

Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013)

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The Commission presents a Communication on the ex-post evaluation of the Seventh Framework Programme carried out by an external High Level Expert Group (HLEG), and submitted to the Commission on 19 November 2015. The Communication sets out the findings and recommendations of the HLEG and the Commission's response.

To recall, the Seventh Framework Programme was established under Decision No 1982/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, and was one of the largest transnational competitive RTD programmes in the world with a budget of EUR 55 billion. The main focus of FP7 was on science, especially the promotion of collaborative research and excellence.

Key findings of FP7 excellence: the ex-post evaluation of FP7 cannot present the complete picture on FP7 results and impacts, since 50% of the projects promoted are still on-going. However, the Communications presents the following figures:

- FP7 accounts for about 7% of total public expenditure on R&I in the EU. However, both directly and by leveraging private and Member States' funding, its economic impact on GDP and employment is substantial. It has been estimated that FP7 will **increase GDP by about EUR 20 billion per year over the next 25 years** through its indirect economic effects and that it will create over 130,000 research jobs per year and 160,000 additional jobs;
- so far, FP7 projects have generated **170,000 publications**, with the share of publications in highly ranked journals lying above EU and US averages;
- more than **1,700 patents and 7,400 commercial exploitations** have so far resulted from FP7 projects;
- on average, 11 organisations from six different countries and nine different regions collaborate in each FP7-funded project;
- FP7 Marie Curie Actions supported 50,000 researchers, including 10,000 PhD candidates from 140 countries, stimulating the mobility of researchers across Europe, and contributing to their sustainable employment;
- the overall proportion of female evaluators was slightly higher than the 40% target. In addition, 38% of the FP7 reported workforce was female.

HLEG recommendations and Commission response

Recommendation (a): ensure focus on critical challenges and opportunities in the global context: the Commission notes that, in line with this recommendation, [Horizon 2020](#) is strongly focused on the resolution of grand societal challenges. Horizon 2020 aims to foster a permanent, structured dialogue with the private sector and involve it strategically, and to maximise the involvement of innovative SMEs. Furthermore, the Commission will:

- implement a **new strategic focus for Horizon 2020** in order to maximise its contribution to 'open innovation, 'open science' and 'open to the world';
- maximise the **synergies** between R&I in thematic priorities of societal challenge areas and new and emerging digital and key enabling technologies and infrastructures;

- explore the need for, and the feasibility of, a **European Innovation Council** as a means to boost innovation and streamline existing instruments;
- facilitate the elaboration of important **projects of common European interest**, which can foster vast deployment of research into mature technologies.

Recommendation (b): align research and innovation instruments and agendas in Europe: the Commission notes that Horizon 2020 further strengthens instruments already developed under FP7 – for instance, ERA-NET CoFund and Article 185 initiatives – to pool resources across Member States, define common strategic research agendas, avoid duplication, and implement joint calls. Furthermore, the Commission will:

- use the policy support facility and cohesion policy capacity building support to assist Member States to implement effective reforms of their research and innovation systems;
- continue to foster synergies between Horizon 2020, the Structural Funds and [LIFE programme](#);
- promote potential synergies with the [European Fund for Strategic Investments](#) (EFSI);
- explore the feasibility of setting up "Innovation Deals" as a new way of addressing regulatory uncertainties and to support the development and deployment of innovations, which could help build investors' confidence.

Recommendation (c): integrate the key components of the Framework Programmes more effectively : the Commission agrees with the HLEG that fragmentation and the emergence of 'silos' in Framework Programmes would undermine its efficiency and coherence. In line with this recommendation, the Commission ensures coherence between the different Horizon 2020 priorities, inter alia, through cross-cutting issues and has established effective mechanisms to coordinate with the Executive Agencies and to apply consistently a single set of rules.

Recommendation (d): bring science closer to the citizens: in line with this recommendation, the Commission has brought science closer to the citizen by involving them in the design of Horizon 2020, through the implementation of dedicated and cross-cutting activities in Horizon 2020 focusing on greater citizens involvement, and by better communicating the impact that science can have on their lives. Furthermore, the Commission will:

- further strengthen open access to research publications and data;
- in line with the Better Regulation agenda, involve citizens in defining user-driven research and innovation agendas, in particular when preparing new Framework Programmes and specific Work Programmes.

Recommendation (e): establish strategic programme monitoring and evaluation: the Commission recalls that it has established a monitoring and evaluation system under Horizon 2020 based on key performance indicators. Furthermore, the Commission will:

- ensure data quality and coherence to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems, in line with the 'Better Regulation' requirements; explore the use of new text and data mining tools, evaluation methodologies and reporting obligations beyond the life time of the projects to improve data sets that will allow monitoring and evaluating the longer-term socio-economic impact of EU Framework Programmes;
- establish data links with external databases to complete and improve the quality of data sets;
- support Member States in the national evaluation of the impact of EU Framework Programmes;
- improve the support Horizon 2020 provides to the knowledge base for policy making on local, national and European level, including SME's competitiveness.

The Commission will report on the progress with the implementation of the HLEG recommendations in the Horizon 2020 Interim Evaluation, due by the end of 2017.

