

INFORSE-Europe Propose to Improve EU Energy Research with Broader Participation, Smaller Projects, and Sustainable Priorities

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The EU 7th Framework Program for Research and Technical Development (FP7) gives a valuable contribution to research and technical development of renewable energy and energy efficiency. It has, however, limited participation of citizen's based organisations and other smaller actors. It is therefore losing important opportunities for:

- Involving practical experience with dissemination and use of renewable energy and energy efficiency in research and development
- Disseminating results of research and development further
- Involve the non-profit sectors of the society more in the application and promotion of new technologies, which will give an additional opportunity for outreach that is not limited to the stricter cost-effectiveness and confidentiality requirements of the traditional profit-making business sector.

The experience from the International Network for Sustainable Energy, a network of 72 NGOS that are promoting sustainable energy, is that there are a number of barriers for NGO participation in FP7 projects, but also that FP7 projects can be very valuable in bringing together and combining experience and knowledge from different countries and different actors in the society.

The main barrier for smaller organisations is usually the required size of projects. Valuable results can be achieved with smaller projects than the typical FP7 projects. While such projects should not replace the present, larger research projects, they would give an additional value to the program, involving many smaller actors that otherwise would not have any connection with research and development in sustainable energy.

Therefore INFORSE-Europe proposes to include budget lines for smaller projects, for instance with an upper limit of 300,000 € in EU support for each project. These budget lines should in general follow the same priorities as the larger projects, but have more focus on applied research and development, as well as on dissemination.

Another barrier is the long lead-time from applications to project start. Often it takes more than a year to evaluate projects and negotiate project contracts. INFORSE-Europe proposes to limit this period to for instance 6 months. That would increase the value of the programme; it would bring it more into line with the timeframe of the general planning of programmes and projects in organisations.

In addition to the barriers, EU research and development should extend its scope to cover a number of additional key issues in sustainable energy. In its comment to the EU Strategic Energy Research (SET) Plan, INFORSE-Europe identified a number of additional priority topics. They include clean and sustainable use of biomass for heating and electricity, super low energy houses; renewable energy cooling; sustainable transport; geothermal, wave, and tidal energies; energy efficient and low-carbon industrial production, and efficient energy supply for low-energy consumption. See: <http://www.inforse.org/europe/pdfs/INFORSE-on-SET-Plan.pdf>

The extended scope must obviously be followed by increased funding for sustainable energy. The funding could come from changing priorities of funding within FP7, with reductions of funding for nuclear power including nuclear fusion that is less effective in providing sustainable solutions to the current climate and energy supply problems than renewable energy and energy efficiency.

More information: Gunnar Boye Olesen, INFORSE-Europe, www.inforse.org/europe, ove@inforse.org, Ph- +45-86227000, Fax: +45 86227096.