



Long-Distance and Cross-Cultural Research Cooperation between Korea and the EU: A Bottom-up Perspective

Korea-EU ICT Cooperation Event

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Academic Background

- Licenciante degree in computer science (June 2002)
 - at Ghent University, Belgium
- Ph.D. degree in computer science engineering (February 2007)
 - at Ghent University, Belgium
- Postdoctoral researcher (September 2007)
 - at Ghent University - IBBT, Belgium
 - at Information and Communications University (ICU), Korea
- Senior researcher (March 2009)
 - at Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), Korea
 - (ICU merged with KAIST)

Postdoctoral Experience in Korea (1/2)

- Personal motivation
 - my girlfriend is Korean
 - to experience another culture
- Professional motivation
 - “Korea is a digital laboratory”, Google Inc.
 - “Korea is an ICT powerhouse”, various media sources
 - “Korea sees robots as a key growth engine”, various media resources
- Why ICU in Daejeon?
 - specialized in ICT research and education
 - almost all courses taught in English

Postdoctoral Experience in Korea (2/2)

- Supported by Brain Korea 21 program (BK21)
 - provides a limited amount of funding
 - not aware of any other scholarships (for European researchers)
- Ghent University
 - full funding for my “postdoc adventure” thanks to my track record and an excellent professional understanding with my Belgian supervisor
- Why “postdoc adventure”?
 - European researchers tend to seek their postdoctoral experience in the USA, Canada, other EU member states, and Japan (to some extent)
 - stay in Korea not possible without funding provided by Ghent University

Challenges in Research Cooperation (1/3)

- Formal research cooperation in a bilateral context
 - extensively discussed, but no action taken
- Reasons
 - my Belgian and Korean supervisor did not know each other personally
 - no certainty about my long-term commitment
 - my Belgian lab was at that time involved in a lot of national projects
 - founding member of a new research institute in Flanders (IBBT)
 - lack of information, time, and experience
 - publications were main focus of my postdoctoral stay
 - (my Belgian supervisor was worried about communication problems)
 - i.e., language and cultural issues

Challenges in Research Cooperation (2/3)

- Formal research cooperation in a European context (e.g., FP7)
 - briefly discussed, but no action taken
- Reasons (complementary to the bilateral context)
 - participation requires a significant, mature, and unique contribution
 - typically the output of a national project
 - requires a long-term vision
 - low acceptance rate for European project proposals
 - in the order of 10 to 20%
 - likely to have a low return-of-investment
 - why incorporate a Korean research partner (and not a European one)?
 - the distance and time difference between Korea and Belgium

Challenges in Research Cooperation (3/3)

- Formal research cooperation in a bilateral context
 - Korean company (chaebol) interested in acquiring experimental software developed by my lab in Belgium
 - extensively discussed, but unsuccessful
- Reasons
 - mainly unsuccessful due to a rather high cost of labor in Belgium
 - my Belgian supervisor asked for compensating the development costs
 - funding for two Ph.D. students for a period of two years
 - exceeded the allocated budget of the company
 - no IPR issues
 - access to ‘background’ and ‘foreground’ knowledge, shared patents

Informal Research Cooperation

- Successful research cooperation
 - we published a joint conference and journal paper
 - my Belgian lab endorsed a national Korean project proposal
 - both labs attended the first “Korea-EU ICT Cooperation Event” in Seoul
- Left my Belgian lab in August 2008
 - near-term perspective: informal research cooperation
 - long-term perspective: formal research cooperation
 - cooperation in the field of standardization and exchange of researchers
 - EUREKA project (<http://www.eureka.be/>)
 - Korean government has made available funding for contributing to the definition of EU project proposals (<http://fp.or.kr/>)



Feedback / Suggestions

- Increase the number, attractiveness, and fame of fellowships
 - for *young European* Ph.D. holders looking for a postdoc experience
 - should facilitate better cooperation with the EU in the long term
- National projects in Korea (a/o)
 - project proposals do already exist and have already been evaluated
 - results are supposed to be mature and innovative
 - improve their visibility to facilitate matchmaking with EU partners
 - outline for possible cooperation
 - given Korean system A and European system B
 - the scope of an EU project may consist of coupling improved versions of system A and system B

Any questions or comments?

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