

Ideas for simplifying the implementation of the EU RTD Framework Programmes

In 2010, the European Commission plans to issue a Communication on possibilities for simplifying the implementation of the EU RTD Framework Programmes. For gathering ideas, the Commission opens here a first informal consultation.

Ideas are sought under two broad headings:

Improvements to processes and systems that could be implemented under the current legal basis of the 7th Framework Programme (e.g. better guidance and communication, improved workflows, improved IT systems...).

More profound changes of the modes of implementation of the EU research budget that would require adaptations to the legal basis (in particular the Framework Programme, Rules for Participation, model grant agreements).

Please provide your suggestions under these two sections in the respective boxes below.

This consultation is subject to a privacy statement.

Personal identification

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Involved (now or earlier) in a project of the Framework Programme

1. Suggestions for simplification within the current legal framework

Please provide below your concrete ideas and suggestions for simplifying the participation in the EU RTD Framework Programme that could be implemented without changing the current legal basis.

Make it visible,

Most of the innovations today come from small entities. Therefore particularly SMEs form a flourishing field of innovations, but unfortunately the programme has rarely been able to reach innovative SMEs due to the invisibility of the programme among those actors who actually could benefit the most of it.

The programme should be able to communicate its possibilities also to the innovative actors under the surface of big companies and actors specialised on writing project applications. Only those who are interested in EU RTD framework anyway will travel to Brussels to participate to events organized to promote it. EU RTD framework should be present on major industry events, where its target group is gathered anyway.

Make it simple,

Considering the demanding nature of preparing a FP7 project, one of the understandable by-products of EU RTD framework has been the emerge of enterprises and officials burying themselves in mastering ever-changing framework regulations. As a result, there is a remarkable risk of framework funding ending up to the most brilliant project applications instead of the most innovative ICT solutions.

In addition to making structures of funding clearer and simplifying the participation rules, in order to reach the most innovative actors, the EU RTD framework has to be much more risk-taking, risk tolerant and competent to identify the most innovative initiatives behind the formal quality of applications. If more support from EU RTD framework would be successfully targeted to the needs of the most innovative SMEs, it would lead to increased competition on European single markets and direct the funding to the most successful European products.

Research has to support enterprises, not compete with them.

Current FP7 programme makes universities, research institutions and their spin off enterprises to compete from same funding. This easily leads to a situation where institutionalized research institutions eat emerging enterprises alive. As innovations are mainly driven by enterprises and the transform of innovations to economic growth happens mostly in them, the research funding should be concentrated in general to institutions, whose mission is to support SMEs.

SME focus should come visible in reality

The successful implementation of EU RTD policy for creating jobs and growth requires strong involvement of relevant industry in the RTD framework. While engaging actors of the industry in the framework, it should be remembered that strong actions taken to support RTD of big well-established companies also create a serious risk of emerge of companies with dominant market position. In addition, it is in the interest of companies already having a dominant market position to do what ever is necessary to stop the emergence of rival companies.

Therefore, in all levels of EU RTD framework it should be secured that a broad base of companies, especially SMEs, are benefiting from it. In particular, SMEs should always be present in the core of the framework projects, also when it comes to JTIs.

Open JTIs are less risky for markets

In order to avoid market failures, it is important to take into account the specific economic situation of different markets and their actors while building up JTIs. When the inflexible model of JTI 'Clean sky' is used, the core owners of the JTI are fixed to the limited amount of named companies and therefore this model clearly carries the risk of dominant market players using a JTI to secure their dominant market position also in the future.

Consequently the model of JTI 'Artemis' should be favoured over the JTI 'Clean sky', because such an initiative can only be successful, if all major stakeholders of the field of industry are successfully represented and the process is dynamic. JTI 'Artemis', that is run by an open industry association, is possibly more open, transparent and dynamic and thus it carries much lower risk of being used to secure dominant market position by major economic players on the field.

2. Suggestions for simplification requiring a change to the legal framework

Please provide below your concrete ideas and suggestions for simplifying the participation in the EU RTD Framework Programme that would require changes to the legal basis (in particular the Framework Programme, Rules for Participation, model grant agreements).

Non-collaborative and individual funding

Currently the efficiency of EU RDT activities is not as high as it could be, because lots of energy, time and funding is used only to building up partnerships on European level that do not necessarily offer any additional benefits on the long run. Therefore there should also be possibilities for non-collaborative projects for SMEs in the FP7 framework. Particularly there is a need for funding for risky ideas that show a commitment to facilitating both innovativity and creativity among European entrepreneurs. Thus, for them, a similar program to current Ideas programme for researchers is needed to be split from Co-operation programme. This should not be linked to any formal requirements on university level or research level. It should really be open for new ideas from the whole community.

Let SME associations release their full potential in FP7

Currently SME associations and their umbrella organizations are not automatically equated to SMEs in the FP7 guidelines. As SME associations and their umbrella organizations are attending to their members' interest, they are experts of the challenges faced by their members and are efficient in the mainstreaming of best practices, new knowledge and standards among their members. Therefore they form an effective way of achieving many of the goals of the FP7 for SMEs.

At the moment SME's are accepted as SME's on a case per case basis. Therefore in order to simplify often confusing status of SME associations under the FP7 framework, SME associations should be considered in general equal to SMEs. This would significantly clarify the role of SME associations under the FP7 framework and thus increase their involvement in the FP7 activities and help them to better mainstream the benefits of FP7 to European SMEs.

Re-evaluate EIT

The structure of European institute of technology (EIT) has been decided to be build on the virtual Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). It is highly questionable, if this solution will be in the end more effective and productive than concentrating all resources in one city in Europe. In addition only 25% of the budget of Knowledge and Innovation Centres will be funded by EIT, in the times of economical crisis this will cause a serious challenges for the whole project. Therefore, the whole EIT-project should be re-evaluated in order to find out if it offers enough added value compared to directing same funding to EU RTD programmes like FP7.

Focus to the innovative business models

EU RTD framework must be built in the context of the real media distribution system on the area of ICT. In every single project the relevance of content and relevant business models should be justified, as the end user's perception of media happens through the content layer.

It should be noted that business models interlink with technology and innovation is not necessarily technological. Today it is the technology that follows the business models, as in the end new business models are the innovations that make the technological innovations to create jobs and growth. Similarly, the content is the main driver for technological innovations as it fuels the demand for new technologies. Therefore testing and developing them should be one of the priorities of EU RTD framework.

It takes innovations on services to generate growth

At the moment ICT focus of EU RTD framework does not fully include creative industries using ICT as medium of their creative cultural products and services. As European ICT markets are getting more and more driven by digital content, there is a clear need to modernise aid frameworks to reflect the changes brought by the digital world.

TEKES, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation, has taken a broad-based view on innovation: besides funding technological breakthroughs, TEKES emphasizes

the significance of service-related, design, business, and social innovations. This approach should be largely adapted also when it comes funding for ICT in EU RTD framework. By extending the definition of innovation and the focus of it in ICT RTD funding, EU will secure its competitive edge on the rapidly expanding content industry.