Research RTD, 6th framework-programme 2002-2006: Joint research Centre JRC, direct actions, EC programme

2001/0124(CNS) - 18/12/2008 - Follow-up document

The purpose of this document is to communicate the results of an independent assessment of the Joint Research Centre's (JRC) Direct Actions under the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) for Research Technology Development and Demonstration and to present an initial reaction of the Commission. The evaluation, carried out between February and September 2008 responds to the requirements of the Financial Regulation, its Implementing Rules, the provisions for an independent assessment in the Specific Programmes for Direct Actions by the Joint Research Centre in the Sixth Framework Programmes, and the provisions for evaluation for the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7).

This dedicated evaluation report on Direct Actions in FP6 is established as an integrated part of an overall evaluation strategy for the full FP as requested in 2007 in the Court of Auditors' report on the evaluation of the Framework Programmes.

The evaluation has been carried out in conformity with the standards and guidelines given in the recent Communication on evaluation to the Commission.

The overall assessment of the JRC's performance and achievements during the Sixth Framework Programmes is positive. The delivered science and policy support is qualified as "good, very good and sometimes excellent". The evaluation Panel observed a continued improvement of the customer orientation of the JRC from FP5 through to FP6 ever since the adoption of the new mission of the JRC in 1998.

The Panel acknowledges the JRC's strategic framework: a convincing mission statement, a value statement and regular internal evaluation. It recommends establishing a longer-term vision and an overarching corporate strategy, which would allow the organisation to make a next step and advance to higher level in serving the policy customer. In this context, the JRC should start a continuous process for making a detailed short, medium and long-term assessment of the status of its research facilities and infrastructure with the aim to further enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. The Panel supports the modernisation and rationalisation of the JRC site in Ispra and the renovation of buildings and facilities at the other sites, which started as a follow-up to the previous major external evaluation.

As regards its mode of operation, the Panel is of the opinion that the JRC is very much reactive, whereas it has the knowledge base and the skills to be more proactive. The Panel would like to facilitate such evolution in an environment where the organisation is expected to do what the customers ask (reactive) and suggests that this could for instance be done through a high-profile Chief Scientific Adviser inside the Commission, who could be an intermediary customer for proactive work from the JRC. Aware of the Staff Regulations for Officials of the European Communities and the Conditions of Employment of other Servants of the European Communities, the Panel believes that certain improvements in the field of human resource management are feasible, and necessary for the JRC. It recommends the Commission to grant the JRC more flexibility in adapted recruitment procedures and career management schemes.

Finally, the Panel addresses the process for the evaluation. With such a very wide ranging work programme, an overall evaluation of the JRC would benefit from dedicated, competence or sector-orientated evaluations of the performances in the various areas which would then also allow a more profound analysis of the quality of the work in those areas.

The Commission invites the European Parliament and the Council to take note of the findings and the recommendations of the evaluation Panel. The Commission commends the progress made in the customer orientation of the JRC and asks the European Parliament and the Council to support the recommended step change to advance to a higher level of service to EU policies.

Internally the Commission will support the JRC in seeking a more proactive approach in its scientific advice and support activities and it will consult on the overall orientation of the JRC with the Board of Governors with its representatives of the Member States, the candidate countries and the countries associated to the framework programmes.

The progress made in establishing a corporate strategy for the JRC and in implementing other measures proposed will be a major object of the mid-term evaluation of the direct actions of the JRC in FP7. This evaluation will be available in the course of 2010 as a basis for further developing the JRC as the scientific and technical arm of the Commission to support the conception, development, implementation and monitoring of EU policies.