

**Commission Services' comments to the recommendations of the  
5 Year Assessment Panel for the**

**IMPROVING THE HUMAN RESEARCH POTENTIAL AND THE  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC KNOWLEDGE BASE PROGRAMME**

<p>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.</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The following comments of the Commission Services 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.

**Recommendation 1. Socio-Economic Research and Indicators**

“The Panel recommends that Socio-economic Research (SER) becomes (again) a separate **thematic programme** in the future framework programme, as it has (intrinsically) very little in common with the training and mobility of researchers programme.”

“A common set of socio-economic **indicators** (e.g. in the line of the Science Technology and Innovation Indicators) **should be developed.**”

**Comments**

The panel's recommendation to strengthen socio-economic research in the future is noted. It should be pointed out that within FP5, socio-economic research is included both within the thematic programmes and in the Socio-Economic Key Action under the IHP programme. The programme also has an important role in the co-ordination and support of the socio-economic research activities in the thematic programmes.

The recent Communication on the European Research Area, and the conclusions of the European Council meeting in Lisbon have set a new agenda and new orientations for the work on S&T indicators. Further developments of these activities will place more emphasis not only on building new indicators that facilitate the analysis of the key factors and obstacles underlying the development of the European Research Area, and that can help in the preparation of appropriate European policies but also on making socio-economic indicators easily available.

**Recommendations 8 and 9. Bottom-up Approach**

“The **bottom-up** approach is a characteristic of the programme that the Panel values and wholeheartedly recommends as a means to strengthening the basic research capabilities in Europe.”

“The Panel also recommends that at the same time some attention be given to strategic consideration in order to **correct the observed imbalance.**”

**Comment**

The need to balance demand across disciplines is important and is explicitly answered by the bottom-up nature of the programme, which is a critical and well-accepted approach by Member-States. Of course demand must be balanced against quality and there is no suggestion that quality could be sacrificed to ensure that the activities remain bottom-up. However, the Commission is satisfied that there is **no significant quality variation** between proposals submitted to the different disciplines which would necessitate changes to the bottom-up system of funding and this view is supported by the independent observers who noted the high quality and lack of significant variation across disciplines. Therefore, the Commission does not plan changes to the system at present but will keep a careful eye on the quality of proposals across disciplines and will take action in the future if necessary.

### **Recommendation 10. Mobility**

“Extend the **mobility** concept (by relaxing age-limits, encouraging the participation of women, experienced researcher, new countries and developing return grants from outside Europe) and increase the flexibility of the grants, in an attempt to consolidate an increasingly **open**, global research area in Europe.”

#### **Comment**

- **Country/region imbalance:** FP5 has introduced a new MC Fellowship scheme called the “Marie Curie Development Host Fellowships” exclusively addressed to the Less Favoured Regions and representing 500 fellowships-years for the whole duration of the FP

- **Involvement of private enterprises:** FP5 has introduced two new measures addressed exclusively to enterprises: the “Marie Curie Industry Host Fellowships” and the Marie Curie Experienced Researchers - Academy-Industry exchange. The first one itself will represent at the end of the FP 1200 fellowships years. These two measures are addressed exclusively to enterprises with commercial activity.

- **Encouraging women:** While promoting FP5, women have been encouraged to participate not only in preparing projects but also as participating as experts-evaluators. Their participation in the projects has been successful (see previous point) however the Programme recognises that further promotion is needed to encourage women to submit their applications to the evaluators database. In the Research Training Networks Activity, there is an obligation for the contractor to apply an equal opportunity policy in the appointment of the young researchers.

- **New countries:** The Marie Curie Fellowships and the Research Training Networks and are in FP5 open also to non-EU-nor-Associated-States nationals who have been residing for five years in the Community. In addition the **New Associated States** are being object of a strong promotional campaign of the Programme.

The Panel’s comments on extending mobility are being taken into account in the proposals for a **European Research Area** and in the planning for FP6. The Programme Management will review the relative importance of funding opportunities for pre-doctoral and post-doctoral researchers. Similarly, the retraining needs of older researchers, and the need to mainstream female researchers of all ages is at the heart of current thinking for the future.

## **Recommendation 12 and 15. Infrastructures**

“A more ambitious approach to European research infrastructures is needed, including financing for upgrading and **new** national and European research centres.”

“There is a clear need to incorporate **impact indicators** (in addition to output indicators) to strengthen future monitoring and assessment exercises.”

### **Comment**

The recommendations of the panel in favour of a policy for the support by the programme of new infrastructural projects goes in the same direction as the debate the Commission is presently animating, in particular through the Conference on Research Infrastructures.

The Programme Management can only agree completely with the remark of the panel concerning the desirability of appropriate impact monitoring methodologies. The suggestions made about impact parameters and monitoring methodologies are very useful and will be taken into account in the next edition of the "Mid-term Review" of the action.

## **Recommendation 14. Raising Public Awareness**

The Panel strongly recommends activities addressed to **increase** the level of **public awareness** on the relevance of Science for the competitive development of Europe. Dissemination of the scientific results of the Programme should be one key element of this activity.

### **Comment**

The Commission Services welcomes the panels support for the new activities in the area of raising public awareness of science and technology. This is an issue that requires considerable attention not only in terms of the type of information conveyed but also as regards the way in which information is transmitted.

It must be recognised, however that there is a difference between the **dissemination of research results to users** (science professionals, industrialists, entrepreneurs and commercial organisations) and activities aimed at **raising the level of science awareness of the non-specialised general public**. The general public is not so much a user of science but rather a consumer of products and services that depend (increasingly) on technological innovation and the application of scientific principles.

## **Recommendation 20. Women and Science**

“The goal of increasing the participation of **women in science** and its associated decision-making should be **explicit** in European Research policy. A strengthened activity should undertake more **policy studies** to build qualitative **indicators** to allow **monitoring of progress** towards the goal of increasing participation and qualitative findings to provide experiences and practical resources to help research organisations in Europe take forward equality goals.”

## **Comment**

The Programme Management welcomes the detailed and supportive comments made about the “Women and Science” activities developed within FP5. It confirms that the Commission intends to pursue and intensify action in this area. It is indeed a **key element of the European Research Area**, and Commissioner Busquin, in the conclusion of the April conference on “Women and Science” confirmed that the Commission will continue to act as a catalyst in this matter.

**The Commission services thank all the members of the Panel for their dedicated work and the efforts they invested in carrying out the assessment.**