

## Comments from the Programme Management on the panel's recommendations

These comments have been prepared by officials of DG RTD and represent their personal views on the conclusions of the 5-year assessment. These views have not been adopted or in any way approved by the Commission and should not be relied upon as a statement of the views of the Commission or DG RTD.

*The following comments of the Programme management have integrated the most recent developments, notably in the context of the European Research Area.*

*As regards the overall 5-year assessment of the Framework Programmes, the Commission has expressed its position in the document COM (2000)659, 19 October 2000.*

The Programme management is pleased with the positive assessment of the relevance of the Programme's objectives and of the quality of the funded research, and will endeavour to safeguard longer term research as the Panel recommends.

The Programme management is aware of the highlighted differences between the areas covered by the Programme. The mentioned complex management structure is a result of the efforts to deal with that, and the Programme management is pleased with the Panel's observation that most difficulties associated with this structure have been resolved.

The Programme management takes note of the Panel's suggestions

- that Sustainable Mobility and Standards, Measurement and Testing might be independent programmes in the future;
- that all calls for proposals should specify exact technical objectives to be met instead of declaring areas open for proposals,

but the possible follow-up of these suggestions depends obviously on a future negotiation process with the Council and Parliament.

The Programme management is grateful for the clear distinction between recommendations which it can follow up itself and recommendations which can only be addressed at a higher level, and wishes to comment briefly on each of these recommendations (see below).

The Programme management thanks the Panel members for their dedicated efforts and for the quality of their conclusions and recommendations.

## **1. Recommendations related to the objectives of the Programme**

### **(Recommendations addressed to the Council)**

#### ***Recommendation nr 1:***

*"The objectives of the GROWTH Programme are highly relevant and should be maintained, but the Panel recommends a more systematic formulation of these objectives. Despite extensive consultation in the process of the formulation of objectives, these are too general in some KAs. We recommend that a few specific and challenging targets are selected for each KA.*

*The concepts of 'European dimension' and 'European added value' have to be further clarified and translated into programme objectives and corresponding project selection criteria.*

*The Panel appreciates that efforts have been undertaken in some parts of the programme to specify the socio-economic objectives in a quantifiable and verifiable way. It recommends this practice to be spread to other parts, where possible. This would help overcome present difficulties in formulation and evaluation of project proposals."*

Comments from the Programme management:

- The Commission will pursue its efforts along the lines recommended, in particular for the future EU research activities (second revision of the Growth workprogramme and FP6), aiming at the right balance between realism and innovation / challenge.
- 'European dimension' and 'European added value' will be more precisely defined in the framework of the future European research policy and will be adapted to the new challenges and priorities (ERA, Enlargement, Variable geometry)
- Objectives will be defined in a quantitative / verifiable way where this is feasible and desirable. This not always the case, either because the basis to set challenging but realistic specifications is lacking at the time of defining the objectives (e.g. research on new materials), or because a true bottom-up approach is considered as essential (e.g. in support to SMEs).

#### ***Recommendation nr 2:***

*"There needs to be a better balance between applied and basic research, and between 'technological breakthrough' projects and 'incremental innovation' projects. One way of doing this may be special calls, incorporating different requirements and evaluation criteria for high profile, high risk projects with potentially high rewards.*

*In this context, project failure (for risky projects) must be considered acceptable, however mechanisms must be put in place for early identification, assessment and closure of failing projects.*

*Also the complementarity with EUREKA must be re-defined accordingly."*

Comments from the Programme management:

- The impact studies for FP4 indicate indeed a reduced number of high-risk breakthrough technology projects. This number will increase in FP5 where high risk projects are already being funded in generic technologies (long term research on materials) and in targeted research actions, critical technologies, technology integration projects / technology platforms. In the second revision of the Growth workprogramme, more emphasis has been given in some areas to the need for long-term, high-risk projects.

- Mechanisms to identify and close failing projects are already in place, but it is recognised that their application is not yet as systematic and formalised as they should be.
- One of the objectives set out in the European Research Area document is to improve the overall efficiency of research in Europe; this includes identifying means to increase the synergy and complementarity with nationally funded programmes and with relevant co-operation mechanisms, including Eureka. Services dedicated to these tasks are being set up in Research DG.

***Recommendation nr 3:***

*"There is in many cases a need to better co-ordinate other policy instruments outside the FPs with the objectives of the RTD projects (e.g. in Transport systems)."*

Comments from the Programme management:

Although FP5 has already been a significant step forward in this direction, the Programme management is fully aware of the need to strengthen and better highlight the link between research activities, other policy instruments (e.g. structural funds), and the policies of the EU. RTD results are already being used in EU legislation and communications, especially in the field of transport. In the future European research actions (FP6), co-ordination and linking with other policy instruments will be one of the guiding principles across the programme.

## **2. Recommendations related to efficiency of management**

### **(Recommendations addressed to the Council)**

***Recommendation nr 4:***

*"Given the specific needs and the horizontal character of measurement and testing, the Panel recommends the instatement of SMT as an independent, co-ordinating SP with a larger budget."*

Comments from the Programme management:

The Programme management thanks the Panel for this recommendation and will take it in due consideration within its capacity to optimise its operational structure in agreement with the Member States and the other Institutions.

***Recommendation nr 5:***

*"The optimisation of Transport systems needs the integration of different technologies (materials, concepts, production, energy, telematics, etc.) as well as organisational and political framework conditions. A merger of all activities related to 'Sustainable Mobility' could be appropriate to simplify the co-ordination inside the Commission."*

Comments from the Programme management:

The Growth Programme integrates most of the Transport RTD activities promoted by the FP5. This has been a substantial integration in comparison with the fragmented Transport RTD activities under FP4. At the beginning of FP5, a specific Group of Directors was created to co-ordinate transport activities and several actions have been taken identifying areas where co-ordination was particularly needed like Urban Transport, Safety in Tunnels, Air Traffic Management, Transport and Logistics, and others. Nevertheless we can not disregard the complexity of the transport system itself and the many approaches which are necessary to tackle its problems comprehensively. In any case all the Transport RTD activities under FP5 foster the overall target of a sustainable mobility.

**Recommendation nr 6:**

*"Given the resource constraints on the side of the Commission, there should be, where appropriate and efficient, stronger efforts to outsource or to decentralise to national level more administration and decision making. Advantages and disadvantages of alternative management structures have to be systematically studied (e.g. outsourcing, involvement of NFPs, etc.)"*

Comments from the Programme management:

These options are being studied in the context of the Commission reform. Some mechanisms (project technical assistants, reviewers) are being implemented, and new mechanisms are expected to be introduced in the future European research actions (FP6).

**(Recommendations addressed to the Commission)**

**Recommendation nr 7:**

*"The organisation structure of FP4 (a single director responsible for the Programme with an ,advisor') had advantages in comparison to the present structure in terms of clarity of responsibility and division of tasks and should be re-installed.*

*In Programme management, more transparency based on job descriptions and management performance criteria should be established."*

Comments from the Programme management:

As part of the reform of the Commission, job descriptions and a process for assessing management performance are currently being introduced.

Although the management structure of the Programme will probably be changed in the current reorganisation of DG Research, major changes in structure will normally be linked with the start of a new Programme. Indeed, having a single director in charge is not really compatible with including key actions managed by two Directorates-General.

**Recommendation nr 8:**

*"The introduction of the EAGs is judged positively, but the roles of and relations between the EAGs and the Programme Committees needs further clarification.*

*In addition, the information exchange between EAGs and Programme Committees should be improved.*

*There should also be a system for regular change of membership in the EAGs."*

Comments from the Programme management:

- Steps are being taken to enhance information exchange between EAGs and Programme Committees; as a first initiative, the chairmen of all EAG and HLEG have presented the work of their respective groups at recent meetings of the Programme Committee.
- EAG members are nominated for 2 years with possibility to extend for another 2 years. New members from the Associated States have recently been introduced.

**Recommendation nr 9:**

*"The development of an effective two stage proposal process should be reinvestigated, not with the aim of improving the overall success rate but of weeding out unsuccessful proposals before significant amounts of effort are expended."*

Comments from the Programme management:

The system of Expressions of Interest + dedicated call, which applies to parts of the M&T activity and to Infrastructure, is actually a form of two stage procedure.

A general two stage procedure with the same level of transparency in selecting proposals would lead to much longer overall delays, whilst the development of a stage 1 proposal would still require a substantial effort as the information provided should be sufficient to allow a fair evaluation process.

**Recommendation nr 10:**

*"We recommend the streamlining of the process leading to finalisation of the contract:*

- The delay between the end of negotiation and the effective signature of the contract should be further reduced. To reduce delay the Panel suggests that the Commission delegates the responsibility of contracting to the DGs.*
- Proposals which have reached the final contract negotiation should be allowed to start at the risk of the consortium while formal approval process continues.*
- It is suggested that the Commission should undertake a study comparing in each key action the ideal minimum timing per phase (preparation, launch, ex ante evaluation, time to signature), the real average time per phase, the number of contracts monitored per project officer. Based on such findings, the Commission should regularly monitor and publish these indicators per call and Programme (in time and deviation from optimum)."*

Comments from the Programme management:

- Contracting is done at DG level; it is the selection of projects which is currently decided at Commission level. Measures for speeding up this process (including delegation) have recently been implemented, and further options are being examined (in the context of the Commission reform) by a working group dealing specifically with ways to accelerate procedures.
- Present Commission rules say that the costs of any activity can be covered only if a prior budgetary commitment was made, but the possibility to take up this recommendation will be examined.
- Although they were so far not included in any formal study or report, the considerations listed in the third indent are regularly taken into account in reviewing the programme management performance.

It appears possible to implement this recommendation by including the suggested indicators in the reports on future proposal evaluation exercises.

**Recommendation nr 11:**

*"A systematic process leading to a follow-up report to all monitoring and assessment panels, explaining the degree and basis of acceptance or rejection of recommendations by the relevant bodies, would improve transparency and performance of up-take of recommendations."*

Comments from the Programme management:

This is actually current practice for issues on which the Commission can decide.

This recommendation is, however, difficult to implement when dealing with issues which anticipate on future political decisions.

**Recommendation nr 12:**

*"BRITE-EURAM has been a very innovative and sound programme in terms of programme and project management. E.g., it was the first to introduce CRAFT and Exploratory awards, the most systematic evaluation mechanism have been developed, Expressions of Interest have*

*proved to be a valuable source of bottom-up input of ideas. These best practices should be disseminated as much as possible to other parts of the Programme and across the FP."*

Comments from the Programme management:

- Craft, exploratory awards, and the proposal evaluation system now apply Framework Programme-wide.
- Information on the Programme's experience with impact assessment of finished projects and with Expressions of Interest is exchanged between programmes via the Interservice Group on Monitoring and Evaluation, the interservice Co-ordination group on Innovation, and the Group of Directors.

### **(Recommendations addressed to the Management of the GROWTH Programme)**

#### ***Recommendation nr 13:***

*"A priority effort should be devoted to the acquisition of the best evaluators, through an early planning of the evaluation period and by allocating more time and resources to the selection of*

*evaluators and proposals. As a general rule, the Panel recommends to increase the share of evaluators from business and industry to 30-50 percent."*

Comments from the Programme management:

About 80 % of the experts are contacted 2 - 3 months in advance, but the list of experts can be only finalised, and confirmation of invitation sent, when detailed information on the areas covered by the proposals to be evaluated is available (i.e. about 2 weeks before the actual evaluation). To improve this substantially, it would be necessary to require prior notice of the intention to submit a proposal (e.g. by making the pre-proposal check compulsory).

#### ***Recommendation nr 14:***

*"Streamlining of application procedures is recommended at all levels: A greater clarity of calls and description of the targeted groups would facilitate the application procedure.*

*The information packages have to be shortened and made more concise in order to be digestible for SMEs. Application forms should be shortened. Administration forms should, at minimum, be reduced at least to previous levels.*

*The efforts to help SMEs with project proposals by information, courses, screenings and economic support could be intensified.*

*The project reporting requirements should be simplified by requiring shorter reports targeted to planned vs. actual achievements in terms of time, cost, quality and risk of the project."*

Comments from the Programme management:

- The application procedures, administration forms and general information packages are harmonised at Framework Programme level, where a working group is currently looking into simplification of procedures and forms.
- Efforts to stimulate the participation of SMEs have been strengthened under FP5: single entry point for Craft, SME help desk, training of a dedicated network of national contact points, multi-national stimulation actions funded by the Innovation and SMEs programme or by the Thematic Programmes.
- The Innovation and Quality cell of the Growth Programme will re-examine the reporting scheme aiming at the best possible match between the objectives of the various forms of reporting and the effort required.

### **3. Recommendations related to the effectiveness of the Programme**

#### **(Recommendations addressed to the Council)**

##### ***Recommendation nr 15:***

*"The possibility of using public procurement at the European level should be carefully studied. Public procurement can generate innovation by demanding performances beyond the state-of-the-art. In order to increase the effectiveness of the Programmes it is recommended that opportunities be given to combine public calls for tenders by national authorities with specific RTD contents. Transport could be a good case in this direction."*

Comments from the Programme management:

Mechanisms to stimulate innovation, other than research funding, are being examined in the context of the definition of the future European research policy.

#### **(Recommendations addressed to the Commission)**

##### ***Recommendation nr 16:***

*"The results of the projects must be more widely disseminated. E.g. in SMT, it should be required to have an effective dissemination plan to user groups outside the SMT community as part of the proposal. Encouragement by presentations, general publications and meetings, training courses, contact with large companies and electronic networks could reinforce such active dissemination.*

*The impact of many Transport systems RTD projects could be further improved if higher involvement of users is assured, and closer co-operation between the Commission and Member States to improve the dissemination of results is achieved."*

Comments from the Programme management:

- The need to increase the visibility of Measurements and testing is acknowledged; the need is partly due to the lack of visibility of metrology in general. More efforts will have to be made in order to publicise the achievements, for example the success stories. In addition, organisation of public awareness raising events could be discussed with, for example, EUROMET and CEN.
- The Transport activity seeks to involve users by encouraging consortia to involve users, via thematic networks, through demonstration projects led by users, via wide dissemination of final reports of projects, a final conference and a web-site in every project, and via web-sites on specific subjects like public transport. Linguistic barriers should be overcome through national relays which channel the information to lower levels. Co-ordination with national programmes will be improved in the framework of the European Research Area; links with the national information systems have already been created.

##### ***Recommendation nr 17:***

*"Despite the Council decision to limit CRAFT to SMEs only, we recommend that one large company (customer or supplier of the SMEs) per consortium be allowed, thus facilitating interaction within the supply chain."*

Comments from the Programme management:

The present system aims at reserving the Intellectual Property Rights resulting from Craft projects for the SMEs. Large companies can co-operate in Craft projects via a third party agreement (i.e. a contract between the large company and the SMEs, not between the large company and the Commission). They can also be RTD performer (being paid as subcontractor of the SMEs, which will own the resulting IPR).

### **(Recommendations addressed to the Management of the GROWTH Programme)**

#### ***Recommendation nr 18:***

*"The quality of the technical and scientific work is high throughout the Programme and it is very important to maintain this status."*

Comments from the Programme management:

This status will be maintained because the design of the evaluation system ensures that the funded projects meet high standards for "scientific-technical" as well as "socio-economic / European" criteria.

#### ***Recommendation nr 19:***

*"More attention should be devoted to the appropriate critical size of projects in the proposal evaluation process."*

*In SMT, the search for projects achieving critical mass and clustering of projects should be intensified."*

Comments from the Programme management:

- Under FP5, the critical size of projects has gained importance especially for the research objectives covered by the Targeted Research Actions and the Technology Platforms. Further measures to encourage high impact projects are being considered at Framework Programme level.
- Solving the technical problems which slow down the European standardisation, for example, leads to a number of sharply focused projects which are often unrelated to each other and therefore difficult to cluster. In spite of that, a continuous effort is being made to merge, cluster and network projects. A new means to achieve critical mass is the use of Expressions of interest. The average size of an M&T project has doubled as compared to an SMT one.

#### ***Recommendation nr 20:***

*"The awareness for support of infrastructure in FP5 should be raised. In parallel the objectives and evaluation criteria should be clarified. The Panel also recommends that the measure be followed up to ensure that the intentions are fulfilled."*

Comments from the Programme management:

In the Growth programme, Support for Research Infrastructures is quite different from the corresponding activity in the other thematic programmes. Awareness activities are being planned to underline the importance of this part of the programme and to clarify its scope and objectives. A workshop on Virtual institutes (VI) was held in September 2000. The section on VI in the December 2000 edition of the Workprogramme has been rewritten.

#### **4. Recommendation related to the preparation of FP6**

*Statement in the Executive Summary which is actually a recommendation:*

*"With a view to FP6, the Panel has the opinion, that one of the main lessons learned from the current GROWTH Programme is that there needs to be some continuity in terms of objectives and underlying approach. The concepts underpinning the problem solving approach of FP5 have to be further developed and tested in practice."*

Comments from the Programme management:

The programme management acknowledges the need to continue the problem solving approach followed by FP5, and to develop it further in line with the objectives of the European Research Area.