

Inspiration paper of the EU Member States and Associated (Candidate) Countries for EU Research and Innovation Funding

12 July 2011

Introduction

A series of workshops has been organized to facilitate a **structured informal exchange of views** between the EU Member States and Associated (Candidate) Countries regarding their national views on the future framework for research and innovation funding in the EU. The main objectives of the workshops were **mutual learning and information on the national views** as well as the exchange of relevant experiences with the current and preceding EU research and innovation programmes.

The workshops allowed for an extensive discussion between the Member States and Associated (Candidate) Countries. The participants were in that way able to identify some key messages on different objectives and themes, which are presented in this document. These key messages should be deepened and formalized in the responsible bodies, both at Member State and EU level, during the upcoming preparation and negotiation phase of the future EU funding programme(s) for research and innovation. This paper should be considered without prejudice to more detailed national positions on Green Paper named "From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation Funding."

Key Messages

1. The CSF must be embedded properly in a **sound overall political architecture for research and innovation** in the EU. It has to contribute to the objectives of the Europe-2020-strategy and its flagship initiatives; in particular, to the Innovation Union. Member States and Associated (Candidate) Countries place high emphasis on the need for a holistic view to cover the whole system from fundamental research to market uptake, to develop the European Research Area and to support the relevant sector policies. Research and Innovation policies should be coherent, although based on a **multiple legal basis** which combines the relevant chapters of the Treaty. In particular, a clear understanding of the relation between the envisaged framework for the further development of the European Research Area ('ERA Framework') and the CSF is required; The CSF, being the most important instrument to implement ERA, should be a fully operational, integral part of the ERA Framework comprising all related funding instruments at EU level. Member States and Associated (Candidate) Countries ask therefore for a **clear roadmap and action plan** indicating the relevant steps and interactions to be taken towards the development of the CSF and the ERA Framework, both at Member States and EU level.
2. To **overcome the innovation gap** in Europe, i.e. the better transfer of research results into products, processes and services, must be **one of the leading principles of the CSF**. A **comprehensive set of funding instruments** should be designed in such a way that all stages of the research and innovation cycle are covered and are aimed at providing solutions for bottlenecks in the system. Efforts to improve the transfer of knowledge into innovation should be stepped up, among others by a stronger focus on demonstration activities, increased project flexibility

3. **Scientific knowledge** not only satisfies people's curiosity, but it builds the **basis for innovation** and is also an effective job creator. The role of excellent, curiosity driven research is often underestimated as its socio-economic impact is not as obvious as for the mission oriented applied research. However, breakthrough discoveries with huge societal benefits often occur unexpectedly while shifting the frontiers of scientific knowledge. **The independent European Research Council (ERC)** which supports the researchers' freedom of choice by financing projects on the basis of excellence should receive a significant level of funding.
4. The Member States and Associated (Candidate) Countries emphasize that the **CSF structure** should strongly interlink the research and innovation agendas driven by science, industry, governmental bodies and civil society. For that purpose, the applied research programmes within the current FP7 and the research-related innovation programmes within the current CIP as well as the EIT have to be streamlined and integrated as far as practicable. The Member States and Associated (Candidate) Countries support the Commission's view that (a) **grand challenges** reflecting a demand-driven, mission-oriented research approach, (b) **key enabling technologies, capital market instruments and SME-specific measures** reflecting the technology-pushes at the supply side, as well as (c) **basic and curiosity-driven research** are the right building blocks and could be used as starting points for the design of the CSF. A **broad understanding of innovation** comprising non-technological innovation (e.g. services, including software development and creative industries) should bridge and interlink these building blocks, if relevant by specific horizontal activities as part of a matrix structure of the CSF. **Integrated and multidisciplinary approaches**, including the vital role of social sciences and humanities, should form the basis of the CSF to overcome traditional technology silos. Finally, the integration of the EIT is an important element of the CSF and should also strengthen the link within the Knowledge Triangle.
5. Despite the recent improvement, administrative burdens are still important obstacles to participation in the EU funding programmes. Therefore, Commission, Council and Parliament should give the highest priority **to the simplification of procedures and the reduction of the number of different instruments**. Responsible trust based approach incorporating national accounting principles of the participants should be considered with the target of shortening the time to grant period. Interoperability of different funding instruments has to be ensured, in particular by means of designing of **one transparent, simple and consistent set of rules and procedures**. Greater harmonisation of rules and procedures of CSF with those of the Cohesion Policy is called for where appropriate. The number of instruments should be reduced by **clustering instruments of comparable purposes**, such as those for coordination of national programmes, the different SME activities, etc.
6. A **sufficient degree of flexibility** should be a leading principle for the CSF. Even with the predefinition of certain grand challenges and key enabling technologies,

the CSF must be able to fully respond to new and emerging trends in science, technology, society and economy. Where appropriate, the current “top-down” (thematic) approach of the Specific Programme ‘Cooperation’ under FP7 might be transformed towards more “bottom-up” activities (less prescriptive) stimulating a broader competition for best solutions. There should also be flexibility with regards to size of projects. Concurrently, the potential structuring effects of “top-down”-based, larger EU-projects should be considered. For large scale projects, where appropriate, a planning phase of up to 6-12 months could be possible before submitting a proposal to enable countries to prepare for the submission of a proposal. This might give new-comers and stakeholders from countries/regions with low participation more opportunity to bring their strategic agenda in line with funding programmes and to build excellent consortia. In this context, the **role of the Programme Committees** should be slightly adapted towards more strategic bodies to identify, on the basis of transparent stakeholder consultation, the best possible balance with regard to the predefinition of content, size and implementation modalities of individual funding measures.

7. The availability of an effective, well-established and commonly understood **evaluation** scheme is one of the most important strengths of the current EU funding system. It helps to ensure fairness and equal opportunities within CSF for all participants, male and female, from all Member States and Associated (Candidate) Countries. The criterion of scientific and technological quality (“**Excellence**”) should remain the leading principle as well as one of the key evaluation criteria for research funding within the CSF. In line with the purpose of the call, the weight between the criteria might be adapted such as a higher weight for impact issues in more market-oriented or policy-support type of projects. A balanced composition of the evaluation panels reflecting all relevant stakeholders remains a big challenge for the CSF; in particular, as the involvement of actors from business, technology transfer and innovation entities has to be reinforced in the future.
8. Successful parts of the current EU funding programmes should be kept to ensure a **maximum of continuity for the applicants**. In particular, **collaborative-type research projects** based on consortia of public and/or private partners, taking participation of SME’s into account, should be maintained as the central element of the CSF, as the transnational co-operation is a unique value of EU funding. Moreover, the **European Research Council (ERC)**, **Marie-Curie-Actions** and **Eurostars** are generally regarded as success factors of the current system. The ERC should be further developed as a “European Trademark” for ground breaking research and could be integrated into national evaluation schemes. The ERC activities should be strengthened in terms of autonomy and budget. The possibility to combine different instruments should be considered, e.g. combining MC actions with collaborative projects or with Research Infrastructures activities.
9. CSF should include **explicit provisions on knowledge transfer and IP management** especially for research institutes, universities as well as SMEs. Knowledge transfer and IP matters should be more intensely taken into account when setting up Work Programmes and calls with regard to the opening up of the CSF for international collaboration. IP rules should be transparent and clear and guarantee equal opportunities including a fair mandate concerning **international**

collaboration. Results from publicly funded research and research consortia should be accessible where possible, but it should not impede economic activities by private partners. Open Access of peer reviewed publications should be standard.

10. The **Cohesion Policy** in the next funding period should be **better used as a pathway to research excellence** and economic competitiveness in consistency with the CSF. The targeted use of cohesion funds for research should be strengthened in order to support the participation of less-represented regions. In particular, the involvement of ESF instruments should allow better human resources management in RTD by adding mobility schemes to the other cohesion policy objectives. Moreover, an analysis and better understanding of economic impacts of research infrastructures for regional competitiveness shall be a starting point for future **synergies between the CSF and Cohesion policy instruments like the structural funds**. Access to research infrastructures should be considered within an integrated concept of brain circulation by streamlining the CSF with the EU Programmes for Education and Training, and with the European structural funds.