

Conclusions of Session 2.2

Priorities for Community Research Policies

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Introduction

The main speaker in this session presented some of the recommendations currently being discussed and finalised by the Expert Group on "The Role of Community Research Policy in the Knowledge-based Economy", due to present its report at the end of October 2009. In turn, the four discussants offered some of their own priorities for future Community research policies, with the audience at the event invited to do likewise. The policy suggestions presented below thus reflect not only the recommendations likely to be made by the Expert Group, but also those suggested during the session and in discussions with participants immediately afterwards.

These suggestions fall into three groups. The suggestions in the first group deal with the problems research can be expected to address; those in the second deal with policies designed to strengthen and improve the position and performance of researchers in various settings (e.g. universities, RTOs, industry etc.); while those in the third group deal with the governance of research-related policies and their delivery.

A final section picks out three dominant themes that could form over-arching orientations for both Community and Member State research policies post-2010.

A Problem-oriented Approach to Research Policy

- Focus on major societal problems, particularly those that require joint research to resolve and that involve the creation of new markets
- Place greater emphasis on altering the direction of technical change
- Use existing instruments (Cooperation programme, ERA-NETs, Joint Programmes, JTI, International Cooperation etc.) to tackle 'Grand Challenges'
- Set the overall direction for research to follow, but incorporate bottom-up elements in project generation, ensure excellence via competition and support high risk research
- Link supply and demand elements via lead market initiatives and greater use of research and innovation-friendly procurement instruments

Improving Research Performance

- Increase the commitment to research and innovation, especially at the highest levels of governance
- Set new targets for public expenditure on research (1%) and higher education (2%)
- Strengthen individual components of the research system and corresponding infrastructures in order to meet new challenges
 - Encourage modernisation of universities via the introduction of competitive institutional funding schemes that reward progress towards greater autonomy, transparent accounting systems, leading edge PhD training schemes, entrepreneurship courses, research group leadership etc.
 - Support high-tech start-ups via targeted schemes that encourage them to carry out high risk research

- Support the development of infrastructural elements (e.g. a Community patent system) that encourage and facilitate open innovation
- Build truly European institutions by strengthening the ERC and the Knowledge and Innovation Communities of the EIT; exploiting the new legal framework for establishing European Infrastructures; and launching a new Joint Research Initiative scheme
- Strengthen the links between research and innovation actors, especially within clusters and between countries
- Continue to support collaborative R&D projects that involve a diverse range of R&D and innovation performers, intermediaries and users
- Launch a new scheme targeted at research relevant to the needs of actors in the service sector
- Work with other Directorate Generals (e.g. DG ENTR and DG REGIO) to support the research component of cluster development schemes
- Develop a truly European strategy for International Cooperation via SFIC
- Continue to develop mobility schemes, particularly those that promote global brain circulation
- Support the opening-up of national programmes via time-limited Community contributions to programmes demonstrating movement in this direction

Governance and Policy Delivery

- Improve policy delivery via greater efforts to reduce administrative burdens
- Encourage the spread of an evaluation culture by supporting appropriate training schemes and networks
- Make a special provision for research in the Financial Regulation that recognises its risky nature and helps to rebuild a relationship based on trust between the Commission and the research community
- Ensure greater policy coherence and links between supply and demand policies, and between policies affecting research, education, innovation and market development
 - Make greater use of Pre-Commercial Procurement
 - Encourage the participation of high-tech start-ups and entrepreneurial SMEs in research and innovation-friendly procurement initiatives
 - Set an example to Member States by launching joint initiatives involving DG EAC, DG ENTR and DG REGIO and supporting similar initiatives at a national level
- Support the evolution of differentiated strategies for different countries and regions, focusing in particular on smart specialisation
 - Devise schemes that will help regional policymakers to devise smart specialisation strategies
 - Work with DG REGIO to ensure that a greater proportion of Structural Funds are devoted to the development of knowledge economies
 - Make the provision of Structural Funds conditional upon a commitment to smart specialisation and progress towards it
- Further promote joint programming between Member States via Community contributions to resultant initiatives

Overall Orientations for Community and Member State Research Policies

- Adopt three overall orientations for Community research policy post-2010 that could also be shared by Member States
- In short, develop policy portfolios that can be described as:

Bolder

- The opportunity to exploit win-win situations by focusing research on areas likely to lead to both the resolution of major societal challenges and the growth of new markets for innovative goods and services should be grasped firmly and promptly

Better

- Research system performance at national and European levels needs to be continually improved if the goal of a fully functional ERA is to be realised. Moreover, in the light of the current financial crisis, the efficiency with which existing resources are deployed also needs to be improved

Bigger

- Investment in research and research infrastructures needs to be expanded if the EU is to continue to make headway in its attempt to become a leading knowledge-based society