A dedicated programme for collaborative R&D into critical priorities in the Eighth Framework Programme

Executive Summary

The current procedures for defining research work programmes and managing calls and projects in the Research Framework Programmes have been generally effective in supporting collaborative research. However, in order to achieve a greater impact in critical R&D topics, more simplicity, focus and speed is necessary. This requires decreased time from idea to grant, reduction in wasted efforts of writing unsuccessful proposals and enhanced stakeholder input, whilst retaining an accountable and robust procedure.

EUCAR is proposing a dedicated programme to achieve these objectives in critical collaborative R&D, where societal needs require the results of the R&D to be available at an early stage for implementation. The outline of the programme, to be implemented as a complement to the existing work programmes, is as follows:

- Allocate an appropriate portion of the FP8 budget for a programme of dedicated action in critical collaborative R&D issues that require fast industrial exploitation of the results.
- Take inspiration from the structure and function of certain EU member state programmes, which act as benchmark for speed - as low as 3 months from conception to project start.
- Involve industry as the primary stakeholder to ensure alignment of topics with the needs of industry and a high success rate.
- A project proposal can be submitted at any time, followed by a dedicated evaluation procedure performed within 6 weeks from submission.
- A dedicated procedure for a fast-track contract negotiation is applied, eliminating certain administrative elements and allowing project start just a few months after submission.
- The described procedure therefore provides an accelerated process from idea to project, aligns R&D with industry needs and gives flexibility to industry and the Commission.

Potential scope for this type of programme includes the following:

- A dedicated automotive R&D programme in breakthrough technology, with shared management of topics and projects between the Commission and industry.
- A programme in which projects which are permitted to commence immediately after positive evaluation, with contract negotiation in parallel to project execution.
- Collaborative projects which have already been started by the participants in a feasibility or pilot stage.
- A project to follow on an ongoing project, e.g. an extension based on new research needs, a project enhancement or an implementation project to exploit results.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR AUTOMOTIVE R&D

Dedicated collaborative R&D

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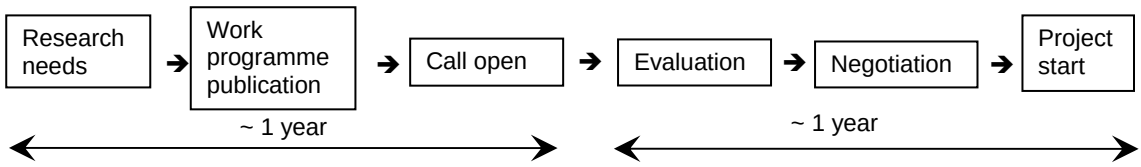
Current status

A large proportion of industrial R&D under the EU's Seventh Framework Programme, including automotive, takes place within the Cooperation Programme. A number of programmes within Cooperation are relevant to the automotive R&D – Sustainable Surface Transport (SST), Information & Communication Technology (ICT), Nanomaterials, Materials and new Production Technologies (NMP), Energy, Environment. From 2009, a portion of the automotive R&D from these programmes has been brought under the umbrella of the European Green Car Initiative.

In these areas, R&D topics are defined by work programmes which may be annual (e.g. SST, NMP, Energy, Envi with annual calls) or biannual (e. g. ICT, with 1-2 calls per year). The typical process from initial compilation of R&D needs and ideas to project start is visualised as follows:



This process can be slow, with projects on average starting 2 years after the start of the work programme compilation and one year after the proposal submission.

Status assessment & need for action

The current procedures as presented above have been effective in supporting collaborative automotive R&D projects in the Framework Programmes. Around 50 ongoing projects in the automotive domain involving EUCAR's members have been through this process. The process also has certain disadvantages, in particular in cases where a new R&D topic is rising and a fast reaction is necessary for European competitiveness. The following table shows a summary assessment of the current procedural structure for collaborative R&D.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Full stakeholder input to work programme	Long delay "idea to grant" (~ 2 years)
Robust definition of project parameters	Long delay "submission to grant" (~1 year)
Accountability of project partners	Break in R&D activity for follow-on projects
	Complicated negotiation procedures
	Wasted effort for unsuccessful proposals

For a greater impact of EU R&D in critical R&D topics, including the automotive area, more simplicity, focus and speed is necessary.

- A substantial reduction in time from "idea to grant" and "submission to grant".
- The efforts made in writing long unsuccessful proposals need to be eliminated.

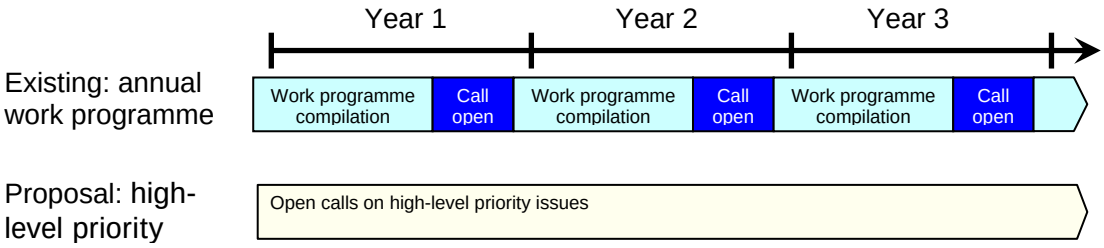
- The effectiveness of stakeholder input should be enhanced whilst retaining the appropriate level of accountability and robustness.
- A solution is required which addresses these requirements.

Framework of a solution

EUCAR and its members propose a framework, complementary to the existing structure of work-programme based collaborative R&D, for a dedicated programme for critical collaborative R&D, which includes the following elements:

- Allocate an appropriate portion of the FP8 budget for a programme of dedicated action in critical collaborative R&D issues that require fast industrial exploitation of the results.
- Take inspiration from the structure and function of certain EU member state programmes, which act as benchmark for speed (e.g. NOW - Nationale Organisation für Wasserstoff, Germany - as low as 3 months from project conception to project start).
- Involve industry as the primary stakeholder to ensure alignment of topics with the needs of industry and a high success rate.

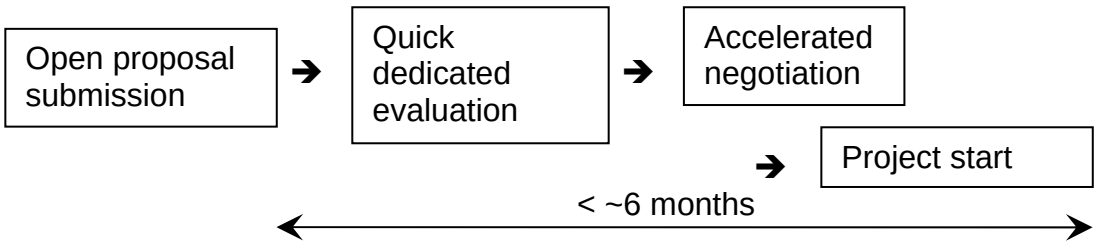
In parallel to annual work programmes, high-level priority topics valid across the entire Framework Programme are set up. Independent from the timed calls for proposals, an open call is set up, without fixed call deadlines:



The project application process is arranged as follows:

- A project proposal can be submitted at any time.
- Dedicated evaluation resources are put in place and the proposal evaluation is performed within 6 weeks from submission.
- A dedicated procedure for a fast-track contract negotiation is put in place, allowing elimination/reduction of certain administrative elements in the negotiation and early project start.
- The project starts within a few months from submission.

The proposed process is visualised as follows:



The processes involved are based on the current procedures and rely on existing resources.

Assessment of benefits

A programme following this framework brings the following benefits for dedicated R&D:

- An accelerated process from "idea to grant" and "submission to grant".
- Is aligned with industrial needs, thereby encouraging industrial participation.
- Provides flexibility for industry and Commission.

How to make it work in practice – dedicated scope of the programme

The following are some examples of the types of R&D to which the programme described above could productively apply:

1. A dedicated sectoral programme (with focus on automotive R&D) in breakthrough technology, with shared management of the programme topics and projects between the Commission and industry.
2. A programme in which projects which are permitted to commence immediately after positive evaluation, in which the negotiation of contract proceeds in parallel to project execution (the project is funded, but at the risk of participants should negotiations not be successful). This would allow even faster process for those project participants able to commit to this risk.
3. Collaborative projects which have already been started by the participants in a feasibility or pilot stage, demonstrating commitment to project, thereby providing confidence supporting accelerated contract negotiation project.
4. Projects which are continuations of ongoing projects nearing completion, e.g. extension of the existing project due to newly identified research needs, enhancement of the project due to new expertise or insights or exploitation of the results of an R&D project in an implementation project. Accelerated procedures are employed allowing timely continuation without interruption in the R&D work.

Conclusion

EUCAR has proposed a framework for a dedicated model for funding of critical collaborative R&D, to be set up in parallel to the standard funding measures. It has an open call structure based on multi-annual R&D priorities, with accelerated evaluation and contract negotiation, bringing speed and added focus to these priorities.

The framework is to be complemented with further detail on the procedures and scope and EUCAR looks forward to further exchange with policymakers and stakeholders to determine an effective concrete solution.

About EUCAR

EUCAR is the European Council for Automotive R&D from the major European passenger car and commercial vehicle manufacturers. EUCAR facilitates and coordinates pre-competitive research and development projects and its members participate in a wide range of collaborative European R&D programmes. The European automobile manufacturers are the largest private investors in R&D in Europe with over €26 billion investment per annum, or 4% of turnover. EUCAR members are BMW, DAF, Daimler, Fiat, Ford Europe, GM/Opel, Jaguar Land Rover, Porsche, PSA Peugeot Citroën, Renault, Scania, Volkswagen Group and Volvo. EUCAR is closely connected to ACEA, the European Automobile Manufacturers Association.

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