

Thursday 20 May 2010

Implementation of the synergies of research and innovation earmarked funds in Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 concerning the European Fund of Regional Development and the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development

P7_TA(2010)0189

European Parliament resolution of 20 May 2010 on the implementation of the synergies of research and innovation earmarked Funds in Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 concerning the European Fund of Regional Development and the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development in cities and regions as well as in the Member States and the Union (2009/2243(INI))

(2011/C 161 E/16)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Titles XVII, XVIII and XIX thereof,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/ 2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Council Decision 2006/702/EC of 6 October 2006 on Community strategic guidelines on cohesion ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to Decision No 1982/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013) ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to Decision No 1639/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (2007-2013) ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 May 2007 on the contribution of the future regional policy to the innovative capacity of the European Union ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 May 2007 on putting knowledge into practice: a broad-based innovation strategy for Europe ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 March 2009 on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion and the state of the debate on the future reform of cohesion policy ⁽⁷⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 25.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 291, 21.10.2006, p. 11.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 412, 30.12.2006, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 310, 9.11.2006, p. 15.

⁽⁵⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0184.

⁽⁶⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0212.

⁽⁷⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2009)0163.

Thursday 20 May 2010

- having regard to its resolution of 24 March 2009 on best practices in the field of regional policy and obstacles to the use of the Structural Funds ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 March 2009 on the implementation of the Structural Funds Regulation 2007-2013: the results of the negotiations on the national cohesion strategies and the operational programmes ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the study published by the European Parliament entitled 'Synergies between the EU 7th Research Framework Programme, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme and the Structural Funds',
- having regard to the study published by the European Parliament entitled 'Moving towards a territorialisation of European R&D and Innovation policies',
- having regard to the study published by the European Parliament entitled 'Structural Funds' support for innovation – implementation challenges for 2007 - 2013 and beyond',
- having regard to the Commission's Communication of 16 August 2007 entitled 'Competitive European regions through research and innovation – a contribution to more growth and more and better jobs' (COM(2007)0474),
- having regard to the Commission's Communication of 11 December 2007 on Member States and Regions delivering the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs through EU cohesion policy, 2007-2013 (COM(2007)0798),
- having regard to the Commission's Communication of 14 May 2008 on the results of the negotiations concerning cohesion policy strategies and programmes for the programming period 2007-2013 (COM(2008)0301),
- having regard to the 20th annual report of the Commission of 21 December 2009 on implementation of the structural funds (2008) (COM(2009)0617),
- having regard to the Commission's Staff Working Document of 14 November 2007 on regions delivering innovation through cohesion policy (SEC(2007)1547),
- having regard to the Commission's Working Document of 24 November 2009 on consultation on the future 'EU2020' strategy (COM(2009)0647),
- having regard to the Commission's fifth progress report of 19 June 2008 on economic and social cohesion – Growing regions, growing Europe (COM(2008)0371) (Fifth Progress Report),
- having regard to the Commission's sixth progress report of 25 June 2009 on economic and social cohesion – Creative and innovative regions (COM(2009)0295) (Sixth Progress Report),
- having regard to the note of the Scientific and Technical Research Committee (Crest) of 4 December 2006 on the report entitled 'Lessons for R&D policies on the basis of the national reform programmes and the 2006 Progress Reports' (CREST1211/06),
- having regard to the Commission's guide entitled 'Competitive European regions through research and innovation - Practical Guide to EU funding Opportunities for Research and Innovation',
- having regard to the report of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures, entitled 'European Roadmap for Research Infrastructures Report 2006',

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2009)0156.

⁽²⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2009)0165.

Thursday 20 May 2010

- having regard to the independent report, prepared at the request of the Commission, entitled ‘An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy’ (Fabrizio Barca report) (2009),
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (A7-0138/2010),
- A. whereas the renewed Lisbon strategy gives high priority to research and innovation so as to respond to challenges such as climate change and increasing global competition; whereas in the post-crisis era stimulating growth and jobs through research and innovation has become ever more important, constituting a core target of the proposed EU 2020 Strategy,
- B. whereas the implementation of research and innovation is a need shared by all strata of society and its purpose must be to improve people’s social and economic conditions,
- C. whereas European support for research and innovation is primarily provided through research, innovation and cohesion policy, the main instruments of these being the Structural Funds, the Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP),
- D. whereas cohesion policy is an essential pillar in the process of European integration and one of the most successful EU policies, facilitating convergence between increasingly diverse regions and stimulating growth and employment,
- E. whereas innovation is most effectively addressed at regional level with the proximity of actors, such as universities, public research organisations or industry, promoting partnerships in knowledge transfer, and the exchange of good practices between regions,
- F. whereas the second Community Strategic Guideline on cohesion for the period 2007-2013 refers to improving knowledge and innovation for growth, and consequently 25 % of the total allocation has been budgeted,
- G. whereas the complexity of today’s challenges calls for an integrated mix of these policies; whereas the knowledge society requires, more than just an aggregation of the activities of the different sectors, a synergy between agents and instruments, which is vital so that they reinforce each other and support the sustainable implementation of research and innovation projects, delivering a better valorisation of research outcomes in the form of concrete product ideas in the regions,
- H. whereas, while some elements of the architecture of these instruments, such as the same time frame and alignment with the Lisbon agenda, allow for synergies, there are still differences, such as different legal bases, thematic versus territorial focus, and shared versus centralised management,

Cohesion Policy delivering research and innovation objectives

1. Appreciates that, in 2007-2013, in conformity with the second Community Strategic Guideline on cohesion, all Member States have devoted a significant amount of their total financial allocations to R&D, innovation and development of a knowledge-based economy, resulting in 246 National or Regional Operational Programmes with around EUR 86 billion allocated to research and innovation, of which EUR 50 billion have already been allocated for core R&D and innovation; notes that cohesion policy has become a major source of European support for this field, rivalling the budget of both FP7 (EUR 50.5 billion) and CIP (EUR 3.6 billion); points to the effectiveness and the possibility of determining quantified targets in terms of the amounts allocated to research and development spending;

Thursday 20 May 2010

2. Welcomes the fact that new financing methods exist and underlines the potential of the JEREMIE initiative and the Risk Sharing Finance Facility of the Commission and the European Investment Bank Group in boosting financing opportunities for innovative enterprises; recommends that regional actors exploit these new opportunities complementarily to Structural Funds financing; stresses in this context the need to effectively coordinate public and private investments;
3. Awaits the Commission's Strategic Report as referred to in Article 30(2) of the General Regulation; considers that the Report will give a comprehensive overview of the performance of Member States in delivering the objectives for the period 2007 - 2009 and will be a basis for discussion on the future prospects of cohesion policy;
4. Reiterates the need for an integrated multi-level governance approach to specific policies in the EU; stresses that a functional multi-level governance system is a precondition for setting and implementing earmarking objectives efficiently; notes that the responsibility for the implementation of Structural Funds lies with national and regional authorities, while CIP and FP7 are centrally managed by the Commission; is aware of the administrative diversity existing at Member State level and believes it is important to identify the decision-making level which is most effective for citizens;
5. Considers it important to coordinate Community policies that play a role in achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion; believes it is necessary to undertake a closer analysis of their impact on the territory and on cohesion with a view to foster effective synergies and to identify and promote the most suitable means at European level of supporting local and regional investment in innovation; recalls the need to take account of the different social and economic circumstances of the three types of regions (convergence, transition and competitiveness), and the variations in creative and innovative capacity and entrepreneurial spirit; stresses in this context that investment in R&D, as also in innovation, education and resource-efficient technologies, will benefit traditional sectors and rural areas as much as it will high-skill service economies, and will therefore reinforce economic, social and territorial cohesion;
6. Highlights the great potential of cities in pursuing research and innovation; believes that smarter urban policy, based on technological advancements and addressing the fact that 80 % of Europe's population lives in towns, which is also where the greatest social disparities are, would contribute to sustainable economic growth; therefore calls for incorporating the urban dimension in future cohesion policy;

Synergies between Structural Funds, FP7 and CIP

7. Acknowledges that, through the earmarking provisions for 2007-2013, cohesion policy is better geared to create synergies with research and innovation policies, and that at the same time the territorial dimension has become increasingly important in FP7 and CIP; calls for consideration to be given to a performance based earmarking mechanism with a stronger thematic focus allowing for appropriate policy responses to the new challenges;
8. Notes that spending on R&D&I under the framework programme is allocated on the basis of the excellence criteria, involving a more competitive mode of access for participants, that require high technical capacity and strong knowledge of administrative and financial procedures; stresses that this situation generates a high concentration in economic clusters and top EU regions, thus limiting positive synergies in the group of regions and Member States which are going in the right direction but have not yet attained the goal; points out that the increase of regional disparities in terms of research and innovation potential and the guaranteeing of actual policy coherence represent challenges that need to be addressed by both cohesion and research and innovation policy, irrespective of the fact that the implementing bodies exist at different levels (supranational, national, sub-national) and are governed by a different rationale (cohesion vs. excellence);
9. Insists that effective innovation depends on the closeness of the synergies obtained and regrets that existing opportunities for such synergies in funding are still not well known; calls on the regions, as main agents for information and capacity for analysis, and Member States to step up efforts to improve communication; highlights that effective synergies necessitate a complex set of relations between the agents which produce, distribute, promote and implement different forms of knowledge; stresses as well

Thursday 20 May 2010

that the different national, regional and local bodies managing FP7, CIP and Structural Funds have to be aware of the possibilities offered by each of these instruments and asks for better coordination between these actors and policies;

10. Underlines that interventions targeting research and innovation should capitalise on regional assets and capacities and form part of a regional innovation strategy based on smart innovation; considers that such strategies require an enhanced role of regions and cities in the EU and national priority setting and implementation; calls therefore for consideration of the possibility of re-establishing innovative actions within the Structural Funds with a view to promote regional innovation strategies;

11. Notes the existing possibilities of combined funding; stresses, however, that mixed financing is not allowed between Structural Funds and the framework programmes; stresses that the instruments can be combined to cover either complementary but separate activities, as in the case of research infrastructure, or consecutive parts of related projects, such as the development and follow-up of a new research idea, as well as projects within the same network or cluster;

12. Believes that the fact that mixed financing is not allowed between Structural Funds and Framework Programmes prevents regions from using both instruments at the same time and that effective 'bottom-up' strategic processes at both regional and national level could help eliminate gaps or overlaps of funding from SF, FP7 and CIP;

13. Underlines that synergy is especially efficient in capacity building; refers in this context to the project financing management in the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) and the need to coordinate EU research funding priorities on regional and national level;

14. Stresses that synergy goes beyond complementary project funding; considers that capacity building, networking and knowledge transfer is an important form of synergy and notes that all instruments offer opportunities for such exchanges;

15. Notes that actual synergies from the point of view of the direct beneficiary of funding depend on the beneficiary's organisational and strategic capacity to combine support from different EU instruments; calls on the regional actors to create regional strategies that can facilitate the combination of funding;

16. Recommends that Member States and the Commission allocate sufficient resources from the SF for research and innovation, in particular sustainable innovations, and strengthen research capacities; stresses the need to promote and apply successful models in the knowledge triangle and to ensure the sustainable development of regional research and strategic frameworks for innovation in collaboration with enterprises, research centres, universities and public authorities; highlights the potential of knowledge-intensive regional innovative clusters in mobilising regional competitiveness and welcomes the inclusion of cluster development in both CIP and FP7 (Regions of Knowledge action in FP7); highlights the new Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) established within the framework of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), linking up leading European knowledge-intensive regional clusters; notes that knowledge exchange in regional clusters can also be facilitated by Structural Funds; emphasises that such clusters represent a major opportunity for disadvantaged regions in particular;

17. Calls on regional and local authorities to make better use of the SF to build up research, knowledge and innovation capacity in their regions, for instance by setting up research infrastructure, enabling them to take part in EU research and innovation activities; encourages regions to establish SF R&D priorities that are complementary with those of FP7 and calls for long-term planning at regional level in order to achieve synergies that derive from thematic complementarities between the financial instruments;

18. Highlights the importance of analysing, sharing and integrating best practices concerning synergies between the policy instruments; in this context, welcomes the efforts made by the Commission to improve inter-departmental cooperation and calls on it to step up regional-level analysis of research and innovation potential and needs, in particular as regards the collection of available qualitative data, as well as analysis of the interrelations with other instruments in the evaluation studies on either of the three financing instruments, in order to be able to provide joint guidance;

Thursday 20 May 2010

19. Notes with satisfaction the Practical Guide to EU Funding Opportunities for Research and Innovation; recommends that in future such guidance notes be provided immediately after the legislative frameworks come into effect; awaits the Commission Staff Working Document containing examples of synergies in practice; calls on the Commission to act as a facilitator, promoting the exchange of good practices, and to evaluate the possibility of providing additional expert support on Community funding opportunities through ex-ante guidance notes and a 'user's manual' for the practical management and administration of research and innovation projects with a view to achieving the intended results;

20. Calls on the Commission to simplify the bureaucracy for the FP7 and CIP in order to strengthen the effects of synergies with the Structural Funds;

21. Calls on the Commission to carry out a study on how applying for support under the various programmes can be made easier using computer programs with standardised manuals;

22. Encourages the Commission to continue its activities aimed at fostering synergy, and to keep the European Parliament informed on their evolution, particularly on the situation of vertical cooperation between the EU and national and regional entities;

23. Supports stronger collaboration between national FP7 contact points, managers of R&D programmes and innovation agencies, allowing different aspects or phases of research and innovation projects to be funded from different sources;

Recommendations with a view to the next programming period

24. Welcomes the emphasis in the draft EU 2020 strategy on the interdependence between policies, the importance of policy integration and the need for better synergies and stronger partnership in the design and delivery of public policies; calls for consideration to be given to the need expressed by cities and regions for a more comprehensive framework in the three policy areas including a technical liaison structure within the Commission to monitor and coordinate synergies for innovation and research and development programmes, and to be associated to the design and implementation of EU funding instruments and state aid regulations; calls as well for territorial cohesion to play a special role in this regard;

25. Believes that future R&D&I programmes should complement national efforts, orienting and dynamising them with a view to revitalising the guiding role and multiplier effect of knowledge, innovation, development and national investment in R&D&I;

26. Stresses that in order to consolidate knowledge and innovation as motors of future economic growth, it is necessary to improve the quality of education, build on the results of research, promote innovation and the transfer of knowledge Union-wide, exploit ITCs to the maximum, ensure that innovative ideas are reflected in new products and services that generate growth and quality jobs and contribute to meeting the challenges of social change in Europe and the world, encourage entrepreneurship, prioritise user needs and market opportunities, and guarantee funding of an accessible and adequate nature on the basis of a key role for the Structural Funds;

27. Supports the three flagship initiatives of the EU 2020 Strategy for achieving intelligent growth, namely 'Innovation Union', 'Youth on the move' and 'A digital agenda for Europe', in whose implementation the Structural Funds will have a key role to play;

28. Considers that a strong and well-financed EU regional policy which benefits all EU regions is a precondition for delivering the objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy, in order to secure intelligent, sustainable and integrative growth with high levels of employment and productivity, as well as for achieving social, economic and territorial cohesion; stresses in this context the importance placed by the EU 2020 Strategy on research and innovation;

29. Stresses the need to review and consolidate the role of the EU instruments that support innovation, namely the Structural Funds, the EAFRD, the Framework Programme for Research and Development, the CIP and the SET plan, with a view to rationalising administrative procedures, facilitating access to funding, especially for SMEs, and introducing innovative incentive mechanisms based on achieving objectives linked to intelligent, sustainable and integrative growth, as well as to promoting closer cooperation with the EIB;

Thursday 20 May 2010

30. Considers that the Structural Funds are the appropriate instrument for supporting local and regional authorities in their endeavours to promote creativity and innovation; underlines the need for greater flexibility to ensure the swift use of this funding for purposes of promoting innovative business initiatives; underlines in this context the added value of cohesion policy, particularly to small and medium-sized enterprises on a wide scale, by offering easily accessible support and providing improved access to research and the transfer of technology and innovation, oriented towards practical application;

31. Recommends that the entirety of the funding not spent in a given region under N+2 and N+3 be assigned again to regionally based projects and Community initiatives;

32. Recalls that territorial cohesion has a horizontal, multi-sectoral character and therefore Union policies have to contribute to its achievement; reiterates that this concept is not limited to the effects of regional policy but also focuses on coordination with other Union policies that are targeted at sustainable development and offer tangible results at regional level, in order to develop and fully use the specific forms of regional potential and increase their impact on the ground, boosting regions' competitiveness and attractiveness and achieving territorial cohesion; is of the opinion that 'concentration, cooperation, connection' are the key coordinates of territorial cohesion in order to reach a better balanced territorial development in the EU;

33. Highlights the need for place-based policies and considers that cities and regions should pursue smart and sustainable specialisation by defining a few innovation priorities based on the EU objectives and on their needs, as identified in their Regional Innovation Strategies, and concentrate earmarked EU resources on these identified priorities; is of the opinion that the capacity of regional decision makers and entrepreneurs to attract and turn knowledge to sustainable competitive advantage is crucial for a region's economic performance with an added value also for surrounding regions, including parts of neighbouring Member States;

34. Points out that research and innovation, in particular as regards the development of low or zero carbon emissions and energy savings, are of critical importance for addressing global challenges, such as climate change and security of energy supplies, and also for improving competitiveness at regional and local level;

35. Supports the proposal of the Committee of the Regions for the creation of a 'virtual creativity network' that would be open to all (businesses, local and regional authorities, central public authorities, the private sector and citizens) and would provide advice, assistance and access to venture capital and technical services; stresses that a virtual network offers the additional advantage of giving the inhabitants of islands, outlying regions, rural areas, mountain areas and sparsely populated areas easier access to expert advice, education and information, business support and financial guidance;

36. Points out that transnational cooperation is the essence of FP7 and CIP, and that territorial cooperation (via transnational, interregional and cross-border programmes) is mainstreamed in the Structural Funds; calls on the Commission to reinforce the European territorial cooperation objective in the future, through its further mainstreaming; invites the Commission to evaluate the possibilities of enhancing territorial cooperation in the field of innovation in each cohesion policy objective; points out that better knowledge of the results of FP7 and CIP at regional level would facilitate practical coordination between the EU Regional policy and these programmes; urges the Commission to pay particular attention to such coordination; encourages Member States to take further measures for effective transnational cooperation by developing coherent regional and national strategies for achieving synergies; calls the Commission and Member States also to facilitate development and accessibility of data on this issue;

37. Stresses that under the Seventh Framework Programme support is granted to transnational cooperation in its different forms both within and outside the EU, in a number of thematic areas corresponding to the main fields of knowledge and technology, within which it is necessary to support and consolidate high-quality research in order to tackle the social, economic, environmental and industrial challenges facing Europe;

Thursday 20 May 2010

38. Calls on the Commission to analyse the impact of simplification measures already taken on the management of the Structural Funds with a view to preparing the future legislative framework;
39. Acknowledges that both shared and centralised management require specific rules and that the top-down approach of FP7 and CIP and the bottom-up approach of Structural Funds each have their own merits; underlines, however, the need to harmonise the rules, procedures and practices (eligibility rules, standard unit costs, lump sums, etc.) governing different instruments and to ensure better coordination (of schedules of calls for proposals, themes and types of calls, etc.); calls on the Commission to explore possibilities to that end, without prejudice to competences of Member States and regions under shared management, while encouraging an administrative culture that promotes a pluridisciplinary approach via common cross-sectoral strategies in a range of subject areas, and via continuous dialogue between different policy communities in order to strengthen policy coherence; calls on the Commission to simplify the administration of the funds concerned and asks for the specific strengths of both support pillars to be promoted at the same time as making use of synergies and simultaneously increasing their impact;
40. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the upcoming Research and Innovation Plan will be drafted with a view to strengthening the synergies between the Structural Funds and the Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation (FP7, CIP);
41. Reiterates its call on the Commission to develop specific evaluation criteria for the assessment of innovative projects, and to consider proposing future regulatory incentives for implementing innovation measures;
42. Sees a clear need for more expertise at regional level regarding applications for funding, administrative and financial procedures, fund management and financial engineering; calls on the Commission to look into the feasibility of providing further specialist support and ensuring closer cooperation between the Enterprise Europe Network and the structural fund managing authorities and a closer link between the Lead Market Initiative, technology platforms and regional technological roadmaps;
43. Insists on the importance of taking account of equal opportunities when assessing the suitability of projects and determining access to funding from the Structural Funds and other Community instruments;
44. Stresses the importance of better assistance in the implementation of policies and programmes that enhance synergy within the research and development infrastructures - innovation - job creation chain;
45. Believes that large research infrastructures cofinanced by Structural Funds should be subject to a higher evaluation by an international peer review board, which will have a positive effect on the efficient spending of earmarked Structural Funds;
46. Is convinced that commitment by the political leadership is both a necessary precondition for research and innovation policy coherence and a tool to enhance it; with that in mind, calls for the establishment of a strategic policy framework for research and innovation adjusted in the light of progress, new information and changing circumstances and consistent with national goals and priorities for economic and social development;
47. Reiterates that the informal mechanisms governing territorial cohesion and spatial planning in the Council should be replaced by more formal structures; takes the view that this development accompanied by the creation and reinforcement of integrated and cross-theme structures will result in a better coordination of policies;

*

*

*

48. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
-