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G6 Feedback on the three-year evaluation of EU executive agencies

As part of the triennial evaluation of the European Union's agencies, the Commission has launched a consultation to gather feedback from stakeholders on the performance of six executive agencies (EACEA, EASME, REA, ERCEA, CHAFAEA, INEA), with the aim of identifying potential areas for improvement in the new programming period.

The G6 network, which brings together six major European multidisciplinary research organizations—CNR, CNRS, CSIC, Helmholtz Association, Leibniz Association and Max Planck Society—and represents 143,000 staff, presents its contribution hereafter.

Need of an enhanced interaction between agencies and DG's

The delegation of implementation to agencies has created a form of disconnection between policy makers and implementation workforces, impacting end-users and most importantly the scientific management of projects. Lump sums, that are both perceived as a valuable simplification tool with yet identified drawbacks in terms of scientific implementation, illustrate this insufficient concertation.

G6 institutions consider that an enhanced dialogue between agencies and DG's is key for proper implementation of funded research projects.

High staff turnover compromises the efficiency of executive agencies

Scientific research is by essence a long-term process, involving highly qualified personnel and high-level equipment. As such, the follow-up and monitoring of research projects require long-term stability and acute knowledge of research practices. Trust and stability between both parties is an essential ingredient for the proper management of scientific projects.

Over the past years, G6 institutions have observed that support staff in executive agencies, in particular within the Research Executive Agency, is subject to heavy turnovers. This results to loss of continuity and less knowledge of research practices as well as of the diversity of the European research ecosystem.

This high turnover impacts the quality of follow-up, leading to work overloads of both beneficiaries and agencies. The evaluation of proposals is also affected by this high turnover resulting in evaluation summary reports with noticeable disparities in quality.

For first-time applicants, this situation reinforces the perception that European projects are cumbersome, administratively complex with lack of efficient support to run them.

Excessively long evaluation periods

The late start of Horizon Europe has generated important delays in the evaluation of proposals, particularly at the ERCEA. Although G6 is deeply committed to the high quality of proposals reviewing at the ERC, these extended review periods had severe consequences on the implementation of projects, particularly with respect to hiring young talents. G6 institutions call on agencies to speed up evaluation processes, without compromising the excellence of reviewing.