Latvian Council of Science in Capacity Development of Ageing Research

Panel presentation
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Latvian Council of Science
Latvijas Zinātnes Padome

- Established in 1990 as the main policy elaboration and management body in science
- Initially follows the model of the presidium of former Academy of Sciences
- Meta-governmental body, membership appointed by the Cabinet of Ministers
- 22 members representing scientific institutions, Academy of Sciences, major ministries
- Policy elaboration, evaluation, financing body for >10 years
- Since 2009 cover policy development and evaluation of projects and institutions, as financial and administrative management moved to a body within the Ministry of Education and Science
- Since FP7 designated as main hub for all activities – NCPs, PCs, expert groups etc.; functions transferred to MoES in 2009
LCS impact on research capacity

• Direct impact – until 2004
  – Doctoral student grants
  – New scientist = post-doctoral grants

• After EU accession and ESF instruments’ domination in the area – mainly indirect impact
  – Evaluation criteria accommodate capacity increase
  – Earmarked part of LCS new collaborative research grants to capacity increase
  – Policy recommendations
  – Review of EU financing instruments’ impact on policies
National instruments in promoting research on ageing

Research tier

- LCS project grant programme – evaluation criterion (we are happy to continue for 12 years a large national collaborative grant on ageing)
- National research programmes – performance criterion
- Bilateral programmes (non EU) – evaluation and performance criterion
- Market-oriented research: evaluation criterion, ageing population is an important market
- Joint Calls – ERA-Net, ERA+, 185§ - evaluation criterion

Educational tier

- PhD studies – performance criterion only
- PhD auxiliary grants – performance criterion
- Researcher’s training – the activity envisaged 2014 – 2020, outline unfinished, evaluation criterion possible

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Structural Fund instruments

**ESF**
- Large programme for support of PhD studies, central instrument in research support in 2014 – 2020
- Large programme for support of new research groups
- Other relevant programmes suspended due to lack of national co-financing during crisis
- Absorption and progress good, as relatively few limiting conditions, ESF is clearly the best experience for Structural Funds

**ERDF**
- Operational Programmes designed during boom phase, but must be accomplished during a major global downslide
- Permanent co-financing and pre-financing problems in an environment of dysfunctional financing streams and externally governed banking system
- Countless strings attached, most completely out of the context of altered economic and societal background
- Absorption associated with major business risks and risk of rejection of cost declarations

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Framework programme in capacity raising

Several instruments designed for capacity development

Specially dedicated REGPOT activity under FP7 Capacities
  • 1/3 to infrastructure, 2/3 to human/institutional activities
  • FP evaluators, coherence with other main programmes
  • Abnormal oversubscription because of accumulation of projects
  • Low financing, with 3 years having total programme financing below 30 million EUR
  • Strong competition from FR, EL
  • Not a single project is dedicated to integrated ageing research

FP7 People MCA
  • Initial Training networks
  • Grant system for career development, even career restart
  • LV - better results for scientific areas not under FP7 priorities
  • Many ongoing projects in OMS looking for continuation
  • Promote brain drain (cf. FP7 interim report), informal criteria
  • Generally HR in science have not been a dominating problem in NMS, it’s rather a problem in health services sector

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European instruments in capacity raising

- Educational programmes (Erasmus, LdV)
  - Contribution for short/dedicated activities
  - Capabilities in PhD and researcher training limited
- FP7 Cooperation & Ideas
  - In FP6 complete career development as part of projects possible
  - In FP7 small grants for NMS, very limited impact, coordinators do not want to pay for capacity development
  - FP7 Ideas – exaggerated gravitational competition, no projects in LV
  - Concentration and monopolisation of research activities
- Other programmes – particular in their nature
- Large scale central initiatives like EIT- still not operational (Horizon 2020?)
- JPI – SRAs not finished (JPND), no added-value beyond ERA-NETs and ERA-Plus, not suited for small countries

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Infrastructure

- Very incremental improvement before EU Accession
- Major part of ERDF financing for innovations
- Programme for the actual period started in LV only recently due to lack of co-financing
- Project management – a large burden on scientific organisations
- Fragmentation problems not manageable (aka “regional support”)
- Part of “Entrepreneurship and Innovation” Operational Programme:
  - Not possible to use for building central infrastructure objects and for concentrating similar institutions
  - Collaboration with private sector – confronted with demand and supply side problems in the market, SMEs unable to compete with large EU companies
- Decision: to create 9 virtual State Research Centres
- LCS – an important role in reviewing and evaluating research strategies for State Research Centres
- State Research centres in “Public Health and Clinical Medicine”, and in “Socioeconomics” have planned substantial part of their activity for ageing research

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Perspective

• MFF Cohesion policy Legislative proposal 2014 – 2020 provides a list of priorities (ERDF – 11); research, social inclusion and carbon not negotiable. Active and healthy ageing among themes of ESF

• Proposal of MEP MG Carvalho: 30% of SF for research infrastructure
  – Limited to infrastructure due to EU regulations (not for projects)
  – Large investment into infrastructure can have negative depriving impact on project financing, which must be diverted for hardware maintenance
  – Lack of infrastructure must be realistically assessed, ESFRI networks can fill many gaps

• Discrepancies between “regional” and “excellence” not eliminated

LCS activities

• Restoring the national instruments for PhD students and especially for the post-docs, as doctoral studies no more a priority in ESF

• Strong influence on infrastructure decisions, elimination of deprivation of project and HR-development financing

• Dialogue with Latvian bodies in the preparation phase of MFF and Horizon 2020

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Thank you for the attention!

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