



DLR's View

On

EU funds in the area of research & innovation



Motivation

In line with the independent High Level Group lead by P. Lamy on maximising the impact of EU Research & Innovation Programmes DLR sees EU investment in research and innovation projects as essential in the way that it fosters transnational collaboration and competition of a scale, scope and speed that no single country can match. European Framework programs are the main instrument to implement research and innovation strategies prepared and approved by European public and private stakeholders. DLR calls the European Union to set the right example by dedicating a considerable part of the budget and efforts to the European Research and Innovation framework programme (FP9) in order to address societal needs and to deliver on its political priorities.

The main reason for DLR to participate in European research and innovation framework programmes is to collaborate with European / international partners to broaden and deepen DLR research activities over the entire span of Technology Readiness Levels (TRL). We recognize that the cross border cooperation dimension of the programme is key to achieving a critical mass to tackle grand societal challenges, to secure Europe's global competitiveness and to foster multicultural education. Supporting only national or even regional programmes will not add value to this superordinate importance. Collaborative research in Europe is essential to get access to and combine the otherwise latent knowledge of European partners in order to ameliorate the results (and their exploitation) while avoiding harmful fragmentation and duplication. Consistent with the spirit of the current framework programme Horizon 2020, DLR strives for interdisciplinary cooperation that covers key stakeholders from multiple sectors and delivers impactful results leading to European market growth, job creation, enhanced international competitiveness and benefits to society.

DLR's View on EU funds in the area of research & innovation, in particular on the next EU Framework Programme

DLR calls for a properly funded FP9 by reaching the target set by Heads of States to invest 3% of GDP invested in R&I (both EU and its Member States) as the correlation between investments into research and economic growth is evident. Looking at recent Horizon 2020 programme there is abundant evidence European added value compared to what can be done at national level.

In order to answer challenges on European level, which cannot be done by one Member State alone, the best capabilities of European research need to be brought together. In this light we see transnational and multidisciplinary collaboration in research and innovation projects as a core asset of the current and upcoming framework programmes. It fosters international and interdisciplinary networks of excellent research and innovation across Europe. It also facilitates cross-sector activities and bridges between research, higher education, industry, innovation and stakeholders. Hence, we ask for a continuation of collaborative research in international networks that foster interdisciplinary research and cross-sector activities to tackle grand societal challenges to secure Europe's global competitiveness.

We see continuity as a form of simplification. This contribution to the simplification agenda encompasses the continuation of the financially well-balanced three-pillar structure, instruments and rules of participation. Furthermore, higher financial support for coordinators could enable also smaller entities to take over the leadership in projects.

As sectors of societal and economic relevance such as aviation, transport and energy have experienced long product cycles the entire research and innovation chain from TRL 1 to 9 needs be well covered to ensure innovation. On European scale the steps from basic research (TRL1) up to system demonstration (TRL6) are covered appropriately by ERC, RT&D collaborative research and the system demonstration in Joint Technology Initiatives like Clean Sky, SESAR, Shift2Rail, and FCH-JTI and should be funded as before via grants.

DLR welcomes the idea of an European Innovation Council (EIC) functioning as a virtual umbrella for existing EU innovation funding programs. It could be the right instrument to support industry and enterprises on higher TRLs from 7 to 9 as it supports them to cover the so called "valley of death" in which companies will have to deploy the demonstrated technologies into the successful final product. The EIC can also help to mitigate the undesirable effects of focussing on impact throughout the framework programme by offering a dedicated funding scheme incl. financial instruments addressing high-TRL, high-impact pre-commercial research and innovation and prioritising excellent innovation impact as key evaluation criterion.

DLR restates the importance of FP9 funding for public and non-profit institutions being allocated through grants, irrespective of the Technology Readiness Levels of the project in which they are participating. In order to nurture promising disruptive ideas and support their implementation high risk projects close to market might be supported by financial instruments. It is crucial that this additional funding instrument (i.e. EIC) flanks the existing ones and does not weaken them by reducing their resources.

Excellence should remain the key evaluation criterion as, in the long-term view, it solely ensures future global competitiveness of European products and allows for creating and investing in jobs and growths in Europe. Yet, we recognise the necessity to assess impact for projects as well. Impact is particularly relevant for high-TRL research and innovation. We ask for a sensible way to support low-TRL research with appropriate funding and collaborative research instruments, that allow preparing fundamental results that can be picked up and developed into mid and higher-TRL in later stages, omitting the need to state high-impact and to be compared with high-TRL projects.

DLR at a glance

DLR is the national aeronautics and space research centre of the Federal Republic of Germany. Its extensive research and development work in aeronautics, space, energy, transport and security is integrated into national and international cooperative ventures. In addition to its own research, as Germany's space agency, DLR has been given responsibility by the federal government for the planning and implementation of the German space programme. DLR is also the umbrella organisation for the nation's largest project management agency.

DLR has approximately 8000 employees at 16 locations in Germany: Cologne (headquarters), Augsburg, Berlin, Bonn, Braunschweig, Bremen, Goettingen, Hamburg, Juelich, Lampoldshausen, Neustrelitz, Oberpfaffenhofen, Stade, Stuttgart, Trauen, and Weilheim. DLR also has offices in Brussels, Paris, Tokyo and Washington D.C.

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