

Forum calls for 'integrated approach' toward European research and innovation

October 9 2013



Credit: Knowledge 4 Innovation

Europe's research and innovation sectors are in urgent need of reform if they are to meet the challenges posed by global competition, policymakers emphasized last week at the 5th European Innovation Summit in Brussels.

As the current Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) draws to an end there is growing interest in how the follow-up research and innovation financial instrument, Horizon 2020, will take shape with a budget of EUR 70 billion.

The Director General, Research and Innovation, European Commission, Robert-Jan Smits, said the focus would be on simplicity and setting the

right framework conditions to encourage full exploitation of the funds.

'In our legislative preparations, we listened carefully to those who criticized EU research funding as being too bureaucratic,' Smits said. The pitfalls surrounding the funds are not solely a simplification issue. Smits suggested that the new measures would be 'challenge-driven,' an approach that steers away from the previously thematic-led approach towards increased multidisciplinary cooperation.

Today in the European Union, an estimated 88% of the public funding for research is managed entirely at national level and invested into companies, universities and research institutes within a state's own borders. Overcoming this bottleneck features prominently under the new programme.

Horizon 2020 is split into three pillars; excellence in science, competitive industries and tackling societal challenges. In doing so, the Knowledge 4 Innovation platform (K4I) - the summit's organizing body - aims to heighten collaborative ties between organizations on long-term projects in order to tackle Europe's biggest societal issues.

The EU political and regulatory landscape featured heavily in discussions on the balance between research and market entry success. Edit Herczog, Hungarian MEP of the Socialists & Democrat party of the European Parliament, voiced concerns over the lack of communication between member states. 'In the last 2 years, the debate has been on how we collect the money, not how we spend it,' she said.

Clearly any prediction on how the EU will look in 2020 is speculative, but the worries that put a strain on EU-wide consensus searching come not least because of emerging [global competition](#) from the likes of Asia and the US but moreover the push for excellence across Europe. Gernot Klotz, Executive director of the European Chemical Industry Council,

noted that while cooperation forms the backbone of Horizon 2020, 'Europe has a problem turning knowledge into jobs and growth.'

Spending on research and innovation has been steadily in decline across the 28-nation bloc since 2011. The new scheme will be roughly 25% bigger than its predecessor with a stronger focus on the implementation of the new instruments, seeking to identify the remaining barriers to innovation and how they can be overcome in order to make Europe a global force in innovation ecosystems.

Concluding the summit Lambert van Nistelrooij, Chair of the K4I Governing Board, made clear that whilst the financing instruments are currently at the final stage, 'it is up to member states and the regions to act, and to make innovation, competitiveness and employment happen.'

The event was held at the European Parliament from 30 September until 3 October 2013. The summit featured a series of workshops and was organised in cooperation with prominent [innovation](#) stakeholder platforms in the EU.

More information: Knowledge 4 Innovation
www.knowledge4innovation.eu/

Provided by CORDIS

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