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## **European Commission demands better use of European research, innovation and cohesion funding**

***If the European Union is going to promote the economic and social development of all its Member States, it is essential that the various sources of funding that can support this are used in a coherent way. In a policy paper presented today, the European Commission offers guidance to national and regional authorities on how to interlink Cohesion Policy programmes with innovation and research funding under the Seventh Research Framework Programme and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme. While proposing a number of ways in which the Commission will work to enable the various sources of funds to be used in the most effective way, the paper clearly calls upon Member States and the regions themselves to play a leading role in making the best use of the European funds at their disposal.***

*"Innovation can enhance regional development and a regional approach can foster good innovation," said European Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner. "The capacity of those making decisions about their regions to turn knowledge into growth will have a decisive impact on the future. So we need to use all means that we have to make this positive relationship between regions and research flourish."*

*"By harnessing their potential for knowledge, regions can make a considerable contribution to increasing growth and jobs and improving the quality of life of all Europeans," said European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik. "This needs a change in emphasis in how we use the funds at our disposal. By putting the principles we are proposing into practice, I am sure that national and regional authorities will be building a solid base for future development."*

Regions that wish to harness their research and innovation potential to develop economically have a range of funding programmes open to them:

- The cohesion policy instruments – in particular the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund enable investment in research and innovation on the basis of National Strategic Reference Frameworks. This investment is delivered through sectoral and regional Operational Programmes and drives forward progress on the Lisbon agenda. .
- The Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7), particularly the actions for capacity-building in certain regions ("Research Potential") and European cluster funding ("Regions of Knowledge").
- Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), which supports enterprise and entrepreneurship activities.

If the opportunities available to regions for their development through research and innovation are to be used successfully, it is important that the various programmes can be used coherently. At European level the Commission has ensured that, in spite of different approaches – thematic v geographical scope; funding by European calls for tender v national and regional selection – the programmes can be used to achieve the same objective of growth and jobs. A first step that will make this easier is the alignment of the time-horizons of the various programmes (2007-2013).

The European Commission proposes various actions to make better use of European funding:

- A practical guide, by the end of the year, to help research institutions and companies to identify the most appropriate source of funding for them.
- Improving information exchange with national/regional authorities so that they know what organisations receive FP7 and CIP grants , with a view to providing complementary support from national, regional and European funds.
- 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.

There is also a considerable role for Member States. Their representatives in the main advisory scientific committee, CREST, already produced a report on "how to achieve better coordinated use of Framework Programme and Structural Funds to support R&D", which provided general guidance. Member States should also work with regional and local authorities to improve the arrangements for preparing actions under the various programmes in a more coordinated way.

**For more information:**

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/research-cohesion.html>