APRE
Agenzia per la Promozione della Ricerca Europea

TOWARDS FP10

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1

IN BRIEF

In an international context marked by strong geopolitical, socio-economic and environmental dynamics, radical paradigm shifts, fast-moving events, the continuous development of new technologies and the disruptive emergence of artificial intelligence, the next Framework Programme must emerge as the main instrument at the service of the Union's public investment strategy. It must be capable of making a clear contribution to relaunching the competitiveness of the European economy and to achieving the goals of environmental sustainability and technological sovereignty. For this to happen, the founding elements of a new vision must combine with the most relevant elements of the previous Programmes, reconciling the urgent need for innovative approaches and instruments - which enable the technological, economic, social and environmental challenges to be tackled incisively and in a timely manner - with the strengthening and enhancement of existing approaches and instruments that have proven their effectiveness and been appreciated by the R&I community.

The next Framework Programme must be forward-looking and closely aligned with the Union's strategic and policy orientations (e.g., green transition and environmental sustainability, digital transformation, competitiveness, strategic autonomy), but also able to adapt with due flexibility to the dynamics of a changing framework and the emergence of new challenges. For this, research and innovation priorities, the definition of calls - and thus of research projects - must be established through the systematic use of foresight, accompanied by a structural mechanism to ensure feedback-to-policy.

The Framework Programme will require a budget of at least 200 billion euros to adequately reflect the role of R&I in the pursuit of the Union's strategic objectives, but also to help to increase the success rate to at least 25 per cent, a necessary condition for its attractiveness and economic justification. In parallel, there is a need for a monitoring system that allows for a periodic review of the initial allocation of funds.

The complexity of the challenges calls for systemic responses, which only an organically stand-alone Programme, supporting the bulk of research and innovation activities in all scientific and technological fields, can provide. Above all, the trans-disciplinary character of the Framework Programme must be strengthened right from the initial stages of programming, and to further enhance the synergies between programmes and instruments, focusing on a better alignment between cohesion and research and innovation policies, and the identification of targeted international cooperation priorities.

As well, the traditional opposition between basic and applied research must be overcome by systematically highlighting the science-application pathway in calls for proposals, regardless of the level of maturity of the scientific knowledge and technologies involved. Thus, a new architecture of the Framework Programme can be envisaged, overcoming or reducing the distinction between the current pillars, blurring their contours.

The goal of technological sovereignty, an essential condition for ensuring Europe's economic autonomy and global leadership, requires the decisive focus of research and innovation activities on deep technologies and, in general, on all those technologies with a high innovation potential, with concrete and acceptable solutions to meet the aspirations and needs of European citizens, and create new markets that guarantee fair and sustainable development.

The Union's support for research excellence must be defended and preserved by consolidating the success of the European Research Council, by strengthening the most popular components of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and by continuing on the path of developing and integrating research infrastructures.

The streamlining of partnerships and KICs, which has already begun with Horizon Europe, should be pursued further, starting with a rigorous evaluation of the results to reduce the risk of redundancies and ensure transparency and openness.

It is then necessary to ensure that the founding spirit of the missions is effectively reflected in their implementation, with a clear focus of their objectives, on the concrete problems of society, and the prevalence of their research and innovation content.

Moreover, the European Innovation Council needs to be strengthened and refocused in order to reinforce its role as a driver of innovation investments, and to pursue more effectively the EU's goal of strategic autonomy and regained competitiveness.

The contribution of SMEs to the European R&I ecosystem also requires further encouragement with new financial, procedural and capacity building facilities.

The quality of research and innovation is the main indispensable guarantee of its impact. It is, therefore, necessary to increase the efforts concerning the substantive evaluation of the quality of R&I, the actual achievement of contractual objectives, the ability of the proposed solutions to meet concrete needs and their socio-economic impact, by shifting resources from bureaucratic control to the evaluation of results, including through the generalisation of contracts on a lump-sum basis (lump sum).

2

VISION AND STRATEGY

Strategic orientations: a forward-looking and up-to-date Programme

1. Research and innovation aim to produce the knowledge and solutions needed to tackle the technological, economic, social and environmental challenges of our time. Consequently, it is imperative that the wording of the next Framework Programme explicitly reflects the fundamental role of R&I for EU policies, emphasising the link between the development of new knowledge and solutions and the Union's responses to society.

2. The geopolitical, socio-economic and environmental context in which the Union moves has greatly changed in recent years and, in the medium to long term, remains subject to considerable uncertainty. For FP10 to increasingly emerge as the main instrument serving the Union's public investment strategy, its objectives, priorities and instruments must be closely aligned and consistent with the EU's strategic and policy orientations, including green transition, environmental sustainability, digital transformation and strategic autonomy.

3. Moreover, in an international framework characterised by old and new antagonisms, increasingly fierce competition, reorganisation of supply chains and unprecedented imperatives of economic security, the next Framework Programme must become a decisive instrument for relaunching the competitiveness of the European economy.

4. At the same time, in the pursuit of the Union's strategic objectives, FP10 needs to reflect the right balance between a purely top-down approach, where R&I priorities directly stem from the strategic objectives, and a bottom-up approach, including for collaborative research, that ensures the freedom of scientific and technological choice and promotes the creativity of those involved in research and innovation.

5. The systematic use of foresight is essential to achieve this balance. Foresight is not seen here as a method of forecasting, but rather of exploring uncertainties and representing alternative future scenarios in order to anticipate critical issues and identify, and translate into calls for proposals, the research and innovation priorities needed to address medium- to long-term challenges.

6. To be fully effective, foresight processes will have to: i) combine the regulatory approach (from vision to R&I programmes) with the exploratory approach (from ideas to their concretisation into new knowledge); ii) be highly participative, involving, also as an opportunity for confrontation and dialogue, government institutions, civil society, academic and research communities, the business world and the financial world; iii) activate a structural mechanism that dynamically ensures feedback to policy, through backcasting techniques.

Budget: a full and flexible Programme

7. In order to meet the ambitions and objectives of the Framework Programme, to adequately reflect the relevance of research and innovation and to help increase the success rate, the FP10 must have a budget of at least 200 billion euros.

8. The increase in the FP budget must be assessed at the programming stage in the light of the impact on other funding chapters of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), comparing the overall added value for Europe expected from alternative budgetary scenarios; and protected during the programming by reallocations to other MFF chapters, while ensuring budgetary certainty.

9. To produce economic benefits that significantly exceed the costs incurred by the user community, the success rate of the FP needs to be at least 25%. For the increased budget to make an effective contribution to achieving this goal, it is necessary to: (i) aim at a balanced formulation of calls avoiding, on the one hand, that overly generic calls lead to the proliferation of proposals of little relevance and, on the other hand, that their excessive specificity prefigures ex ante the expected solutions, effectively limiting research freedom; (ii) revisit the selection/evaluation mechanisms, e.g., by ensuring the funding of a minimum percentage of proposals above the threshold, extending the 2-stage practice, introducing stricter thresholds for passing from the first to the second stage.

10. To ensure that the work programmes best reflect R&I priorities and their evolution over the FP's seven year period, and for the FP to be able to address novelties and emergencies with adequate resources, more flexibility in budget allocation is needed, which is to be pursued by defining the allocation of funds to the current second pillar components at the strategic planning stage, and not at the legislative stage.

11. In support of this reform, a precise monitoring mechanism must be introduced to periodically revisit the premises of the initial allocation. This monitoring will have to take into account unforeseen and unforeseeable emergencies, but also be based on the substantial evaluation ex-post of the quality and impact of the programmes and projects financed, and of the response of the realities involved in the research and innovation processes. The flexible reallocation of resources could be facilitated by the introduction of a reserve fund (10%) that can be used in all FP components in the final stages of FP10.

12. To prevent this flexibility from negatively impacting the coherence and continuity of the programmes, it is essential to ensure the continuity and certainty of research and innovation directions with a long-term perspective, while avoiding that the reallocation of resources only serves to cover possible inefficiencies.

Trans-disciplinarity: a Programme that effectively addresses complexity

13. To effectively address the complexity of the technological, economic, social and environmental challenges, and to reduce the risks of redundancy, the trans-disciplinary character of the FP needs to be further strengthened from the early stages of programming, including through appropriate internal reorganisation within the Commission that fosters the full implementation of the co-creation process.

14. Whereas multi-disciplinarity involves the collaboration of the disciplines towards the achievement of pre-established goals, trans-disciplinarity involves the collaboration of disciplines right from the stage of identifying objectives. These objectives must translate the determination to meet society's aspirations and expectations, and it would therefore also be appropriate to give greater prominence to the criterion of Societal Readiness Levels (SRLs), which specifically aim to measure the added value

of R&I projects in meeting society's needs, and which are currently in the background (compared to Technology Readiness Levels - TRLs, which fully retain their relevance).

15. This trans-disciplinary co-creation must be approached as a sizeable change, so that it does not become just one more step that would only weigh down the process. To this end, a possible reorganisation must, first and foremost, aim at streamlining the duplications and redundancies (above all, between clusters and missions, and between partnerships and other instruments), without, however, overlooking the many advantages that different multi-disciplinary approaches can bring to tackling complex challenges.

16. The systemic approach to the complexity of societal challenges cannot be limited to R&I activities and, therefore, needs to be reflected in the Union's other investment programmes as well, in order to ensure the coherence and continuity of the European action.

The science-application path: a barrier-free Programme between research and innovation

17. The traditional distinction between basic research and applied research is increasingly artificial and ineffective, representing a constraint that locks in the topics and forces the scientific communities into taking fragmented and incomplete paths. To overcome this distinction, the science-application path must be clearly delineated and highlighted in calls for proposals, identifying expectations that realistically reflect the different levels of maturity of the scientific knowledge and technologies involved, without neglecting low TRLs with potential long-term spin-offs.

18. The proposal to give a central role to the representation of the science-application path could actually make the distinction between the obsolete current pillars, blurring their boundaries and suggesting a new architecture for the entire FP.

19. More or less radical changes to the overall structure of the next FP, such as a new architecture that clearly reflects the different grand strategic challenges, should be considered in the light of the fact that the R&I community has shown over the years a general appreciation for the continuity of the instruments, and that the stability of the structure can contribute to making the FP more comprehensible and recognisable to an ever wider audience.

20. In the immediate term, however, criteria and parameters for assessing impact (a common goal for all projects) must be agreed on that take into account the different expectations according to the TRLs. Thus, it will also be possible, where necessary, to ensure continuity and flexibility along the path by offering funding opportunities to already funded low TRL projects that have achieved the agreed on objectives.

International cooperation: a Programme attentive to global dynamics

21. The Global Approach strategy has shown the way for R&I cooperation policies with third countries

and has proven to be appropriate by anticipating trends in the new international context. The EU must continue to clearly pursue the objective of reconciling, on the one hand, the general principle of openness underpinning the Framework Programme and the diplomatic potential of scientific collaborations and, on the other hand, the defence of strategic interests and economic security in line with its own strategies and policies.

22. Therefore, it is necessary: i) to establish more clearly the strategic priorities of international cooperation - which topics to address with which third countries, and to set out more clearly the specific objectives in the individual calls (e.g., attracting talent, transferring knowledge and technology, contributing to global objectives); ii) to confirm and strengthen the provisions introduced in Horizon Europe, such as the extension of the programme association agreements to like-minded countries and the targeted exclusion of third-country entities from certain types of calls.

3

TOOLS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Synergies: an effective Programme integrated with the European ecosystem

23. To enhance the impact of European R&I investment in support of major policy priorities, synergies and coherence between instruments and programmes should be further promoted and strengthened. In addition to the many opportunities to exploit the potential synergies of the FP instruments, and between the FP and other directly managed programmes, better alignment between research and innovation policies and cohesion policy, and also between European and national programmes, must be ensured in order to stimulate competition for expertise and further strengthen the role of the FP in fostering innovation at regional level.

24. Of particular importance is the synergy between the FP and that part of the Structural Funds dedicated to financing R&I activities, where it is necessary to: (i) carry out a rigorous assessment of the impact of the regulatory changes introduced in the 2021-27 programming on the implementation of synergies at national and regional levels; (ii) assess the possibility, as part of the overall review of cohesion policy, of making the disbursement of structural funds conditional both on the effective implementation of systemic reforms and capacity building and on project performance and the achievement of intermediate targets, based on a programme agreed on between the European Commission and each Member State; (iii) strengthen the joint capacity building initiatives between the FP and the structural funds.

25. Moreover, in order to more decisively seize the opportunities for synergies with the policies of the different regions, and contribute to reducing the internal EU disparities in R&I, it is appropriate to: (i) set up the Widening participation and spreading excellence component on a regional basis, and no longer on a national basis, thus, moving from the concept of "Widening countries" to "Widening regions"; (iii) package and communicate the reform so that it avoids being perceived as underlining backwardness and injustice, but rather as a fair reflection of the diversity of socio-economic fabrics and regional priorities.

26. The possibility of formally opening up the development of dual-use technologies in the FP, as put forward by the Commission in its White Paper, needs to be further explored in order to ensure, first and foremost, maximum clarity regarding the ultimate purpose of individual research lines. This openness should be assessed taking into account a number of factors, such as: (i) the political willingness for a greater integration of the EU's external and defence policies due to the changed international situation; (ii) the need to ensure that this openness does not undermine the portion of the FP budget dedicated to R&D technologies for exclusively civilian use; (iii) the need to strengthen synergies between the financial support for technologies for civilian use currently provided by Horizon Europe and the support for technologies for military use guaranteed by the European Defence Fund, avoiding the duplication and redundancy of the different instruments.

27. Even where a significantly increased budget is concerned, there is still a need to strengthen and explicitly represent the FP's leverage effect, highlighting opportunities for beneficiaries to draw on other sources of funding, in parallel with and downstream of FP10-funded projects, and rewarding proposals designed to exploit synergy with other programmes.

Research excellence: a Programme that enhances researchers

28. The European Research Council (ERC) is one of Europe's most prominent success stories, defending and preserving the Union's political and financial support for outstanding frontier research in all fields of knowledge. The recent innovations in the area of evaluation, placing more emphasis on the project idea than on the profile of the principal investigator, are to be welcomed. The following could be considered: (i) the introduction of an intermediate scheme between the ERC Consolidator and the ERC Advanced, to ensure a better balance in the project competition between male and female researchers in the advanced stages of their careers; (ii) the enhancement of the ERC proof of concept, to further foster synergies between ERCs and EICs and help fill currently under-explored and unexploited research spaces.

29. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) have proven to be effective and internationally recognised, contributing to enhancing and strengthening human capital in research through the different types of interventions. The MSCA actions must be safeguarded in their recognised and fundamental capacity to ensure a unified vision of quality research within the European Research Area. In particular, the Post-doctoral fellowship and Doctoral network actions are highly valued, and their weight within the MSCA programme should be strengthened by ensuring an increase in funding for these actions. In addition, a reassessment of the various values for calculating project costs is necessary, taking into account the development of the economic cycle.

30. On the other hand, it is considered useful to assess the possibility of complementing the ERC and MSCA instruments by introducing more opportunities for collaboration on low TRLs in the second pillar, to prevent the current preponderance of medium-high TRL projects from leading to the weakening of the intermediate knowledge platform that is the starting point for innovation.

31. The MSCA objective of fostering mobility and circulation of talent should be enriched with initiatives that further counter the so-called 'brain drain', by strengthening incentives to return – and, in any case, to 'brain circulation' - in mobility measures, and increasing return and/or attraction grants for countries most exposed to the depletion of human resources in R&I.

32. Research Infrastructures have proven to play a key role in the creation of the European Research Area, fostering the integration of capacities of several countries, the development of collaboration between academic and industrial research, and attracting researchers from third countries. FP10 must, therefore, continue to support, internationalise and open up research infrastructures and strengthen Europe's operational institutions. Above all, the strengthening of research infrastructures needs to ensure consistency with the Union's strategic priorities, fostering the integration of research capacities and access to technologies in areas that are critical for the achievement of the EU's strategic autonomy in the global context.

Partnerships: a Programme that catalyses and integrates R&I actors

33. R&I partnerships are confirmed as a key instrument of the FP, and their continuation should be ensured in FP10 so that they can further contribute to: i) aligning research and innovation priorities between the EU, Member States and the private sector; ii) strengthening the competitiveness of the European industrial system for the green and digital transitions; iii) helping to attract national and private funding in addition to the limited FP budget; iv) strengthening collaboration between universities, research and business.

34. The rationalisation introduced in Horizon Europe and materialised around the current three typologies should be continued in FP10, through: (i) a rigorous assessment of the results, impact and contribution to the achievement of EU policy objectives and a possible further reduction in the number of partnerships that might result; (ii) a stronger focus on integration and synergies between the different partnerships in areas of partial technological and/or solution overlap (e.g., promotion of joint calls); (iii) identification of complementarities with work programmes and other FP instruments to avoid fragmentation and duplication, and to promote cross-cutting themes; (iv) better interaction between the partnerships themselves and other instruments outside the FP that support pre-commercial or commercial activities (TRL 7-9), such as the Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs) or the Innovation Fund programme.

35. It is crucial that the process of building individual institutionalised and co-programmed partnerships carries maximum transparency and accessibility and that it continues to favour the inclusion of competent actors - academic, research and industrial - not involved in the initial stages. It is, therefore, necessary to: i) guarantee that the associations contributing to the establishment of the public-private partnerships ensure full transparency in the methods of access and contribution right from the partnership's creation phase; ii) highlight the 'openness rate' of each partnership through the analysis of data on participation and success in calls for proposals, including for those outside the partnerships.

36. The simplification and harmonisation of rules and procedures is a necessary condition for the defence and promotion of the partnership instrument. Here, it is necessary to: i) remedy the difficulties in implementing co-financed and institutionalised 'tripartite' partnerships - due to the misalignment of procedures and timeframes between the European and national levels and to the different participation rules laid down by the various Member States - by resorting to direct management by the Commission also of the financial contributions of the various states (common pot); ii) further harmonise the participation rules of the various institutionalised partnerships, continuing the action begun in Horizon Europe with the adoption of the Single Basic Act.

Missions: a Programme capable of achieving ambitious goals

37. While the founding, and widely shared, spirit of the missions was to promote the trans-disciplinary approach to R&I, the experience to date has not provided any clear and encouraging indications. Among the critical points that have emerged are the insufficient space left for research, a formally

collegial but often ineffective governance, a lack of attractiveness for the humanities and, in some cases, a lack of focus on the founding objective. Therefore, strengthening and deepening studies and analyses of the success/failure factors of the missions is vital to assess whether the instrument should be extended, consolidated or abandoned.

38. To complement and enhance the effectiveness of HE missions as a tool to further strengthen the link between EU strategic orientations and Framework Programme priorities, mission calls should be complemented with thematic programmes (clusters), so that the expertise generated by cluster projects is better exploited. This integration would help reduce the risk of duplication between clusters and missions, and increase the overall level of synergies within the Programme.

39. Considering the vastness of the topics, it is crucial to ensure that: (i) efforts are focused on a limited number of thematic and geographical priorities, as is partly the case in some of the current missions (albeit with different criteria) and; (ii) the objectives of the mission calls are ambitious but credibly achievable.

Incisiveness of innovation: a Programme that promotes competitiveness

40. To strengthen support for critical technologies in line with the EU's goal of strategic autonomy, the European Innovation Council (EIC) needs to be reinforced and enabled to effectively perform the task originally assigned to it. Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the EIC's approach to integrate the aim of supporting technological sovereignty and investing in scale-ups that have already been partially capitalised, with that of driving and supporting the development of high-potential start-ups by supporting them in their early stages.

41. For the review of the EIC and its desired strengthening to translate into greater effectiveness and incisiveness, as for partnerships, data and evidence need to assess its added value, distinguishing where required between the different EIC instruments. The impact of EICs must also be assessed by monitoring the R&I investments made post-funding by beneficiaries, so as to provide useful elements for assessing the impact also for the regional reference systems.

42. It is also necessary to: i) ensure that the EIC operates in a context of appropriate enabling conditions (e.g., tax incentives, simple rules, evaluator competence); ii) ensure the balance between innovation and sovereignty to avoid that an excessive focus on strategic autonomy limits international collaboration; iii) balance funding between scale-ups and start-ups, in order to ensure more support for innovative start-ups working in collaboration with established companies; iv) recover, at least in part for the EIC Accelerator, the spirit of a public risk fund, able to take responsibility for financing those innovations that are truly visionary and with low bankability, but disruptive for their possible future implications; v) ensure that the EIC Accelerator takes into account the different degree of development of national venture capital markets, possibly by formalising a dual channel; vi) increase the budget share reserved for the EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition to strengthen their role in feeding the innovation chain from the bottom.

43. At the same time, also with a view to reducing redundancies with other instruments, the experiences of the EIT and KICs need to be critically revisited, specifically by: i) avoiding the establishment of new KICs; ii) reaffirming the principle of their self-sustainability at the end of the course; iii) simplifying processes.

SMEs: A Programme for systemic innovation

44. Accompanying and support measures specifically aimed at innovative SMEs need to be strengthened in order to involve a broader range of SMEs in the Framework Programme activities. For any new measures for them designed to produce the expected benefits, the diversity of sectors and disciplines, vocation, own resources and design culture of SMEs must be considered, and configure targeted interventions, also in order to contain and make the best use of the necessary financial resources.

45. Priority should be given to financial and/or procedural facilitations to: i) support innovative SMEs that propose 'original' approaches that lead to value creation; ii) foster collaboration between SMEs and universities/research centres and support the creation of academic and non-academic start-ups and spinoffs; iii) facilitate SMEs' access to research infrastructures and innovation test beds.

46. In particular, concrete measures, including capacity building, are needed to facilitate SME access to FP funds and support throughout the project cycle, e.g., through: (i) funding rates above 70 per cent for innovation actions; (ii) simplified procedures for small and/or moderately complex projects; (iii) rationalisation of SME support services, which are currently very fragmented; and (iv) incentives to encourage SMEs to take the lead in projects but also to participate in large and complex projects.

Impact and evaluation: a quality Programme that produces value

47. The increased emphasis on impact reflects the increased focus of the FP on the usability of new knowledge. However, assessing the impact generated by the use of knowledge and technologies developed through R&I is difficult, in the absence of appropriate tools and mechanisms. Indeed, a real 'culture of impact' needs to be developed, including within the Commission. On the one hand, the hoped-for use of foresight will make it easier to identify expected long-term impacts; on the other hand, as far as short/medium-term impacts are concerned, it will be necessary to develop and systematically adopt an impact assessment methodology that, while using different metrics that reflect the specificity of the issues, makes it possible to compare programmes by assessing the level of achievement of objectives and the economic, social and environmental impacts of projects on a common scale (1-10, for example). The methodology must create a rigorous but sufficiently streamlined system of indicators, enabling the assessment of both the scientific and technological value and the socio-economic and environmental impact, always in relation to the agreed objectives.

48. The quality of research and innovation is the first and indispensable guarantee of its impact. It is

therefore necessary to increase the effort on the substantive evaluation of the quality of R&I, the actual achievement of contractual objectives and the related socio-economic impact, shifting resources from bureaucratic control to the evaluation of results, strengthening the capacities of impact assessment and promoting a logic of service contracts - which commits the beneficiaries with respect to the achievement of contractual objectives also in research activities

49. The effectiveness and reliability of substantive evaluation depends on the availability and competence of evaluators, both internal and external to the Commission, and on a balanced composition of evaluation panels, including the possible inclusion of business-oriented profiles. It is crucial that the selection of evaluators is, in turn, carried out by those within the Commission who have the competence to do so.

50. Moreover, it is necessary to strengthen the mechanisms of interaction between proposers and evaluators, including by reintroducing the figure of the scientific officer, both for proposal evaluation procedures and for any redress process activated by the proposer. This figure would have full knowledge of the content and would contribute both to i) making it possible to discuss the substance of the proposals (and not only the procedural aspects), and ii) providing the proposers with concretely useful elements for future proposals.

51. The generalisation of contracts on a lump-sum basis (lumpsum) can make a decisive contribution to the desired transition: on the one hand, it reduces the administrative burden (and thus costs) for both programme managers (the EC) and beneficiaries; on the other hand, it shifts the focus from the process (timesheets, analytical accounting reporting) to the result (deliverables).

52. The shift to substantive evaluation must not be perceived as an additional layer of control that constrains or extinguishes the researcher's driving force, but on the contrary as a guarantee of the recognition of research excellence as such. In this sense, it is necessary: i) to prepare a real targeted communication campaign that facilitates the dissemination of a culture of research quality and its ethical implications, also with the help of existing tools such as Horizon results booster, Horizon results platform, Innovation radar; ii) to promote capacity building initiatives aimed at disseminating the culture of impact.

Simplification: a clear and accessible Programme

53. To ensure the attractiveness of the FP and the full trust of the R&I communities, the overall structure of the Framework Programme must be immediately intelligible so that the risks of duplication are minimised by design, and that the entire Programme is increasingly governed by clear rules, with information on its overall progress being shared systematically and in a timely manner.

54. In addition to the already mentioned opportunities for simplification of specific instruments (EICs, partnerships) and reduction of overlaps, and the generalisation of contracts on a lump-sum basis, it is necessary to: (i) further uniform and standardise the participation rules, procedures and contractual rules so as to simplify the entire call management process and facilitate, in particular, the participation

of SMEs and small organisations, which are not always able to orient themselves in their choices; (ii) ensure greater transparency, focusing on the evaluation process and results, and on the criteria adopted for the funding of proposals in reserve; (iii) introduce flexibility mechanisms also with regard to contractual forms (e.g., negotiated contracts), allowing easier access to funding for innovative companies; iv) ensure that the desired commitment to monitoring the impact of the programme does not result in a further increase in the administrative burden on participants.

55. Moreover, in order to ensure the continuity of the life cycle of programmes and projects, and to guarantee the necessary level of support to R&I actors, the role of the Executive Agencies needs to be revisited, with particular reference to: i) the objectives and modalities of their collaboration and communication with DG R&I and the other DGs involved in research and innovation programmes; ii) the fundamental contribution that the Agencies could provide to ensure the afore-mentioned feedback to policy.

APRE - Agenzia per la Promozione della Ricerca Europea has been supporting and promoting Italian participation in European Union research and innovation programmes for over thirty years. The first and only organisation of its kind in Italy, APRE is a multi-faceted association of over 150 members, in which public and private players of Italian R&I meet and discuss topics of national and European interest.

APRE provides information, training and assistance to Italian researchers and innovators to assist them in taking full advantage of the collaboration and funding opportunities offered by the European R&I programmes. APRE's role as host organisation of the Framework Programme National Contact Points contributes to this objective..

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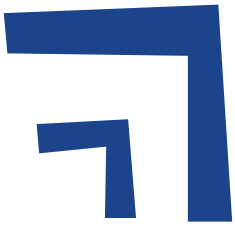

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