Ministry of Education,
Science and Culture

Iceland's position on the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation ("FP9")

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Research and innovation are an integral part of our societies' economic and social well-being. Not only are they the main drivers for increased productivity, growth and welfare, but also crucial if we aim to tackle the complex societal challenges we are currently faced with.

The next Framework Programme ("FP9") should aim to support sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe. It should be committed to delivering true European added value, complementing, as well as providing leverage to national research and innovation activities. Furthermore, it should take a clear lead in addressing global challenges through global partnership and cooperation, upholding the ambitions of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Iceland has participated in the EU's Framework Programmes as an EEA EFTA country since 1994 and is committed to continued contribution to excellence in research and innovation and the global competitiveness of Europe. This paper presents Iceland's preliminary views on some key aspects of FP9.

Fundamental principles

1. Excellence

Excellence should be the key principle of FP9 and specific measures should aim to widen participation based on a culture of ever-increasing capacity for excellence. Promoting excellence through competitive funding is vital to Europe's competitiveness in a global setting. Excellence should be further strengthened in FP9 both through relevant instruments and the evaluation process.

2. Openness

Open science and innovation build on the concept of research, technological development and innovation as collaborative endeavours, to be guided by principles such as co-creation; the involvement of users and citizens; dynamic, rather than linear knowledge processes; and knowledge diffusion through the sharing of data, publications and other research results.

The principle of openness should be developed further, e.g. by rewarding open access publishing, data sharing and open resource development. Furthermore, FP9 should be open to the world, building on the insight that research and innovation practices are more international than ever and that global challenges require global cooperation.

3. Impact

Increasing the impact of research and innovation on society and economy should be an aim of FP9. Balance needs to be struck between a clear focus on the desired impact of individual programmes and instruments, on one hand, and recognition that long-term impact requires a long-term vision,

rather than a strong focus on immediate effects, on the other. The demand for impact should not translate into risk-aversion and it must be recognized that high risk projects can result in high gains.

Impact should not be understood as relating only to economic growth or competitiveness, but also to social goals and values, such as inclusion, collective learning and distribution of agency. The involvement of end-users - and citizens more generally - is a prerequisite for strong knowledge societies in Europe.

Other key issues

4. Major societal challenges

Addressing societal challenges should be the main ambition of FP9. The approach to societal challenges should recognise the dynamic and complex nature of contemporary challenges, and the fact that they call for collaboration across national, sectoral and disciplinary boundaries. Interdisciplinarity should be further encouraged, challenging researchers to break barriers between fields of research and foster an open and unprejudiced dialogue across disciplines.

A greater involvement of the social sciences and humanities (SSH) is of particular importance in this regard. It has been recognized that simply intensifying hard science often does not lead to a broad civic commitment to addressing societal challenges. Instead of considering them as add-ons, SSH should participate actively in defining societal challenges and framing work programmes from the early drafting stage to the evaluation of projects. Increased participation of SSH is likely to lead to a more fine-tuned understanding of the complexities of societal dilemmas, such as global warming, energy supply, poverty, social inclusion and health threats. In the long run, such an approach would deliver more socially and culturally sensitive results leading to greater societal impact of research and innovation and more robust knowledge societies.

The process of relating research and innovation to societal goals should be open and inclusive, aimed at active participation of all stakeholders. Greater attention should be paid to citizen science and to citizens as active participants in the knowledge and innovation processes. While raising awareness of the role of science and innovation continues to be important, such efforts should be understood as multi-directional flows of knowledge, involving a variety of actors, rather than as a unidirectional flow *from* science/innovators *to* citizens.

The goal should therefore be to enhance impact by integrating social and cultural aspects from the start and encouraging a more dynamic societal engagement with research, innovation and new technology. Effort should be put into developing more diverse ways of assessing the outcomes of research, including social outcomes, rather than continuing to rely mainly on the volume of peer-reviewed publications.

The work programmes and tools should be flexible enough to adapt to new and changing challenges. In general terms, FP9 should support green and blue growth; inclusive societies with respect to gender, ethnicity, religion and social status; new energy solutions; and improved health and education.

5. Simplification

FP9 should be accessible to its users. Improved electronic processes are important to contribute to greater efficiency, from proposals through evaluation to reporting, as well as to decrease the time from application to award of grants. These measures enhance the transparency and effectiveness of the programme and enhance trust between stakeholders.

Further steps are needed to reduce fragmentation and duplication of activities. A more simplified and rationalised EU funding landscape for research and innovation is needed with greater synergies and complementarities between the FP and other EU programmes, processes and instruments. Subsequently, a more user-friendly programme would contribute to new recruitment and widened cooperation at all levels.

6. A balance between continuity and new initiatives

FP9 should develop in an incremental manner from H2020, incorporating lessons learnt from past FPs and keeping a balance between old and new initiatives. The bottom-up approaches of the European Research Council (ERC) and the Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) have been important to give room to new ideas and approaches. Moreover, MSCAs have been instrumental in encouraging mobility and the diffusion of skills, increasing the employability of young researchers and giving rise to valuable transnational partnerships and networks. They promote two-way mobility between higher education institutions and companies, reinforcing the knowledge triangle between research, business and education. Both ERC and MSCA are key measures in realising the European Research Area (ERA) and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and should be continued.

ESFRI has been successful in supporting a more strategic approach to world-class and sustainable research infrastructures in Europe and should continue on this path, with a FP that continues to support European research infrastructures.

Importantly, the focus of FP9 should remain civilian and any increased emphasis the EU may have on security and defence matters should be funded by other means.

7. Gender equality

FP9 should apply methods of gender mainstreaming in order to ensure equal participation of men and women in all its programmes and to encourage the incorporation of gendered perspectives into processes, tools, work programmes and research projects. The gender composition of research teams and evaluation panels should be monitored and gender-sensitive indicators and analysis applied in evaluations.

8. Enhanced international cooperation

Many of the challenges we face are global in nature and require effective international cooperation. If Europe wants to enhance its role as a central player in tackling global challenges, there is a need to step up its efforts in international cooperation in research and innovation. The new programme must therefore continue to contribute to the European added value, while at the same time enhancing Europe´s global outreach. New measures should be included to encourage partnership with countries outside Europe, based on excellence, openness and impact.