WRITTEN RESPONSE CONCERNING THE GREEN PAPER ON A COMMON STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR EU RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUNDING.

Information about the respondent

I am answering as an individual based in a university where I am responsible for the communication , articulation and management of international research programmes within the College of Life Sciences, of which EU Framework Programmes are an important element. I am incorporating the comments of a group of colleagues as well as my own opinions. I have also participated in the national consultation process on the Green Paper and many colleagues have also responded to the individual thematic consultations (e.g. KBBE) , and have contributed to submissions from academic associations and learned bodies of which they are members.

Country of location : Ireland

My organisation's main activity is research and higher education

The name of my organisation is the National University of Ireland, Dublin, University College Dublin

My organisation has received funding from: FP7 (all 4 pillars) ; successive EU Framework Programmes since their inception; COST, ESF, Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Interreg and other Structural Funds, DG Sanco, DG Justice, DG Agriculture and from all relevant national funding bodies for research and innovation. http://www.ucd.ie/research

I have taken the headings from the on-line Questionnaire as the framework for response on the basis that it will facilitate analysis and aggregation of views.

Working together to deliver on Europe 2020

The questions in this section correspond to Section 4.1 of the Green Paper.

1. How should the Common Strategic Framework make EU research and innovation funding more attractive and easy to access for participants? What is needed in addition to a single entry point with common IT tools, a one stop shop for support, a streamlined set of funding instruments covering the full innovation chain and further steps towards administrative simplification?

Broader topics underpinned by sufficient numbers of awards are required - currently the fact that sometimes only one project per topic has a chance to be funded is a deterrent.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important.

2. How should EU funding best cover the full innovation cycle from research to market uptake?

Systematically target funding to each stage of the process, from basic to applied to market uptake.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

3. What are the characteristics of EU funding that maximise the benefit of acting at the EU level? Should there be a strong emphasis on leveraging other sources of funding?
European Added Value- things can be done at a scale not possible at the national level; critical mass attained; internationalisation of research; leveraging should be generally encouraged (just as national policy encourages the same- in Ireland the higher education sector is required to achieve at least 20% of income from non-Exchequer funding, and EU funding is in fact an important part of that, so complementarity / leveraging/ subsidiarity is already at work.
A "strong" emphasis on leveraging might put researchers from fiscally-constrained member states at a systematic disadvantage, not in keeping with the concept of a level playin field across the EU.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

4. How should EU research and innovation funding be used to pool Member States' research and innovation resources? Should Joint Programming Initiatives between groups of Member States be supported?
Research and Innovation are different and one solution will not fit all. Technology Platforms combine elements of both and pilot actions could be funded to gauge best practice. The issue of subsidiarity arises here as in the previous question. Joint Programming should not supersede project-based funding but should be used for selected pan-European issues in which there are national programmes in most /all countries. ERA-Nets provide a good model, at a more modest level. Joint Programming could be facilitated by good information exchange and financial supports to visit and meet one another.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

5 . What should be the balance between smaller, targeted projects and larger, strategic ones?
The balance is very important as large networks and consortia often grow from small initial projects. Large projects should be few and very strategic, with at least 50% of funding support devoted to smaller , targeted projects, and clusters thereof.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

6. How could the Commission ensure the balance between a unique set of rules allowing for radical simplification and the necessity to keep a certain degree of flexibility and diversity to achieve objectives of different instruments, and respond to the needs of different beneficiaries, in particular SMEs?
In so far as possible, there should be one core set of rules, and clear differentiation for specific sectoral measures such as those for SMEs.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Important

7. What should be the measures of success for EU research and innovation funding? Which performance indicators could be used?

Measures of success: benefits in terms of industry, of applications in government policy , education and society as a whole. Increase in European patents. Indicators : a wide range of quantitative indicators measuring both process and outcomes. In principle, some attempt might be made to quantify additionality , e.g. collaborations which would otherwise not have occurred.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

8. How should EU research and innovation funding relate to regional and national funding? How should this funding complement funds from the future Cohesion policy, designed to help the less developed regions of the EU, and the rural development funds?

EU R&D funds should complement regional and national funding. Part of the cohesion funds could be dedicated to support the participation of researchers from the less-developed regions, including access to established networks. This support should be of fixed duration, after which researchers from these regions should be well placed to compete for funding with those from established regions.
With specific reference to rural development, the current debate on the appropriate policy architecture for supporting rural development beyond 2013 will be very important. There appears to be support in some quarters for elements of the current CAP Pillar 2 to migrate to Cohesion Policy in the post-2013 EU Budget period. As some commentators have noted, one of the main arguments in favour of such a shift would be the increased coherence such a move would bring to the pursuit of rural development at an EU level. As against that, it has been argued that rural development policy should not be "subsumed" under regional policy because this would increase the risk that available funding would be diverted towards urban centres rather than within rural areas. However, to date, there has been little discussion about how such fundamental shifts in policy architecture might be operationalised , or of the relative merits of strengthening the relationship between the two policy spheres.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

Tackling Societal Challenges

The questions in this section correspond to Section 4.2 of the Green Paper.

9. How should a stronger focus on societal challenges affect the balance between curiosity-driven research and agenda-driven activities?
There is a need for both and a 50:50 balance could be appropriate.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

10. Should there be more room for bottom-up activities?

There definitely should be more scope for bottom-up activities, particularly given the multiannual nature of Framework programme research and the need for flexibility for rapid response to emerging issues.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

11. How should EU research and innovation funding best support policy-making and forward-looking activities?
Addressing the policy context in all proposals / projects should be mandatory , recognising that outputs such as policy tools are not appropriate in the majority of proposals. Project consortia should be encouraged to engage at local/regional level with policy makers and opinion formers.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

12. How should the role of the Commission's Joint Research Centre be improved in supporting policy-making and forward-looking activities?

The JRC could be a standard-bearer for the Commission in this regard. This could be piloted in a specific number of projects early in the new funding scenario.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Important

13. How could EU research and innovation activities attract greater interest and involvement of citizens and civil society?

Increased emphasis is needed in consultation on and communication of the benefits of EU-funded research to civil society and to policy makers, and involving all stakeholders in the process .
The need for outreach and public understanding of science is already recognised in most member states. A pan-European media campaign should be spear-headed by the European Commission, providing an identifiable "umbrella" under which national activities could operate.
At project level, all proposals and reports should contain lay summaries and the latter should be communicated to the wider audience. The EU has fostered and supported excellent research in many areas and these outcomes need to be communicated to the public in layman's terms , so that they understand the value of the research spend.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important.

Strengthening competitiveness

The questions in this section correspond to Section 4.3 of the Green Paper.

14. How should EU funding best take account of the broad nature of innovation, including non-technological innovation, eco-innovation and social innovation?

The integration of the CIP into the common strategic framework will, per se, address this issue. A better articulation of the various aspects , definitions and meanings of innovation would make a good starting point.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Of some importance.

15. How should industrial participation in EU research and innovation programmes be strengthened? How should Joint Technology Initiatives (such as those launched in the current Framework Programmes) or different forms of 'public private partnership' be supported? What should be the role of European Technology Platforms?

These measures are relatively new, having been introduced in FP7, and have just had their mid-term review. It seems premature to comment further at this point. On a general point, the Intellectual Property Rights system seems to work well and does not seem to present a barrier to the participation of industry.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Important

16. How and what types of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) should be supported at EU level; how should this complement national and regional level schemes? What kind of measures should be taken to decisively facilitate the participation of SMEs in EU research and innovation programmes?

The current balance of measures seems appropriate, i.e. specific measures for / to assist SMEs as well as their mainstream, integral involvement in projects as appropriate.
In FP7, many applicants do not find the mandatory inclusion of SMEs in specific topics in the call texts to be wholly appropriate.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

17. How should open, light and fast implementation schemes (e.g. building on the current FET actions and CIP eco-innovation market replication projects) be designed to allow flexible exploration and commercialisation of novel ideas, in particular by SMEs?

Again, it is rather early to say , but the success of CIP measures and the experience of FET in FP7 to date are positive indicators for their future role in the common strategic framework.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

18. How should EU-level financial instruments (equity and debt based) be used more extensively?

We have no input on this issue.

19. Should new approaches to supporting research and innovation be introduced, in particular through public procurement, including through rules on pre-commercial procurement, and/or inducement prizes?

We would broadly support the new approaches on public procurement and we believe that Inducement Prizes should indeed be introduced as we believe that there is evidence to show that these can be cost-effective in inducing innovation.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Important.

20. How should intellectual property rules governing EU funding strike the right balance between competitiveness aspects and the need for access to and dissemination of scientific results?

As mentioned in response to question 15, the Intellectual Property regime seems to work well, neither inhibiting the meaningful involvement of industry nor precluding the university sector from full participation with their IP appropriately protected and no restriction on publication.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

Strengthening Europe's science base and the European Research Area

The questions in this section correspond to Section 4.4 of the Green Paper.

21. How should the role of the European Research Council be strengthened in supporting world class excellence ?

The role of the ERC is to help raise the excellence of the European science base. It could be further strengthened either by increasing funding to allow for more grants, whilst maintaining the highest quality standards, or by diversifying its programme base, as per its new Proof of Concept grant currently on call, or by a mixture of both.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Important.

22. How should EU support assist Member States in building up excellence?

In addition to providing competitive funding programmes, the judicious use of Cohesion Funds will help build capacity where needed, working in complementarity with national systems.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

23. How should the role of Marie Curie Actions be strengthened in promoting researcher mobility and developing attractive careers?

In successive Framework Programmes, the Marie Curie measures have proven very receptive to the real needs of early stage and experienced researchers in academia and in industry, and are with the zeitgeist, e.g. in the new measures to be introduced in the next ITN Call – the European Industrial Doctorate and the Innovative Doctoral Schools, building on the familiar IAPPs.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

24. What actions should be taken at EU level to further strengthen the role of women in science and innovation?

Special measures to encourage women scientists back to the workforce after maternity/ parental leave, e.g. recognition that special assistance needed to address resultant gaps in publication records

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Important

25. How should research infrastructures (including EU-wide e-Infrastructures) be supported at EU level?

The EU has consistently provided important support to infrastructures. It is particularly important to ensure maximum access to such facilities, especially for those from less-favoured regions, or for those from smaller labs in Europe. The further deployment of e-Infrastructures is very important to allow remote and virtual access to facilities and infrastructure at low cost.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important

26. How should international cooperation with non-EU countries be supported e.g. in terms of priority areas of strategic interest, instruments, reciprocity (including on IPR aspects) or cooperation with Member States?

It has proved difficult to have meaningful collaboration with the countries which have concluded international agreements on S&T with the European Community, since in any initiative both parties have to compete for their funding within their own systems and there is no synchronicity between programmes/ deadlines/ review/ notification. It would be useful to pilot a specific set of " matched" proposals and to track issues and outcomes.

There are separate issues relating to the ICPC countries, and some researchers who remember the "old" INCO Programmes believe that these were of more direct relevance to the countries involved than the current system.

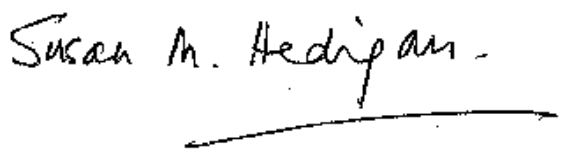
There is indeed a need to strike the right balance between the goals of strengthening European competitiveness and solving global challenges.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Important

27. Which key issues and obstacles concerning the ERA should EU funding instruments seek to overcome, and which should be addressed by other (e.g. legislative) measures?

On a practical level, on the funding side ,ERA-Nets work well, and Joint Programming will take this a step further, as will Technology Platforms / Joint technology Initiatives. Legislative measures may be necessary to provide a consistent environment relating to industry-specific issues, patenting, other IPR-related issues and employment / mobility.

How important are the aspects covered in this question? Very important



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