

Simplifying the implementation of the Research Framework Programs

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ITRE Committee

13 July 2010

President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,

To begin with, I would like to underline the extensive consultation that this report has involved. I have launched a public consultation process and I have received wide ranging responses for which I am very grateful.

The report is of really interest to the scientific and business community and more over is particularly timely in light of the interim evaluation of FP7 and the start of the preparatory phase for FP8.

There are four main aspects of the report that I should like to bring out:

Firstly, the question of administrative and financial simplification;

Secondly, the need for improvement of quality, accessibility and transparency;

Thirdly, I should like to suggest some of the benefits of enhanced synergy between programmes and instruments;

And finally, I would like to say a few words about the future FP8.

1) So, firstly the pragmatic shift towards the pragmatic shift towards administrative and financial simplification.

There are 2 aspects:

- a) General principles
- b) concrete recommendations

a)) In so far as the General principles are concerned

- simplification is in the interest of all stakeholders
- it is necessary to provide stability and legal certainty
- there is also a need for trust-based and risk-tolerant approaches without sacrificing procedural rigor.

For example, this last opinion involves allowing beneficiaries to apply their usual management and accounting principles.

As for the concrete recommendation, the main goal is to attain greater clarity, precision and simplicity:

Firstly, clear definition of what needs to be changed, how it needs to be changed, and at what speed.

Secondly, further simplification in the rules governing funding and costing methodologies is necessary. For example, funding rates and costs calculation methods should be identical across the different instruments.

Finally, clarity in the definition of such things as eligible costs and taxes is of utmost importance. It is just as important to promote consistency in the application of rules across the all commission departments and audits.

2) Turning now to Improvement in quality accessibility and transparency. There are three points:

a) The rapporteur is in favor of a science-based approach. Such an approach promotes excellence whilst simplifying financial controls.

This being said the result-based approach has certain advantages. Before pursuing a "result-based approach" pilot

tests should be carried out for research and demonstration projects in specifically challenging areas.

The second exception to my general preference to science based system is the "high trust awards" proposed by the commission. These are appropriated to frontier research, such as the ERC.

b) Minimizing time to grant is of course to be encouraged. However, it is important that Member States retain their power of scrutiny. In addition, the rapporteur supports the two-stage application procedure provided that evaluation is undertaken thoroughly in the initial stage.

c) the rapporteur recommends the full integration of grants, evaluations and proposals into a unique IT platform. This should be sound, flexible and easy to use. The same platform should be used across all commission services and agencies.

3) With regard to improved synergy of programmes and instruments. We need to reduce the complexity of programmes and instruments. This entails introducing uniform interpretation and application of rules and procedures. It also supposes harmonization across of all EU bodies involved. This will contribute to greatly enhance synergy.

4) Finally, concerning the future of the FP8 programme, there are 3 basic aspects:

- a) I consider administrative simplification to be a central priority in the future FP8. The number of instruments should be reduced and greater coordination between them should be achieved.
- b) The FP should take into consideration the whole chain of innovation from frontier research, technological development, demonstration, valorization of results and rapid integration of research results into markets. This should strike a balance between top-down impact-driven and bottom-up, science driven research.
- c) The rapporteur also believes that further internationalization is desirable and this should include developing countries.

As you know Christopher Columbus set off in 1492 in search of a western passage to India.

However, he discovered America, instead. How are we to evaluate this event? If we apply strict result-based criteria, we might well consider the mission a failure. He did NOT (?) give in the promised deliverables. Hence, no funding!

However, from a science based point of view, there are reasons to believe, the mission was a considerable success. After all he had discovered nothing less than a whole new continent. The success of a project does not necessarily rely on the extent to which it fulfils its stated, initial intentions.