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P.O. Box 448 Sentrum, NO-0104 Oslo, Norway
Visiting address: Akersgata 13
post@innovationnorway.no

Phone: +47 22 00 25 00
Fax: +47 22 00 25 01
Web: www.innovationnorway.no

To: The European Commission
From: Innovation Norway
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Subject: Public consultation on a possible successor to the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP)

Innovation Norway promotes nationwide industrial development profitable to both the business economy and Norway's national economy, and helps release the potential of districts and regions by contributing towards innovation, internationalisation and promotion.

To whom it may concern,

With reference to the ongoing public consultation on a possible successor programme to the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, Innovation Norway would like to bring forward our views on some selected topics concerning the future contents of a CIP II:

Rationale and additionality

It is our opinion that the CIP I addresses vital and universal issues relating to innovation and competitiveness that are of European-wide interest and importance. Hence, we strongly support the following-up of the CIP I into a CIP II.

The Enterprise Europe Network

Innovation Norway coordinates the network in Norway and considers it a success, both nationally and on the European level. It contributes to the breaking down of formal and informal obstacles in the Internal Market and offers hands-on, practical guidance to European SMEs, thereby improving their competitiveness. The network also contributes strongly to the visibility of the CIP programme.

The Enterprise Europe Networks compliments the national SME support system by giving it an invaluable European/international dimension. Furthermore, it provides formal and informal arenas where national business support providers and policymakers can exchange best practice and build competence. The network is up and running in every way and we strongly support the continuation and further development of the network in the post-2013 period. An important task for the network in the future would be to contribute to get more innovation out of European R&D.

Also, Innovation Norway would like to point to the fact that there still remain many obstacles in the internal market and the well-functioning of this market is of vital importance to European businesses. We would therefore strongly encourage and support a continued and perhaps even stronger role for the Enterprise Europe Network in transferring knowledge of EU law to companies, helping and advising them on everything from CE-marking to market access. The network should therefore continue to focus both on internal market rules as well as internationalisation and innovation services.

Innovation Policy Development

Learning platforms

In Innovation Norway's experience, the various arenas under the Europe INNOVA and PRO INNO Europe platforms are invaluable for the development and testing of new policy instruments and pilot projects.

Moreover, these settings provide direct access to a European knowledge base and networks. In this way, they function as a breeding ground for new ideas where actors from the 'triple helix' can sit together in a multinational setting to discuss and exchange experiences and best practice. Obviously, gathering actors at the European level in this way thus facilitates a more cost and time effective learning arena than unilateral and/or bilateral arenas alone can offer. Furthermore, formal and informal networking among European policy actors creates valuable reference points for creating national policy support instruments.

The innovation policy development platforms have, in their first phase, provided solid platforms for key stakeholders to meet and start thinking more outside the box. Based on the above, Innovation Norway underlines the importance of providing the framework conditions for continuing these meeting places also beyond 2013.

Linking policies

We do believe that further synergies between the CIP and the 7/8RP could be explored. The totality of the research/innovation- relationship should be of great importance when the new programmes are outlined. A smoother continuation between the various European programmes, JPI and national initiatives would decrease the time from research to market, thus closing the gap between research, innovations and markets. Innovation Norway therefore supports the market replication programme proposal on key enabling technologies as a way forward. The NCPs and the Enterprise Europe Network should play an active role in bridging this gap.

In our opinion, the Europe 2020 ambition of building stronger links between regional, research and innovation policies is also of great importance. The shape and form of a new programme structure after 2013 should take into account the potential leverage effects of putting new European policy concepts and tools to use in pilot and market replication projects in the regions.

National and regional innovation support agencies have, in many countries, few strong ties to the research support agencies. A better coordination of these policies and/or instruments could result in a more targeted and coherent approach on both European and national levels.

Financial instruments

The Financial Instruments (GIF I and II, the SMEG) are well-designed to create additional, private funding for innovative SMEs. The number of finalised contracts with Norwegian financial intermediaries is limited. However, the instruments seem to have created a learning process in some venture capital funds in the sense that they become more outward-looking and internationally oriented. This applies both to the perceived market and their organisational structure.

We do think that the efficiency of the financial instruments of the CIP could be even higher if a) the risk level taken in the SMEG loan guarantees was higher (up to 50%), b) the legal and administrative procedures for the financial intermediaries were somewhat simplified, especially when it comes to reporting and c) the time from application to an agreement with EIF was shortened considerably. 1 year from application to a deal is too long, and could hamper the survival of funds for instance.

Innovation Norway welcomes the ongoing policy process of realising the Internal Market on venture capital. We believe that a more international/European market for VC would be fruitful and enabling for all. Also, we do believe that the road is long and that such policy goals will need continuous adaptations if they were to be a focus in a new CIP II.

Eco Innovation

The feedback from Norwegian SMEs on the Eco Innovation calls for proposals are mainly positive, and the interest for the call is growing every year. Innovation Norway supports the continuation of the initiative. The companies would strongly benefit from a less demanding application process and from a speedier publication of the approved projects, due to the fast time lines and schedules in innovative companies.

Innovation Norway supports the use of an electronic application system, it is however vital that the system is not overloaded and breaks down when applicants submit proposals. The SMEs work long and hard with the proposals and being stopped in the last days from submitting it due to system error is not acceptable. We would therefore welcome the time and effort spent to upgrade the system sufficiently.

NCP network

As a national contact point for the EIP, Innovation Norway suggests the setting up of a more systematic and formal NCP-structure. Learning from each other would improve the NCPs' ability to mobilise and recruit in even more purposeful ways. If the NCP-network could also be given information about unsuccessful candidates, they could follow up these projects, either to a better European proposal or to assist them in finding national funding. This would mean that the time spent by the SMEs for writing the proposals would generate a higher success rate (national or European funding), and perhaps this could encourage more SMEs to enter into European projects.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Hans Martin Vikdal
Senior Vice President
Innovation Norway
