

Statement Regarding the 8th EU Framework Programme Under the National Consultation Process

In the first quarter of 2010 a stakeholder dialogue process was launched to survey positions within the Austrian research landscape. Based on the results of this dialogue, the Austrian Council compiled a statement which draws on the recommendations made in Strategy 2020 and reflects the specific needs of Austrian research institutes. At the end of March the following text was uploaded to the era.gv.at website.

The Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development acts as an observer and advisor in shaping the EU Framework Programme and takes a strong interest in ensuring optimal organisation and effective further development of excellent research in the 8th EU Framework Programme.

The Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development is therefore taking the opportunity to comment on the development of the 8th Framework Programme and the European Research Area as part of the online consultation process and will continue to participate regularly in the ongoing development process. In this statement concerning the development of the concept for the 8th Framework Programme, the Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development proposes the following points for the European research programme:

- 1. Expansion of the Cooperation programme*
- 2. Promotion of international mobility*
- 3. Incentives for Austrian scientists to take part in international projects*
- 4. Expansion of European frontier research*
- 5. Increased budget for the 8th Framework Programme*
- 6. Coordination of national and international initiatives*
- 7. Consolidation of initiatives such as Joint Programming, EIT, JTI, etc.*

1. Expansion of the Cooperation Programme

The Cooperation programme to establish new collaborative research projects and strengthen existing ones represents the core of the European Framework Programme. The programme stands out with its focus on the transnational networking of researchers from academia and the private sector, which should contribute to improving and expanding the generation of knowledge and scientific excellence between Austrian universities and other research institutes.

A new concept for future structures in the 8th FP should not result in a radical change of the tried-and-tested structures of the 7th FP, but should instead offer a clear concept based on the experiences gained in the current Framework Programme. However, the present development process should make reference to evolving social challenges. The planned structuring into Grand Challenges with distinct thematic fields to address new societal needs should be welcomed in this context. In addition to calls for proposals based on a top-down approach, consideration should also be given to bottom-up approaches which are often needed to give greater support to the development of additional innovative approaches. It will be up to the Commission to formulate clear descriptions of the expected results and to incorporate feedback from national delegates into the working papers. In the interest of domestic researchers, the Austrian Council calls for a strong mandate to be given to Austria's representatives that will enable them to participate actively in influencing developments within the Commission. All necessary support and backing by Austrian stakeholders is to be welcomed.

2. Promotion of International Mobility

Encouraging international mobility is a particularly important element of the European Framework Programme efforts to develop human resources. In the 7th Framework Programme such activities were covered in the "People" programme and should be given even greater emphasis in the 8th Framework Programme. In addition to the Grand Challenges, the Great Ideas block would include the key area of Human Resources.

The Austrian Council considers that Austria still has great potential to improve the mobility of its scientists and researchers. More should be done to acquaint specific target groups with this programme with the aim of increasing participation in Marie Curie measures for example.

3. Incentives for Austrian Scientists to Participate in International Projects

By providing comprehensive and in-depth advice to Austrian applicants seeking to participate in EU projects, the FFG makes an important contribution to increasing their chances of success, and in many respects also ensures the quality of the applications.

Refunding the sometimes considerable expense incurred during the application phase from funds set aside for procurement financing constitutes a further incentive. Just like the advisory services, this support helps maintain the success of domestic project participants and should therefore continue to be offered. In accordance with the recommendations made in Strategy 2020 the Austrian Council proposes that adequate budgets must be made available for preparing and participating in Framework Programmes as well as for specific calls within the framework of ERA-NET (Plus). This should also make it possible to support cooperation with third states as part of the Framework Programme.

4. Expansion of European Frontier Research

The European Research Council (ERC) supports frontier research in all fields of research and all sectors within the framework of the Ideas programme. The successful participation of Austrian researchers in this programme should be supported by secure financing for basic research in Austria. The Austrian Council therefore believes that structures and subsidies which increase Austria's integration in the European Research Area should be developed further and expanded so that Austrian researchers can continue to achieve excellence among European competition.

5. Increased Budget for the 8th Framework Programme

As the overall EU budget framework is fixed, and agriculture and structural funds along with the Framework Programme are the largest items in the budget, the Austrian Council recommends shifting funds away from other areas to research and development in order to ensure a sustainable future for the EU. At the same time, it must be clearly specified which amounts are explicitly intended for the innovation process. However, the Austrian Council points out that an increase in the European research budget must under no circumstances be allowed to lead to a reduction in the level of domestic funding – on the contrary, strong domestic research funding programmes form the basis for the successful participation of Austrian scientists in international research. As the available funds should be accessible to a wider research community, all groups which are engaged in research such as SMEs, universities, etc. must be taken into account when formulating guide lines and programmes. This also applies with regard to the harmonisation and simplification of bureaucratic processes, as they deter less experienced applicants and also divert resources away from research and into administration due to the expense involved.

6. Coordination of National and International Initiatives

Austrian participation in ERA-NET+ programmes should be monitored in a continuing participation strategy and coordinated on an inter-ministerial

basis. A selective choice of projects should ensure optimal funding and facilitate the networking of national programmes with European partners. In accordance with the recommendations made in Strategy 2020 the Austrian Council proposes that the ministries should draw up and coordinate a strong joint

strategy for Austrian participation in intra-European internationalisation schemes (ERANET, ERA-NET+, INCO-NET, JTI and Art. 169, etc). Strategic measures – in the sense of parallel, national programmes – must continue to be implemented to ensure strong and successful participation in the Framework Programmes.

7. Consolidation of Initiatives such as Joint Programming, EIT, JTI, etc.

The emergence and establishment of initiatives such as Joint Programming, EIT, JTI, PPP, etc. in the 7th Framework Programme following the expansion of successful ERA-NET initiatives intensified the integration of national thematic priorities with European key research areas. The continuation and expansion of these instruments – especially by further developing transnational research infrastructures – should be given unreserved support. In particular this will promote Austrian economic, social, cultural, environmental policy and scientific positions, etc. at the international level by means of strategic scientific-technical partnerships with other countries. However, in order to simplify structures and programme design, care should be taken to develop an overarching concept for these instruments before new initiatives are implemented.

In addition to participating in the online consultation process, the positions formulated by the Austrian Council were personally presented to the Minister of Science, Beatrix Karl, by members of the secretariat.