



Committee of the Regions

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**73rd Plenary Session
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OPINION
of the Committee of the Regions
on
**MORE EFFICIENT SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
IN EU REGIONS**

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- urges the importance of regions in finding practical solutions - and the need for more assistance for this by the EU and Member States - of the complementary use of research and innovation funding and the Structural Funds, providing a central means to push forward the research and innovation dimension of the renewed Lisbon strategy at regional and local level;
- supports the need to develop regional research and innovation strategies and to strengthen the regional governance of research and innovation, increasing responsibility among all interested parties, in particular of the private sector;
- calls for further activities at EU level to promote synergies of EU funding for research and innovation, such as giving priority to applications within the FP7 and CIP that have an outstanding importance for a regional innovation strategy as well as dedicating a substantial and growing share of the Structural Funds to research and innovation;
- stresses the need for a more sophisticated EU policy mix and balance between fostering existing "poles of excellence" and enabling new ones to emerge. Consequently, consideration might be given to adding a territorial dimension to the CIP and FP7, whilst recognising the FP7's focus on the excellence principle;
- calls upon the Commission to oversee an effective coordination of interregional network funding under the SF, FP7 and CIP in the field of research and innovation, including the regular and better coordinated dissemination of results and good practices and greater interaction of their different "communities".

Rapporteur:

Jyrki Myllyvirta (FI/EPP), Mayor of the City of Lahti

Reference documents

Council Conclusions on "More efficient support to research and innovation: Coordinating the use of the Research Framework Programme and the Structural Funds - Response to the CREST report", 2811th Competitiveness Council meeting, Luxembourg, 25 June 2007

Communication from the Commission on Competitive European Regions through Research and Innovation - A contribution to more growth and more and better jobs
COM(2007) 474 final

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Strengthen synergies between different EU funding instruments 2007-2013

1. strongly welcomes the conclusions adopted by the Competitiveness Council on 25 June 2007 "on more efficient support to research and innovation: coordinating the use of the research framework programme and the structural funds – response to the CREST report¹", where the Council invited the Member States and regions to implement the CREST guidelines on a voluntary basis and in particular invited the CoR to follow-up the subject. For its part, the CoR would like to invite the Council to return to the subject in light of this CoR opinion;
2. acknowledges the need for improved synergies between the EU cohesion, research and innovation policies, in light of their respective goals, and, in particular, the need for an effective, coordinated use of their funding instruments by Member States and regions. The CoR has urged in several opinions, as endorsed by the CoR "Study on structural capacity and motivation of regions and local and regional authorities in R&D"², the importance of the regions in finding practical solutions - and the need for more assistance for this by the EU and Member States - of the complementary use of research funding and the Structural Funds, with a special emphasis on the new Member States;
3. agrees with the Council and the Commission that this provides a central means to push forward the research and innovation dimension of the renewed Lisbon strategy at regional and local level, improving the research and innovation performance within EU regions. The CoR points out that the research establishments and their ways of working are versatile; new knowledge can be produced in establishments of varying size and type. Even small institutions can produce knowledge of worldwide interest in restricted specialties, especially when they participate in global networks and collaborate with knowledge-based businesses;
4. welcomes, endorsing the suggestions made by the CoR study in this respect, the increased potential in the design of the 7th Research Framework Programme (FP7), the Structural Funds (SF), the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) and the European Agriculture and Rural Development Fund (EARDF) for their coordinated use by regions to promote research and innovation. With, in particular, a common time frame and more resources it is possible to get substantial results through increased synergies. The FP7 now has 54 billion euros in the budget for 2007-2013 and, for research and innovation; there is also roughly 10%, or 45 billion euros, reserved in the structural funds. In addition to this, a

¹ CREST 1203/07 – CREST (EUROPEAN UNION SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE) "Guidelines on Coordinating the Research Framework Programme and the Structural Funds to support research and development".

² CDR/ETU/21/2005.

similar amount of money still comes from national cofinancing. This shows the importance and the potential of the SF compared to the similar total FP7 budget;

5. whereas the Council Conclusions and the CREST guidelines focus only on the coordinated use of SF and FP7, the CoR would like to take a broader scope, in line with the European Commission Communication, on the subject and consider the potential of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) and to some extent, the European Agriculture and Rural Development Fund (EARDF), too;
6. reiterates that the renewed Lisbon Strategy in 2005 has put research and innovation as the key drivers for growth and competitiveness at the forefront of European policy, and acknowledges the "Broad-Based Innovation Strategy for Europe", endorsed by the Informal Lahti Summit in October 2006 as an important further step in this regard. To support further investment in research and innovation within the EU regions, the CoR calls upon the European Spring Council of 2008 to strengthen the research and innovation dimension of the new generation of the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs for the 2008-2011 governance cycle of the Lisbon Strategy;
7. agrees that a more detailed assessment of spatial coverage of possible synergies is required. This means strengthening regional level analysis of research and innovation potential and needs, notably by improving the statistical and qualitative data available through, for instance, EU level initiatives such as the Regional Key Figures database, or the Trend Chart and ERAWATCH policy monitoring exercises, which are being extended to the regional level;
8. proposes, that the interim and ex-post evaluation studies of the EU funding instruments should include analysis of inter-relations with other instruments in view of achieving synergies in supporting research and innovation in EU regions;

Functioning multi-level governance

9. stresses that the process of building up research and innovation potential for sustainable competitive advantage in Europe can only succeed with the involvement of cities and regional authorities. Given their physical proximity, they are the main catalysts for knowledge and innovation in Europe. An increasing number of European regions are making research and innovation a top priority of their public funding;
10. urges that to achieve the ambitions of the renewed Lisbon agenda and the Barcelona objective of spending at least 3% of GDP in the EU on R&D by 2010, with two-thirds of this coming from the private sector, and to ensure economic and social cohesion in the EU, further actions are needed. It reiterates that increasing the research and innovation capacity amongst European regions can only be done through shared commitment and coordinated actions by the Member States, the EU, and the regions. EU financing is always a small proportion of total public funding for research and innovation, and it is important that EU policy promotes

the increase and coordination of the investments by the Member States. Besides the public contribution, the EU particularly needs stronger commitments by the private sector;

11. wants to assure a coordinated use of FP7, SF and CIP, because this is essential in terms of the competitiveness of the EU and the mutual synergy between cohesion policy, research policy and innovation policy at national and regional level. The development of rural areas is also an inherent part of regional development and has to be synchronised with other policies, including the research and innovation policies;
12. believes that the FP7 which strengthens European competitiveness has a crucial role in fulfilling the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and in developing the European Research Area, but at the same time will have to complement national research work and focus on supporting such projects that cannot be accomplished at national level. By combining the resources of various Member States, this can serve both European and national interests;
13. is satisfied that the FP7 will strengthen the regional dimension of the EU's research support through initiatives such as Regions of Knowledge 2 and Research Potential. However, the volume of these specific initiatives is too limited, and the CoR encourages the increase of such initiatives and calls on the Commission to provide regional authorities with a regional breakdown of FP7 funding as well;
14. reiterates the view taken in its earlier opinion on the European Institute of Technology (EIT), that provision must be made for the inclusion and involvement of the regions and SMEs, even in large EU cooperation projects such as the EIT; e.g. the concept of the EIT "Knowledge and Innovation Communities" should be used to create partnerships with industry and local and regional authorities;
15. supports CREST's emphasis on the need to develop Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTDI) strategies and to strengthen the regional governance of research and innovation. An important part in that is to develop a specific strategy for using FP7 and SF together for research and innovation strategy development. The needs for coordinated support should be taken into consideration at an early stage of the planning, which could be done within a bottom-up process of selecting strategic research and innovation objectives in the operational programmes. This could be supported e.g. by including a funding reserve in the operational programmes as is the case for some EU regions;
16. states that the coordination of major EU instruments such as FP7, SF and CIP is not only a question of political intentions, but also a challenge of policy coherence. Ensuring policy coherence in the case of multi-level and multi-stakeholder programmes requires the existence of an efficient multi-level governance system;

More active and focused activities and cooperation

17. believes that the CIP should focus on the innovation and replication phase whereas the FP7 should focus on the research and development phase to foster the international competitiveness of Europe. This should avoid financing gaps between research, development and application;
18. suggests, as endorsed by the CoR study, considering a specific priority for FP7 and CIP applications, in terms of importance for regional innovation. It could be an option to give priority to applications within the FP7 and CIP that have a clear, outstanding importance for a regional innovation strategy when they fulfil the criteria for research quality at the same time;
19. would like to ask the Commission to focus more on the Structural Funds for investment in research and innovation. The CoR recognises a need to dedicate a substantial and growing share of the SF to research and innovation, as has been done in SF programmes for the period 2007-2013 for the Lisbon agenda, and to follow, for example, the recommendation of the Aho Report "Creating an Innovative Europe", as endorsed by the EURAB advisory board, to dedicate a minimum of 20% investment in innovation and knowledge in future SF programmes, with this condition as such becoming an integrated part of the EU implementation process of the Lisbon strategy;
20. encourages adding incentives within the Structural Funds to support research and innovation. Such incentives could include differential grant rates favouring investments in research and innovation projects, and adopting a lower (e.g. 10%) contribution of the national/ regional beneficiary in order to mirror the supposed risks and long-term return typical for many research and innovation activities, in particular those requiring the creation of a new infrastructure;
21. stresses the special role of cohesion policy in supporting innovation activity in the regions and states that the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), can also be used for funding business incubators and science parks (infrastructure and connections). These are important ways to disseminate knowledge for use in the markets and they can help in forging connections between SMEs and universities. For its part, the European Social Fund (ESF) can provide financial support for the development of skills (training, guiding services, etc.), as well as the development and modernisation of educational structures and systems. During the 2007–2013 programme period there will be more emphasis than previously on the strengthening of research and innovation by means of knowledge transfer;
22. emphasises the importance of the communication and exploitation of knowledge and that knowledge should be provided in such a form that it can become part of production activity. Solutions and methods developed must be openly accessible to all, in particular for SMEs in those areas where there are no high-level research institutes or universities, In practice, this could be done within the framework of regional clusters. So-called cluster offices which have

been developed in some countries to help in disseminating knowledge, should be considered for use more extensively in Europe;

23. welcomes in particular the CREST recommendations to improve the competence of SMEs in research and their capacities to exploit knowledge generated elsewhere, but points out that the CREST guidelines can only be implemented on a voluntary basis in the regions since the joint preparation of the programmes (Commission and regions) has now been concluded. SF should be used for networking, training and qualification of SMEs to participate in FP7 and then making international and trans-national connections. The CIP should be used to assist SMEs in overcoming a possible gap at the innovation stage;
24. wants to highlight the importance of decentralised innovation activity also in smaller cities and regions. Nationally (as e.g. in Finland) or regionally coordinated centres of expertise networks are an example of a system that combines regional or local research and business potential and resources with national and EU policies and financing. The centres of expertise form clusters in related fields and participate in international networks;

Promoting research and innovation strategies and capacities in the regions

25. emphasises the key role of regional research and innovation strategies in linking the various relevant partners within a region to the strategy. Such strategies, as stressed by the CoR study, can strengthen research institutions by placing them within innovative surroundings, increase a sense of responsibility among all interested parties, and thus lead to a stronger regional research and innovation system. Support from the different programmes available for the different phases of the creation of a new research infrastructure is crucial;
26. stresses the value of taking a focused approach within regional research and innovation strategies, including the identification of flagship projects. In doing so, different approaches need to be balanced. One is, as recommended by CREST, to select priorities at regional level that are complementary to those of the FP7 and CIP in order to increase possible chances of linking the regional research and innovation system with EU funding;
27. recognises the number of options currently offered by SF and FP7 for both supporting efficient education and training systems for researchers and businesses in EU regions and for setting up or upgrading research and innovation infrastructure, and welcomes the recommendations made by CREST to benefit from this. The CoR welcomes the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), which will produce an analysis on *regional aspects* of pan-European Research Infrastructures in early 2008, and urges that the new member states in particular are involved in this initiative;
28. repeats its call for joint research and innovation funds to be set up as new ways of public-private institutional cooperation at local and regional level, underlining that the development of research and innovation capacities is an ongoing task;

Balanced excellence and cohesion

29. shares the concern regarding the Commission's analysis that research investment and activity within the EU is highly concentrated in a few regions. The CoR has noted with concern that research and development expenditure in more than 100 regions in Europe is below 1% of GDP;
30. underlines, that European research, innovation and cohesion policy should pursue complementary goals and collaborate in seeking to improve research and development in Europe. This implies a continuing challenge of balancing support for excellence and for cohesion. If research and innovation are central to growth, EU policies need to support a more sophisticated policy mix and balance between fostering existing "poles of excellence" and enabling new ones to emerge;
31. reiterates that the CoR has urged the SF to strengthen the proportion of high-quality public research and innovation investment in EU regions substantially, under both the convergence and regional competitiveness and employment objectives. It acknowledges that cohesion policy pursues an integrated approach and therefore does not consider research in isolation, but in conjunction with innovation;
32. stresses that although FP7 and CIP are not cohesion instruments as such, they inevitably have an impact on cohesion. The CoR has urged the goal of cohesion to be relevant to all sectoral European policies. Consequently, consideration might be given to adding a territorial dimension to the CIP and FP7, whilst recognising the FP7's focus on the excellence principle;
33. acknowledges the recommendations provided by CREST on how regions can make the best use of SF and FP7 to move their research and innovation systems towards excellence and to the level of European or international competitiveness. This includes improving regional networking between research institutes, universities, SMEs and other relevant actors for creating clusters, regional technology platforms and poles, and assist them to connect with collaborative EU research and innovation projects and agendas such as ERA-Net and the European Technology Platforms, as well as international networks of research actors and enterprises;
34. calls upon the European Commission in this regard to continue its relevant schemes such as the "Regions of Knowledge" under FP7, "Regions for Economic Change" under the ERDF and "Innova-Inno" under the CIP. The CoR also highlights that the SF should play a supporting role to raise the scientific, technological, entrepreneurial and managerial capacity of local and regional actors, especially of SMEs, to participate in FP7 and CIP projects;
35. urges, as endorsed in the CoR study, a significant shift when using EU funding, in particular SF by regions, towards stimulating in particular the demand side for research and innovation,

fostering user-driven and open innovation as a regional potential. Missing absorption mechanisms for exploiting the global knowledge-base are the key bottle-neck preventing the regions to benefit from open innovation;

36. reflects on criticisms related to overlaps in the support for research infrastructure under both Structural Funds and FP7, and stresses that in this regard a more effective coordination and reasoned approach to R&D infrastructure investments based on both EU instruments is needed, which balances the cohesion versus excellence approach and focuses on the support for different phases of infrastructure creation;
37. recalls in this context the CoR's view that the concept of "excellence" within the European Research Area, as well as EU and national research funding, must also take into account highly specialised smaller research centres and less research-intensive players. These are essential for the implementation of innovation and the development of knowledge of worldwide interest in narrow fields of expertise. Research should not only focus on high-tech research, "low-tech" research can also be very important for innovation and development in regions;
38. foresees that gearing EU funding into moving the research and innovation systems to excellence is a crucial challenge for regions within the "Regional Competitiveness and Employment" objective of the SF. They cannot fully rely on receiving FP7 funding and have much less SF funding available for doing so than earlier;

Dissemination of good practice and expertise

39. emphasises the importance of planned actions presented by the European Commission to:
 - make better use of European funding by launching, in spring 2008, a practical guide for identifying the most appropriate source of funding for potential beneficiaries (research institutions and companies). However, the CoR calls on the Commission for greater coordination with the CREST's proposal to develop the CREST guidelines into more operational recommendations;
 - report in due course on the progress made at national and regional level on the co-ordinated use of the Community's instruments and on examples of good practice at national and regional level;
 - hold regular events at which those involved in research, innovation and regional development can come together to share ideas, exchange best practice and access support and advice; considering the CoR as an important partner in this regard;
 - improve information exchange with national/regional authorities about the FP7/CIP beneficiaries in their territories to facilitate complementary funding by national/regional/EU instruments.

40. underlines the importance of using the new cooperation and communication programmes under SF, Interreg IV C and URBACT programmes. These programmes are to disseminate advantages through the *Regions for Economic Change* initiative and networking even straight from one region to another which could and wants to benefit from the results of the successful project of the advanced region;
41. calls upon the Commission to oversee an effective coordination of interregional network funding under the SF, FP7 and CIP in the field of research and innovation, including the regular and better coordinated dissemination of results and good practices and greater interaction of their different "communities".

Brussels, 6 February 2008.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions

Luc Van den Brande

The Secretary-General
of the Committee of the Regions

Gerhard Stahl

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N.B. Appendix overleaf.

II. APPENDIX

Summary of best practice examples and observations obtained from questionnaire responses

A. *Actions at local, regional and national level*

- *Cooperation of authorities in charge of planning and managing EU funding instruments*

The ministries of *Land* of Brandenburg (DE) responsible for programme planning and the use of structural funds cooperate and communicate in working groups and programme committees that meet regularly and bring together representatives from the relevant departments. Decisions of fundamental and strategic importance (for example, overall distribution of funds, operational programmes) are taken by the cabinet of the government of the *Land*.

In Trentino (IT), cooperation as regards the 6th and 7th FPs began in 2002 with the monitoring of piloted policies aimed at promoting and boosting the high-level training and research system of the Province. There have been efforts to promote seconded national experts and traineeships for officials from the provincial government, the university and the research centres at the directorates for Research, Information Society and Education, and at the Joint Research Centres.

- *Structural Funds and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development 2007 - 2013 support for research and innovation in regions*

Western Finland's (FI) operational programme for the Competitiveness and Employment initiative was designed so that the key targets would involve increasing the effectiveness of innovation. Good opportunities exist to use the programme to support the region's development in these areas.

Northern Finland's ERDF operational programme includes its own priority for action, "Promoting innovation activity and networking, and strengthening knowledge structures". The objective is to strengthen companies' innovation environments that support development and to enhance skills structures in terms of research and training systems and learning environments. The programme is used to support *inter alia* innovation cooperation, R&D activity and technology transfer, and forecasting. At least 75% of measures under the programme are linked to promoting the Lisbon strategy.

- *Local/regional integrated research and innovation strategies*

The North Rhine-Westphalia *Land* government (DE) agreed a joint innovations strategy in August 2006 and a joint cluster strategy in March 2007. These initiate, promote and/or strengthen cooperation along the value-added chain. *Land* subsidies are used mainly for co-financing, *inter alia* of ERDF funding. The research framework programmes are promoted aggressively in institutions involved in research; their use is analysed by appropriate accompanying research.

The Autonomous Province of Trento (IT) adopted a *Provincial research programme for the 13th legislature 2004-2008*, which ties in with the various EU and national programmes. Several EU instruments provided for in the 6th FP called on the regions to establish such programmes.

In Austria, the Vienna Strategy for Research, Technology and Innovation involved representatives from across Vienna's scientific community to help draft the city's RTI strategy. The result is a strategy that is not limited to technical and natural science research, but explicitly includes the arts, social sciences and culture. The city council has been developing an active RTI policy since the early 1990s and has significantly broadened the spectrum of institutions supporting research. Through the establishment of theme-based institutions such as the ZIT Centre for Innovation and Technology Ltd., the Vienna Science, Research and Technology Fund WWTF and departure, which were all given specific tasks in the area of RTI policy, this area of policy in the region has become autonomous in nature. The support bodies have made a significant contribution to developing internationally respected priorities and clusters. The city also plays a significant role as a catalyst in such areas as flexible programme and project-oriented subsidies.

Joint research programmes have also been carried out in Finland, including the "Osaava Pohjois-Suomi" (Skills in Northern Finland) strategy of Northern Finland's institutions of higher education and the northern Gulf of Bothnia programme agreement. These strategies take account of the Seventh Framework Programme, and of the competitiveness and innovation framework programme. These EU instruments have been used to support preparation of the strategies and their implementation plans. The aim is to increase the use of EU funding instruments in the region through local cooperation and so enhance the level of R&D and innovation activity.

- *Possible synergies for a coordinated use of EU funding instruments*

The only EU funds that can be controlled directly by the regions are the structural funds. Funds that flow into the region from EU research funding cannot be 'programmed'. Nonetheless, structural funds indirectly help to improve the success rate of those applying for research funds. The level of research funding obtained can act as an indicator of the competitive potential for research and innovation that exists above regional level.

Examples of the ways in which the different EU-funding instruments have been used in Land Brandenburg (DE) include the Potsdam Institute for the study of the impact of climate change (Potsdam Institut für Klimafolgenforschung) which has been cited as an example of best practice in the CREST recommendations "Coordinating the Framework Programme and the Structural Funds to support Research and Development".

In the Autonomous Province of Trento (IT), research and innovation have successfully cut across various EU programmes in the area of the information society and, in particular, e-government.

In the Kemi-Tornio region (FI), the TeRIS project, coordinated by Kemi-Tornio Polytechnic under the Sixth Framework Programme, has initiated business promotion activity which will in future be funded regionally.

It is essential that resources be combined in order to increase R&D activity and regional competitiveness. There is greater scope for coordinating the programmes within large-scale integrated projects where they can complement each other. The various sub-projects can be funded using different instruments, where support can (and should) be allocated for specific measures and their costs. The best expertise in innovation and technology policy is concentrated at a regional centre for the development of technology and innovation, which coordinates activities using both national and EU funding. Efforts are being made to broaden knowledge of funding instruments and consolidate that knowledge at regional and local level.

- *Dissemination of new ideas on local and regional level*

In Land Brandenburg (DE), besides scientific publications and conferences, information on the results achieved in EU-sponsored research and innovation projects are published in a wide range of journals which address a broader public, such as the periodicals issued by the research and higher education institutes. In addition, the government of the *Land*, as well as scientific institutions, and professional and other associations, organise events on research at Brandenburg research institutions, which usually address a specific topic and are targeted at companies in the region.

The office of the West Finland Alliance (WFA) in Brussels provides information for regional operators who must be on the office's mailing list in order to receive information.

In Lapland, knowledge is disseminated first and foremost by Lapland's employment and business centre through customer letters, information bulletins, distribution lists and on its internet pages.

- *Comments on the 14 CREST recommendations*

The 14 recommendations drawn up by CREST make useful suggestions on the coordination of structural funds and EU research funds. However, the recommendations do not draw a clear-cut distinction between the roles that potential players can play in the coordination of the different funding instruments. The recommendations focus mainly on the regions. Meanwhile the potential role of the Commission or the Member States is hardly dealt with. The recommendations should be fleshed out, perhaps also with a greater focus on the specific nature of structural funding. For example, the different conditions in the various target areas should be taken better into consideration. Requirements that need to be met for the use of EU structural funds on research and innovation in Objective 1 and Objective 2 areas should be spelt out in concrete terms, and the various applications of the ERDF, ESF and EAFRD drawn into the analysis, in an extension to the recommendations.

The recommendations clearly identify the division of tasks and various steps in framework programme funding and the Structural Funds, e.g. between research and technology transfer,

application of research findings and creation of international networks. The comments on SMEs and research programmes are correct from Lapland's perspective: the resources, skills and experience of stakeholders can be enhanced through measures under the Structural Fund programmes. This type of approach improves their opportunities to participate in international projects and makes the programmes more useful.

The CoR should be involved in the next stages of the process so as to get the regions on board as key stakeholders, to ensure transparency at this stage, and to further develop the initiative on a region-by-region basis.

B. Actions at EU level

- *Existing barriers to better coordination in the promotion of research and innovation*

Incentives for the regions to effectively promote research and innovation, integrating the various programmes and instruments must be further developed.

There are barriers to implementing aspects of the Structural Fund programmes, which make it virtually impossible to find optimum partners or to properly implement national joint projects. There is excessive increase in red tape; there is slowness or delays in provision of funding. SMEs in particular cannot participate in projects for cash-flow reasons. There are also differences between authorities' interpretations of the same issues in different regions and countries and between different authorities (e.g. payment practices, approval of expenditure, tendering).

- *Recommended actions at EU level*

The main measure would be to increase the involvement of regions, cities and municipalities both in the planning and in the implementation of programmes.

Existing programmes should be closely coordinated with each other and focused on promoting innovation, e.g. in the area of clustering. The thematic areas should therefore be examined, and adjusted if appropriate, in the context of a forward-looking study into innovation and research.

Fostering the establishment of networks between well-performing regions, aimed at facilitating the exchange of best practice and success stories.

Coordination at community level between the structural funds and research programmes, especially the framework programme for research, during programming is crucial. The structural funds need to place greater emphasis on support for R&D as a way of promoting regional development. With regard to the promotion of applied research and innovation, not just the immediate beneficial impact on the economy of the regions (such as cooperation with companies in the region) should be applied as funding criteria, but also the medium-term impact on regional development. Boosting applied research and teaching in scientific institutes contributes significantly to the development of the region

in the medium term through improvements in skills and innovative power and the creation of new enterprises. This can have a more lasting effect than if funding for research and innovation focuses too narrowly on direct cooperation with companies.

Universities have an important role to play in implementing innovation. Cooperation between universities and polytechnics to promote innovation should take place in such a way that the work and activities of both are appreciated. Polytechnics have a statutory duty to take measures to promote innovation at regional level, both by applying the findings from international studies locally to improve regional competitiveness and by refining innovations developed within the region and by local business so that they are successful internationally.

Regions of Knowledge/Regions of Economic Change are the typical funding models through which regional perspectives are taken into account.

The gap between regional operational programmes and EU-level research programmes is still too wide. It is necessary to consider how all the programmes could more effectively promote (e.g. on a regional or thematic basis) the competitiveness of regions and operators that are less successful or among the "second wave". The advantages and synergies of the division of tasks described in the reports and recommendations have either not yet been realised or they only help regions and operators which have already achieved an adequate level of skills and specialisation.

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III. PROCEDURE

Title	More Efficient Support for Research and Innovation in EU Regions
References	Council Conclusions on "More efficient support to research and innovation: Coordinating the use of the Research Framework Programme and the Structural Funds – Response to the CREST report", 2811th Competitiveness Council meeting, Luxembourg, 25 June 2007 Communication from the Commission on "Competitive European Regions through Research and Innovation – A contribution to more growth and more and better jobs" COM (2007) 474 final
Legal basis	Article 265 (1) TEC
Procedural basis	optional referral
Date of Commission letter	16.8.2007
Date of President's decision	29.10.2007
Commission responsible	Commission for Culture, Education and Research (EDUC)
Rapporteur	Jyrki Myllyvirta (FI/EPP)
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Result of the vote in commission	adopted by majority vote
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Previous Committee opinions	Opinion on the European Research Area – new perspectives CdR 83/2007 fin – COM(2007) 161 final Opinion on the leverage effect of the structural funds CdR 118/2006 fin ³ Opinion on the Proposal for a Decision concerning the seventh framework programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013) CdR 155/2005 fin ⁴ – COM(2005) 119 final – 2005/0043 (COD) – 2005/0044 (CNS)

³ OJ C 156, 7.7.2007, p. 1.

⁴ OJ C 115, 16.5.2006, p. 20.

	<p>Opinion on the Proposal for a Decision establishing a Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (2007-2013) CdR 150/2005 fin⁵ – COM(2005) 121 final – 2005/0050 (COD)</p> <p>Opinion on Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013 CdR 140/2005 fin⁶ – COM(2005) 299 final</p> <p>Opinion on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) CdR 233/2004 fin⁷ – COM(2004) 495 final – 2004/0167 (COD)</p> <p>Opinion on Science and Technology: the key to Europe's future – Guidelines for future European policy to support research CdR 194/2004 fin⁸ – COM(2004) 353 final</p>
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⁵ OJ C 115, 16.5.2006, p. 17.

⁶ OJ C 115, 16.5.2006, p. 1.

⁷ OJ C 231, 20.9.2005, p. 19.

⁸ OJ C 71, 22.3.2005, p. 22.