Position of the Four Motors for Europe on the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP9)

Baden-Württemberg

Generalitat de Catalunya

Regione Lombardia

La Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes

The Four Motors for Europe are an interregional alliance between Baden-Wurttemberg, Catalonia, Lombardy and Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes. Since 1988, it has constantly reinforced the European dimension of the socio-economic, scientific and academic sectors of these regions. The Four Motors have always advocated an increased role for the regions in the European project to foster smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. These four regions, which represent more than 33 million inhabitants (6.6% of the European population) and 9% of European GDP, are strong economic innovators with excellent higher education and research sectors.

In a context of weak economic growth, the European Union needs a strong research and innovation policy focused on strategic investments involving all academic, economic and territorial stakeholders. This policy should contribute to the strengthening of basic research, the use and valorization of its results, the "industrial renaissance"[1] and the response to major societal challenges In this context, the Four Motors wish to share their findings on the implementation of the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and to communicate their proposals for the post-2020 period.

In total, the Four Motors have collected almost 10% of the European funds allocated to the Horizon 2020 programme since the beginning of the penod[2], nearly 1.6 billion Euros. This first assessment shows a strong mobilization of the different academic and economic stakeholders in each of the regions to participate in the European programs.

The first challenge of the next framework programme is continuity. Based on the principle of excellence, the Four Motors support the current architecture of the programme and call for adequate funding to meet the challenge of the current oversubscription in Horizon 2020. In general, the Four Motors for Europe support the integration of research and innovation activities, covering the full research and innovation cycle, with special attention to close-to- the-market research in order to facilitate technology and knowledge transfer processes Actually, the "Scientific Excellence' and "Industrial Leadership" pillars enabled regional stakeholders to upscale to the European level and ensure the transfer of knowledge to the industrial sector. To this end. the Four Motors for Europe strongly support an adequate budget for the "Scientific Excellence" pillar and a strengthening of European and international mobility and training of researchers. The "Scientific Excellence" component in favor of the research community must be absolutely preserved. Fundamental research nourishes the scientific and industrial base of the European Union. The balance between research, applied research and the different forms of innovation reinforces the European leadership in science as a driver for an excellent, top-notch innovative and internationally competitive system.

A strong "Societal Challenges" pillar in the future post-2020 framework program is fundamental to achieve the European Union's objectives in terms of economic growth and employment and to meet the pressing issues of society Within Horizon 2020, many efforts have been made with the aim of merging some programs. Nevertheless, this integration is not complete, and further simplification and coordination are still needed.

The second key challenge is coordinating the regional dimension with the programme's philosophy, where appropriate, and particularly with respect to the second and the third pillars. The Regions are the best level to enhance consistency with the actions of academic stakeholders, research centers, technological and innovation clusters, and businesses with European research and innovation policy. As managing authorities of European Structural and Investment Funds, they are well-placed to contribute to the synergies encouraged by the European Commission. However, differences in criteria (e.g. regarding state aid) limit the possibilities for stakeholders to combine European Regional Development Fund (EROF) and Horizon 2020funding.

A third fundamental challenge for the next framework program is to simplify the access of SMEs to the European research and innovation framework programme. Their difficulties lie in the functioning of the calls for proposals and the multiplicity of partners required by collaborative projects. While

[1] Communication COM(2014) 14 Final For a European Industrial Renaissance
[2] The study has been realized by the Four Motors for Europe from the beginning of Horizon 2020 to September 2016

bottom-up instruments like the SME instrument remain important tools for business innovation, the very low success rates (both in the SME instrument and in collaborative projects) sometimes achieved can be an obstacle and a possible reason for discouragement.

Clusters are important stakeholders to foster SMEs participation in European research and innovation programmes Unfortunately, budgets and instruments dedicated to clusters as well as funds available for interclustering (INNOSUP) are usually too scarce, Cluster- facilitated measures should be reinforced in order to support SME collaboration along European value chains and to accelerate the path towards emerging industries.

The creation of the European Innovation Council (EIC) can be a step forward in the right direction if it tries to achieve better tailored support for SMEs, start-ups and a better collaboration between public and private actors The establishment of the EIC should take the experience of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology regarding the "knowledge triangle", improving inclusiveness and European added-value into account

Regarding Joint Programming, ERA-NETs, the Co-Fund and Joint Programs (art.185) are important initiatives to facilitate the alignment of national and regional research and innovation programs. These funding schemes have to be maintained since they are a very valuable tool for the implementation of macro-regional strategies and their action plans.

The next framework programme should foster and offer effective instruments to promote international cooperation. This is important for quality in research, for innovation and for exports and trade. Europe is currently facing a range of challenges which, to a large extent, are of global nature

Finally, simplification of the research and innovation landscape within the European institutions must also be achieved to ensure better coherence between initiatives The large number and complexity of initiatives impedes the participation of the smallest stakeholders, despite their performance and excellent potential. It seems absolutely essential to provide a simple reading of the different European partnering schemes.

With respect to these findings, the Four Motors for Europe specifically propose to:

- Ensure adequate funding of the overall program;
- Base the new framework programme on a broad concept ol research and innovation. Cross-cutting subjects such as social sciences and humanities should be properly integrated in calls;
- Promote the flexibility of calls, in order to boost excellence and increase opportunities for partnerships and collaboration. The Four Motors for Europe require more open and bottom-up calls for the whole programme;
- Ensure the participation of a wide spectrum of stakeholders fulfilling the principle of excellence;
- Increase funding available for the SME instrument programme as well as the clarity of I PR and legal aspects;Strengthen the budget for tools dedicated Io clusters, in particular the INNOSUP programme by reinforcing “re-granting mechanisms" for SMEs;
- Strengthen the participation of regional stakeholders, in particular clusters, in (Digital) Innovation Hubs which help network, technology transfer and growth. Furthermore, Digital Hubs calls in the next framework programme should have a bottom-up approach where technological focus should be based on regional smart specialization strategies;
- Enhancing the attractiveness of synergies by exempting ERDF funding from state aid legislation, when combined with funding from the Research and Innovation Framework Programme;

- Improve clarity and transparency in calls for proposals and evaluation procedures. The emphasis on impact should be continued, where appropriate, but with a clarification of what is implied in terms of scientific, societal or economic impact;

- Simplify the requirements and paperwork required for call applications, especially regarding the expected results of research. Application procedures require long-term projections of frontier research impact that are sometimes difficult to achieve. This may represent a burden to the project application and may lead to inaccurate projections.

- Balance the size of projects supported by the European Commission in order to foster the diversity of beneficiaries;

- Continue supporting the Open Science Agenda, including Open Access to both publications and data as main principles.

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