UNICE

Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe
Union des Confédérations de l'Industrie et des Employeurs d'Europe

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PREPARATION OF THE 6ᵀᴴ RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

UNICE VIEW ON KEY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

Based on the needs of society, including industry, in today's rapidly-changing knowledge environment, bearing in mind the concerns about the 5th Framework Programme (FP5) previously expressed by UNICE (see annex) and taking account of the lead-in to the 6th Framework Programme, UNICE is seeking that the following issues should be addressed in the preparatory work for the 6th RTD Framework Programme (FP6).

A. Objective of the Framework Programme

The main objective should be to increase competitiveness, employment and growth in Europe through investment in RTD relevant to industry and in co-operation with industry.

B. Focus and Content

1. The 6th Framework Programme should be composed of a very small number of precisely – targeted programmes (no more than 5).

2. The programmes should focus on the needs of society and the commercialisation of research. Europe must concentrate its best talents in strong centres of real excellence in strategic areas with critical mass and with potential for world leadership. There should not be any requirement for new institutions or additional bureaucracy. Networking, mobility and co-ordination should be the key elements. In addition programmes, rather than institutions, should be funded on a competitive basis. They should be chosen from the perspective of academic and industrial strengths. Actors from both academia and industry should participate.

3. The results of projects should be integrated into technology platforms in order to establish the key linkages to the R&D and product development activities of enterprises.

4. Regarding the content of the programmes, the focus on the needs of society will naturally lead to a strong emphasis on specific technology areas like (1) biotechnology, (2) information and communications technology, (3) energy/environment and (4) industrial technologies (including methodology, characteristics and standardisation). In addition, there should be (5) a special non-thematic programme for spontaneous candidacies corresponding to a needs/demand-led bottom-up approach.

5. Industry-university–public research collaboration must be given a very high priority in all programmes.

C. <u>Programme Structure</u>

- Horizontal issues, such as training and mobility, should be included in all programmes and not form a programme of their own.

- There should be a project-focused (not technology-focused) approach aimed at stimulating networking and mobility across geographic, disciplinary and organisational borders. Projects between academia, schools, institutes, new and existing enterprises (large and small) should be particularly encouraged.

D. <u>Programme Management</u>

UNICE acknowledges and commends the recent steps taken by the Research Commissioner to improve procedures for FP5. Nevertheless further improvements can and should be made. These include:

1. Preliminary screening should be introduced to reduce the costs of preparing proposals and to increase the success rate.

2. Details of project assessment criteria should be published in advance.

3. The complexity of the documentation (including contracts) as well as the procedures must be substantially reduced to guarantee short turn-around times.

4. The bureaucracy and paperwork associated with FP6 must be substantially reduced.

5. Items 1 to 4 should be examined by a joint EU-industry working party to come up with mutually satisfactory administrative procedures and systems. Alternatively, industry (possibly UNICE) should be commissioned to develop their own proposals which would be considered by the EU.

6. FP6 should be open on a continuous basis with projects being assessed in tranches at regular intervals.

7. Management of multi-partner projects is very complex and costly and the requirement to have a large number of partners should be eased. For large multi-partner projects additional funds should be available to cater for the extra management requirements.

8. The EU should consider the experiences of enterprises in their dealings with main sub-contractors as a model for EU programme management practice.

9. The procedures adopted for the CRAFT programme for SME's and its promotion should be improved and could also be generalised throughout FP6.

10. For early stage basic research projects, information requested on the socio-economic aspects need to be realistic and practical.

Summary of the views expressed by UNICE in its opinion dated 24/02/2000 on the launch of the 5th RTD FP

UNICE has communicated to the EU Commission its views on the first calls for proposals under the 5th RTD Framework Programme. This submission was made in the context of improving the 5th FP and in the lead-in to the preparations for the 6th FP. The UNICE concerns on the initial stages of the 5th FP are:

- The increase in the administrative burden (and hence cost of proposal preparation) for applicants and the increased complexity of the documentation
- The increased complexity of the procedures
- The lack of transparency
- The lack of flexibility
- Inappropriate contractual conditions for the exploitation of results
- Overemphasis on a top-down approach in regard to the choice of priorities
- The very low success rate for applications
- Unrealistic demands concerning the socio-economic aspects of the projects, especially for early research projects, such as: months to market introduction, net effect on employment, etc., that can only be used as *ex post* evaluation criteria.
- The latitude for unilateral reduction by Commission staff of the project budget leading either to initial overestimations or to subsequent cancellation of (important parts) the projects or the removal of some partners (often SME sub-contractors).
- The UNICE RTD Working Group is also deeply concerned with aspects related to industrial participation to External Advisory Groups.
- The very burdensome procedures imposed on experts willing to serve as evaluators of proposals have led to a significant loss of industrial expertise. Evaluation teams are further overloaded with lengthy documents.