

Comments of the Leibniz Association on the Design of Framework Programme 8

The Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Association (Leibniz Association), as umbrella organisation for 86 member institutes and four associated members - all of them conducting research of national significance - is one of the four big German research organisations. With the present paper, the Leibniz Association wishes to comment on the future design of FP8, which is currently being discussed on the basis of the *EU-2020 Strategy* under special consideration of the flagship initiative "*Innovation Union*".

Innovation Union

The *EU-2020 Strategy* is decisively characterised by the efforts to not only overcome the economic crisis but to emerge from it stronger than before. It also strives to enhance the economic benefit of research investments. These goals are supposed to be met by the means of the flagship initiative *Innovation Union*.

- *An improved framework for the exploitation of research results*

The Leibniz Association, whose institutes work at the interface between research and innovation to varying degrees, welcomes the proposed measures for the creation of an EU-Patent, for the integration of standards into R&D projects of the Research Framework Programmes, as well as for better dissemination and exploitation of results emerging from projects of the EU-Framework Programmes.

FP8

FP8 will be the core instrument for the realisation of the *Innovation Union*. According to information the Leibniz Association obtained from the Directorate-General for Research & Innovation, including its Director General Robert-Jan Smits, the following basic structure is currently being discussed:

- **Science for Science**, mainly directed at fundamental research and including programmes such as the ERC, mobility and research infrastructures
- **Science for Competitiveness**, mainly directed at innovation, including programmes and instruments such as JTI / PPP, EIT and others
- **Science for Society**, mainly directed at addressing the *Grand Challenges*, including programmes and instruments such as Joint Programming, ERA-NET, Art 185, ...

- *Financial balance between programmes and elimination of existing shortcomings*

The Leibniz Association welcomes a clear structuring of FP8 with an equal commitment to fundamental research, to innovation and to the *Grand Challenges* such as climate, energy, mobility, health etc. The Leibniz Association calls for a balanced and adequate provision of these areas with regard to contents and budget, while shortcomings of FP7 (especially in the field of research infrastructures) should be eliminated and not be perpetuated.

1. Science for Science

- *Excellence as a main criterion for individual funding of basic research (ERC)*

The ERC shall continue to be exclusively understood as an Excellence Programme for individual basic research funding, irrespective of any political or economic objectives. This principle has to stand above any potential considerations on the evaluation procedure, improvement or efficiency efforts of the executive agency (ERCEA). If the FP participation rules regarding project management do not meet the requirements of an Excellence Programme, further reflection on alternative structures should be envisaged.

- *Basic research funding for individuals and projects*

Today's fundamental research constitutes the prerequisite for future innovations. Therefore, project driven funding of basic research is needed in addition to the individualised funding by the ERC. This could, for example (but not exclusively), be realised through collaborative projects.

- *Extended funding mechanisms for networking and transnational training*

Dynamically growing research areas, including those with a clear relevance for innovation, suffer from a sometimes threatening lack of young scientists. Therefore, the mobility programme (Marie Curie Actions) should receive a higher amount of funding, especially with regard to the Initial Training Network Scheme and Individual Fellowships. Other funding instruments, e.g. the research infrastructures, should more than so far receive their own opportunities to carry out complementary domain-specific transnational training activities.

- *Sustainability of existing and new pan-European infrastructures*

For new pan-European infrastructures from the ESFRI-Roadmap, a convincing financing concept that includes a clear priority setting has to be identified. A significant contribution of the EU regarding the operational costs should be envisaged. Existing infrastructures (such as e.g. the Leibniz Institutes) substantially contribute to research in Europe. Therefore, the synergetic networking of existing infrastructures, as well as Open Access have to receive more funding than so far.

2. Science for Competitiveness

- *Basic research as an element of strategic industrial partnerships*

Strategic partnerships aiming at strengthening the European position in research and innovation require a long-term commitment of industrial project leaders. In many research areas, there is no short-term conversion of research results into marketable products. The incubation period of research developments into modern key technologies is partly very long and may encompass decades. Therefore, a sufficient share of long term basic research funding has also to be allowed for in industry driven projects.

- *Streamlining the portfolio of funding instruments*

It is important to ensure that new measures will not merely duplicate existing activities and thereby further contribute to the fragmentation of the European Research Area.

- *Quality control and sustainability of Public Private Partnerships*

A successful implementation and the expected leverage effects depend on a high level of industry commitment. However, the interim evaluation report of established *Joint Technology Initiatives* particularly criticises the absence of such a leverage effect. Future instruments for *Public Private Partnerships* should, therefore, include elements of quality control and securing mechanisms for sustainability.

3. Science for Society

- *Prudent implementation of Joint Programming*

Joint programmes by member states and coordinated cross-border activities are supposed to generate leverage effects. To achieve this goal, strategic mistakes and weaknesses of existing, comparable activities and instruments (e.g. ESFRI, ERA-Net) must be avoided. As noticed by the Leibniz Association during the implementation of ESFRI-Roadmap projects, the process of self-commitment and the balancing of interests of all actors involved have partly led to major delays in international projects. This is similarly true for the area of tension between scientific peer review (quality control) and the national funding interests in ERA-Nets.

- *Safeguarding financial stability and robustness of approved instruments*

An integrated approach by member states would imply the opening of national programmes. As this process inter alia raises complex legal national issues, its implementation can possibly not be expected until the start of FP8. With regard to the financial provisions of FP8, it has to be ensured that delays in this area will not affect other programmes and instruments that are less exposed to external influences and decisions and that have already proved to be efficient in the past.

- *Continuity of collaborative research*

Collaborative research projects have to be continued as a substantial and proven instrument, also for addressing the *Grand Challenges*, taking into account the specific characteristics of research institutes within the fields of socio-economics and humanities.

- *Improving SME-participation through reduction of bureaucracy*

The SME-participation in the FP should not only be guaranteed by a SME quota, but should rather take into account SME-specific requirements as well as efficient measures to reduce bureaucracy.

- *Simplification of administrative procedures and introduction of a trust-based approach*

The Leibniz Association welcomes the efforts for simplification based on the principle of trust and supports the acceptance of national accounting and management principles. The Leibniz Association, however, does not approve a solely result-oriented approach, as it was discussed at an earlier stage.

- *Improvement of European peer review*

The Leibniz Association, setting strict standards of quality assurance for its own external evaluation procedure, considers that there is still room for improvement with regard to the European peer review. This is particularly applicable for the practice of self-nomination of evaluators, to which the Leibniz Association strongly opposes.

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The Leibniz Association

The Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Scientific Community, known as the Leibniz Association, is the umbrella organisation for 86 institutions conducting research or providing scientific infrastructure. Some 7.100 scientists and scholars work in the humanities and social sciences, economics, spatial and life sciences as well as in mathematics, the natural and engineering sciences and in environmental research. Altogether, about 16.000 people are employed at Leibniz Institutes, of whom 2.800 junior scientists. The annual budget is 1,3 billion Euros, with up to 280 million Euros third-party funding.