



EUROHORCs

EUROPEAN HEADS OF RESEARCH COUNCILS

Simplifying and strengthening the efficiency of the research programmes

Contribution by EUROHORCs

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What is EUROHORCs?

- The informal association of the heads of European research funding and research performing organisations
- 45 organisations from 24 countries (both funding organisations and research performers)
- Represent approx. 30% of total R&D funding in Europe
- Dedicated to promoting excellence in all branches of research
- Dealing with current issues at EU level but also developing its own agenda

EUROHORCs and “Simplification”

- A view both from FP customers but also from peers
- Set up a dedicated Working Group of FP practitioners to advise and prepare EUROHORCs position papers in Autumn 2009
- Aim is to point out main issues to be improved but also contribute with potential best practices – keeping in mind the specific FP context
- Two position papers
 - EU Regulatory Framework for Research Actions – Basic Principles for Robust Rules (December 2009)
 - Simplifying the implementation of the research framework programmes - Key elements (April 2010)

Main messages: Principles for Robust Rules (I)

Appropriate and effectual rules for Research

- **Stability**

Rules should be stable and remain valid beyond a single FP to ensure continuity and guarantee quality implementation

- **Transverse Consistency and Coherence**

Consistency of rules and their application throughout the different research programmes and coherence in implementation must ensure the right balance between project, programme and context

- **Adaptability**

Need for appropriate suppleness in the implementation of these texts which is to be preserved

- **Tolerable Risk**

Taking risks is an important driver of innovative and high-level competitive research and the regulatory framework must be able to support risk-taking in research.

Main messages: Principles for Robust Rules (II)

Implementation

- **Use of own accounting system**

Research organisations accept research expenses that are real, economic and necessary for the implementation of a project or programme. European funds, like all public funds, must therefore be determined and managed in accordance with the usual accounting principles of the individual participant

- **Reliability and Traceability**

Beneficiaries have to be able to rely on agreements that have been reached in dialogue with the responsible Commission staff. It must be possible to trace all aspects of research actions, including decisions made during the lifecycle of a research project

- **Partnership and mutual trust**

Mutual trust between funders and research performers is crucial. Partnership gives value to common action and enhances the chances for success of any operation

- **Focus on best interest of research project**

The central goal of funding research is to support research, development and innovation in an optimal way. The focus should be on what is in the best interest of a research project and its scientific goals

Main messages: Key elements for Simplification

- **Simplification means improvement** of the implementation of FPs
- Implement internal procedures in the EC in order to have **consistent and traceable application** of rules in order to ensure **legal certainty**
- Improve the **clarity and accessibility of guidance documents**
- Remove the obligation to open **interest-bearing bank** accounts
- Not extend the use of **lump sums** in the current FP7 as it will introduce further confusion
- Necessary **acceptance of usual accounting practices and methodologies**
- Reduce the number of **funding rates**
- Remove **timesheets** (LERU proposal) as the UE legislation underestimates the time spent by a researcher on his/her project

Preliminary input 1: Result/output-based funding?

- Funding must be based on the **excellence** of the project
- If output = result, it becomes research procurement :
 - That is not suitable to fund any kind of research (from basic to applied research)
 - It will lead to a “best-price” approach detrimental to science
 - It will not favour originality or risk in research
 - It will decrease the quality of science in the European Union
 - SMEs will be reluctant to engage for a procurement based on results
- EUROHORCs proposal of definition of **output is the work that will be performed**
- **Evaluation and controls should rely on the best effort** to achieve the work described in the proposal (emphasize on the scientific evaluation/monitoring)

Preliminary input 2: Introduction of lump sums?

- Lump sum need a **definition** and are closely linked to the question of their implementation
- Current use of lump sum by the Commission should not be extended: their definitions rely on cost categories and are not flexible
- **Lump sums**
 - Shift financial control towards scientific control (except audit)
 - Should not be within cost categories (otherwise no simplification)
 - Should not be negotiated based on future result
 - Should be based on the real costs of the project (link with the activities)
- EUROHORCs proposal of definition of a “**project lump sum**”:
 - The amount **depends on the total budget** of the proposal. **Its value in € is not predefined** by the Commission
 - It is defined against **total actual costs** according to the **accounting system of the participant**
 - It **covers all categories of costs** in order to allow transfers between costs categories

Preliminary input 3: Reducing complexity?

- Complexity and multiplication work against **competitiveness**
 - The complexity and number of instruments needs to be tackled per se. Segmentation notably prevents the value-adding Europe-wide competition and decreases the chances of the best researchers participating
- Danger of **path-dependency**
 - There is a core responsibility of policy makers and programme owners to take stock of current state and merge or stop where necessary
- FP rules of participation should remain the **sole model** for any funds for research (FP projects, EIT, JTI...))

Preliminary input 4: Timing for measures?

- **Short term actions** (2010) are possible and will improve the management of the research programmes:
 - To reduce and clarify guidance documents
 - To apply traceability
 - To improve coherent and consistent answers from different services from the Commission (eg mediation process in case of conflicts)
 - To accept usual accounting system
 - To remove the Interest-bearing account constraint
- **Medium term:** Other changes that require changes in the Financial Regulation and a new FP (“co-decision” timeline)

Conclusion (I)

- In the medium and long term, there is a link between
 - The attractiveness of a research programme
 - The quality of the research performed
 - The rules that should be applied
- Rules and forms should be built around researchers' best interest. Simplification should be for them, not science administration
- The devil is in the detail and definition but beyond clear and consistent rules, the main need is a change in risk management culture
- Symbolic measures could be a great start to rebuild trust

Conclusion (II)

- Very consistent input from the community and their relays, now is the time for all EU institutions to act together with a common language
- EUROHORCs see that for the first time there is a clear political will
- 2010 is a unique opportunity to build a new basis of ERA through an improved FP
- We are all responsible and we have to work together in order to build the future ERA that is a prerequisite to the achievement of EU2020

Thank you for your attention!

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