



Brussels, 03 NOV. 2015
D(2015)

Opinion

Title: DG RTD - Ex-post evaluation of the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for Research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013) - FP7

(Submitted version of 8 October 2015)*

(A) Context

The EU's research and development framework programme for the period of 2007-2013 (FP7) amounted to 53 bn €. While representing only 7% of the total public expenditure on R&D in EU Member States, FP7 has been the world's largest cooperative research programme. Its objectives have been to contribute to the EU becoming the world's leading research area, to support the target of 3 % R&D spending, to support the creation of the European Research Area and to contribute to developing the knowledge-based economy in Europe.

FP7 covered a range of sub-programmes (such as 'ideas', 'capacities', 'people' and 'cooperation') with different features, objectives and financing models. Since calls were made until the end of 2013, many FP7 projects are still on-going or under final assessment. This evaluation therefore only covers 36 % of the total projects funded by FP7. Conclusions on the final results of the programme will only be possible to draw in some years given the long time horizon for research projects.

To date, some 150 internal and external studies and evaluations have been undertaken in the context of FP7, providing the basis for this evaluation report. This includes an independent external evaluation carried out by a high-level group (HLEG) – a separate Commission Communication will be produced to respond to its recommendations. The evaluation results will serve to improve the Horizon 2020 programme and future research programmes.

(B) Overall opinion:

The Board finds that the evaluation report presents ample evidence of the results of the FP7. However, the results need to be better qualified, made more comparable, described more factually and put into context – i.e. what worked well, which programmes worked less well, what are the reasons and to what extent can the results be attributed to the boosting of the budget rather than to improved programme designs. The report would gain clarity by also being more specific about the different objectives per programme, and the outcomes should be compared in a systematic way either to the baseline as defined in the impact

* Note that this opinion concerns a draft ex-post evaluation report which may differ from the one adopted

assessment for FP7, or, if not feasible, with other (third party) research programmes of similar size. Drawing on the numerous background evaluations and monitoring reports, the report should more clearly bring out the main lessons learnt and the potential identified for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Horizon 2020 or future research programmes. The report should also address stakeholder criticisms of burdensome requirements.

(C) Main recommendations for improvements:

(1) Potential for enhancing results and reducing in-efficiencies. While the evaluation provides information on many impacts and aspects of the FP7 programme, the report needs to better qualify the results which should be described more factually and put into context – i.e. what worked well, which programme worked less well and what are the reasons? The report should clarify whether FP7's outcome has been reached in the most effective way and whether the research results for every euro spent has been 'optimised'. The report would also gain clarity by being more specific about the different objectives per programme and how they have been achieved. Moreover, it should address whether there would have been room for increasing further the EU value added and/or effectiveness through adjustments in the programme (e.g. through a rebalancing of sub-programmes, changes to funding structures and procedures, further simplification measures). The conclusions should more clearly distinguish between the results of better designed programmes vis-à-vis a simple boosting of the budget. This would require comparing the results among programmes in a normalized way rather than in absolute terms. The report should also better bring out the evaluation results relating to the JTIs, addressing concerns *inter alia* raised by European Parliament.

(2) Methodology to qualify the outcomes and results. The methodology should be further clarified and developed. In particular, outcomes should be compared in a systematic way either to the baseline as defined in the impact assessment for FP7, or, if not feasible, with other (third party) research programmes of similar size. Moreover, gaps between anticipated effects and ex-post estimations (in particular for growth and jobs) should be addressed. While a high number of citations and patent applications compared to other research programmes are positive intermediary results, a more comprehensive system for monitoring, benchmarking and evaluating outcomes and final impacts should be pursued for future research programmes, as recommended by the HLEG.

(3) Simplification. As the complexity of FP7 has been considered a significant problem in the impact assessment for Horizon 2020, the report should more clearly explain how the savings generated by simplifications have been calculated, how they have addressed the burdens for different stakeholder groups and how significant the remaining burdens are. In this context, the report should properly address criticism from the public consultations and the HLEG report (17% of the respondents are moderately/very unsatisfied with the burdensome requirements and for the majority of respondents there are still issues to solve).

(4) Global context. The report should clarify the overall global position of the European Research Area vis-à-vis its global partners and how it has developed, and to what extent FP7 has contributed to the EU's objective of becoming the world's leading research area. It should also specify whether FP7 has managed to address the identified threat of brain drain.

(5) Research and cohesion. Given the unequal distribution of research activities across Europe, the evaluation should address more substantially the territorial dimension of the

FP7, discussing possibilities of convergence and cohesion through synergies with other Community instruments.

Some more technical comments have been transmitted directly to the author DG and are expected to be incorporated into the final version of the impact assessment report.

(D) Procedure and presentation

Presentation of the intervention logic should be improved (i.e. figure 1). Charts and graphs should be made more reader-friendly.

(E) RSB scrutiny process

Reference number	2015/RTD/004
External expertise used	Yes, a high-level group of prominent experts produced an independent and external evaluation of the FP7.
Date of RSB meeting	28 October 2015