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Although situated over 4,500 miles from Brussels, **Christine I Caly-Sanchez** of the Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence explains the essential role EU money plays in local R&D on the other side of the Atlantic

## Sunshine State horizon

Located across ten different US states, the EU expands its influence across America through a network of European Union Centers of Excellence. The goal of the EUCEs is to promote the study of the EU, its institutions, policies and member states, and EU-US relations. These aims are achieved through teaching programmes, scholarly research and outreach activities in local and regional communities.

A consortium of the University of Miami and Florida International University, the Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence (MEUCE), was established in autumn 2001 through a grant from the Delegation of the European Union to the United States. MEUCE facilitates the development of new courses on the EU; provides financial support to graduate students and faculties pursuing EU-related research; hosts conferences on EU-related matters; and sponsors public lectures featuring speakers from Brussels. The centre also conducts outreach workshops for educators, journalists and media professionals in the greater Miami area.

Christine I Caly-Sanchez is the associate director of MEUCE and detailed the significance of EU funding, the centre's plans for Horizon 2020, and how to encourage greater participation in the new research and innovation framework programme.

### How important is EU RDI funding to Miami and the local area?

According to the Beacon Council, Miami-Dade County's official economic development partnership, life sciences (defined as medical devices and pharmaceutical manufacturing, research institutions and medical laboratories) form the largest component for regional industry in South Florida, which comprises the Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties.

EU RDI funding is essential to Miami-Dade County, since the city is home to more than 1,300 life science companies with over 13,000 employees – this includes several industry leaders, namely: Beckman Coulter, BD (Becton, Dickinson and Company), Boston Scientific, Cordis Corporation (a Johnson & Johnson Company), and Schering-Plough Stiefel Laboratories. South Florida's life sciences industry is anchored in the north by the Scripps Research Institute and in the south by the University of Miami's multiple research



institutions and the Jackson Memorial Hospital in the newly-renamed Miami Health District.

As one of the world's leading international commercial centres, Miami-Dade County is home to more than 1,100 multinational corporations, dozens of foreign consulates and trade offices, and various bi-national chambers of commerce. All of these organisations are capitalising on Miami's many business advantages, including a skilled, multicultural, multilingual workforce, connectivity to the world's most important markets and international infrastructure. These elements help businesses to compete in the global marketplace.

Prestigious biosciences companies are not only located in Miami – the Max Planck Florida Institute (MPFI) for Neuroscience is situated in nearby Palm Beach County and is part of the prestigious Max Planck Society based in Germany. The MPFI is the first and only institute of its kind in North America. Positioned in the new biosciences cluster, the MPFI offers a vibrant, interactive environment where scientists are provided with generous on-going support to conduct high impact, cutting-edge research.

### How would you assess local participation in FP7?

There has been significant participation at Florida International University and the University of Miami across a range of fields and



disciplines in the Seventh Framework Programme. All of the European Consulates in Miami are extremely interested in spreading information regarding EU funds to their science counsellors. In addition, the seminar held at the Miami Innovation Center during September 2013 generated a lot of enthusiasm and interest among the scientific and academic communities. Dr Alexandra Quittner (Professor of Psychology, Paediatrics and Otolaryngology at the University of Miami) and Dr Sharan Ramaswamy (assistant professor in the Department of Biomedical Engineering at Florida International University) have already applied and obtained FP7 funding.

### What are the thoughts of local businesses and academics regarding Horizon 2020 funding?

There is a tremendous amount of enthusiasm. We have held a number of events on campus at the Florida International University and within the community to promote opportunities under Horizon 2020. These events are always well attended with great interest.

These events began in 2010, when MEUCE at Florida International University hosted a deputation for the Delegation of the European Union to the United States and various European embassies. The event was led by Dr Astrid-Christina Koch, the then science counsellor in the delegation, and included science counsellors from Belgium, Estonia, France and the Czech Republic. Visits to scientific and innovative sites were organised by MEUCE and Koch made several presentations on FP7.

Since then, MEUCE has continued to organise many lectures and workshops on FP7. We are currently promoting Horizon 2020 and, during September 2013, we organised a breakfast seminar on the presentation of 'Calls for Research and Innovation Proposals – Horizon 2020' at the Miami Innovation Center. We were proud to partner with the centre and, thanks to its CEO, Carolina Rendeiro, we were able to include





presentations from Dr Irene Norstedt (head of the personalised medicine unit, health directorate, DG Research & Innovation in the European Commission), Dr Iiro Eerola (scientific project officer, personalised medicine unit), and Dr James Gavigan (minister-counsellor of Research & Innovation, Delegation of the European Union to the United States). The seminar was attended by 35 decision makers and important members of the local scientific community.

### What action are you taking to encourage greater participation in Horizon 2020?

We have held practical workshops on the recent developments concerning Horizon 2020, including tentative changes that will appear when calls begin. The session included over 60 participants and took place during August 2013 and was organised by MEUCE, the National Council of University Research Administrators and DLR, the national aeronautics and space research centre of the Federal Republic of Germany.

MEUCE is a BILAT USA 2.0 partner organisation and this workshop formed part of this bilateral co-ordination activity. Workshop participants hailed from institutions across the United States, including the Office of the President at the University of California, the University of Tennessee, Rutgers University in New Jersey and the Developmental Disabilities Institute at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan; attendees included scholars as well as research administrators in health, nanotechnology and disability advocacy.

The first segment of the workshop began with an informative talk by Errol Levy, First Secretary Research and Innovation at the European Union

#### Downtown Miami, Florida

Delegation to the United States of America, who provided an overview of European framework programmes with an eye to Horizon 2020, and also Olaf Heilmayer of DLR, who shared a brief introduction to the BILAT USA 2.0 objectives and goals. The workshop also included several break-out sessions focusing on the legal and financial aspects of Horizon 2020, the fellowship programmes, the European Research Council, the Marie Curie Actions and the European National Contact Point system. We plan to hold a follow-up session in Miami later this spring.

MEUCE is a long standing cultural, political and economic resource concerning the EU in Miami and South Florida; we look forward to another very productive and successful year.

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HORIZON 2020

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**B R O W S E**

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