

**Máire Geoghegan-Quinn**

Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation

**Opening Remarks at the Press  
Conference on Simplification of  
Research Funding**

*Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Press Conference

**Brussels, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

Speaking notes for Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn, for press conference on simplification of research funding, 29 April 2010

I am here today to explain our proposals to cut red tape in EU research funding.

I want researchers to spend more time in the lab and less time in the office.

But first I want to underline the success of EU research policy.

Over 54 billion euros in EU funds are being invested from 2007-2013 under the EU's Seventh Research Framework Programme, known as FP7.

With research and innovation at the core of the EU's Europe 2020 Strategy, using this money effectively is more important than ever.

Research funding is a key weapon in the fight for economic recovery. It is a short-term stimulus through maintaining and creating high-quality jobs. It is a long-term investment in our future.

The Seventh Framework Programme has funded almost seven thousand projects since 2007. Nearly all European universities participate. That is a fantastic achievement.

Just to give you a very few examples among many.

In 2009, a multinational EU funded project called Crystal Clear achieved a new world record for the efficiency of solar cells.

In 2006, a Swedish company and its Belgian partner used €2 million in EU funding to develop an innovative form of cancer treatment that last year secured €50 million in investment from the pharmaceutical industry, with the possibility of increasing this to €450 million.

Another EU backed project developed a pioneering method of treating the very severe brain disease ALD with gene therapy.

The Research Framework Programmes mean real added value from Europe, for every citizen, in every Member State.

I am talking about results that improve people's lives - and sometimes save people's lives.

I pay tribute to my predecessors and to all the scientists, Commission staff and stakeholders involved in this success story.

**But we are here to listen. And researchers are telling us there is a problem.**

**Nearly eleven thousand people have signed a petition that says (I quote): "The funding of European research should be based on trust and responsible partnering. Today researchers in Europe face a lot of red tape and cumbersome financial regulations. We are not against rules. But we need to simplify."**

**I agree with every single word.**

And SMEs are telling us almost the same thing – they want to take part, but some are hesitating over the administrative burden.

Our proposals today can deliver simplification without compromising on financial control.

I am a former member of the Court of Auditors.

I can tell you that multiplying different and overlapping procedures equals confusion. Clear and simple rules, consistently applied, equal good financial control.

A lot of this is technical. I am not going to go through our communication in detail. You have the text. But I will summarise briefly.

We have made a lot of changes already, in areas like reducing form-filling, improving IT tools and providing better guidance to applicants, for example through one-stop shop web pages.

We will make more changes soon, within the current legal framework. For example, we will further improve consistency in the way rules are applied, in particular on auditing. We will improve the structure and content of the "calls for proposals" in response to which research organisations bid for funding.

Once we have a new financial regulation we will be able to go further. Let me say that I warmly appreciate the full cooperation I have had with my colleague Janusz Lewandowski. He will be bringing forward proposals in a few weeks time.

Once those are in place, we want to widen the use of "average cost methodologies" that avoid the need for projects to account separately and painstakingly for each small item of expenditure and for each specific task performed by staff. We want to use more flat rate reimbursements.

The Commission also aims to allow projects to use the same accounting methods for EU funding as for national research funding. If projects are using one accounting method instead of two, that will save time and reduce errors.

These proposals require a decision of the European Parliament and the Council. Some can be implemented already before 2013 under FP 7. But changing the rules applying to FP7 projects while they are half-way through would create confusion. It could be a cure worse than the disease. So some changes would be implemented under FP 8.

The changes I have already referred to are very important. But they are not enough. I keep saying since I took this job that to create a true innovation society – an "i-society" – innovation in public sector administration is crucial.

So we want to consider truly radical innovations to EU research funding policy. Radical changes can sometimes be common sense changes.

The Court of Auditors itself has asked whether instead of the current system of "payment by input", we could move towards "payment by output". Agreed objectives would be set in return for funding. Payment of full amounts would be linked to whether those objectives are achieved.

I think this would make financial accounting easier for scientists while making scientific controls more rigorous. That in turn can improve value for money for taxpayers.

The Communication sets out three options for implementing this principle. As we prepare for FP8, I want to set up pilot projects to see what works best.

I am calling today on other EU institutions to support us in delivering simplification. The signals are good. I had a very good meeting with the European Parliament Committee responsible for research yesterday. They intend to work closely with the budget committee.

The bottom line is this. The Framework Programme is not a programme for accountants or bureaucrats. It is a programme for scientists and innovators.

Above all, it is a programme for Europeans. It provides tangible evidence of how the EU can improve people's lives.

Research programmes are crucial to Europe's economy. They deserve to be revamped, simplified, improved.

That is why I am also launching today a comprehensive review of all aspects of FP 7, by a group of independent experts.

Let me finish with a further thought. I've used the jargon throughout: Framework Programme, FP6, FP7, FP8.

We need a new name, so we can get the message of success across to more people.

A name which captures the imagination, so we can communicate European research better.

Let's think about it.