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**Finnish reflection paper on the future EU RDI Framework Programme**

EU's main challenges are to strengthen Europe's strategic competitiveness and improve comprehensive security in Europe. For Finland, it is essential that EU funding supporting competitiveness effectively enhances the **functioning of the internal market, industrial renewal and Europe's attractiveness** as an investment destination.

In the context of the future MFF, Finland highlights **the need to increase the share of research, development and innovation funding** to strengthen EU's competitiveness, growth and productivity. Finland remains critical of any proposal to establish a new debt-based competitiveness instrument.

The principle of **excellence and competitive calls must remain** as the foundation of EU RDI funding. Excellence in both research and innovation is key if European RDI is to continue to deliver essential contributions and solutions enhancing EU's global competitiveness in the short, medium, and long term. Separate widening measures do not solve EU's global innovation gap. Finland does not consider it appropriate to allocate EU research and innovation funding to widening measures. Within EU programmes, cohesion policy programmes should be the primary means of addressing the disparities in development between the EU Member States.

The role of **private funding is of essence** and thus the Framework programme should further incentivise and mobilize private RDI investments. The Framework Programme should continue to contribute to reaching **the EU 3 % target** of investment in RDI of which 2/3 should come from the private sector. This should be translated into bold political commitments at national level, including through national R&D investment targets. Successful national participation in the framework programme strongly depends on the level of national RDI investment, both public and private.

The Framework Programme should further incentivise both private and public RDI investments and **valorisation of knowledge**. In addition, combining current programmes, that support European competitiveness, into a single programme could, at its best, make EU funding faster and more effective in reaching tangible results. In general, innovation funding should be particularly focused on the phase where the **scaling, utilization, and commercialization** of research results and innovations are emphasized. This is a key challenge within the EU. Finland also emphasizes **the importance of funding collaborative RDI projects and public-private partnerships** that produce European added value and commit private contributions to R&D. Facilitating private investments in technologies and scale-ups, especially through the EIC, will equally ensure this. Openness and transparency of partnerships must be increased.

The **availability of risk financing for innovation and growth** should be strengthened. Investment guarantee financing such as InvestEU is particularly important for SMEs, innovation projects, and low-carbon technologies. This funding guarantee should be significantly increased to achieve sufficient private financing leverage. Capital and equity investments in start-up and scale-up companies should be more extensively supported through models like EIC fund and InvestEU.

EU's RDI **funding instruments must be simplified** and reformed so that they are easy to understand and use for applicants. Reducing administrative and regulatory burden is also important. For Finland, it is essential to ensure the balanced economic and societal impact of measures in the short and long term.

EU funding processes for innovation should be **accelerated and streamlined.** This is of utmost importance for researchers and innovators and their startups and scaleups which try to optimize the disruption to the markets with new technologies and solutions often in a narrow time window.

Technology neutrality, i.e. supporting open and diverse technological development, should be a general starting point while recognising the **need to be more competitive in emerging critical and deep technologies**. Artificial Intelligence, high performance and quantum computing, chips, and 6G are key technologies that need to be prioritised in the next Framework Programme to ensure European knowledge and competitiveness in these fields. EU RDI funding should also be used to maintain and strengthen the EU's global leadership in circular and bioeconomy and bio-based solutions. Pilots, demonstrations and take-up of technologies and innovation as well as open European technology infrastructures need risk-sharing also from the Framework Programme.

Also, **dual-use purposes** should be **broadly emphasized** in the future EU funding, **including RDI funding.**

**Open science, research integrity and academic freedom** as well as respecting the needs of research and innovation must remain as fundamental approaches in the Framework Programme. However, the changing geopolitical context requires rebalancing of possibilities for open international cooperation and risks related to research security. Co-operation with strategic and trusted partners should be further deepened.

The contribution of social sciences and humanities of solving challenges and increasing resilience must be considered.

**Funding activities aimed at solving societal challenge**s should encourage cross-sectoral collaboration and avoid creating unnecessary silos. Finding comprehensive solutions to societal challenges requires **also projects at lower TRL levels**.

**Top-level scientific research, researcher training and mobility and joint European research infrastructures** are key elements for breakthrough research and innovation and for attracting top-level researcher to Europe. As prerequisites for Europe's scientific excellence, these elements need a strong role in the next Framework Programme. The autonomy of the ERC must be safeguarded.