



Brussels, 6 April 2006

## **FEANI Position Paper on 7th Framework Programme**

*To the attention of the EU Commission's Directorate General Research*

FEANI is a federation of the national engineering associations in 26 European countries and hence is the voice of the professional engineers in Europe. Through engagement in materials production, manufacturing, communication, and infrastructure, engineers constitute a major source of EU economic power and social wellbeing. As a result engineers are well informed on matters relating to the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme (FP7) and their views should therefore be given serious consideration.

FEANI supports the European Parliament's call for an increased budget for research. It is very important that decision makers put all their efforts into rebalancing EU budgetary resources towards competitiveness enhancing programmes. FEANI generally welcomes the thrust of the FP7 proposal but has identified a number of areas where it considers special emphasis is required.

### 1) The need to enforce industrial innovation and market driven research

Promotion of industrial innovation is a cross cutting issue, relevant to the whole FP7 and is in line with the Treaty objective of "*strengthening the scientific and technological bases of Community industry and encouraging it to become more competitive at international level*" [Art. 163.1]. However, the focus of EU funding for research has increasingly shifted in the last years to supporting basic research and single academic teams. As a result, funding for industrial innovation and market driven research has faltered and is at present insufficient.

FEANI recommends that measures are taken to increase overall industrial participation in FP7. In this context we very much welcome the concept of the technology platforms, which we believe will provide a boost to developing lines of research which answer the requirement of industry's markets.

FEANI suggests that the Technology Platforms (TPs) and the Joint Technological Initiatives (JTIs) evolve to represent a central tool for fostering European competitiveness. This should be reflected in the recitals to the EU decision on FP7, in the financing and in the political commitment. The TPs and the JTIs should be supported to play a crucial rôle within the FP7 building process to define work programmes, key topics and objectives, as well as evaluation criteria.

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## 2) The importance of bridging the gap between science and companies

The gap between the research community and the market driven sector needs to be bridged. More must be done to exploit the results of research and to facilitate the uptake the results by companies. In this regard engineers play a crucial role as they are trained to take blue skies innovation and turn it into useful, commercially viable and/or socially beneficial, products, services and infrastructure.

FEANI recommends that best practice analyses be conducted on ways to ensure university cooperation with industry. We welcome more investment in large-scale infrastructure or public projects, which drive research and innovation along the whole industrial chain. Funding must be reserved within the framework programme to facilitate technology transfer from science research to company level.

FEANI suggests developing a Technology Transfer Facility within the framework programme, which could play an important role in taking projects from universities or research centers to a development stage where venture capital could be forthcoming.

FEANI also recommends that evaluation criteria take into consideration the industrial relevance of project proposals and their alignment with the need of European industry. We suggest increasing the number of industry experts in the evaluation teams.

## 3) The necessity to establish higher funding rates for not-for-profit organizations

Not-for-profit organizations play an important role in bridging the gap between science and company level. Especially with regard to SMEs who do not have resources themselves to get involved with external researchers, not-for-profit organizations can act as important contact facilitators.

A dynamic SME sector is essential to a modern economy. Not-for-profit organizations can have a key role to play in setting the right conditions to ensure that SMEs receive assistance for their knowledge development and business growth.

FEANI suggests that Community financial contributions to not-for-profit organizations activities should be able to reach a maximum of 100% of the total eligible costs. This will enable not-for-profit-organizations to facilitate contact between researchers and SMEs.

## 4) The need for simplification and reduction of administrative burdens.

More flexible instruments must be introduced to increase industry involvement in the Framework Programme, particularly for SME participation. In this regard it is positive that the two-stage procedure for submission has become permanent. The two-stage procedure allows less detailed first proposals, which make it easier to apply.

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In order to further reduce administrative burdens for participants an effort must be made to make application guidelines clearer and less complex. The Commission has proposed to reduce the size of the guidelines and avoid repetitions. This is a good initiative, which the FEANI strongly supports. It is however important to acknowledge that much can be done to make guidelines more user-friendly.

FEANI suggests that practical guidelines are formulated as a supplement to the heavy juridical rules of procedure. The practical guidelines should not have references to all earlier EU decisions, but only provide – in a simple language – the information relevant when applying.

5) The importance of measures to attract and develop the demanded skills

More emphasis must be put on measures to attract and develop the skills demanded by European companies if they are to stay competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The apparent decline in student enrolments in science and technology is viewed with concern in many European countries. Furthermore, new data shows that Europe is lacking at least 700,000 researchers if the target of 3% investment in R&D is to be met by 2010.

FEANI acknowledges the renewed emphasis given to the programme “People”, supporting training and career development of researchers. It is extremely important that the programme addresses those disciplines that are subject to the most urgent demands in European companies. The programme must also be capable of meeting the need for continual updating of the cutting edge knowledge of engineers and scientists in industry. Life long learning is vital to Europe maintaining a technological lead and is a concept to which the engineering profession is fully committed.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W. Fuchs'.

Dr. Willi Fuchs  
President of FEANI

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