

Introduction to EC research: FP6 and FP7

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Introduction

I would like first to thank Wendy Kenyon and Claudia Carter for inviting me to the opening of this second PATH conference, or should I say this second STEP along the PATH project.

The first step took place in Copenhagen one year ago. Copenhagen was the time for starting new tracks in a space widely open. I hope in Edinburgh this year we will focus towards a few more innovative steps.

I would just like to say a few words about the European Commission, especially for those who are not from European Union countries and who are perhaps less familiar with our research community policy.

What have we done up to now in this new Science and Society (S&S) field? What are we preparing now? And what are our expectations from PATH and the PATH conference?

Running FP6 projects

As you know, the Commission mainly finances 'classical' research projects but the field of Governance in the 6th FP has been a bit special. Our objective was more a political one: Rather than producing new knowledge, we aimed to better structure in the European Research Area and for that we financed European co-ordination actions and some other activities supporting this aim.

After 3 calls for proposals since 2003, we have now a small portfolio of 15 projects (representing about 10 M€), dealing with scientific advice, risk governance and participation of civil society. The first significant project began in January 2004 and the last one will end in December 2008. So as you see, we are right now only in the middle of our FP6 projects...

Preparing FP7

But we are already preparing actively the next Framework Programme, FP7, from 2007 up to 2013. This new FP will show a significant increase in time (7 years) and money (proposal for doubling up to 72,726 G€, but EP last week agreed on 50,524 G€), a new structure (ideas, people, cooperation, capacities), probably new and more user friendly instruments, but the rationale is very much in line with the 6th FP (Lisbon, Barcelona).

And indeed, there will be a Science and Society dimension in FP7. The rationale is not likely to change radically but it will evolve. From Science AND Society we are progressing towards a more inclusive Science IN Society (SiS). I will come back later on to that orientation.

Continuity

In the S&S part there will be elements of continuity: launching SiS activities in the Capacity Specific Programme, embedding SiS in other Specific Programmes, and co-ordinating national policies in this field.

Novelty

And there will be elements of change, notably regarding the research agenda, and the effective participation of civil society in research.

Gover'Science

As far as Governance is concerned, we are building now on the Gover'Science seminar we had in Brussels last November. As some of you may recall we invited about thirty co-ordinators of governance related projects, supported by the Commission, including PATH.

We invited the coordinators to share their experience in scientific advice, risk governance and participation of civil society, and to reflect on the direction of EC efforts in the next FP. It has been a very exiting and precious moment, because it is rare, and out of the various views brought by projects emerged this new paradigm which we agreed to call 'Co-operative Research'.

We do not know yet exactly what 'Co-operative Research' is, but we agreed on some features:

- A new form of research process rather than a research project,
- A process in which social learning is as important as the science and technology outputs,
- A process during which knowledge and understanding are treated in a symmetrical way,
- A process which would ensure an effective integration of research design, implementation and dissemination.
- And further more a process which is in itself a field of research, innovation and experimentation.

We are now trying, in the few months to come (but we have already a deadline by mid-July), to make this paradigm more concrete for FP7. We are confident that this approach can be supported at EC level with our instruments.

Our Director General himself gave his blessing to the outcome of the seminar by signing the foreword of the Gover'Science report written by Andy Stirling (University of Sussex) and where one can read the following: *"building a truly democratic knowledge based society requires recognition of the collective right to question the societal choices behind scientific and technological ones..."*

Expectations

So as you can understand, I will pay a lot of attention to the presentations and discussions during the next three days. Time has come for all of us to be concrete, and I really hope that the two issues of representation and scale in the field of participation can inspire us.

It is also a unique occasion to practice in our own field! As I said last year in Copenhagen, governance projects have this unique feature to be in a position to influence the way they are generated. Therefore, I shall try to play my role of 'inclusive policy maker' as fully as I can. In other terms, outputs from this conference are inputs to me for the next Framework Programme!