

Estonian position for the development of the next Framework Programme

EU framework programmes have been a major instrument for building the European Research Area. The new Framework Programme (FP) needs to clearly define its role in the complex system of European Research, Technological Development and Innovation policies and instruments as well as its relation to national and regional policies on the one hand, and with other EU funds and policies on the other hand.

1. We propose the following general principles which should be considered in designing the new Framework Programme.

To achieve the objectives of the ERA Vision 2020, the **budget of FP** should be significantly increased by means of restructuring of the EU budget in line with the strategic goals of EU 2020 and by revision of the existing reserves within the RTD&I. As knowledge-based society is the basis for the future well-being, EU should follow the model of several Member States during the recent economic crisis where budget cuts were made in all other areas except education and research.

The **Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP)** could be a part of FP in order to create better synergy and to face future priorities of European research and research-based innovation.

Before the new programming period, there is a need for cooperation and open discussion among the public sector and stakeholders, to ensure that during the next period the principles of added value and interoperability between **Structural Funds and the FP** will come into effect.

The Innovation Union Flagship Initiative clearly outlines the EU perspective to connect research funding to beneficial socio-economic outcomes. At the same time the implementation of the Flagship Initiative should not lead to more complicated **R&I landscape**.

2. The FP regulations should be considerably simplified; excessive control mechanisms should be lightened in order to achieve better risk/trust balance. Stability, consistency and coherence, adaptability and risk tolerance should be the guiding principles for appropriate and efficient rules for research.

The following principles should be followed:

- The interests of end-users should guide/underlie simplification;
- Reducing significantly the administrative bureaucracy (e.g. budget limits to projects which will be the subject of ex-post audit) and increasing substantially risk tolerance towards the programming instruments;
- Harmonisation of the rules, procedures and terminology between different DG-s, consistent interpretation and consistent and traceable application of the rules and procedures;
- Continuing the efforts to shorten the time to contract;
- Simplification of time-recording mechanisms to an acceptable level.

3. The prime criterion for research funding in FP should be scientific excellence. However, in order to fully exploit the potential of the EU as a whole, appropriate elements regarding capacity building and development of potential within the European Research Area, including FP, should be designed.

Contents of the next Framework Programme

Balance between top-down and bottom-up research in FP

To address the grand challenges of our time which call for action at the European level, it is essential to mobilise industry and knowledge-building institutions of different scales, as well as civil society at large, through both top-down and bottom-up approaches, as emphasized in the conclusions of the Competitiveness Council from 3 December 2009.

a) Bottom-up activities will ensure the flexibility of FP:

- i. European Research Council (ERC) activities must continue to support top talents and performance of excellent basic research;
- ii. Marie Curie actions support the realisation of ERA through researchers' mobility. We strongly support the continuation of efforts to professionalise the careers of early stage researchers, as well as retaining the focus on research-based training and increasing access to Marie Curie initiatives for junior post-doc researchers;
- iii. Research Potential programme should support knowledge transfer as well as capacity building, and help to strengthen excellence across ERA;

b) Top-down activities will support strategic choices and targeted investments

- i. Meeting the grand challenges must take into account the diversity of Europe (differences in size of EU countries, differences in development trajectories, etc.). In case of Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI), Research Infrastructures, public-private partnerships, small countries are not able to allocate very high public and private investments and resources needed for such an ambitious scale and scope. At the same time, small countries have excellent research groups and high tech industry but on a smaller scale. In order to be included, special measures/instruments should be put in place/adopted which would enable smaller groups and entities to participate.
- ii. To ensure the continuing excellence in research and support from society, FP should include measures addressing Europe's talent base and general public, for example: consistently upgrade the quality of science education in Europe; strengthen the links between all levels of education, as well as research and innovation (the knowledge triangle) to introduce R&D as an exciting and promising career opportunity; establish a targeted strategy through specific models for communicating research results.
- iii. In the pursuit for economic prosperity and in meeting the grand challenges, we acknowledge the greater role of social sciences and humanities research.
- iv. Taking into account the extent of fragmentation of Europe's research base, it will be advisable to consider and support Joint Programming as a gradual process within the ERA.