

# Norway's Reflections on the 8th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development

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*Position Paper*

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## Norway's reflections on the 8th Framework Programme for research and technological development

Participation in the European Community's Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities is a clear priority in Norwegian research and innovation policy. We therefore take considerable interest in the forthcoming process and discussions about the forthcoming research programme, referred to hereafter as the 8th Framework Programme or "FP8".

This position paper is based on a process where Norwegian actors involved in EU research collaboration have been invited to discuss issues of relevance to the next Framework Programme. We are pleased that the various stakeholders in our research community have taken an active part in the process of developing this preliminary Norwegian input.

In due time, Norway's participation in a new framework programme will be subject to the Parliament's decision.

### A changing landscape for European research and innovation

Since the launch of the FP7 several significant developments have taken place, developments which we expect will have an impact on the new programme.

The economic crisis has reinforced focus on the Lisbon objectives of strengthening European competitiveness and innovation capacity.

Globalization and new developments in the global environment and ecosystem has resulted in a stronger focus on global challenges. In order to meet these challenges, we need new joint efforts which should also include countries outside Europe. The European Research Area (ERA) has evolved rapidly since the launch of the Green Paper on ERA in 2007. New arenas for European research cooperation have emerged both through and alongside FP7. Furthermore, through the ratification of the Lisbon treaty, the EU has made a commitment to ensure the realization of ERA. We believe FP8 should have an even stronger role as a driver and facilitator for the further development of ERA. The Europe 2020 flagship initiative "Innovation Union", points to a better integration of research and innovation.

The mid-term evaluation of FP7 confirms that there is a clear European added value of the Framework Programme. The evaluation however also emphasizes the need for a quantum leap for simplification of administrative procedures, together with a need to increase the involvement of women. We strongly support a thorough follow up of these findings.

The new framework programme will have to respond to new challenges and build on what has already been achieved. At the same time, new challenges will emerge during the period of the programme, pointing to a need both for flexibility and blue sky science in the next programme.

### Key principles for FP8

We suggest that FP8 should be based on the following principles in order to meet global and societal challenges, strengthen innovation and competitiveness and contribute to knowledge development that brings both European and national added value:

- **FP8 should play a key role in a further strengthening of the European science base and in promoting excellence.** It is important to include open arenas like the ERC and Marie Curie to enhance frontier research, and also to strengthen support for new infrastructure as a basis for such research. More blue sky science should not least be viewed as an instrument to meet unforeseen challenges. Human resources are the most important factor in our efforts to strengthen innovation. More attention must therefore be paid to the development of research careers. It is of paramount importance to ensure improved involvement of women in all programme activities in order to take full advantage of Europe's human resources.
- **More open arenas.** Many activities in the Cooperation part of the Framework Programme are initiated on the basis of political decisions on thematic priorities and less based on initiatives from the research community. There is a need for a better balance between top-down and bottom-up activities in FP8. We suggest increased openness in the programme to allow for better project ideas and applications, increase flexibility, and enhance innovation and competitiveness. Excellence should be a main criterion. Calls should not be overly specified. We suggest the use of open arenas both for research and user-driven innovation. The EUROSTARS initiative managed by EUREKA is an example of such an instrument, but it should not be limited to SMEs.
- **Innovation.** Innovation is a prerequisite for coping with global societal challenges and for achieving a smarter and greener growth and securing new jobs. FP8 should make major contributions to innovation both in the public and private sectors. It should not least take into consideration that the European economy is increasingly based on a combination of public and private services. The health and welfare sector, for example, has a large potential for innovation. Europe has the opportunity to be a first-mover when it comes to new technology and services for health and welfare, as well as in areas related to green growth and other societal challenges. The role of education in fostering creativity, entrepreneurial skills and economic growth is an inherent aspect of innovation which should be addressed in the new programme. Also, demonstration activities are a necessary part of bringing new ideas closer to implementation. Improvements should be made in order to facilitate and fund more demonstration activities.
- **Global and societal challenges** should be an overall priority for activities in FP8. The programme should give considerable more attention and resources to a core set of themes related to global and societal challenges, such as climate change, energy supply, food security, health and demographic changes, while leaving other parts of the budget more thematically open. Solutions to these challenges will in many cases have to be found through cooperation at international level, also beyond Europe. In finding solutions emphasis will have to be put on multidisciplinary approaches. The social sciences and the humanities will i.a. play a central role in facing the challenges, for instance in relation to studies on societal implications and in analyses of possible solutions to the challenges.

Thematic priorities will be elaborated upon at a later stage. However, at this first stage we wish to highlight two thematic areas of fundamental importance in facing the global challenges:

1) Marine and maritime research

Coastal regions account for more than 40% of the EU's GDP and are home to 50% of the EU population. Knowledge of marine and maritime issues therefore merits great attention. Marine and maritime research is crucial with respect to understanding climate change and monitoring and conserving the marine environment and resources in the European oceans is of fundamental importance for sustainable economic growth. Knowledge development is important also for land use, tourism, coastal defence, transportation, food production, culture and conservation. This area should be given a higher priority in FP8.

2) Arctic research

The Arctic is crucial to our understanding of climate change and covers a broad thematic spectrum including life sciences and environmental sciences, as well as studies on culture and politics in the northern hemisphere. New developments in the High North could have a global impact. Access to research stations in these areas, provides Europe with unique possibilities for being in the forefront of climate change and related scientific disciplines. Svalbard, including SIOS (the Svalbard Integrated Arctic Earth Observing System on the ESFRI roadmap), is an example of an international research platform that offers significant facilities and possibilities for research in a number of areas and is a shared common good. We therefore advocate the inclusion of Arctic research in the FP8.

- **Integration of ERA in FP8.** FP8 should become a driving force in developing ERA. We recommend that FP8 provides financial resources to secure the realization of initiatives aiming at creating synergies and greater coherence between national R&D-activities, such as Joint Programming Initiatives and infrastructures on the ESFRI roadmap.
- **Simplification.** As acknowledged by the Commission's communication on simplification, it is important that European research programmes are accessible from a participant's point of view in order to attract the best researchers from all parts of the world. As such, it is imperative to simplify application procedures and financial regulations. We would like to reiterate our support for new initiatives in simplification. The main objective must be to increase user-friendliness and accessibility from the participant's perspective. The increasing number of initiatives related to FP7 and ERA has added to the complexity of the EU research activities. Thus, it will be necessary to ensure a high level of coherence across FP8 programmes and ERA instruments.
- **Budget.** In general, we wish to express concern related to a possible further increase in the budget of the Framework Programme. Although we in general are supportive of stronger efforts in research and innovation, including at the European level, there is in our view first a need for a clearer division of labour between the European and the national level. It is also important to have sufficient time to allow the national research systems to adjust to a strengthening of cooperation at the European level, i.a. through ERA initiatives outside the FP. Finally, before budgetary increases are considered simplification procedures should be completed in order to secure the attractiveness of the funding provided for at the European level.