

SwissCore Synopsis

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In February, it's snowing reports

As winter slowly recedes from Brussels, the European Commission has displayed an intense publishing activity; not less than three reports have been issued by DG Research during last month. First, before the debate on the next Framework Programme could really start, an expert group under the lead of Prof. Rietschel, President of the Leibniz Gesellschaft had a close look at the precursor (FP6), in order to make bold propositions for the current (FP7) and the next (FP8) generation of programmes (p.4). Radical as the ideas in the ex-post evaluation of FP6 might be (e.g. doubling or tripling the FP7 budget for FP8), they have at least the merit to throw a large stone in the pond and to wake up the stakeholders for the upcoming policy debate - we just hope that seen the current low temperatures and harsh climate (meteorologic as well as economic), the pond is not frozen over...

To nicely complete the report that the European University Association (EUA) had published last November on sustainability of university funding, DG Research has just issued an experts' report dealing with the impact of project-based funding on the financial management of universities (p.6). These reports fuel the debate on the introduction of full costing methodologies by research project participants, an aim that the Commission had overtly declared during the debate on the FP7 Rules for Participation. Only thanks to the European Parliament's Research Committee were the representatives of the universities and other higher education institutions able to salvage a decent indirect cost flat rate, at least until 2010. As the review of FP7 is approaching, discussion on what the ideal indirect costs flat rate should be has already started. Most recent news however point towards a minor change only (5-10% less), if at all. Unlike the weather, the Commission seems to have warmed up on this issue.

The third report of DG Research deals more with the present, as it mainly outlines the new method it has set up to monitor the implementation of FP7 (p.2). The data presented in this report is however rather thin, as it just concerns the first year of the Programme (2007). In addition, DG INFSO has issued a report on the ICT research and innovation agenda for the next decade (p.8). With all this, one has the feeling that it's just snowing reports...

After being frozen for a while, activity has resumed at the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT): the Governing Board has just published the selection criteria for the future Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) (p.7). The consortia preparing a KIC will now be able to better assess whether their project fits into the EIT box. We hope these guidelines will not leave too many of them out in the cold. To generally warm up the innovation climate, DG Enterprise has just launched a new exchange programme called Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (p.8). This programme aims at twinning starting and experienced entrepreneurs and to give support for the stay abroad of the former.

And with the current cold weather, even the Education Council seemed to wait for spring before taking major resolutions: the new indicators for the Education and Training Work Programme 2010 will be defined at the May Council meeting.

But the nomination of the experts in charge of the review of the European Research Council (ERC) (p.3) will hopefully warm up the research policy scene this spring and lead to a summer full of hot weather and hot debates...

Panel members finally appointed for the ERC review

On 24 February, the European Commission published the names of the future members of the high level panel which will conduct the review of the European Research Council (ERC). The aim of the review, which comes after only two years of operations, is to critically assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the structure and mechanisms of the ERC. The Commission had already published a relatively detailed methodology and terms of reference for the ERC review in August last year (see Synopsis 2008/8).

The six eminent experts selected for this challenging task all have a strong background in research policy and management and have all held top positions in academic institutions or government:

- Vaira Vike-Freiberga (Panel Chair), former President of Latvia and Professor of Psychology;
- Lord Sainsbury (Vice-chair), former Under Secretary of State at UK Department of Trade and Industry;
- Yves Mény (Rapporteur), President of the European University Institute and Professor of political sciences;
- Fiorella Kostoris Padoa Schioppa, Professor of economics and former President of ISAE;
- Lars-Hendrik Röller, President of the European School of Management and Technology and Professor of economics;
- Elias Zerhouni, former Director of the National Institutes of Health (US) and Professor of medicine.

Through their work, the experts are expected to provide advice and guidance for possible modifications of the structures and mechanisms of the ERC, which could then be implemented in the frame of the mid-term review of FP7 in 2010.

With the appointment of the experts by the European Commission the work on the ERC review can finally start. The expert panel will meet between February and July, and will prepare an initial report in the summer. An initial response from the Commission is expected in autumn.

DG Research changes its way of monitoring the Framework Programme

On 13 February, the European Commission's DG Research published the first monitoring report on the implementation of FP7, covering the year 2007. This report is the first one based on a completely new approach for measuring the implementation and performance of the running Framework Programme. Unlike under FP6, where these activities were performed annually by panels of independent experts, the reporting under FP7 is designed as an internal management tool based on a coherent system of indicators. Future reports will follow the same structure as this first one and should thus allow a kind of longitudinal analysis of FP7 implementation. The indicators are divided in ten categories:

1. Promotion of FP7 (e.g. info days, NCP meetings);
2. Performance of the calls (mainly success rates);
3. Performance of the proposal evaluation procedure (including time to grant);
4. Quality of ongoing research projects (e.g. results of project reviews);
5. Project performance by outputs (e.g. publications, dissemination activities, patents);
6. FP activity (e.g. number of projects per theme, participations per country),
7. Achieving gender equality (mostly male/female ratios);
8. Observing sound ethical principles in FP research (e.g. number of ethical reviews);
9. Performance of international cooperation activities (e.g. participation of Third Countries);
10. Simplification of the FP (based more on qualitative indicators).

While this first report nicely details the indicators to be measured annually, the information it contains is somewhat limited, as it is only based on the first year of FP7. Indeed, for indicators 4 to 10, there is only very little data available from 2007. More extensive as well as first comparative data is expected to be found in the report 2008.

The first FP7 monitoring report can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/reports/2009/pdf/first_fp7_monitoring_en.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none

Call 2009 of the ARTEMIS JU launched

On 5 March, the ARTEMIS Joint Undertaking (JU), one of the currently five Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI), launched its second call. Deadline for the submission of Project Outlines is 15 April. Full Project Proposal have to be submitted till 3 September. The 22 ARTEMIS Member States have committed an indicative budget of around €37 million. There will be only one call per year.

The financial contribution of the ARTEMIS JU will be 16.7% of eligible costs incurred by participants to implement the projects. Swiss participants will also receive 16.7% of their eligible costs, but no more funding from national authorities will be added, since Switzerland is not a Member State of ARTEMIS. The 2009 call of the ENIAC JU, the other JTI in the field of ICT, is expected to be published in a few days.

More information on the 2009 call of ARTEMIS can be found on this Website:

https://www.artemis-ju.eu/call_2009

EU Research Policy

Dossier: Looking back on FP6 with a view to FP8

With perfect timing, the report of the independent Expert Group for the ex-post evaluation of the 6th Framework Programme (FP6) came out in mid-February. Indeed, as discussions about the mid-term review of FP7 and the preparations of the future FP8 start brewing here in Brussels, it seems sensible to take stock from the lessons of the previous Framework Programme before amending the current one, or even more so, designing the next one. It therefore comes as no surprise that the experts' report, next to a large section devoted to FP6 and the lessons to be drawn from it, also devotes a substantial chapter not only to conclusions with an impact on the running FP7, but also to recommendations and a vision of the future of the EU Framework Programmes.

The main three chapters analysing the results and achievements of FP6 are quite insightful, not only on a purely metric level, but also on the significance of this programme on the policy level. This part of the report is divided in three parts:

- Rationale: This part analyses whether the policy objectives of FP6 have been attained, and in the appropriate way. The main finding here is that none of the declared goals of FP6 can be described as specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (SMART) and that neither the desired outcomes, nor the way to achieve these were specified. More coherence with other EU policies should be sought in the future.
- Implementation: In a large section of the report, the experts looked at the design and structure of FP6 as well as at the participation it attracted and the suitability of the instruments. When compared to previous Framework Programmes, it can be noted that FP6 had fewer and bigger projects than FP5 (the number of participants per contract doubled), that the success rates generally fell (18% in FP6 compared to 26% in FP5) and that half of the allocated budget went to large projects with many participants (IPs and NoEs: 47.5%). Gender balance was still largely inadequate. Interestingly, the expert group looked at country participation and found no differences in success rates between "old" and "new" Member States, despite large differences between these two groups on purely budgetary bases.

Regarding the return of different countries, the net “donors” and “recipients” are identified in the report, but surprisingly, the experts do not find a correlation between the return and the domestic R&D investment (GERD). Points of concerns are the dwindling industry participation, especially in the life sciences, and the lack of clear data on SME involvement. Besides unclear communication regarding the purpose and aim of instruments newly introduced in FP6 (IPs, NoEs, ERA-NETs), the biggest issue for the expert group remains the cumbersomeness of the administrative procedures (“this is not quite international worst practice among RTD funders but comes very close to it”). For example, average time to contract in FP6 was an impressive 384 days!

- Achievements: In general, the expert group draws a positive balance from the achievements of FP6: In their view, the core thematic priorities have generated European added value, network externalities and a contribution towards industrial competitiveness. However, the programme was only partially successful in bringing new knowledge to the industrial sector. Internationally respected scientific and operational standards for competitive selection procedures were achieved under FP6.

The last section of the report summarises the findings of the previous sections, while adding a set of ten recommendations for the design of FP8, as well as a general vision for the role of the Framework Programme in the European Research Area. The recommendations focus on the following points:

1. More in-depth analysis and documentation of the policy goals of the Framework Programme;
2. Clarification of the role of the Framework Programme in regard to national RTD policies;
3. Revision of the “Third Country” terminology and strategic definition of international cooperation partners;
4. Creation of a new bottom-up format (inspired by NEST);
5. Encouragement of SME participation in line with relevant industrial dynamics;
6. Continuation of the ESFRI process for research infrastructures;
7. Re-introduction of gender equality actions to substantially increase female researchers’ participation;
8. Further promote scientific careers and mobility, also incoming;
9. Radical simplification of administrative procedures (outsourcing to agencies, reducing financial control mechanisms and time to contract, improving IT tools, transparent and commensurate audit procedures). In this context, a move away from the principle of cost reimbursement towards “price-based” contracts (i.e. procurement) is proposed.
10. Better measurement and monitoring of the results and achievements of the Framework Programme and broadening of the culture of evaluation at the European Commission.

Together with these recommendations, the experts unveil their vision of the future Framework Programme, which focuses on two lines of actions:

- Grand Challenges would be defined through a top-down process to integrate the problems, concerns and questions of citizens (e.g. climate change, ageing society);
- Grand Ideas would result from bottom-up activities initiated by researchers, universities, companies.

The latter would be “something like the European Research Council (ERC), but one that is freed from the short-term constraints of being a budget line in FP7”. The report goes on to develop the experts’ view of an independent ERC, which could include NEST-like collaborative research projects and be managed by no other than a revamped European Science Foundation (ESF)! In addition to the two lines above, the vision further claims the need for an innovation and technology transfer instrument. All this added up, the experts estimate that a doubling or tripling of the current Framework Programme budget would be necessary to deliver on the vision!

While parts of the report can certainly be seen as controversial, it certainly has the merit to ask challenging questions and to launch the debate about FP8 on a sound basis. The experts’ debatable vision of FP8 should not overshadow the merits of this excellent report, which gives

ample evidence for the upcoming policy debate on the next generation of the Framework Programme.

The report of the expert group for the FP6 *ex-post* evaluation can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/reports/2009/pdf/fp6_evaluation_final_report_en.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none

Expert report on university financing

Although not yet officially published, a final draft of the Expert Group report entitled “Diversified funding streams for university-based research: impact of external project-based research funding on financial management in universities” was made available in the middle of February. This report can be seen as a complement to the report of the European University Association (EUA) on the financial sustainability of Europe’s universities, published in November of last year (see Synopsis 2008/10). Much alike EUA, the expert group mandated by DG Research and under the lead of Sabine Herlitschka from the Austrian research funding organisation FFG makes the following recommendations to the different actors:

- Universities should recognise that excellence in research goes in hand with excellence in research management. Financial management is seen as a condition for informed, strategic decision-making and sustainable development; therefore, universities should adopt full costing methodologies as soon as possible, in consideration of their national legal requirements.
- Member States should, together with the European Commission and the national funding agencies, contribute to the sustainability of university-based research by drawing up Good Practice Guidelines for External Funding Terms and Conditions, in consultation with universities.
- Member States should be clear about the purpose of core funding and recognise the infrastructural costs of universities, based on assessments of the current state of university research infrastructure (both human and physical) to identify priority areas for investment.
- The European Commission should reward best practices and encourage the adoption of full costing. Sharing of such best practices and mutual learning should be promoted. As part of the mid-term review of FP7, the state of play across the EU on the ability of universities to identify the true costs of research should be assessed. The FP7 transitional flat rate could be used as a major external driver towards full cost implementation, but it should not be considered in isolation.

The Expert Group willingly only touched upon the research activities of universities, while the complementary report from EUA tried to consider both the costs of education and research. Whereas the findings of the present report might sound somewhat trivial, they serve as a good basis for an open debate on the question of university financing. Indeed, the realisation that excellent research needs excellent research management is key to a good relation between scientists and their funders; moreover, transparency of costs will indeed lead to higher quality science being funded. However, this transparency might scare certain institutions keen to retain the current (possibly non transparent) distribution mechanisms. The debate that is expected to follow up on the official publication of the report promises to be interesting.

The report of the Expert Group can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/eg_external_research_funding_final_repor_with_cover.pdf

Publications

Expert group report on the Open Method of Coordination in Research Policy

The Expert Group for the follow-up of the research aspects of the Lisbon strategy (LEG) assessed the impact of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) with a set of 174 interviews with national policy-makers, and on the basis of their own expertise. The implementation of the OMC was to be overseen by CREST (Comité de la recherche scientifique et technique) through a

series of working groups presenting a report. The main findings of the study that was published on 7 January 2009 are that the CREST-OMC constitutes a novel approach and that it has achieved substantial results. However, there is also room for improvement, most notably in the field of coordination. Furthermore, the expert group points out that diverse expectations are held as to the type of learning/coordination that should be achieved in the CREST-OMC process by its national representatives and its actors respectively.

The expert group report can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/omc_coordination_2009.pdf

Climate Change Research in FP6

An overview over research carried out in the field of Climate Change during FP6 stresses the importance of detecting and describing global change processes in order to improve prediction of climate change and its impacts. The publication is divided into seven parts according to the respective research fields: I) Carbon and nitrogen cycles: sources and sinks; II) Atmospheric pollutants and their regional impacts; III) Stratospheric ozone and climate interactions; IV) Climate dynamics and variability; V) Prediction of climate change and its impacts; VI) Adaptation and mitigation strategies; VII) Observing and forecasting systems.

Also on the subject of climate change, the European Commission adopted a Staff Working Document on integrated climate change, based on an International Symposium on the results of the fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The document presents the main research priorities and knowledge gaps founded on the discussions during the symposium. Furthermore it outlines current and planned EU-funded activities on climate change research.

The overview can be found under:

http://www.eurosfair.prdd.fr/7pc/doc/1221469581_climate_change_projects_fp6.pdf

The Staff Working Document can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/environment/index_en.cfm?pg=publications

◆ Innovation

EIT publishes criteria for selection of KICs

On 2 March the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) published the criteria for the selection of Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs).

KICs will bring together the three elements of the knowledge triangle: research, education and innovation. They will be excellence-driven partnerships between universities, research organisations, companies and other innovation stakeholders. KICs will be highly integrated, building on existing partnerships between partners or centres. The proposals may be trans- or interdisciplinary and may incorporate programmes or projects already in place throughout Europe. Accordingly, the selection criteria established by the EIT are demanding, covering the inclusion of a business plan as well as a plan on how to put into practice the educational goals of the EIT. Successful consortia will therefore need proven strength in research, education as well as in entrepreneurship in order to be able to build a coherent innovation chain. As only 25% of the means of a KIC will be directly financed through the EIT budget, consortia will need to attract additional money from different sources, both public and private.

A KIC will have to consist of at least three independent organisations from three different EU Member States. Participation of organisations from Third Countries such as Switzerland is possible, but a majority of partners has to be established in the EU Member States. A KIC shall include at least one higher education establishment and one private company.

A selection panel will examine the three top-scoring proposals from each priority area and will prepare a final report. Upon receipt of this report, the EIT Governing Board will decide on whether to hold hearings prior the designation of the KICs. Finally, the Governing Board will select two or three KICs.

The launch of the call is foreseen on 2 April 2009 and will cover topics of mitigation and adaptation of climate change, sustainable energy and future ICT applications. This will be the only call for a long time, being the next call planned only for 2013. The call deadline can be expected in August 2009 and the selection of the first two or three KICs by the Governing Board in January 2010. The call will be published on the EIT Website as well as in the Official Journal of the EU.

More information on the EIT as well as on the selection criteria for KICs can be found on the Website: http://ec.europa.eu/eit/index_en.htm

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is launched

Young or rather new European entrepreneurs will be able to spend up to six months working with an experienced entrepreneur in another EU country and learn how to better manage and grow their business. This is the concept of Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, a new EU exchange programme covering all 28 Member States. The exchange will take place between a New Entrepreneur (NE) and a Host Entrepreneur (HE), whereas the New Entrepreneur will be shadowing the Host Entrepreneur who is an experienced business person. This can take place in any sector of activity and there is no age limit for New Entrepreneurs. The matching of the HE and NE is carried out with the help of over 100 intermediary organisations all across the EU (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, start-up centres). NE are entitled to receive a financial contribution from the EU towards their travel and accommodation costs. This funding varies according to the living costs and ranges from €560 to €1100 per month.

In 2009-2010 about 870 stays shall be organised. An asset of the programme could be that it will encourage cross-boarder business activities in Europe, being that only 8% of SMEs export their goods and services within the EU. However, it seems to be rather questionable whether young entrepreneurs will have the time to spend several months in another country, away from their employees, suppliers and clients. Therefore it might be that the programme will give support rather to those who would be interested to follow an entrepreneurial career than to the real entrepreneurs that have already put their ambitions into practice by starting their own business.

For the time being, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is a pilot project. The European Commission intends to make available another €5 million if the pilot project succeeds. The programme is part of the Small Business Act which has been launched in June 2008.

The programme has its own website, providing more information and links to national organisations in charge of the programmes implementation:

<http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/>

Publications

Report on the ICT research and innovation agenda for the next decade

Based on a public on-line consultation which took place from 4 September to 7 November 2008, the European Commission gathered information on a future ICT R&D&I strategy for Europe. The input came from ICT R&D&I suppliers, users, policy makers, and also from the wider public, all in all 565 contributions were registered. The questions addressed were: I) the main challenges to come for the ICT R&D sector, asking for trends and changes; II) strengths and weaknesses on the demand and the supply side; III) the role of public policy in putting Europe at the forefront of ICT innovation; and IV) future systemic approaches for ICT in Europe.

The results show that energy efficiency, environmental sustainability and health and social care systems were the most important societal challenges identified. The main business applications driving ICT development are believed to be web-based services. The strength of European technology is seen in embedded systems, the one of European industry in telecom equipment

and services, whereas computing hardware software products and consumer electronics is its major weakness. All in all, the consultation confirms the lack of entrepreneurship in Europe and the unwillingness to take a risk. Ultimately all findings will be fed into a renewed strategy for ICT R&I to be unveiled in the Communication from the European Commission on 'A strategy for ICT R&D and Innovation in Europe' planned for April 2009.

The report can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/tl/research/key_docs/documents/report_public_consultation.pdf

◆ **Education**

Education Council discusses priorities beyond 2010

On 16 February, Education Ministers discussed the future of the European cooperation in Education and Training beyond 2010, following on the Commission's proposal issued in December 2008 (see Synopsis 2009/1). New objectives are targeted for the next decade through the open method of coordination used to compare and learn from each other's practices. Among the main five indicators set in 2002 in the Education and Training Work Programme 2010, four of them, not achieved, should be maintained and updated, while most urgent new priorities have to be identified in order to set new benchmarks. Indeed, the ministers remain divided over the Commission's proposal to increase the amount of benchmarks. The Council agreed that the number, content and scope of these indicators will have to be specified before the adoption of the updated strategic framework schedule at the next Education Council in May 2009.

Education Ministers also adopted key messages in education and training and in the youth policy to be addressed during the Spring Summit. As expected, the Council stressed the vulnerability of young people in terms of unemployment particularly affected by the deteriorating economic situation and highlighted the potential of education to speed up the economic recovery. Member States should coordinate medium- and long-term structural measures in order to improve the transition to employment.

More details about the Council's decisions can be found under:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/106094.pdf

Publications

Impact of ERASMUS on higher education institutions and policy

The impact of ERASMUS in Europe on higher education institutions and policy is considerable; found a study carried out on behalf of the European Commission. The study is based on literature reviews, surveys among 750 institutions and over 1800 Erasmus coordinators, and 20 case studies. It explores the impact of the ERASMUS programme on quality improvement in European higher education, in particular in the areas of teaching, research, student services and the openness to society with a focus at the institutional and system level. The influence of ERASMUS on internationalisation policies in higher education on national, international and European level has been shown to be vast. Not only did it bring forward the Bologna process with all its merits but also has a wider impact for example on institutional management and attractiveness of the institution. However, it has been reported that bureaucratic costs in terms of time and administrative procedures were high compared to the benefits. All in all, ERASMUS has been very valuable to the development of higher education in Europe.

The full study can be downloaded here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc/publ/impact08.pdf>

Comparison of learning outcomes approach of 32 countries

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP published a study on how learning outcomes shape the education and training landscape on general, vocational and higher education level. The study was published on 4 February 2009, taking into account the changes in all 32 countries being in the Education and training 2010 process. The findings stress that learning outcomes are recently more and more used as a means to assess a learner's knowledge understanding and abilities. It is said that mere input-based learning will not be able to adequately respond to future challenges. Moreover, learning outcomes play a highly important role in lifelong learning environments, both at the level of policy development and implementation. Furthermore, it is expected that the use of learning outcomes will have a major impact on the organisation of institutions, for the curricula and for the role and training of teachers.

For more information, the study can be downloaded under the following link:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=525

◆ SwissCore Küche

SwissCore Higher Education Seminar on 20 March

For the second time, SwissCore organises an event focusing on the education priorities of the European Commission. The 2009 edition focuses mainly on higher education topics. The SwissCore Higher Education Seminar 2009 will take place in Brussels on 20 March, allowing Swiss higher education actors to get first-hand information on the latest European education policy developments, such as the updated strategic framework concerning the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme, addressed by the Commission in December 2008. New short and long terms goals are now identified, such as the relation between university and business. The presentations will focus on the current priorities of the European Commission and of the Bologna Process to be dealt with during the next years and on practical information concerning the two European education programmes LLP and Erasmus Mundus II.

The SwissCore Higher Education Seminar will give the participants the opportunity to discuss and raise questions directly to the experts from the Commission.