a lot of travel and exchange with partners and third parties alike, the chances to travel to the partner region – reduced as they may have been – seems equally shared among early career, female, and senior researchers.

**Q2) *Have excellent research facilities in Southeast Asia become known to Europeans?***

Combining different priorities of funded projects, i. e. *improving researchers' understanding of partner countries research systems (71 %), enhancing researchers access to research facilities in both regions (77 %), and enhancing research data and knowledge exchange between the two regions*, it is safe to assume that there is enough motivation and opportunity for European researchers to learn about SEA research facilities.

**Q3) *Have strong and competitive biregional researcher groups been established?***

Despite the ongoing global pandemic, strong biregional ties are being formed. This becomes evident when regarding the jointly produced output, such as scientific works or follow-up project proposals.

**Q4) *Has the ability to formulate excellent proposals in a given time been fostered?***

According to the number of already submitted project proposals and those that are currently in the works, as well as the composition of research teams, it seems that it is indeed the case that proposal-writing skills are being fostered.

**Q5) *Is the alignment with the EU-ASEAN S&T Cooperation Roadmap given?***

The process of determining the theme or topics for each call is highly interactive, involving all participating RFOs throughout the process. This resulted in a number of interdisciplinary topics per call that address global challenges and require international project teams to achieve an impact that otherwise could not be achieved on a national or regional level only. Furthermore, the topics have drawn the attention of a good number of project consortia.

**Q6) *Is the idea of the JFS still valid, is it useful and complementary to existing major programmes (e.g. H2020, HE)?***

Yes, the participating RFOs clearly confirmed that the idea underlying the JFS is still valid today.

**Q7) *Is the additionality of the JFS given, compared to uni- or bilateral interventions?***

Yes, both the participating RFOs and the funded projects have clearly stated that the JFS provides additionality vis-à-vis national or regional funding, and provided examples which factors specifically contribute to the additionality.

**Q8) *How successful is the implementation of the calls?***

Measured in terms of the satisfaction of the involved RFOs and funded projects, the implementation of the calls can be regarded as very successful.

**Q9) *How high is the satisfaction of the beneficiaries with the call management?***

It has continuously improved over time and can be considered high.

**Q10) *How successful is the implementation of the funded projects?***

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the caused delays and hampered collaboration, it is too early to say conclusively how successful the implementation of the calls is. This question remains to be answered in the future.

**Q11) *What are the outcomes and impacts of the funded projects?***

The majority of funded projects state that the outcomes and impacts of their projects met their expectations or even surpassed their expectations; the few exceptions were either funded by the recent calls and are too new to have already generated any impact was reported as hindered (or delayed) by the global pandemic.

**Q12) *Did the outcomes meet the expectations of the funders as well as funded projects?***

For the vast majority of funders this is the case; the few exceptions were either only marginally involved (one call in the beginning) or did not focus on the achieved outcomes.

**Q13) *What progress was made in terms of scientific excellence?***

In total, 57 scholarly works have already been published, 30 of which are openly accessible, 45 were co-authored with project partners. 34 works were published in peer-reviewed journals.

**Q14) *What improvements were registered through the offered mobility?***

As the funded projects have made clear, the increased mobility – though hampered by the global pandemic – enabled to exchange in an interdisciplinary research collaboration, to foster one's professional network, to improve one's knowledge about the other region's research system and infrastructure. Furthermore, they reported to have built trust among project partners, which is a prerequisite for future collaborations

## 5 Recommendations

The overall objective of the Monitoring and Evaluation activity is to help improve the funding mechanism in the future. Although the present report represents only the second of its kind, some preliminary recommendations can already be drawn.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected the implementation of most funded projects, in some instances where field activities are foreseen severely so. While there is little that can be done at the JFS level, there may be some measures that might mitigate such negative effects. Keeping communication channels with funded projects open and short is key for understanding the concrete challenges and deriving suitable measures, not just with regard to the pandemic.

The consulted R&I funders as well as the funded projects agree that the idea behind the JFS is still highly relevant and that it provides an added value vis-à-vis other available funding possibilities. These strengths could play a role in further popularising the JFS and in aligning efforts with existing schemes in each region.

Improvements in terms of support provided by the JFS could clearly be observed. Efforts in this direction should be kept up to ensure a continuously high satisfaction and balance out the few remaining negative experiences.

The monitoring and evaluation activities have only just begun. These efforts should be kept up to allow insights into the developments over time and to collect evidence to provide solid answers to the evaluation questions. Ideally, the participation of funded project in the monitoring activities would be mandated to ensure a high response rate. At the same time, the monitoring and evaluation methodology may be tweaked to keep a light burden on the funded projects whilst gathering the required evidence.

Although the share of scientific open access works is roughly 67 %, it is recommended to further explore how this share can be increased. The JFS may provide further incentives or help overcome some of the barriers that lead to open access publications.

As stated by the consulted project coordinators, one of the most favourite features of the JFS is the broad range of eligible costs. Combined with the fact that most projects strive to enhance the involved researchers' access to research facilities in the partner region as well as enhancing the data and knowledge exchange between the two regions, this could make a convincing argument in further promoting the JFS among the research community in SEA and Europe.