

## **Commission to boost research and innovation by making it easier to apply for and manage EU grants**

***The European Commission has unveiled a plan to simplify the procedures for taking part in EU-funded research projects. The overall aim is to make participation transparent and attractive to the best researchers and innovative companies in Europe and beyond. Ensuring European research realises its full potential is crucial to the EU's Europe 2020 Strategy, given the need to consolidate economic recovery and develop new sources of growth and jobs to replace those lost in the crisis. Complementing the proposals on simplification, the Commission has also appointed a group of independent experts to review all aspects of the current Seventh Framework Programme.***

Research, Innovation and Science Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn said: *"Our proposals aim to minimise administrative burdens in Europe's research programmes. We need to get the best researchers and most innovative companies taking part and we need to enable them to concentrate on results, not red tape. That will boost Europe's economy and quality of life. In particular, we must encourage more SME's to join in. I believe this can be done without compromising financial control. We are asking the other EU institutions for support to achieve this."*

Budget Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski added: *"The review of the Financial regulation which the Commission will present next month will underpin these ideas for simplifying research funding with concrete legal proposals, helpful also in many other policy areas. We need simpler rules to encourage potential beneficiaries of EU funds - such as small and medium enterprises or NGOs - to apply for them. Simplification means the EU budget serving citizens and businesses better."*

The first part of the Commission's strategy will make improvements possible under the current legal and regulatory framework, some of which are already underway. These involve, for example, better IT systems, more consistent application of rules, in particular on auditing, and improving the structure and content of the "calls for proposals" in response to which research organisations bid for funding.

The second part involves changing the existing financial rules to allow more radical simplification while maintaining effective control, for example by widening the use of "average cost methodologies" that avoid the need for projects to account separately and painstakingly for each small item of expenditure. The Commission also aims to allow projects to use the same accounting methods for EU funding as they are required to use for national research funding. These proposals require a decision of the European Parliament and the Council.

The third type of change envisaged will be considered for implementation under future Research Framework Programmes. Among the options presented is a move towards "payment by results", which would mean that beneficiaries were paid lump sums to undertake specific scientific tasks and would need to demonstrate that they have done so effectively and efficiently, rather than to report individual cost items.

In the meantime, the Commission has launched the interim evaluation of the current Programme (FP7). A group of independent experts, chaired by Mr. Rolf Annerberg, has been appointed to undertake this review and present their report this autumn.

Mr Annerberg is Director General of the Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (Formas). The mandate of the group covers a wide range of issues related to the design, implementation and impact of Framework Programme activities.

## **Background**

FP7 has proved very attractive to the research community with more than 33,000 proposals received since 2007, almost 7000 projects funded. Nearly all European universities participate.

Several concrete steps have already been taken towards simplification of procedures both in setting up FP 7 and since it has been in progress.

For example, FP7 introduced a new Guarantee Fund and a single registration facility meaning organisations applying for funding for several projects over several years need only enter their details once. Eight out of ten participants in FP7 are now exempt from ex-ante financial capacity checks and three out of four participants are exempt from providing certificates on financial statements needed for periodic cost claims.

Two new Executive Agencies were set up by the Commission in 2007: the Research Executive Agency (REA) and the European Research Council Executive Agency (ERC-EA). The European Research Council is a flagship component of FP 7 and awards grants to projects headed by starting and established researchers, with no requirement for projects to involve cross-border consortia.

Link to the full text of the Communication:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index\\_en.cfm?pg=documents](http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm?pg=documents)

For more details on today's communication, on measures taken in the past and on the review of FP7, see [MEMO/10/156](#)