

ANALYSIS OF THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION ON

“Science and Technology, the key to Europe’s future: guidelines for future European policy to support research” COM(353)2004

DG Research, European Commission, 10 December 2004

MAIN MESSAGES

An online consultation on the Commission Communication “Science and Technology, the key to Europe’s future – Guidelines for future European Union policy to support research”, COM(353)2004, was open to all interested organisations and individuals to participate in between 30 July and 15 October 2004. Over 1700 organisations and individuals from across Europe and other countries, and including universities, large companies, SMEs, associations and government bodies responded to the consultation.

Major findings from the analysis of the responses are the following.

There is very strong support¹ (over 97% of responses) for the need to strengthen support for research at the European level (see table below). Furthermore, there is strong agreement that this would have an important impact on Europe’s research capacities and capabilities (over 95% of responses) and that this would contribute significantly to Europe’s competitiveness, social welfare and sustainability (over 92% of responses).

There is strong support for the 6 major objectives (over 80% of responses for all objectives) set out in the Commission Communication (see table below). Support is particularly strong to make Europe more attractive to the best researchers (over 95% of responses) and supporting transnational collaborative research (over 90% of responses). These actions are established ones with proven European value added. However, there is also widespread support for the new objectives to launch European Technology Initiatives (86% of responses) and to stimulate the creativity of basic research (81% of responses). Concerning the development of infrastructures of European interest and the coordination of national programmes, the support was high (86% and 85% of responses respectively).

Concerning other aspects for future European support to research, there is a particularly high importance attached to improving **science and society** relations (92% of responses); to supporting **innovation** (88% of responses) to support to research by and for **SMEs** (88% of responses); and the importance of **focusing EU efforts on topics of major European interest** (88% of responses).

¹ Percentage of responses rating the objective as either “very important” or “important”.

A number of common concerns are evident from the written comments provided:

- **Stakeholders require further information about the Commission's proposals** in order to further the debate. This applies, in particular, to the new approaches proposed for basic research and for European technology initiatives. The Commission has in the meantime made available working documents covering many of the objectives set out in the Communication.²
- **Stakeholders want improvements in implementation of the Framework Programme.** Many of the concerns coincide with those found in the mid term evaluation of the effectiveness of the instruments of the 6th Framework Programme conducted by an independent panel led by Professor Marimon. Many of these concerns are being addressed by the Commission in its response to the panel's report and an action plan has been established.³

Responses to questions on the strengthening support for research at European level

	Do you agree that the support for research at a European level should be strengthened?	Do you agree that a strengthened European level research support will have an important impact on Europe's research capacities and capabilities?	Do you agree that a strengthened European level research support will contribute significantly to Europe's competitiveness, social welfare and sustainability?
agree	56.4%	56.7%	54.6%
mostly agree	41.2%	38.8%	37.5%
mostly disagree	0.5%	0.6%	1.0%
disagree	0.9%	0.4%	0.6%
don't know	0.9%	1.0%	2.3%

Responses to questions on the importance of the six main objectives in the Guidelines

Importance of the objective	Creating European centres of excellence through collaboration between laboratories.	Launching European technology initiatives	Stimulating the creativity of basic research through competition between teams at European level
very important	48.4%	41.9%	45.9%
Important	42.4%	44.1%	35.3%
not important	4.5%	6.3%	8.1%
Unnecessary	2.8%	1.5%	6.4%
don't know	1.3%	6.1%	4.2%

Importance of the objective	Making Europe more attractive to the best researchers	Developing research infrastructure of European interest	Improving the coordination of national programmes
very important	73.6%	43.4%	43%
Important	22.5%	42.4%	41.5%
not important	1.9%	5.7%	7.5%
Unnecessary	0.8%	1.4%	2.9%
don't know	1.1%	6.9%	5%

² All working documents can be found at http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/future/index_en.html.

³ See the Communication of the Commission "Responding to the observations and recommendations of the high-level Panel of independent experts concerning the new instruments of the 6th Framework Programme" COM(2004)574.

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Commission is preparing its proposals for the next research Framework Programme due to start in 2007. In order to launch a debate a Communication on “Science and Technology, the key to Europe’s future: Guidelines for future European Union policy to support research” was published 16 June 2004.⁴ Following this, an open consultation was launched on 30 July 2004 to obtain views and comments on these guidelines with a deadline for responses of 15 October 2004.

This report provides the statistical results and analyses the main messages arising from the online consultation, where over 1700 responses were received including over 8000 written comments on the various aspects of the guidelines. In addition to the online responses, the Commission is receiving a number of position papers and other written contributions for the preparation of the 7th framework programme proposals. To date, over 100 such documents have been received. In addition, more detailed information and consultations have been provided regarding the identification of the research themes for future European Union support.⁵ Although they are not the focus of this report, these inputs are being analysed by the Commission in parallel.

The results of the consultation are being used to help the preparation of the Commission’s proposal for the 7th Framework Programme which is due to be presented in April 2005.

2. RESPONSES RECEIVED

Commission received a high level of response to the online questionnaire and a total of 1727 responses were received.⁶ All responses were on a voluntary basis.

Regarding the types of respondent:

- 115 responses (about 7%) came from large companies. Many leading companies are represented from different sectors.
- 457 responses (about 26%) came from universities/higher education institutes; this also represents a strong response, although some responses come from the level of departments or research groups rather than the university as a whole.
- 144 responses (about 8%) came from SMEs represents a good response from this group. However, given the diversity in SMEs, more caution is needed in interpretation. It should be pointed out that a number of the associations that responded have a large number of SME members.
- Regarding wider societal interests, around 7% of responses came from associations, 8% from government bodies, and 31% from individuals. However given the very different nature of their interests, the following analysis does not generally attempt to identify trends for these types of respondent.

⁴ COM(2004)353, http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/future/index_en.html

⁵ http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/future/themes/index_en.html

⁶ There were a couple of cases of coordinated actions. In one case a group of researchers from different countries have put forward comments in favour of a specific research topic. In another case a group of researcher in one country have submitted duplicates of the same form. However these two cases have not significantly affected the overall outcome of the statistics.

Regarding their activity type, just under half of respondents indicated “research” as their main activity type, just under a quarter “higher education”, around 12 % “industrial, and 5% public administration. Most of the SMEs responding indicated that their main activity is industrial, although a significant number (27%) listed research as their main activity.

Type of respondent	Number of responses	% of responses
Individual person	540	31.3%
University/higher education	456	26.4%
Commercial organisation (including consultancy) less than 250 employees	144	8.3%
Governmental body	141	8.2%
Commercial organisation (including consultancy) more than 250 employees	115	6.7%
Association (e.g. trade association, trade union, employers association, chamber of commerce, NGO)	113	6.5%
Other	218	12.6%
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>1727</i>	<i>100%</i>

In terms of country balance, there is generally a good response from many EU Member States, with other 100 responses from Germany, the UK, Italy, Belgium, France and Spain; and over 50 responses from the Netherlands, Portugal, Greece, Austria and Sweden. However, it should be noted that relatively few responses have come from some Member States, and in particular the 10 new Member States. Most respondents indicated that their geographical scope of activities is European or international. There was, however, a significant number of regional or local organisations responding (10% of the total).

Country	Number of responses	% of total responses	Country	Number of responses	% of total responses
DE - Germany	258	14.9%	CH - Switzerland	25	1.4%
UK - United Kingdom	157	9.1%	FI - Finland	22	1.3%
IT - Italy	147	8.5%	LT - Lithuania	22	1.3%
BE - Belgium	142	8.2%	IL - Israel	17	1.0%
FR - France	132	7.6%	PL - Poland	16	0.9%
ES - Spain	123	7.1%	CY - Cyprus	12	0.7%
NL - Netherlands	89	5.2%	CZ - Czech Republic	10	0.6%
PT - Portugal	81	4.7%	EE - Estonia	10	0.6%
EL - Greece	80	4.6%	HU - Hungary	10	0.6%
AT - Austria	79	4.6%	BG - Bulgaria	8	0.5%
SV - Sweden	68	3.9%	SK - Slovak Republic	7	0.4%
TR - Turkey	44	2.5%	SL - Slovenia	6	0.3%
IE - Ireland	33	1.9%	MT - Malta	5	0.3%
NO - Norway	31	1.8%	LV - Latvia	4	0.2%
Other country	30	1.7%	LU - Luxembourg	1	0.1%
RO - Romania	29	1.7%	IS - Iceland	1	0.1%
DK - Denmark	28	1.6%	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>1727</i>	<i>100%</i>

Subject to the above comments, the responses can be said to **represent an important indication of the views of the research community and research users**. However, the low number of responses from some Member States and in particular the new Member States means that these countries are under represented in the overall statistics. This factor is being taken into account in the Commission’s analysis of the results; this consultation is only one source of input from stakeholders and that views as represented by national governments and European parliamentary representatives have a strong importance.