



THE GOVERNMENT OF CATALONIA'S POSITION REGARDING THE NEXT EU FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH

English version

BACKGROUND

Over the next few years Europe will have to face major challenges related to social and economic complexity and cohesion. The EU Framework Programme for Research will be a key tool to advance towards a knowledge-based innovation economy. Catalonia, a European country with a pro-European outlook, is keen to take part in the process to define the future of Europe and in the discussion of key issues. This document is the fruit of reflection and contains a series of proposals for the preliminary discussions on the forthcoming EU Framework Programme (referred to hereafter as FP8).

The Government of Catalonia has decision-making powers in research, development and technology transfer, university education, the management and assessment of research personnel at universities, primary and secondary education, vocational training, industry and technological innovation. It is also responsible for the development, application and implementation of EU regulations affecting matters within the scope of its powers.

The Research and Innovation Plan of Catalonia

Catalonia has recently passed its fifth [Research and Innovation Plan](#) (PRI), covering a four-year period up to 2013. This Plan is part of the [Catalan Agreement on Research and Innovation](#) (PNRI), a broader strategy covering the years up to 2020, which was signed by the main agents in the Catalan RDI system, the Catalan Government, political parties and socioeconomic agents in October 2008. In accordance with the Agreement, the sixth Research and Innovation Plan will cover the same period as FP8, i.e. from 2014 to 2020, so that policies and strategies can be aligned with European policy on research.

The FP8 will focus RDI on certain priorities which, from the Catalan perspective, we consider they need to be linked to the socioeconomic challenges facing European society.

A major concern of the Catalan Research and Innovation Plan is the prioritising of RDI areas according to socioeconomic and environmental challenges. The areas have been classified as follows:

Environmental challenges

- *Mitigation and adaptation to climate change*
- *Energy efficiency and decentralised renewable energy*
- *Water management and planning for sustainable use*
- *Effective flows of people and goods (sustainable mobility) and of information*
- *Buildings, cities and regions for living and generating value*



Challenges for people and society

- *Quality, healthy and pleasurable food*
- *Prevention and health care*
- *Lifelong learning and distance learning*
- *Artistic creations and cultural products and services of excellence that are broadly disseminated*
- *Products and services linked to tourism, leisure and emotional consumption*
- *Social cohesion and management of social complexity to generate opportunities*
- *A new services society with innovative consumer and business service products and e-services*
- *Security of people, goods, information and the territory*

Scientific, productive and organisational challenges

- *Frontier research and scientific research and technology of excellence*
- *Development of materials, production systems and eco-products with innovative designs*
- *Non-technological innovation, transformation of organisations and new forms of work*
- *Improvement of governance, socioeconomic and political mechanisms*

These priorities or focus areas have been identified via a long process of analysis involving the main research and innovation agents of Catalonia, carried out while the Research and Innovation Plan was being drawn up.

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The Government of Catalonia supports the development of a Framework Plan (FP8) which respects and takes advantage of the contributions of sub-state governments, emphasising innovation processes and the participation of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), while continuing to promote frontier research and improving mechanisms for participation and communication.

It is accordingly desirable to take advantage of the socioeconomic characteristics of each region and to recognise their potential for improving both the design and the implementation of the Framework Programme and their key role in linking the generation of knowledge to local conditions.

1. Participation by regions in the governance of the European Research Area

In the fields of research and innovation many European Union regions have advanced, consolidated RDI systems which play a major role in the implementation of research policies and which therefore contribute to the consolidation of the European Research Area (ERA). To continue to reinforce the ERA, we propose that measures related to scientific and technological policy in Europe's regions should be given greater weight in all programmes. Based on the mechanisms of FP7, we suggest the following two main proposals, although there may be others.



Proposal 1: to open up the decision-making processes concerning the Framework Programme for Research to those regions which have a significant record in promoting, managing, evaluating and implementing RDI programmes.	
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To open the European Competitiveness Council to participation by regions with legislative powers.• To increase the participation of regions in committees managing the Framework Programme and in the appointment of experts to assist these committees.• To include regional representatives in the European Research Area Board (ERAB), the Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC) and the Research Executive Agency (REA).• To develop mechanisms to coordinate and analyse regional RDI policies in the Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST).
Proposal 2: to open the sub-programmes of the Framework Programme to participation by regional RDI administrations.	
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To make it possible for regions to promote joint programmes under the terms of Article 169.• To make it possible for regions to be represented in processes to promote new initiatives, like public-private partnerships, designed for each territorial area and meeting its needs.• To consolidate mechanisms to set up RDI programmes and projects on a joint basis, such as the ERANET scheme, which is a key feature in the development of the ERA.• To consolidate and promote mechanisms to coordinate programmes for the Europe-wide mobility of researchers (e.g. the COFUND scheme in the FP7 People programme).

2. Improving regions' access to the instruments of the FP8

The regions play an important role in the implementation of RDI policies. Many of them have their own established, coherent strategies and policies. It would therefore seem necessary that the instruments of FP8 are as directly accessible as possible at regional level, to ensure its application is more efficient and effective.

Proposal 3: to improve access to FP8 instruments for regions and their R&D agents.	
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To develop specific, direct strategic investment instruments at regional level.• To maximise the use of instruments accessed via competitive processes where regions, networks of regions and their agents have a major role.



3. European Research Council

The Government of Catalonia believes that the European Research Council's Ideas Programme is key for the development of frontier research, moving the frontiers of knowledge in Europe yet further, adding a new dimension that would not be possible with other grants organised at a regional or national level.

Catalonia has played an outstanding part in attracting projects under the Ideas programme, with 33 projects of scientific excellence led by researchers working in Catalan universities and research centres. This represents 4% of the projects awarded under the first three official calls. Catalonia has a recognised programme for attracting international talent (ICREA), and the Ideas Programme provides researchers with an excellent opportunity to form or strengthen independent research groups, ensuring that this talent remains in Europe and preventing "brain drain" abroad.

Proposal 4: to promote the Ideas Programme, in particular its support for young researchers (ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grants) so that Europe has a generation of world-class researchers.	
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase the budget of the Ideas Programme and the proportion dedicated to grants for young researchers.

4. Innovation

FP8 should place greater emphasis than FP7 on innovation processes in order to ensure that RDI helps make Europe more competitive.

Proposal 5: to ensure innovation is increasingly recognised as a key element of business RDI so that the results of RDI projects reach the market.	
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To integrate the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) and its instruments into FP8. This will ensure that the RDI supported by FP8 will be effectively exploited in the future through measures that include integrated financing structures.
Proposal 6: to include innovation as a key element of all FP8 financing instruments and mechanisms.	
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To finance programmes and instruments such as joint technology initiatives (JTIs), public-private partnerships (PPPs) and other structures to support innovation activities, ensuring participating companies have greater opportunities to develop patents in partnership with other businesses and universities. To design specific activities linked to innovation in the various programmes and instruments of FP8. These activities will vary according to the features of the programme to ensure that RDI is effectively used in the market.
Proposal 7: to incorporate specific features into the Framework Programme's governance mechanisms to ensure its correct horizontal application.	
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish specific representatives, innovation peer reviewers, and suitable evaluation systems.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve coordination between institutions such as the European Commission's Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), the Directorate General for Regional Policy and the ERDF funds for innovation, among others. To involve sectoral directorate generals of the European Commission (e.g. the DG for Mobility and Transport) in the development of specific R&D programmes that affect their areas of authority.
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5. Small and medium-sized enterprises

There is a preponderance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Europe. The continent's competitiveness therefore depends on the competitiveness of these companies. FP8 will help to make Europe more competitive provided it guarantees the involvement of SMEs, which are by nature flexible and innovative. 30% of the resources of FP7 were committed to SMEs, ensuring their involvement, but there is still some way to go to make that involvement more effective.

Proposal 8: to help SMEs to bring the results of FP8 projects to the market more quickly.	
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To introduce specific instruments to facilitate processes of innovation and to bring the results of R&D to the market.
Proposal 9: to reduce financial and administrative costs for SMEs.	
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make financial regulations more flexible in order to better adapt them to the specific nature of SMEs. To promote electronically provided services and reduce administrative costs, in particular at the management and subsequent monitoring stages of projects.

6. Broadening the strategy with regard to third countries

The EU's strategy with regard to third countries in general, and in the Euro-Mediterranean region in particular, is becoming increasingly significant. This is reflected in the Barcelona Process, which eventually became the Union for the Mediterranean. Support for R&D in this region is one of the keys to ensuring its cohesion and growth.

Proposal 10: to strengthen FP policies linked to supporting R&D in the Euro-Mediterranean region.	
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a Euro-Mediterranean strategy that includes instruments to address the region's socioeconomic situation and challenges within the context of the Union for the Mediterranean, a process in which the EU is directly involved.



7. Communication and standards of participation

The financing provided by the European Commission has become ever more diversified through new structures (public-private partnerships) and public-private research initiatives (joint technology initiatives), while its management has become increasingly decentralised (Article 169, joint programming). Each of these structures has its own rules for participation. Although they represent financing opportunities, obtaining information about these new initiatives and how they work is complex, making it difficult for entities without previous experience of the system to become involved. Instruments to encourage the transfer of knowledge should be created and maintained to ensure all research agents have access to FP8.

Proposal 11: to create and maintain instruments to promote the transfer of knowledge in FP8

Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To improve the accessibility and quality of communication mechanisms, adapting them to the needs of less experienced agents who have difficulty accessing information. A more unified approach should be taken towards promoting the available financing instruments, with communication using more user-friendly language.• To unify the rules and procedures for participation in order to make the system as clear as possible.• To make it easier for competitive European entities, especially businesses, to access the system in order to cooperate with major research entities and groups in other countries.
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To conclude, the Government of Catalonia specifically supports European Commission proposals to simplify the Framework Programme, making the selection process more efficient, exploring new financing models and simplifying the cost-based financing system, above all to improve ease of access for small companies.