

Proposals for Recommendations
The Universities and the Structural Funds, Nancy, 1 December 2010

Presentation plan

1) The universities affirm:

2) The universities underscore:

- Leverage effects of structural funds to enhance the capacities of the territories to innovate.

3) The universities recommend:

- Reinforcement of means and resources devolved to the structural fund;
- Enhanced consultation by and between the regions and the universities;
- Smart specialisation and support for regional innovation strategies;
- Taking the knowledge triangle necessarily into account;
- Links between these programmes and the PCRDT;
- Simplification and harmonisation of the programmes.

1) The universities affirm:

- ✓ The important role that universities play in the territorial economic development (training of highly qualified staff, research results, detection, inventions and know-how, creation of high-tech companies and activities), major employer in the conurbation, leverage effect of their research and innovation activities in companies.
- ✓ The requisite close cooperation and consultations with local players, particularly the regional authorities (territorial authorities and decentralised State services) and companies – relations that fall under the knowledge triangle. The interactions between these links result in stronger territorial development.
- ✓ The importance of the choice of governance in facilitating sustainable cooperation between public players, private players and research structures in the partner entities.
- ✓ The important role of the structural funds and EU programmes that encourage the implementation of regional strategies that favour consultation between territorial authorities, universities, competitiveness centres and companies, all being eligible for EU funds (Structural funds, FPRTD, PIC).
- ✓ The cohesion policy requires reinforced consultations between players and on strategies, whereby the universities constitute an indispensable relay.

2) The universities underscore:

For the structural funds (objectives: “regional competitiveness and employment” and “territorial cooperation”)

The universities underscore that the lines and measures of these programmes meet essentially such priorities as innovation, technology transfer and territorial development.

- The universities underscore the lever effect of these funds;
- They recognise the structuring effects of ERDF projects which help:
 - ✓ Enhance the capacities of territories to innovate;
 - ✓ Create and get integrated in European networks;
 - ✓ Attain a level of excellence through the acquisition of efficient equipment (in particular through technological platforms) and the establishment of infrastructures of different types and scope;
 - ✓ Acquire skills and experience in putting together and running cooperation projects.

They call for greater mobilisation of the universities to avail themselves of the “regional competitiveness and employment” objective of the structural funds for the 2007/2013 programming, in particular under the mid-term review.

3) The universities recommend:

- That excellence and development in the territories be not thwarted: the universities wish to reconcile excellence and innovation on the territories. Excellence policies ultimately support territorial innovation policies as well. Territorial economic development is the anchoring point par excellence. The universities accordingly wish to bolster coherence in the definition of regional, national and European strategies.

- ***Reinforcement of means and resources devolved to the structural funds***
 - The universities are pleased that the EU’s post-2013 regional policy will bolster the capacity of territorial players to achieve the objectives of the “EU2020” strategy (innovation and research) based on their own guidelines and strengths;
 - The universities want an increase in the effective co-financing rate of ERDF projects – an incentive element for presenting quality projects;
 - In particular, they insist on maintaining and reinforcing the “regional competitiveness and employment” project with significant means and resources for the entire European Union, considering its importance for capitalising on the potential of the territories (sustainable development, innovation and inclusive society);
 - They propose a discussion on potential indicators (ERDF OP / research and innovation line) (annex 1);
- ***Enhanced consultation by and between the regions, all local players and the universities***

The convergence between higher education institutions, the local authorities and the socio-economic partners of the same territory in international policy is essential nowadays.

The participation of universities in this policy is henceforth conceivable only on the basis of shared territorial diagnoses, geared to multilateral, contracted actions and programmes.

- The universities must be involved in the governance of strategies and in operational and integrated governance for implementing and revising operational programmes and for defining NRISs and RISs.

- ***Smart specialisation and support for regional innovation strategies***

Pursuant to this concept, the structural funds must bolster complementarities between regions by supporting the strategies defined by the universities and companies in consultation with the territorial players. Smart Specialisation presupposes a bottom-up approach, cooperation to identify the most promising areas for regional development, and an innovation strategy.

The universities have reaffirmed their role in Smart Specialisation, the success of which depends on the quality of their relations with companies and local authorities.

- In that regard, priorities should be determined by relying on regional forces;

- For their part, the universities must communicate more about the strong lines of research;

- ***Taking the knowledge triangle necessarily into account***

The knowledge triangle, a model for a public-private partnership with strategies and actions in the three areas of research, innovation and education, affords a complementary approach to these three inseparable pillars. It requires the involvement of three players, to wit the public authorities, the universities and other research organisations and companies; it plays an essential role in reinforcing innovation processes, and constitutes a real accelerator for “regional specialisation and growth.”

It meets three objectives:

- A balanced training map to democratise education in territories further;
- Networking of cooperative research on the territories;
- Ensure continuous fundamental research until fruition without segmenting fundamental research;
- The structural funds must be reinforced as a source of funding for capacity building in the regions and should rely on knowledge triangles;
 - A part of the structural funds could be devolved to these additional support mechanisms for the knowledge triangle: there is no innovation without research, and higher education and training are the vehicles par excellence for the transfer of knowledge – a condition sine qua non for regional development based on innovation. In this respect, the “regional

competitiveness and employment” prong should be able to co-finance innovative training actions in higher education.

- Finally, the ESF must be able to support skill development more broadly.

- **Synergies and interconnection between these European programmes (Framework Programme for Research and Development):**

- ✓ The interconnection between European programmes should secure the continuity of the innovation chain; and
- ✓ Enhance the capacity of territories to innovate.

It is important that the participation of research players in the 8th FPRTD can be continued through structural fund programmes that enable them to gear their innovation results to the territory.

Whereas the interactions between the two programmes are real, the universities want:

- Greater harmonisation of the rules for participating in ERDF and PFRDT projects;
- Greater complementarities between these programmes;
- The integration of incentive measures in EU projects to bolster gateways between such initiatives;

- ***Simplification / harmonisation...***

To remedy the difficulties encountered which are linked to the administrative and financial complexity (quantity of vouchers to be provided, drafting in several languages, highly itemised budgets, etc.) on the one hand, and the fact that project submission and management rules fluctuate in accordance with the financing/managing organisation, as well as deadline problems on the other,

The universities want:

- Simplification of the rules for participation;
- Standardisation of the rules relating to the different Interreg programmes;
- Greater harmonisation between the rules for participation in programmes financed by the structural funds and those of other EU programmes (FPRD).

Finally, the universities underscore the need to strengthen the European units, make them more professional and secure a strategic position for them in institutions.