

## Priorities in FP9 suggested by the Nordic Five Tech alliance

Nordic Five Tech is a strategic alliance of the five leading technical universities in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (DTU, Aalto, NTNU, Chalmers and KTH Royal Institute of Technology). The alliance was established in November 2006 with the goal of utilizing the shared and complementary strengths and creating synergies within education, research and innovation.

The Nordic Five Tech alliance aims to:

- become the Nordic check point for Nordic and international master's students in engineering
- increase the mobility of staff and students within N5T
- improve the competitive edge and acknowledgement for high quality in education, research and innovation
- take advantage of the "N5T extended campus" in terms of activities, infrastructure and competence available within the alliance

The Nordic Five Tech alliance (N5T) strongly supports an increase in funding for the next research framework programme (FP9). The alliance encourages FP9 to be aimed at ground-breaking science, excellent research and innovation in open and collaborative ways. A cornerstone of the framework programme must be the creation of added value by addressing the global challenges through collaboration, on a European and global level through focused investments with high critical mass.

The following issues are of common concern to the N5T alliance:

### 1. Excellence must remain the guiding principle

Excellence must be the guiding principle and should not be compromised across the pillars. This is the only way for Europe to ensure its global competitiveness.

It is important that the ERC is maintained and that the Excellence pillar is kept as a strong part of the framework programme, so the share of funding is at least equivalent to its share in Horizon 2020.

There is a need for the stakeholders of FP9 to experience continuity from H2020 and thus the pillar structure should be maintained.

### 2. Better support to fundamentally new ideas

Research and innovation in the framework programme needs to focus on finding solutions, concentrating on outputs, and boosting disruptive innovations to tackle major societal and technological challenges. Promoting Open Science, increasing the attractiveness of the European Union for the world's top researchers e.g. through ERC funding and promoting international and inter-sectoral mobility of young researchers e.g. through MSCA funding are important means towards this aim.

N5T supports larger budget allocations directed to bottom-up collaborative projects under the Excellence pillar: FET-Open, MSCA-ITN, ERC-SynG and possibly new multidisciplinary bottom-up schemes.

Within the Excellence pillar, the FET programme is a strong instrument. FET is conceptually very important for universities of technology and fits well into high quality basic technology research where collaboration and excellence-driven approaches are key words. However, both the success rates and risk taking of FET Open and Proactive are too small.

### **3. Harmonization**

Harmonization of rules between EU funding programmes needs to be increased (both for participation, funding and reporting) in order to facilitate the use of complementary funding. In addition to this, harmonization of practices between agencies and project officers should be implemented in order to ensure equal treatment of the proposers and grantees.

Grants, not loans should be the guiding principle. Also, N5T is concerned about the suggested lump sum funding. If lump sum funding is employed, we foresee problems in the distribution of the budget in a collaborative project, how the audit will be performed if it is not cost-driven, etc.

### **4. Differentiated funding reintroduced**

FP9 should differentiate rates of funding according to the size of the company. Efforts should be continued to ensure a 100% funding rate for SMEs, but lower funding rates should be offered to larger companies as was the case under FP7. If funding support for industry is reduced, it will, relatively speaking, release means. These funds could be used for competitive initiatives adapted to the participation of smaller companies and start-ups. Alternatively, these extra funds could be in part distributed to the Excellence and Societal Challenges pillars.

In relation to particularly the Excellence and Societal Challenges pillars, assuring industry participation from day 1 of the projects may be problematic. A way of facing this might be to introduce a funding model in which projects with clear market potential are evaluated and given additional market maturing funding for a number of years.