

Draft Report

Teaming of Excellence – Discussion on Success Factors and Evaluation, 27 January 2015, European Parliament

Agenda

8:00 – 8:10	Welcome & Introduction of Speakers “Impact of Scientific Excellence on Society and Science-advised Policy” Prof. Danuta Hübner, MEP
8:10 – 8:25	“Excellence through Teaming - Closing Gap of Competitiveness inside Europe” Prof. Maciej Żylicz, President of the Board of Foundation for Polish Science
8:25 – 8:35	Mr Dimitri Corpakis European Commission, DG Research & Innovation Directorate for the Innovation Union and the European Research Area Spreading excellence and widening participation
8:35 – 9:15	Discussion moderated by Mr Declan Kirrane, ISC Intelligence in Science
9:15 – 9:30	Conclusions supported by the European Parliament Dr Christian Ehler, MEP

Report

Meeting was dedicated to Teaming of Excellence, and specifically discussion on success factors and evaluation. It gathered representatives of the European Parliament, the European Commission and scientific actors: Foundation for Polish Science, research institutions, Brussels based scientific offices and science councilors from various Permanent Representations.

Meeting was opened by the remark that many important question regarding European science still remain unanswered, e.g. how can science can support policy making.

Following views of both scientists and the European Union institutions were expressed. Scientists focused on expectations of the scientific community towards the EU to support creation of centres of excellence which would fulfil a set of demanding criteria. These criteria would include, e.g. excellence, creating new structure from bottom-up, integration of funding and mission with cohesion funds, clarity and transparency of selection process, as well as involvement of the European Parliament in the creation of these new institutions. One of the speakers expressed their concern towards the Commission that process of choosing and instructing the evaluators has not been enough transparent, and that European Research Council has not been enough involved.

The Commission participants underlined that innovation is connected with excellence. With regards to evaluators, their names are not made known during the process in order to protect them from pressure. The Commission recalled key success factors, like well-chosen, carefully structured partnership & strong engagement from parties, long term vision & long term financial commitment nationally from the outset, coordinator both strong in project management & strong in mobilising national/Cohesion funding, full autonomy in decision-making for the newly established/upgraded Centre as a must for sustained excellence, alignment with the national/regional Smart Specialisation Strategy, as well as synergies with Cohesion. One of speakers explained, and many in the room concurred, that the main concern for the European projects is that they have troubles with sustainability after EU funding finishes, hence national dedication of funds is of a paramount value. On the other hand, it is foreseen that ERC would be substantially involved in the evaluation of the proposals in the second stage.

A question from a Member of the European Parliament opened a discussion on the importance of the investment in fundamental science and hopes which were laid in Teaming to be the tool for supporting this specific type of research among remaining funding tools primarily dedicated to innovation. According to the Commission participant, innovation is not equal to applied sciences. However, opinion on importance to fund specifically fundamental science has been clearly showed by participants. A participant from among research institutions illustrated how focusing on fundamental research as the beginning of scientific value chain are having more and more success and are driving innovation. Another participant, while thanking the EP for hosting this event and congratulating the Commission on the enormous effort put into Teaming, concurred with their predecessor regarding value of the fundamental science. They also supported view that transparency of the evaluation process is not perfect, and expressed his concern that the report of advisory board, clearly preferring applied sciences, may influence too

much the evaluators with a wrong perception of the objective of Teaming. The Commission supports the need to learn from the process, and that one remaining problem is the approach of the Member States towards integration of the centres created within Teaming, into their academic system. It has been generally agreed that most MS have little enthusiasm into reforming their research systems, with single positive examples of Germany and Poland. In both cases, political decisions were coupled with available budget. Lamentable shortcomings of vast majority of Operational Programmes for implementation of cohesions funds have been mentioned, as still synergy of structural funds with Horizon 2020 was poorly prepared, mainly by delays in finalising Smart Specializations Strategies.

The participants concluded that Teaming was a new challenge for the Commission, especially in the question of negotiating reforms with the Member States themselves, as well as working out a more effective financial model. The European Parliament will take up mid-and long-term efforts to ensure sustainability of the Teaming initiative and coming results on both national and European levels. Following steps have been proposed:

- The EP to launch in 2016 an initiative report on Teaming, after having observed first roll-outs of the projects,
- The EP to join discussion on priorities and funding availability in the light of possible cuts in the Horizon 2020 budget,
- The EP to join discussion on the geographical distribution of Horizon 2020 funding and expected impact on the regions,
- The EP to support efforts of both DG Research and DG Regio,
- ITRE Committee to put Teaming on its agenda and invite FNP and other key actors to take part in hearings.

All gathered expressed their hope that the new Commissioner for Research will have a close political grip on Teaming and its implementation.