

7TH RTD Framework Programme
Preliminary Portuguese Position

04/10/28

I - New Instruments

The recognition of the importance of FP7 leads to the relevance of evaluating the current Program and of raising some questions about the New Instruments that were introduced.

- 1) Portugal is not convinced of the actual efficiency of the New Instruments created in FP6. Integrated Projects (IPs) were defined as means to pursue specific objectives in wide-ranging areas, requiring the collaboration of a large mix of partners with different expertise, collaborating towards a common goal, otherwise, impossible to achieve. However, their added value has not been proven.
- 2) Networks of Excellence posed significant difficulties in terms of the commitment to integrate in a durable way many independent structures working in similar areas of knowledge. The concept is in need of clarification. The objectives, structure and legal aspects should be reconsidered with a view to making it a more useful and flexible tool.
- 3) New Instruments carry quite a few important drawbacks, as so correctly identified by the independent Panel of high-level experts, chaired by Professor Marimon. Among them, we would highlight the following:
 - a) The effort to put together a proposal for an IP becomes an expensive and time-consuming task. The needed resources for preparing such a proposal are only available to institutions with a strong financial capacity. Few SMEs would ever be able to assume such costs. Only very large industries and research Institutions are able to take up such an effort and responsibility.
 - b) The risk of preparing such a proposal and not being financed is quite high, as only the very best proposals can meet the strict quality requirements defined by the selection criteria. Quality must indeed be a paramount issue. This is however an important obstacle for certain industries and research groups, unwilling to take a reasonably high risk of failure even if they have excellent ideas to propose and pursue, given the amount of resources they would need to commit to the preparation of such a proposal. A smaller investment in a proposal would make the risk more acceptable.
 - c) Even the few proposals that overcome the evaluation barrier and succeed to be recommended for funding then face another complex, time consuming and expensive contract negotiation phase. When cuts are made by the evaluators (as is often the case), difficult situations may ensue where a few of the original partners are excluded from the project. Reaching practical consortium agreements for such large projects, with large numbers of partners and a large budget, is not always an easy task.

- 4) Moreover, as the number of funded proposals is strongly reduced when large projects such as IPs and NoEs are financed, it becomes much more difficult to support STREPs developing good ideas that only require a smaller fraction of the budget that is usually associated to the New Instruments. The New Instruments therefore become, in a way, a strong obstacle to the type of research that was traditionally carried out in the previous FPs which produced good results that cannot be ignored. SMEs, new emerging teams, smaller teams, etc., all these actors are being pushed out of the EC research by the New Instruments. FP6 tends to become dominated by the larger partners. This becomes quite clear from the analysis of the results of Calls that are already available in FP6.
- 5) The strong reduction in the number of funded proposals, as mentioned in the previous indent, is also associated with the fact that the new instruments oblige the proponents to concentrate in larger projects. Therefore, another obvious consequence is the clear decrease in the capacity of an institution to have its proposals funded. The risk of oversubscription increases, together with the exclusion of many excellent proposals.

Thus, in line with the conclusions and recommendations of the Marimont report, Portugal considers that:

- a) **There is a need for a strong presence and share of the traditional instruments, namely STREPs and CRAFT projects, to continue to promote the development of many good ideas requiring smaller R&D efforts, the presence of emerging and smaller research groups from SMEs, Industry, Universities and Research Institutions. More STREPs will allow an enlarging of the range of possible participants in the FP.**
- b) **The share of traditional instruments in FP7 must be much larger than in FP6. New Instruments, especially IPs, should only be adopted for special cases and should not represent the majority of the resources as in FP6. NoEs need to be rethought along the lessons learned, to make them a better, more flexible and appealing instrument. The situation of FP6, where New Instruments represent about two thirds of the available budget, must be reversed. STREPs should become, once again, the preferential instrument.**

We must also consider in this context the Technological Platforms, emerging as a “new” instrument for FP7. Portugal considers that this idea should be used with caution, on the one hand, and with transparency, on the other. The mobilization of critical masses needed for research and innovation must not be made on an *ad hoc* basis but with the participation of all Member States in the definition of priorities and in their implementation.

II - Basic Research

Portugal recognizes the importance of reinforcing the support to fundamental research at the European Level.

This support should, preferably, be given under the FP7 enlarging the scope of areas such as New and Emerging Science and Technology (NEST) or the Future and Emerging Technologies (FET), directed to projects where an European dimension is present. In any case this should be the object of additional funding although not sacrificing the other priorities that are more oriented to applied research.

We are therefore not yet convinced that the creation of a new structure to fund basic research is the most appropriate solution for increasing the support to this important area.

III – Priority Areas

On a preliminary basis, in order to preserve and reinforce the results already obtained it is convenient to keep focusing on the priorities defined in FP 6

Nevertheless we consider that other important areas should also be included in the FP7 as new Thematic Priorities such as Marine Sciences (see attachment) and Security and Natural Hazards .

Furthermore, the work program of Priority One (Life Sciences, Genomics and Biotechnology for Health) should be broadened in order to include Public Health research, an area that in our opinion is insufficiently covered in the present programme.

IV – Human Resources

Portugal strongly favors the continuity of the measures to support Human Resources in the scope of the next Framework Program. In this field we pay particular attention to questions related with the researchers' careers and mobility.

V – Research Infrastructures

Portugal agrees with the Commission proposal concerning the role of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) in the definition and implementation of the European policy on this important matter.

The question of funding related to the construction of new facilities and the maintenance of the existing ones has to be thoroughly discussed and should come from several sources, depending on the activities and areas covered. Further transparency and the involvement of all MS need to be ensured.

VI – Improving the coordination of National Programmes and Policies

Portugal is in favour of the Commission's intention to reinforce the future support to the ERA-NET scheme, which has proved to be a success within the current FP.

The ERA-NET is a new experience but we consider it as an important step to promote the co-ordination of national R&D programmes and policies, which could pave the way to the creation of Centres of Excellence.

VII – Small and Medium size Enterprises

The specific measures to support SME – CRAFT and Collective Research - have had an enormous success and the great demand they have been subjected to also shows that SME consider these schemes as an important instrument to enhance their competitiveness.

Portugal strongly supports its continuity in the forthcoming Framework Program as well as a substantial increase of the budget dedicated to them.

In a global perspective to increase the European actions in favour of SME, we also consider important to analyse the possibilities of collaboration with the EUREKA Programme to better explore complementarities and synergies between both programmes.

In the present context it is important to reinforce that CRAFT is a very particular support scheme to enhance the technological capacity of SME and that it does not have parallel with any other European scheme in favour of SME.

At the same time measures to improve the level of participation of SME in all activities of the Framework Program should be envisaged.

VIII – FP management

The management of FP7, namely the intervention of Member States should be improved and simplified. Nevertheless, the basic nature of the programme or priorities management committees should be maintained.