



Ministry of
Education
and Culture



Ministry of Economic Affairs
and Employment of Finland

Finland's preliminary views on the EU's 9th Framework Programme (2021-) for research and innovation

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In this position paper Finland presents its preliminary views on some guiding principles and general aspects of the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021 –). Finland's preliminary views are based on a national consultation process among representatives from various interest groups and other stakeholders in addition to authorities. This position paper has been approved by the R&I sub-committee of the Committee for EU Affairs in May 2017.

Finland's preliminary views on the EU's Ninth Framework Programme (2021-) for research and innovation

Finland considers that key issues in the next Framework Programme are to

- emphasise European added value, multilateral cooperation, and impact in order to promote sustainable economic growth, the creation of jobs, competitiveness and wellbeing
 - comply with the principles of high quality and open competition without Member State or other quotas or regional criteria
 - maintain a balance between research and innovation
 - promote openness in research and innovation
 - develop and support the emergence of innovation ecosystems and to enable and support cooperation among companies of all sizes, higher education institutions, research institutes and public sector agencies
 - continue to simplify administrative procedures from the viewpoint of participants
1. Knowledge and competencies are the basis for prosperity in the European Union. The EU should invest a significant part of its common funds in activities that support growth and prosperity. The Multiannual Financial Framework should support economic growth, employment and knowledge also in the future. Therefore, research, development and innovation funding should be set at a higher level than at present.
 2. The Framework Programme should create genuine European added value. The Framework Programme funding and actions carried out within the programme shall therefore complement, not replace, national research and innovation activities and funding. It should focus on supporting projects and consortia in which European and national interests can be served by combining the resources of Member States and partner countries, and for which there are limited possibilities to implement solely at the national level. Multilateral cooperation should remain a key element in Framework Programmes.
 3. Activities funded by the Framework Programme should be based on excellent research and innovation and on open competition, not on Member State or other quotas or regional criteria. Alongside these activities we should emphasise the impact of the actions on the economic and societal development of the whole of Europe. To support this goal we should create and utilise synergies between the Framework Programme and other EU funds. Measures seeking to close the so called innovation gap between EU countries should not weaken the quality of research and innovation funded by the Framework Programme.

4. An appropriate balance should be found between continuity and reforms in planning the next Framework Programme. As a whole we should aim to further simplification of procedures and instruments: when creating new tools we should be able to merge or discontinue old ones.
5. Increasing the impact of research and innovation requires strong cooperation between the public and private sectors and strengthening the best centres of excellence. Aiming for a leading position globally in an area of expertise as well as creating new solutions requires extensive interactive networks involving a number of parties. The Framework Programme should promote the emergence and strengthening of ecosystems benefiting from such open innovation activity. The goal should be in comprehensive development work emphasising quality and exploitation at all phases of research and innovation.
6. Breakthroughs in science and technology and impact cannot be achieved without long-term investments in excellent research and innovation. Funding based on international open competition (in particular ERC) ensures a high level of European research and attracts talents to Europe from other parts of the world. A strong multidisciplinary approach and the mobility of researchers are essential requirements for gaining new knowledge and expertise.
7. Enabling the growth of innovative SMEs in Europe is a significant common challenge. The Framework Programme should support breakthrough innovations and innovations creating new markets in line with the idea of the European Innovation Council (EIC). It is important that the most innovative SMEs in particular are also able to launch projects arising from their own needs (bottom up) when the most effective way to move them forward is at Community level. In addition, it is necessary to develop mechanisms enabling SMEs to participate in a flexible manner in larger projects strengthening innovation ecosystems at a project phase that best suits them.
8. By strengthening the open approach to research and innovation the reliability, transparency and impact of science can be improved and a more efficient and easier utilisation of research results can be achieved. Promoting an open approach requires not only extensive participation from the researcher community, but also developing research environments, services for researchers and research infrastructures, cooperation and coordination as well as adopting new working methods, including digital technology.
9. Research infrastructures (including e-infrastructures and technology infrastructures) are essential for the quality of research and innovation, attractiveness of research environments, training and mobility of researchers and requirements for decision making in society and business life. The goal should be to utilise Framework Programme funding to facilitate and support the preparation, implementation and use of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure (ESFRI) and other key European research infrastructures in a number of areas of research and innovation.
10. A competitive economy is based to an even greater extent on global cooperation, fostering and attracting top talents and on new business models, products, services and ecosystems enabled by the digital platform economy. Strong research, development and innovation undertaken by large and small companies have the key role in achieving growth, an attractive operating environment and employment. With high-quality public-private cooperation in innovation ecosystems the renewal of industrial and production value chains and the economy is expedited and Europe's position in the global economy is strengthened.
11. Meeting societal challenges, developing and implementing solutions and developing public service systems require investments in research and innovation. In order to find solutions to common challenges and to prioritize thematic areas issues such as the strengthening of wellbeing and competitiveness of Europe, creation of new markets and the dynamics of the platform economy

should be taken into account. The Framework Programme should promote a phenomenon-based approach, early interaction between researchers and users of the research results and linking humanities and social sciences to other research.

12. The funding instruments of the Framework Programme projects should be scrutinised from the viewpoint of each goal, appropriateness and simplification. A key aim is to improve the efficiency, flexibility and impact of funding instruments for research and innovation. The main focus of funding should remain on grants. In addition, the creation and strengthening of, for instance, innovation ecosystems requires multidisciplinary policy measures in a number of sectors in addition to public research and innovation funding in the form of grants, private financing as well as financial (loan and capital) instruments. In this regard developing, for instance, the internal market (including the Digital Single Market) and a Europe wide innovation environment through, for instance, innovation friendly regulation, standardisation, piloting and innovative public procurement, opens up new possibilities to innovations.
13. The EU research and innovation policy and tools and resources involved in its implementation should be considered in relation with a changing operating environment and other EU policies. It is important that also instruments of the EU structural funds, the European Investment Bank and the European Investment Fund can be used to fund research, technological development and interregional cooperation to improve the framework conditions for research and innovation.
14. The EU can bring substantial added value by financing research arising from defence needs. Finland calls for securing sufficient financing levels for defence research also in the upcoming EU Multiannual Financial Framework. At this stage, however, Finland does not take a position on whether defence research should be included in the Framework Programme or whether it should be a separate instrument. Defence research and monitoring of research in that sector probably require, for instance, special conditions and practices for data protection and security classification.
15. Measures aiming to simplify and speed up the administrative procedures of the Framework Programme should be continued. Practices and interpretation of rules should be harmonised both within the Framework Programme and in connection with other EU programmes funding research, development and innovation (including Structural funds, transport etc.). Evaluation and selection procedures of project proposals should be expedited. Particular attention should also be paid to transparency of preparation, assessment and selection procedures, feedback from funding decisions, best scientific practices and procedures laid down in IPR agreements. The preparation process of work programmes and of call of proposals should also be expedited. In the future it is important to find ways to achieve a better balance between demand for funding and the possibility of project proposals being successful.
16. Research and innovation and their funding also need to be understood, trusted and accepted by citizens. The Framework Programme should enhance measures to include citizens and the civil society in setting and planning the priorities of research and innovation and actual research and innovation activities. This can be promoted by, for instance, increasing synergies between the Framework Programme and education systems and through science and media education.
17. In order to boost the quality and impact of research and innovation and to strengthen global cooperation, cooperation between the EU and third countries and parties should be intensified mainly in specifically defined and selected areas and using instruments best suited for the purpose in line with an agreed strategy. It is of particular importance to engage in cooperation with leading countries in science and technology and with emerging economies. Reciprocity and mutual benefit should be leading principles in the cooperation.