

Polish Position Paper on Future Framework Programme - EU support for scientific, technological and social development

Background and context of work on the future Framework Programme

The preparations for the future Framework Programme have started, many discussion papers are being presented by stakeholders and Member States. The European Commission has set up a High Level Group (the Lamy Group) of experts who will advise on how to maximise the impact of the EU's investment in research and innovation. The EC plans to put forward its financial proposal of the future Framework Programme before the end of 2017 and the FP legislative proposal is expected to be published in spring 2018. This Paper is built on the ideas, opinions, views and experiences of the representatives of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, NCPs Poland, Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the EU, Polish funding agencies, regional authorities and stakeholders from academia and industry.

Strategic approach

Modern economy is shaped by innovation that is no longer understood exclusively as a new product or service. From the perspective of the European social model and challenges that Europe faces, socially responsible and open innovation plays an increasingly important role in **inclusive, sustainable development**. Taking this into account the future Framework Programme should be a key measure to further develop and promote an integrated European Research Area. Its key political objective should be an even stronger contribution to a genuine **single market** for knowledge, research and innovation.

The cornerstones of the future Framework Programme should be on one hand “**excellence**” and on the other “**effective and open participation model for all**” that will challenge the growing innovation divide. Over the last decades Europe has developed an excellent scientific and research framework, including research infrastructures, that is distributed across ERA. **Securing Europe’s global competitiveness** is possible only when using excellence and full intellectual capital of all the European countries, in collaboration with non-European partners as well. Moreover, more attention to **market up-take of innovations** across all European regions should be one of the priorities of the future Framework Programme.

I. GOVERNANCE AND HORIZONTAL ISSUES

Management

Horizon 2020, in spite of all the simplification efforts, is still a complex system and due to its size it will most likely remain as such, thus it needs an adequate management structure. What we can observe nowadays are relatively efficient micromanagement practices at single EC Units/DGs levels while the overall strategic coordination and alignment towards common key objectives seem to be insufficient. The Strategic FP management should be provided by the European Commission in close and direct collaboration with the Member States. Such an approach could help avoiding multiplication of FP tools, activities and financial schemes.

Programming

Current approach to building Work Programmes requires improvements in terms of coordination. The WPs preparation process suffers from insufficient transparency and discussion from its very early stages. The final shape of the Work Programmes is often not in line with what was desired by the stakeholders and Member States. Despite of the fact that some of the programming activities (with accompanying budget) were outsourced to external entities, such as Joint Technology Initiatives, they should continue to be subject to proper Member States' supervision via respective Programme Committees' monitoring and reporting tools. Additional efforts should also be put on presenting in Work Programmes links with relevant EU policies and defining the scope and the impact of the calls in a way that allows potential beneficiaries to prepare a suitable proposal fitting the call description. In view of the above we are of the opinion that the **consultation process with the Member States in the programming phase should be strengthened in the future Framework Programme.**

Budget

The future Framework Programme should follow the pattern of the previous Framework Programmes and its **budget should be increased** as more ambitious challenges are being addressed by the EU research agenda. The increase in the budget shall allow addressing, at least partially, the oversubscription, being thus the additional incentive to participate. Moreover, an observed trend of relocating the FP budget and topics to PPPs - outside the Framework Programme's monitoring, reporting and management tools - should be avoided until the effective evaluation of those mechanisms proves their added value and leverage effect.

Remuneration rules

Changes in the remuneration rules, that were introduced recently need to be carefully evaluated in terms of its simplicity and audit resilience. If evaluated positively, they should serve as a basis for remuneration mechanisms for the FP9.

In other case, additional efforts should be made in order to amend remuneration rules **by introducing the possibility of using unit costs as an option**, with reference to the personnel cost category for non-profit organizations. Since within the current regulations some legal obstacles still exist, appropriate provisions should be introduced into the Financial Regulation.

Another option could be introduction of a so called "basic researchers salary", that could be used as an alternative.

Choosing one of the above mentioned option would also be very much in line with the **simplification** idea contributing to the reduction of errors in reporting personnel costs for the sake of ex-post audits.

Evaluation

An efficient evaluation system is the focal point of the program's governance. To ensure accurate and timely evaluation of proposals, the evaluation process in the future Framework Programme should be further streamlined. Therefore, clear regulations, guidance and evaluation methods/criteria provided to experts are necessary in order to deliver best quality to applicants. The experts, especially newcomers, should also have access to trainings enhancing their knowledge and building common understanding of categories such as excellence, impact and innovation. To match this efforts, the scope and content of ESRs should also be redefined in a way that their content allows for drawing conclusions in relation to scores obtained. Additionally, as the success rate for Horizon 2020 is on a very low level, what may discourage some from participation, the 2 stage application process should be implemented. The 1st stage of evaluation should base on simple, standardized application form, allowing for judging the idea behind the evaluated project. Such an approach would limit the cost borne by the applicants for preparation of the proposal. The 2nd stage, should concentrate on detailed evaluation of the complete proposal. This approach would save the applicants time and effort in preparing unsuccessful proposals.

Coordination of support rules and procedures

Strategic management also means a better implementation of EU Research and Cohesion policies stressing the **synergies** between both support frameworks. Current mechanisms (including "Seal of Excellence" or "Stairways to Excellence") are not bringing the results they were created for. Differences between the rules and procedures in both instruments create complicated and risky playing field, not only at the level of Managing Authorities but also single beneficiaries. Especially important in this regard is the **alignment of the state aid rules** with reference to research and innovation in particular, as they bring most substantial risks. While creating a framework for synergies, the autonomy of Managing Authorities for both policies needs to be respected – by no means should one instrument substitute the other. Therefore, together with a vision for the future Framework Programme a new, effective synergy approach should be presented. Designing both policies at the same time and in close cooperation on the level of DG's and MS would allow combining results of both EU policies, maximizing the added value the next MFF should result in.

It is also of crucial importance to include in this synergy scenario the aspect of regional support to research and innovation, including through the regional smart specialization strategies (RIS3). This will allow the **development of integrated ERA through stronger regional dimension**.

Budgetary balance between low and high TRLs

Increased focus on higher TRLs and activities closer to market should be thoroughly analysed in order to avoid financing what the industry would do anyway. Moreover, more balanced Work Programme topics under the Societal Challenges pillar providing **more collaborative research opportunities** in both low and high TRL levels should be secured. This approach will allow for fresh ideas coming from low TRL research to feed into a solid base for breakthrough research and innovation as well as market uptake.

More bottom-up approach

Bottom-up approach enabling granting more than one solution developed according to a defined problem would significantly extend a portfolio of breakthrough research results as well as innovation, creating space for market and intersectoral replies to indicated challenges. Delivering several innovative solutions, driven by diversified approaches, shall considerably increase the chances for their market uptake and scaling up.

Responsible Research and Innovation

RRI has so far proven to be a viable tool for the creation of interface between science and society. It is important for the scientific world to understand the expectations and needs of the society. While it is still too early to fully appreciate and predict the impact of Horizon 2020, the SwafS programme and the impact of the RRI-driven projects, interactions between a **wide range of societal actors and their involvement in research and innovation processes should be sustained** in the future Framework Programme. SwafS should also continue to be a dedicated programme. This would allow for further integration of R&I processes and societal engagement in all thematic aspects linked to RRI (public engagement, open access, gender, ethics, and science education).

Openness and Transparency

Future FP needs to be as much open as it is only possible in all the meanings of this word. Society needs not only to **see the results of publicly funded research**, but also to **understand in what way such research contributes to the well-being of people**. Openness will also guarantee researchers **free access to data generated by publicly funded projects**. Science should not know any barriers nor should the international cooperation and scientific mobility.

International Cooperation

The current Framework Programme suffers from a significant drop in international partners participation. Considering the experiences of Horizon 2020, renewed INCO-roadmaps with specific cooperation goals for top priority third countries/regions (including EaP Countries) should be defined. Openness to the world should be strategically strengthened with a **new vision to enhance Europe's role** as a major research and innovation player in a highly competitive global environment and flagship initiatives with strategic international partners.

II. INSTRUMENTS

Widening instruments

Excellence is equally present in EU-15 and EU-13, however its visibility is significantly lower. Despite serious efforts by the European Union and the Member States as well as the inclusion of the "Widening package" in Horizon 2020, significant gaps remain among European regions in terms of research and innovation performance. This is due to different factors, including stiff regulations on participation (that do not take into account different national frameworks, e.g. remuneration rules), **poorer visibility of EU-13's excellence**, "old boys clubs" reflected in closed cooperation patterns or a '*brain drain*' effect, to name only the most pressing ones. Therefore, current efforts to support wider participation need to be significantly strengthened in the future FP. It needs to be stressed that such an approach clearly **demonstrates the European added value**. Currently we have a set of good practices elaborated under FP7 and Horizon 2020, there is a need to use them and also include some new mechanisms.

Apart from maintaining the current Teaming and ERA Chairs, the new instrument, based on experiences of FP7 RegPot scheme should be introduced. Even more effective would be the horizontal approach as regards evaluation criteria for selecting projects – the criterion of international diversity or participation of Widening countries matched with the size of the budget allocation for the participants should be widely used. Simple but effective criterion would be one dedicated to promotion of projects that will use the research infrastructures build through ESIF.

Mobility schemes

Attracting the best talents to Europe is crucial in contributing to the competitiveness of ERA. In order to **improve brain circulation, targeted mobility schemes** should be introduced for regions which are experiencing '*brain drain*'. Support for mobility of researchers to those regions could on one hand expand scientific networks in Europe and, on the other, create pressure on R&I systems in those regions to reform and provide better framework conditions. Therefore, the current MSCA actions devoted to this area should be strengthened and become an integral part of the future mobility pillar.

Exploitation of research results – the EIC concept

The future Framework Programme should help to bridge the “valley of death” at the European level. The best scientific and research projects should have a support mechanism allowing for “proof-of-concept” approach in order to bring them closer to the market. Existing instruments are an excellent starting point, but more focused actions are necessary. Therefore, it is of crucial importance how to design the European Innovation Council in a way that it fosters and structures innovation efforts in Europe.

The main actions in the portfolio of the EIC should be concentrated on the issue of exploitation of FP projects results. This area should be emphasized to a higher extent in the next FP as one of the strategic policy points. Exploitation of results is crucial for delivering tangible impact both in excellence and innovation. To enable the process, rules for exploitation should be further elaborated to assist applicants with a possibility for implementation of various models. The exploitation of results should be appropriately ranked within the impact criterion.

Use of financial instruments

The use of financial instruments should be promoted only to the highest TRLs and as long as close-to-market activities of companies are concerned. ERA as a whole, without differentiating between EU-15 and EU-13, is not ready for a change in support patterns, therefore grants should remain a default way of financing science and research under the future Framework Programme. Changing current proportions between grants and loans or other financial instruments might threaten the policy objective of having more European added value from the future Framework Programme.