Response to the Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework for future EU Research and Innovation Funding

Prague, 16 May 2011

The National Contact Centre for Women and Science at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Green Paper *from Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding.* We wish to draw particular attention to the importance of the gender dimension in knowledge production and research careers. We wish to stress that it will not be possible for the EU to tackle the challenges facing European societies unless gender is made an integral part of the policy making and implementation processes in research, including the evaluation of research quality and impact of research funding.

7. What should be the measures of success for EU research and innovation funding? Which performance indicators could be used?

Research and innovation funding should be aimed beyond academic and technological results. Assessment of European research should include a societal dimension – an assessment of impact on various European publics, including gender impact; furthermore, research stakeholders using public funds distributed through EU research and innovation programmes should be assessed according to their public engagement, in particular in areas of public concern or controversy. Communication activities should be also part of the impact assessment.

9. How should a stronger focus on societal challenges affect the balance between curiosity-driven research and agenda-driven activities?

Despite the strong emphasis placed on addressing societal challenges, European research should provide ample space for curiosity-driven research. Not all opinions, perspectives and worldviews are necessarily included in policy design and therefore a fair degree of openness of the system is needed to address issues that may escape the policy making process and stakeholders involved in it. This pertains to all areas of research, but more particularly to social and economic sciences and humanities where thematic, methodological and other openness is vital if the wide range of social processes and interests is to be adequately captured in European research. The policy making process should strive to take into greater account stakeholders beyond the academic and business sectors, particularly civil society. Furthermore, a fair volume of funding should be preserved for the European Research Council with its stress on frontier and curiosity driven research.

13. How could EU research and innovation activities attract greater interest and involvement of citizens and civil society?

The European Commission should pool best practices regarding public engagement in science, with particular attention paid to involvement of various European publics in consultations and discussions of direction and impact of strategic European research objectives and instruments for their implementation. Communication channels with a capacity to engage young generation of people should receive particular attention. However, greater involvement of the public would demand an overhaul of the language used to communicate with citizens, as most European research, development and innovation policy cannot capture and hold the attention of non-policy citizens.

15. How should industrial participation in EU research and innovation programmes be strengthened? How should Joint Technology Initiatives (such as those launched in the current Framework Programme) or different forms of 'public-private partnerships' be supported? What should be the role of European Technology Platforms?

European funding and allocations of R&D&I budgets for the private sector are already quite high, especially compared to budgets provided to non-profit civil society organisations. The European Commission needs to take particular care that public funds it provides to private corporations are used to the benefit of European public.

20. How should intellectual property rules governing EU funding strike the right balance between competitiveness aspects and the need for access to and dissemination of scientific results?

As research and innovations play an increasingly stronger role in European societies, access to knowledge, technology and innovations must be ensured to wide segments of the population. Otherwise, the European knowledge society project will be imperilled by inequalities in access. Furthermore, the public nature of research funded with public funds should be at the forefront of attention, ensuring – to the degree possible – open access of researchers and citizens to results achieved using public funds.

23. How should the role of Marie Curie Actions be strengthened in promoting researcher mobility and developing attractive careers?

Marie Curie Actions should provide individual funding to early stage researchers; in order to ensure equal access to researcher mobility, the MCA need to address issue of family relocation, childcare provision, dual-career partnerships etc. Without attention paid to these issues, the effect on women's and some men's careers in research will continue to be adverse.

24. What actions should be taken at EU level to further strengthen the role of women in science and innovation?

The gender dimension needs to be carefully mainstreamed to all aspects of European research. This does not concern only monitoring the participation of women in the EU policy process and in project implementation but also the assessment of gender impact of research projects and innovations. Particularly, it needs to be emphasised that attention to gender aspects of innovations provides a major opportunity – not only in the sense of improving the lives of European societies but also in terms of business opportunities.

Closing questions

Are there any other ideas of comments which you believe are important for future EU research and innovation funding and are not covered in the Green Paper?

European research and innovation funding policy may still be improved vastly in terms of gender equality and public engagement. The funding distributed through various R&D&I programmes is public, and for this purpose it should pay attention to addressing social, research and technological needs of both women and men in view of their social roles and preferences. There is ample research to show that this is not always so and one or the other sex is thus disadvantaged. It merits attention that major R&D&I objectives of the European Union have their gender aspects (foods safety, security, the environment, illnesses, ageing etc.) and thus these aspects must be reflected in the design, implementation and assessment of funding distribution.

Secondly, while the important role of private sector for development of societies cannot be underestimated, European R&D&I policy should harness the ideas and notions extant in other spheres of society that are not profit oriented and represent other, equally valid, values needed for the development of human societies. For this purpose, future R&D&I funding should strive to include non-profit and civil society actors that are crucial for the achievement of the European objectives. This concerns particularly various environmental organisations, gender equality organisations, patient organisations and others.

Contact:
Marcela Linkova
National Contact Centre for Women and Science
Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences CR
Jilska 1
110 00 Prague 1
CZECH REPUBLIC
Email: marcela.linkova@soc.cas.cz