



SIMPLIFICATION IN RESEARCH

KEY MESSAGES

- 1** Simplification of EU research funding programmes is key to ensure attractiveness, accessibility, efficient use of public money, and to foster innovation in Europe.
- 2** In particular, rules and procedures of the European research Framework Programme (FP) must be significantly simplified.
- 3** Recent Proposal for a revised EU Financial Regulation and related Communications go in the right direction and must be implemented.

BACKGROUND

The European research Framework Programme (FP) is the only substantial programme supporting transnational and public-private R&D projects in Europe. The Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) has a € 50.5 billion budget for years 2007-2013, which represents about 25% of total public expenditure in EU 27. FP is of strategic importance and therefore must be used effectively and efficiently.

Nevertheless, with time, implementation and management rules of FP have become more and more complex and generate red tape. Companies are increasingly struggling with complicated and time-consuming rules and procedures which hamper the effectiveness of FP at a time when technology and innovation have to be urgently supported.

Simplifying the existing rules and financing mechanisms is needed to increase the efficiency of the EU support to research and innovation, with a view to sound management of Community funds and strengthening of European innovation capacity.

Recent Communications on simplification (29 April 2010) and on the tolerable risk of error (28 May 2010) together with the Proposal for the triennial revision of the EU Financial Regulation (28 May 2010) have paved the way for a simpler and more efficient framework.

WHAT DOES BUSINESSEUROPE AIM FOR?

Simplification is crucial at all stages of FP: application, project management and reporting. Significant breakthrough must be achieved and implemented in the future FP8 (2014-2020).

BUSINESSEUROPE recommends actions to:

- **Implement the provisions in the above Communications and Proposal**
In particular, the revised EU Financial Regulation must implement a new system of control mechanisms that is not unnecessary burdens on applicants for EU funds, and soften the provisions on personal financial liability for staff officers. The concept of “tolerable risk of error” has paved the way for such an approach.

- **Further simplify rules and procedures for companies to participate in FP**
Concrete actions must be launched to:
 - ⇒ Simplify the documentation and amount of information required to participate to the projects.
 - ⇒ Shorten the time for payments after submitting the project reports: especially for SMEs, waiting for more than three months for final payments is excessive.
 - ⇒ Ensure a clear division of the annual budget for each thematic priority and, whenever possible, for each call.
 - ⇒ Make project consortia more manageable and make the FP more accessible for SMEs by re-introducing the separate category of associated partners from FP5.