

SwissCore Synopsis

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Some thoughts on the EU Research Framework Programme

This is a time for reflection. The interim between the gaining of first experiences with a new Research Framework Programme and the European Commission's proposal for the next one is the time to ponder about a key question: how should research be funded at European level? While the previous Framework Programmes hardly allowed an in-depth stock-taking exercise as they lasted only four years, the seven-year duration of FP7 gives the EU institutions as well as all the stakeholders the opportunity to carefully reflect on the very bases of research funding by the EU.

First and foremost, there is the question about the sharing of responsibilities between the EU and the national levels, which is intimately linked to the concept of "European added value". In essence, it implies that the Framework Programme should only take over from the national research systems what the latter cannot do themselves. This "subsidiarity" has led to the setting up of the Cooperation Programme, the centrepiece of FP7 and of all past Framework Programmes. This part of the programme essentially fosters transnational research projects and thus allows what many national research funding systems are currently unable to do, namely create a real common pot for projects involving scientists from different European countries and beyond. An unsuspected indirect advantage of these transnational cooperation projects is the common set of EU funding rules, albeit burdensome, that puts all participants on an equal footing. Experience shows that intergovernmental programmes with so-called "virtual common pots" lead to complex selection and funding procedures, often resulting in compromises jeopardising the basic research funding principles of scientific excellence and equal treatment. In this context, it is worth reflecting how the new "Joint Programming Initiatives" could fit into the future Framework Programme. A "re-nationalisation" of the Cooperation Programme through the co-funding of Joint Programming Initiatives by the EU could indeed suffer from the same downsides as the aforementioned intergovernmental initiatives.

A new trend in the current Framework Programme that will certainly extend to the next one is the orientation of research funding around "Grand Challenges" rather than traditional scientific disciplines. Such an orientation favours the interdisciplinary approach much needed to tackle Europe's current problems and gives the European citizen a better perception of scientific research's value and potential. However, scientists are often creatures of habit and will most likely not find it easy to navigate societal "Grand Challenges" in the search of their usual funding source. Moreover, experience shows that breaking barriers between scientific disciplines (one could even speak of scientific cultures) is a complex and arduous endeavour; the scientific silos that an interdisciplinary FP project tries to abolish are sometimes just rebuilt at the level of its individual components, the so-called "work packages". A new research funding programme purely centred on Grand Challenges must take into account the needs and habits of the scientists it caters to and translate the subjacent policy ideas into concepts familiar to them.

Besides the Cooperation Programme, FP7 also funds the transnational mobility of individual scientists and awards prestigious grants for excellent scientists through the European Research Council (ERC). These actions, while fully achieving their goals, bear an intrinsic risk, namely that the "substitution principle" takes the place of the "subsidiarity principle". Indeed, in the logic of certain finance ministries, national programmes for mobility abroad or for scientific excellence can now be cut, as they have been "moved up" to the European level. While a further budget increase for the ERC could only be saluted, the excellence principle dictates that receiving an ERC grant should be reserved to the very best and not become usual, else the aforementioned substitution principle would gain momentum. The Commission staff responsible for the Marie Curie mobility actions has already sensed this risk and has thus launched a scheme to co-finance national mobility schemes as an incentivizing tool for national investments in researchers' mobility.

Another key question for the future of European research funding regards the place given to large research infrastructures in this context. Indeed, while everyone agrees that such infrastructures (big machines like cyclotrons as well as supercomputers and databases) are one of the fundamentals of a competitive research system, opinions diverge on how the access to such facilities should be regulated and who should foot the bill for their often sizable running costs. In the current Framework Programme, the dedicated funding stream for research infrastructures is limited to projects granting access to facilities whose running costs are in majority not borne by the EU, and to feasibility and design studies for new research infrastructures. The priority-setting exercise of the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), albeit laudable, does not provide a solution on how the selected facilities should be financed, nor has ESFRI the competence to decide which research infrastructures should benefit from EU funding. As the individual Member States usually pay for both the construction and the running costs of infrastructures located on their own territory, the hosts feel entitled to retain a prioritised access to them – possibly leading to distortions of the scientific excellence principle as a basis for access selection. Also, a “nationalised” system of infrastructure construction and operation can lead to duplication and overcapacity, which should certainly be avoided considering the high costs involved. The approach chosen to support research infrastructures of pan-European importance under the next Framework Programme will be instrumental for gaining a maximum of leverage out of extant and future large-scale research facilities.

Finally, let us contemplate the administrative rules and procedures governing the Research Framework Programmes. Research is a somewhat special business, as it mainly consists of a journey into the unknown, and scientists are different from road builders and farmers in the sense that their workload involves a substantial amount of creative tinkering. This is more true the further away scientists ship from known waters and sail into uncharted oceans – what we have become used to call “frontier research” since the inception of the ERC. The result of this exploration is often not what was intended in the first place, but can lead to even more important discoveries than expected. But realising gains from such unexpected findings puts high demands on the flexibility of the administrative setup in which the research is performed, as the predefined milestones might actually not be reached and budgetary flows might need to be unexpectedly shifted between activities and cost categories. Moreover, research thrives from its potential more than from its actual results – a fact that further distinguishes it from agriculture or bridge building. It therefore seems inadequate to apply the same performance measurements and financial control mechanisms to all these activities, even more so as the potent creativity of the most excellent scientists will be severely stifled by overbearing administrative constraints. The EU institutions will thus be well advised to design rules and regulations that give researchers the necessary flexibility to fully unleash their creative potential while nevertheless severely punishing fraud and misconduct. Considering the current pains endured by FP7 grant beneficiaries, radical simplification of the current rules might be needed rather than simple adjustments. Now is the time to reflect, to find new ways of proceeding and to design the future of European research funding.

◆ **Research**

Dossier: the main instruments for international cooperation under FP7 Capacities

International cooperation can be found in all parts of FP7, and the majority of projects funded under FP7 are open for participants from Third Countries. In particular under the Cooperation Programme, there are Specific International Cooperation Actions (SICA) in each thematic area focusing on the participation of countries with developing and emerging economies in research cooperation projects.

In addition, international cooperation retains an exclusive activity under the Capacities Programme, where three main objectives are pursued: strengthening the international dialogue

between policymakers and stakeholders, networking of different stakeholders and fostering coherence at European level in international Science and Technology (S&T) cooperation. In fact under Capacities, the focus does not lay on funding research itself, but on improving the frame enabling international exchange and integration in S&T activities.

The main instruments of international cooperation under the Capacities Programme are INCO-NET, ERA-NET and the new ERA WIDE.

- The main aim of INCO-NET is to establish coordination platforms in order to strengthen bi-regional dialogue and cooperation. It brings together different stakeholders – especially policy makers from national or regional authorities or organizations acting on behalf of them, but also researchers and the private sector – from the EU and Third Countries in order to identify S&T priorities, strengthen the participation of the targeted countries, raise awareness, analyze statistically S&T trends as well as monitor and review cooperation activities. INCO-NET projects seek coordination between the policy instruments of the EU and those of the Member States in order to maximize their effect.

There are several INCO-NET projects currently running; the most advanced ones are with the Western Balkan countries, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Mediterranean Partner Countries, Sub Saharan Africa, South East Asia and Latin America.

- ERA-NET aims at enhancing the coordination and cooperation of research programmes among Member States, Associated Countries as well as Third Countries in order to fund transnational research projects. ERA-NETs should indeed stimulate the development and the implementation of joint activities and research networking. Hence they are expected to give new inputs to collaborative research (i.e. launching joint calls) and to improve R&D procedures. Several Third Countries and regions have been targeted for these projects, namely South Korea, Russia, the Black Sea Region, India and the Western Balkan Countries. Participants in the ERA-NET calls should be either programme owners or programme managers and either public bodies or organisations closely related to public authorities.
- ERA WIDE is a new instrument that was launched in 2009. The focus of the projects will be to reinforce the cooperation between Europe and the neighbouring countries that are not associated to FP7. The main activities will be networking and competence building in order to improve these countries' participation to FP7, as well as improving the socio-economic impact of the output of local research centres.

The first call for proposal targeted two regions: Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus on the one side and the Mediterranean Partner Countries on the other side. The call addressed research centres of proven high-level S&T capacities, which are located in a European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) country not associated to FP7; consortia of European and non-European organisations are eligible and must include one of these centres.

To further enhance international cooperation in the Capacities Programme the Commission is considering the possibility of launching two new instruments in the next call (2011), in addition to the existing ones: INCO-LAB and INCO-HOUSE. More details will be published in the 2011 Capacities Work Programme, which is expected to be tabled in July 2010.

More information on international cooperation under FP7 can be found under:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm>

New Director-General at DG INFSO

On 31 March, the European Commission appointed Robert Madelin as new Director-General of the DG for Information Society and Media (DG INFSO), replacing the retiring Fabio Colasanti as of 1 April 2010. The Briton Madelin has been Director-General for Health and Consumer Affairs since January 2004.

Moreover, on 24 February, the Commission named Robert-Jan Smits, previously a Director in DG Research, Deputy Director-General of the Joint Research Centre (JRC). With the progressive

dismantling of the Directorates S (ERC) and T (Marie Curie), it is expected that a general reorganisation of DG Research should take place this spring.

Publications

Information material for the “new approach” in SSH research under FP7

Starting with the 2010 Work Programme, the European Commission is implementing a “new approach” for the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH) Theme of FP7. Instead of just calling for a mix of “traditional” topics in all fields of SSH, the Commission is now funding large-scale projects (over €6 mio.) addressing so-called “societal challenges”. These “societal challenge projects” will require an interdisciplinary approach bringing together several teams of scientists from different fields, a professionalised scientific and administrative management, stock-taking and forward-looking activities as well as dedicated dissemination activities by specialised staff.

In order to illustrate the logic behind this new approach and to detail the new requirements towards such large-scale SSH projects, the Commission has recently published an information booklet that can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/booklet-new-societal-challenges_en.pdf

A short leaflet is completing the more exhaustive booklet and can serve as a good tool for general dissemination of SSH research and its new focus on societal challenges in particular:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/ssh-leaflet_en.pdf

◆ Innovation

Switzerland still top in the European Innovation Scoreboard

Good news arriving from Brussels: Like in 2008, Switzerland is also in 2009 heading the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS). But unlike in 2008, the European Commission did not mention in its press release on the EIS the ranking list and did not provide any information about Switzerland’s excellent position (also the positions of any other Third Countries were neglected). Has the European Commission become afraid of ranking lists?

The EIS 2009 includes 29 innovation-related indicators with publicly available data from 2007/2008 and trend analyses for the EU27 Member States, as well as for Croatia, Serbia, Turkey, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. The 29 indicators are grouped around three categories: enablers (human resources, finance and support), firm activities (firm investments, linkages & entrepreneurship, throughputs) and outputs (innovators, economic effects).

In order to find the complete information about the 2009 EIS you will need to search in the report directly (see link below).

- As in previous years, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK are the Innovation leaders. However, of these countries, Germany and Finland are improving their performance the fastest while Denmark and the UK are stagnating.
- Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Slovenia are the Innovation followers. Since 2008, Cyprus, Estonia and Slovenia have progressed into this group due to steady improvement over recent years.
- Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain are the Moderate innovators.
- Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Romania, Serbia and Turkey are the Catching-up countries with innovation performance significantly below the EU27 average. However, all six countries are rapidly closing their gap to the average performance level of the EU27, and Bulgaria and Romania have been improving their performance the fastest of all Member States.

Switzerland has the highest overall level of innovation performance and its rate of improvement is also above that of the EU27. Relative strengths, compared to the country's average performance, concern the indicators "Throughputs" (patents, trademarks, designs, technology balance of payment flows) and "Innovators" (number of SMEs introducing innovations), whereas relative weaknesses are in "Linkages and entrepreneurship" (SMEs innovating in-house or collaborating with others, firm renewal) and "Economic effects" (employment, sales). Over the past five years, "Finance and support" and "Throughputs" have been the main drivers of improvement in Switzerland's innovation performance, in particular as a result from strong growth in Venture Capital and Community trademarks. Performance in "Firm investments" and "Innovators" has not improved.

The full report is available on the Pro Inno Europe website:

<http://www.proinno-europe.eu/page/european-innovation-scoreboard-2009>

European Business Centres in India and China for the internationalisation of SMEs

In accordance with the Small Business Act focusing on supporting SMEs (see Synopsis 2008/5) the European Commission (EC) started to establish European Business Centres to help SMEs with the legal and cultural challenges of the growing markets outside Europe and to enable them to fully benefit from the new opportunities.

The first centre was opened by Eurochambres in India in 2008 with the aim of providing not only business advice, but also technological support. In fact the European Business and Technology Centre (EBTC) in New Delhi helps European companies and researchers to access the market and promotes European clean technology in India with a focus on the areas of energy, transport, biotechnology and environment. Its main activities are to gather knowledge on India and to make it available to the European business community as well as to assist companies in contacting already established EU service providers in India (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, science and technology departments, regional trade promotion agencies). The EBTC is running with a total budget of €14.5 million over an eight year period. In addition, other regional offices will be opened in other major industrial cities in India – in particular Bengaluru (Bangalore), Mumbai (Bombay) and Kolkata (Calcutta) – in order to enhance the network with the emerging industries concentrated there.

A second centre was meant to be established in Beijing, China, in 2009 with a budget of €5 million over five years, but the EC has not awarded the contract to set up the office yet. Other similar offices should be opened in other strategic cities in the world during the upcoming years, in particular in Bangkok and in Moscow.

This strategy could in some cases duplicate already existing services provided by the Member States and the private sector. The EC should therefore take care of not competing unfairly with them and support areas and countries with less developed networks. This strategy has also been criticized to lack coherence and BusinessEurope has underlined the need of an evaluation of the real impact of these services for the companies.

More information on the Indian EBTC can be found under:

<http://www.ebtc.eu>

Publications

Expert Panel on Services Innovation established

DG Enterprise and Industry has established a new Expert Panel on Services Innovation in the EU. 20 individuals with extensive experience in the field of innovation in services have been selected to sit on the Panel which will explore the policy instruments and initiatives that have been applied to support services innovation in Europe and assess the best use and value of these policies. Among the experts is also Antonius Engbersen from IBM Switzerland.

The experts will evaluate the policy rationale behind successful initiatives both at national level and EU level and assess what form European collaboration could take in the future. The Panel will make recommendations intended to have an impact on the future development of the Services Innovation Agenda in Europe. The Expert Panel will convene four workshops over the next 10 months and conclude its work in January 2011.

More information can be found on the Europe Innova Website:

<http://www.europe-innova.eu/web/guest/innovation-in-services/expert-panel/about>

European Small Business Portal launched

The European Commission has launched a new website for small and medium-sized enterprises. In four chapters ("Money, partners and public contracts", "Making the most of the market", "EU SME policy and statistics" and "Support"), the portal provides information on EU market rules, innovation, research and copyright as well as the EU's SME policy and informs on how to obtain funding.

To access the portal use the following link:

http://ec.europa.eu/small-business/index_en.htm

◆ Education

Dossier: 10 years Bologna Process

On 19 June 1999, 29 countries – among these also Switzerland – signed in Bologna a Declaration that aimed at reforming the higher education system throughout Europe. This reform is known as the Bologna Process and supports the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), in which a wide and transparent offer of high quality courses and smooth mutual recognition procedures of academic paths should be guaranteed. It has three overarching objectives: the introduction of the three cycle system (Bachelor, Master and Doctorate), quality assurance and recognition of qualifications and periods of study.

Ministerial Conference and European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

A Ministerial Conference is regularly being organized, where ministers responsible for education of all participating countries meet to evaluate the progress and to set guidelines and priorities for the upcoming period. After Bologna (1999), the ministers met in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007) and Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve (2009). At the last Ministerial Conference in Budapest-Vienna on 11-12 March 2010, Kazakhstan joined the group and brought the number of participant EU Member States and Neighbouring Countries to 47. In order to contribute to this discussion the European University Association (EUA), as a consultative member, publishes biannually the "Trends reports" on the progress of the Bologna implementation.

At the last Ministerial Conference in March of this year, the ministers officially launched the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EHEA should further foster the Bologna Process and in particular promote mobility, attract students and staff to Europe, as well as be internationally competitive. The concluding Declaration also envisages improving the synergies with the European Research Area in order to prepare Europe to face the future challenges. The next Ministerial Conference to assess the progress made within the Bologna Process and the EHEA will be held in Bucharest on 26-27 April 2012.

Assessment of ten years of Bologna

Mandated by the European Commission, Eurydice has published a report entitled "Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna Process". It presents a comparative overview of the progress on higher education made in the 46 participating countries. It focuses in

particular on the implementation of the Bachelor-Master structure, on the approach to quality assurance, on student mobility as well as on the budgetary changes in the last two academic years.

EUA has also published a special report – Trends 2010 – that examines the achievement of Bologna-driven reforms since 2002 in the context of a decade of change in higher education. Trends 2010 analyses the implementation of the Bologna Process and proposes an agenda for the future developments of the Bologna Process and of the EHEA. The report looks at the progress made regarding the core aims of the Bologna Process: quality of teaching has been improved and moved towards a student-centered learning; graduate employability remains a problem, especially at Bachelor level; the mobility of students and staff represents a major challenge and needs to be fostered.

Also the students' community has given its feedback on the Bologna decade through the publication "Bologna at the Finish Line" of the European Students' Union (ESU, former ESIB). ESU – also consultative member in the Bologna Process – warns against the instrumentalisation of the Bologna reform and pushes for its full and transparent implementation.

Link:

Bologna Process: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/>

Publication EUA: Trends 2010, http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/EUA_Trends_2010.pdf

Publication Eurydice: Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna Process, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/122EN.pdf

Publication ESU: Bologna at the Finish Line, http://old.esib.org/documents/publications/ESU_BAFL_publication.pdf

Budapest-Vienna Declaration: http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/2010_conference/documents/Budapest-Vienna_Declaration.pdf

Publications

Assessment of Europe's University-Based Research

The Commission's DG Research has published a report on "Assessing Europe's University-Based Research" (AUBR). In July 2008, an expert group was appointed with the mandate of identifying the framework for a more coherent methodology to assess research produced by European universities focusing on the different types of users and their respective needs. The report presents a comprehensive overview of users and uses of the assessment of university-based research, identifies the basic principles to be observed when developing such an assessment, and analyses strengths and weaknesses of the different indicators. The report, cautious about rankings comparing entire universities, gives general recommendations regarding the assessment of university-based research and proposes a new approach consisting in a multi-dimensional research assessment matrix linking specified users with the respective purposes and objectives.

The report can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/assessing-europe-university-based-research_en.pdf

Report on the University-Business dialogue

Following up on the Communication of the European Commission "A new partnership for the modernisation of universities: the EU Forum for University-Business Dialogue" published in April 2009 (see Synopsis 2009/3), the Culture and Education Committee (CULT) of the European Parliament mandated Deloitte Belgium with a study on the ways for "Further developing the University-Business dialogue". The resulting report analyses the University-Business cooperation in Europe and provides recommendations on how to further develop the existing dialogue at European level. In particular it stresses the need of representative examples of best practice and of improvement in their dissemination. It also suggests that in order to ensure consistency and visibility of the University-Business related activities, their coordination should be entrusted to a

Task Force bringing together all Directorate-Generals involved. Finally the report recommends the involvement of the relevant regional and local authorities and underlines the importance of strategic mediators as e.g. the Chambers of Commerce.

The report can be found under:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/studies/download.do?language=en&file=29760>

Study portal – website

StudyPortal B.V., a private company based in The Netherlands, has set up with the support of the European Commission a new website to help students worldwide to find and select the optimal programme of higher education in Europe: www.studyportals.eu. On this portal, you can search through different European study programmes according to different criteria such as topic, country, language, duration and education form as well as tuition fees. For the selected programmes there is detailed information on content and requirements, as well as other related useful information. The website is available in English, French and German and is developed and updated constantly by a team of 15 professionals. The catalogue of Master programmes is the most complete one, whereas for Bachelor and PhD programmes the portals still need to be broadened.

◆ SwissCore Küche

Staff change at SwissCore

On 1 May, Thomas Marty, European Advisor since December 2005 and Deputy Head of Office, will leave SwissCore to take up a position as Senior Consultant at Zurich-based Berinfor, a small management consulting firm focusing on universities, higher education institutions and other organisations active in the fields of education and research. There, he will work on projects addressing the strategy, organisation, governance, controlling as well as the processes of Berinfor's clients.

During his time at SwissCore, Thomas Marty was mainly in charge of research policy and programmes. He put a special focus on the legal and financial aspects of FP7 and this expertise was greatly appreciated by SwissCore's partners and customers, especially at the start of the new research programme. He was the editor of the SwissCore Synopsis and was responsible for its increased periodicity (from bi-monthly to monthly) and broadened focus (grouping of research, innovation and education into one issue); in this capacity, he was also the main author of the "Seen from Brussels" column. On two occasions, he headed SwissCore *at interim* for a few months and he made important contributions to the organisation of the office, amongst them a new performance management and reporting system. We thank Thomas Marty for his dedication and wish him all the best in his new position at Berinfor.

For more information, see www.berinfor.ch

SwissCore Annual Event 2010

On 24 April, the traditional 15th Annual Event of SwissCore took place to thank the Brussels colleagues and numerous contacts for the continuous good collaboration. This year, Ursula Renold, Director General of the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology, hosted the event with a brilliant speech on the "Triangle of Competitiveness" – indicating the successful synergy between R&D investment, private sector and educational system that made Switzerland ranking top in the European Innovation Scoreboard 2009. The participants represented the different working partners of SwissCore, in particular the European Commission, the IGLO network and other research, innovation and education related organisations in Brussels.



Daniel Höchli, Director of the Swiss National Science Foundation



Ursula Renold, Director General of the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology

