Building research excellence in EU convergence and outermost regions - the Research Potential experience

Acomin KICK-OFF MEETING
25 to 26 October 2012
Sofia

Dr. Stefan WEIERS
Programme Co-ordinator
European Commission
Directorate General “Research and Innovation”
Unlock the full research potential of the EU by building excellence in the EU convergence and outermost regions by a coherent package of measures

Upgrade research capacity and capabilities

Better connect excellent and promising research entities from these regions to ERA and EU research activities

Stimulate regional socio-economic development by harnessing research entities as innovation engines
Implementation

➢ Research Potential supports the implementation of an Action Plan defined by the applicant, derived from its SWOT analysis, composed by a coherent set measures:

➢ Twinning > Exchange of know-how and experience (secondments) + Organisation of workshops & conferences

➢ Recruitment of experienced researchers

➢ Upgrading or acquisition of research equipment

➢ IPR management and innovation capacity building *since 2012-2013

➢ Optional ex-post evaluation for RTD sustainable strategy
CONVERGENCE REGIONS

eligible for financing by the Structural Funds (2007-2013) under objective «convergence» - whose per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is less than 75% of the average GDP of the EU-25
- Budget for 2007-2013 period: 340 M€

- The EC financial contribution per selected project can be up to EUR 5 million (as from 2012)

- The EC financial contribution may reach a max. of 100% of eligible costs – Support Actions

- Duration of projects: up to 36 months (+ 6 additional months if ex-post evaluation facility is included)
Research Potential – Milestones of programme development

- 2009 – **up-scaling** of project size and financial allocation up to 4 MEURO, merger of evaluation facility into main call
- 2010 – tighter conditions for significant size and involvement of partnering organisation
- 2011 – report from expert group on impact assessment of Research Potential
- 2012-2013 - **up-scaling of budget** up to 5 MEURO and mandatory inclusion of innovation related actions (**IPR management and innovation capacity building**),
- simplification by joining workshops, conferences and exchange of knowledge into a single twinning package
Research Potential - major achievements

• Entrance gate for research groups from less favoured regions to EU FP7 research projects and networks
• Successful integration into joint technology initiatives and platforms
• Turning the tide from brain drain to brain gain
• Support of institutional transformation processes and strategic positioning
• New infrastructure acquisitions enabled catching up to cutting edge research and opened doors to industry co-operations
• Sustainable partnerships with top class research institutions at mutual benefit
• Strongly increased visibility and recognition via recurrent scientific events
• Contribution to balanced development of ERA
• Quality seal increasing competitiveness at national level
• Successful liaison with regional stakeholders and industry
Research Potential - challenges encountered

- High oversubscription led to disappointment and rejection of even excellent proposals
- Attracting top class researchers (back) to convergence regions sometimes difficult
- Challenge to balance out significant size of beneficiaries versus need of scientific focus and specialisation of excellent research groups
  EU FP7 research projects and networks
- Internal procedures within organisations sometimes hampering swift procurement and recruitment procedures
- Synergies with cohesion funds and national programmes took place but not systematically
- Opportunities for regional innovation, IPR management, industry involvement not always fully realised often depending on S&T domains
- Relatively low response from outermost regions
Research Potential - outlook

Within FP7

– Launch of the last batch of projects for FP7
– Valorisation of a large portfolio of 150 projects, networking, promotion success stories, increasing visibility
– Knowledge transfer into thematic programmes and regional policy

Beyond FP7

– build a Stairways to Excellence by using all available means for funding research and innovation enabling schemes (from research infrastructure to venture capital and financial support to start-ups and university spin-offs)
– Streamlining Research Potential (REGPOT) approach for future Cohesion policy, transfer of objectives
– Developing specific actions within HORIZON 2020 such as ERA chairs and twinning schemes
Horizon 2020
What is Horizon 2020

- Commission proposal for a 80 billion euro research and innovation funding programme (2014-2020)
- A core part of Europe 2020, Innovation Union & European Research Area:
  - Responding to the economic crisis to invest in future jobs and growth
  - Addressing people’s concerns about their livelihoods, safety and environment
  - Strengthening the EU’s global position in research, innovation and technology
What’s new

- **A single programme** bringing together three separate programmes/initiatives*
- **Coupling research to innovation** – from research to retail, all forms of innovation
- **Focus on societal challenges** facing EU society, e.g. health, clean energy and transport
- **Simplified access**, for all companies, universities, institutes in all EU countries and beyond.

*The 7th Research Framework Programme (FP7), innovation aspects of Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP), EU contribution to the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)
Three priorities:

Excellent science (€24.5 billion)

Industrial leadership (€17.9 billion)

Societal challenges (€31.7 billion)
Priority 1. Excellent science

Why:
• World class science is the foundation of tomorrow’s technologies, jobs and well-being

• Europe needs to develop, attract and retain research talent

• Researchers need access to the best infrastructures
Priority 2. Industrial leadership

Why:

• Strategic investments in key technologies (e.g. advanced manufacturing, micro-electronics) underpin innovation across existing and emerging sectors

• Europe needs to attract more private investment in research and innovation

• Europe needs more innovative SMEs to create growth and jobs
Priority 3. Societal challenges

*Why*:  
- Concerns of citizens and society/EU policy objectives (climate, environment, energy, transport etc) cannot be achieved without innovation
- Breakthrough solutions come from multi-disciplinary collaborations, including social sciences & humanities
- Promising solutions need to be tested, demonstrated and scaled up
Simplification

- **Single set of** simpler and more coherent participation rules
- New **balance between trust and control**
- Moving from several **funding rates** for different beneficiaries and activities to just two
- Replacing the four methods to calculate overhead or «indirect costs» with a **single flat rate**
- Major simplification under the **forthcoming financial regulation**
- **Successful applicants to get working more quickly**: reduction of average time to grant
Specific measures in Horizon 2020 to close the innovation divide

- Improved information, communication and support
- Stimulating cross-border science networks
- ERA (European Research Area) Chairs
- Teaming/Twinning of research institutions
Cohesion Policy
What is EU Cohesion Policy?

• A framework for financing a wide range of projects and investments with the aim of encouraging economic growth and social cohesion in EU member states and their regions.

• Biggest slice of the EU budget: proposed budget: €376 billion

• Allocation of funds from Cohesion policy will be linked to the Europe 2020 objectives for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

• Strengthened partnership between Commission and Member States and regions and local communities
R&I Investment priorities for ERDF (2014-20)

Objectives:

- Enhance research and innovation infrastructure (R&I) and capacities to develop R&I excellence and promoting centres of competence
- Promote business R&I investment, product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation and public service application, demand simulation, networking and clusters
- Budget (expected): More or less €60-80 billion (expected)
- Thematic concentration: R&I, SME, low carbon economy + 4th (e.g. ICT, energy, climate)
- This will have to be conducted via Smart Specialisation Strategies
What is Smart Specialisation?

- A strategic approach to economic development through targeted support to Research and Innovation;
- A process of developing a vision, identifying competitive advantage, setting strategic priorities and making use of smart policies to maximise the knowledge-based development potential of any region (strong or weak, high-tech or low-tech);
- Concentrates resources on a small number of thematic priorities
- Stresses role for all regions in the knowledge economy, through identification of comparative advantages in specific R &I domains/clusters (not just winning sectors);
- Challenges: Smart specialisation has to embrace the concept of open innovation, not only investment in (basic) research.

- See also: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/publication_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/publication_en.cfm)
Synergies between Horizon 2020 and Cohesion Policy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU R&amp;D Policy – future Horizon 2020</th>
<th>EU Cohesion Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Differences</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>non-territorial approach</strong></td>
<td><strong>place-based approach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based mainly on individual R&amp;D Projects (potentially co-funding activities of programmes) tackling the whole cycle of innovation</td>
<td>Based on multiannual Programmes aiming at increased competitiveness through close to the market competitive R&amp;D and innovation efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general awarded directly to final beneficiaries public and private R&amp;D centres, universities or research funding organisations</td>
<td>Awarded through shared management to national and regional public intermediaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly competitive calls addressed to international groupings (exception ERC and MC that also address individuals) through peer-review based on excellence criteria</td>
<td>Non competitive attribution addressed to regional players based on strategic planning negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complementarities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizon 2020 will focus on tackling major societal challenges, maximising the competitiveness impact of research and innovation and raising and spreading levels of excellence in the research base</td>
<td>Cohesion policy will act as a capacity building instrument via smart specialisation, based on learning mechanisms and critical skills in regions and Member States. Staircase to Excellence: increasing capacity to participate in Horizon 2020.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you!