



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Impact Assessment Board

Brussels,
D(2013)

Opinion

Title

DG RTD - Participation by the European Union in a research and development programme aimed at supporting research and development performing SMEs undertaken by several Member States (EUROSTARS 2)

(draft version of 4 February 2013)*

(A) Context

Eurostars Joint Programme involves all EU Member States and 6 associated states. It runs under the 7th Framework Programme and supports R&D performing SMEs. Eurostars aims to stimulate these SMEs to lead international collaborative research and innovation projects by easing access to support and funding. The EU participates in Eurostars since its creation in 2008 by means of Article 185, with an overall contribution of €100 million against €300 million from the participating countries. The programme is built on EUREKA (European Intergovernmental network to support industrial research collaboration), with the EUREKA Secretariat as a dedicated implementation structure. It will come to an end in 2013. In June 2012, the EUREKA Ministerial Conference endorsed an official declaration affirming the engagement to support a strengthened version of the current Eurostars in the period 2014-2020.

The initiative is based on the Commission's proposal for the "Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation in the European Union (2014-2020)" that foresees a dedicated activity for research-intensive SMEs in 'Innovation in SMEs'. The focus of IAB analysis has been adapted accordingly.

(B) Overall opinion

The report should be improved in several important respects. Firstly, it should put Eurostars 2 more clearly in the context of research for SMEs and describe how it differs from and complements other support programs, such as the new SME Instrument. It should then focus the problem definition on the policy choices concretely available for Eurostars 2, given that key parameters have been already set in the Horizon 2020 program. This analysis should be better informed by evaluation findings. Secondly, the report should define more specific objectives, so that it will be possible to evaluate if the implemented Eurostars 2 has generated the intended effects. Thirdly, the report should focus the options on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Eurostars 2 programme management and governance. The expected administrative cost reductions for beneficiaries and authorities should be quantified. Finally, the report should better present the stakeholder views explaining which stakeholders were more critical, on what issues and how these concerns have been addressed.

* Note that this opinion concerns a draft impact assessment report which may differ from the one adopted

(C) Main recommendations for improvements

(1) Strengthen the policy context and problem definition. The report should provide a brief overview of the research programmes foreseen for SMEs and show that there is no overlap between the Eurostars 2 and other initiatives, such as new SME Instrument or the Risk Sharing Finance Facility instrument under the Horizon 2020, and COSME. The report should also better explain the current Eurostars programme including the role of the European Commission in each programme stage. It should then focus on the specific problems as identified in the evaluation report (e.g. synchronisation and harmonisation of the national procedures) and describe the market failures that will be addressed concretely by this initiative rather than quoting broad issues which led to the establishment of Eurostars. The report should describe how the situation is likely to evolve with no further EU action taking place.

(2) Better present the objectives and corresponding monitoring indicators. The report should make the objectives more specific, measurable and time-dependent. Specific objectives should be defined in such a manner that it would be possible to evaluate the extent to which this programme action has generated the intended effects, for example, in terms of new products, processes or services created or increased turnover of beneficiaries. It should then link the monitoring indicators to each of the (specific) objectives. While the report defines detailed output indicators for the operational objectives together with specific targets, it should also describe the current situation with respect to those indicators to allow the level of ambition to be determined.

(3) Better present, assess and compare the options. For each option the report should focus more on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Eurostars 2 in the areas the Commission can concretely address, based on the recommendations from the interim evaluation and stakeholder input. It should better describe the content of each option clearly distinguishing between those recommendations that have already been integrated in the on-going programme (thus are part of the baseline development) and those that still need to be addressed. The report should provide a more balanced assessment of economic, social and environmental impacts. The analysis of economic impacts should include administrative burdens and simplification potential (quantifying it where significant), innovation and research, costs to public authorities, benefits for SMEs, economic growth. The report should also develop the analysis of social impacts, particularly on job creation and, to the extent possible, the regional impact of the programme. The stated impacts should be based on evidence, stakeholder input or otherwise corroborated. The report should present a more comprehensive comparison of options against a fully developed baseline scenario using a clear and consistent set of criteria that measure effectiveness, efficiency and coherence. It should ensure a closer link between the assessment of impacts and the scoring of the options.

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

(D) Procedure and presentation

The report should include a glossary of the most commonly used specific terms as well as a list of abbreviations.

(E) IAB scrutiny process	
Reference number	2013/RTD/005
External expertise used	No
Date of IAB meeting	27 February 2013