



29 June 2004

**Note from ECTRI
(European Conference of Transport Research Institutes)**

To the attention of the European Commission

**“Opinion on the proposed architecture of the 7th FRDP”
COM (2004) 353 Final**

I - The FRDP and the European Research and Innovation Area in surface transport

1. ECTRI is aware of the Communication from the Commission related to the 7th FRDP and gives the following opinion.

2. The field of transport and research in transport is very marked, like others, by the international and European dimension of the problems or solutions which underlines:

- The reform of the State and public governance,
- The societal development,
- The economic development.

3. The complexity of the problems and innovations, as well as the research of scientific and technological excellence, require “mode de faire”, tools and instruments, including governance of research, diversified and especially adapted to the various problems of the concerned stakeholders.

4. The foreseen architecture of the 7th FRDP answers well to these preoccupations and to this challenge, even in the fields related to transport which concern all the human activities and touch directly 1/6 of the European GDP.

5. ECTRI is very supportive of:

- Technology platforms and related potential technological initiatives,
- Collaborative research,
- The initiative on security.

And especially:

- Mobility and research infrastructures,
- Coordination of the structural funds and FRDPs;

There are including:

- International Interfacing of European Research Area,
- Research and society articulation.
- Financial innovative engineering,

6. This paper is also giving some comments on:

- Excellence research,
- European Research Council,
- Problem related to Networks of excellence.

II. The governance for economical and institutional competitiveness

7. ECTRI is very favourable to the governance of research in the field of the surface transport for international economic competitiveness by developing technology platforms.

8. This instrument must have an objective of direct economic competitiveness of industries and/or linked services (and nothing else).

9. ECTRI particularly supports the fact that it represents various types of articulated partnerships:

- Industrial companies, manufacturers, operators, research institutions and universities in the conception and realization of the research programs planned through the strategic research agendas (SRAs),
- Undertakings, financial institutions, financing agencies and European, national and other authorities in their conception, financing and management.

10. The strategic research agendas must be articulated with the medium-term strategic vision. Concerning the research and innovation policies, this vision does not always have to be completely articulated with the politically correct vision in the short and medium term. In addition, when the public policies impact the structure of industry and operators - as it is the case in the railway field - these SRAs could envisage all useful researches for the innovations linked to these sectorial reorganizations, if not the directives and regulations could not be implemented.

11. The car and manufacturer industries are directly linked to the ERTRAC platform, to the pseudo platform E-safety Forum and for the parts concerning transport application of the hydrogen and fuel cell platform (H2PAC).

12. The Rail industry¹ is directly linked to the ERRAC platform and to the transport application of H2PAC platform.

13. We can regret some major gaps in the current landscape of surface transport platforms that could be also solved through the collaborative research line:

- There is nothing concerning the innovating urban transport (bus industry, coach and subway, tram at international level, like the operators)

¹ Maritime and naval industries are also well covered

- The truck industry (Europe is a world-leader) is also missing, whereas, even in the strongest hypothesis on modal transfer, road transport of goods will remain the majority².
- The impact on the transport systems of demographical trends including ageing society.

14. But the development of technology platforms does not exhaust the whole problem of international economic competitiveness of the surface transports³.

15. Research for the direct framework of this sectorial competitiveness (policies of technical regulation, standardization, industrial policy), like research for the general framework of the transport governance (public policies relating to transport... transports, energy, safety - security, environment, health...) and like the one of full economic competitiveness (transport relates to all economic and societal activities), and like research on societal development transport related (ageing, handicap, environment...) require the preservation of a governance close to the last FRDPs through a collaborative focus research.

16. In particular, the research is crucial for:

- Systems and organization of transport (intermodality, safety, durability...)
- Impact of new technologies (NTIC, nanotechnologies, power electronics...)
- Peri-normative or peri-regulatory,

with their systemic, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary nature.

If the Joint Research Centre has a legitimate role on these subjects, it can not be the only provider as there are critical masses outside.

III - The surface transport research dynamics and governance excellence

17. Beyond the instruments of direct competitiveness, the aim is to organize a well balanced governance and dynamics, notably in term of research processes.

18. Mobility and research infrastructures are crucial for the focus research development in surface transport. If the needs in the field of 'Big Science' are obvious and legitimate, the scientific and technological and by the way, the economic and societal ones, requires that a part of the funding and research professionals go to the needs of focus research and in particular the surface transport one.

19. The renewal of the generation of researchers and research professionals and the capacity to transform Europe into a second reserve of scientific and technical competencies - even in the industry - the renewal of the generations of academics will draw firstly the renewal of generation in a disciplinary way - make that it is imperative to devote financing means for mobility in the field of interdisciplinary multidisciplinary, complex or systemic focus research.

² If these lacks are not completed, it shall be taken into account in collaborative research.

³ It shall also be taken into account in collaborative research.

20. The quality of research infrastructures:

- Experimentation, simulation or observation facilities,
- Data bases, libraries, collaborative environments,

is fundamental for quality, relevance of scientific and technological knowledge that is the base of public policies, industries and services developments.

We can notice that two thematic networks of 5th FRDP and ECTRI complementary work parallels to those of ESFRI result in raising this question quickly for the surface transport area.

21. There is neither excellence nor excellence governance without interfacing internationally the European Research Area.

For research in surface transport, the priorities should be:

- Western Balkans Countries,
- Non-European countries of OECD,
- China, India.

It will be necessary to raise the question of the ex-countries of USSR, the countries of the Barcelona process and those of southern Africa and America.

22. COST activities were historically strategic and still remain strategic notably for the coordination and development of the projects and networks.

23. The enlargement of the European Research Area requires a very good coordination of FRDPs and structural funds, in order to avoid what occurred at the occasion of the latter enlargements, i.e. distortions of competition by introduction of ultra modern equipments competing with the existing ones, even if it is legitimate to modernize the quality of research infrastructures in these countries.

24. The imperative character of the research investment for growth is facing a public budgetary constraint (EU, Member States, Regions...) and needs an adapted financial engineering.

25. ECTRI particularly thinks that research and society dialogue is relevant; but giving the fact that the debate "Research and Society" is in depth cultural, it raises the question of cultural and linguistics diversity in Europe.

26. ECTRI wishes that the level of administrative and financial complexity reached by FRDPs shall be re-examined; it notes that an opportunity is opened with the fact that various mode de faire are at stake besides the direct management of the Commission.

27. ECTRI thinks that it should be better to charge a flat rate to everything that is possible within the 7th FRDP (the Marie Curie program is a good example, including at the diversified costs).

IV. Scientific excellence and Surface Transport

28. ECTRI thinks that all mode de faire and new instruments or tools of the 7th FRDP pursue scientific and technological excellence.

29. ECTRI notes that the European Research Council (ERC) will have to manage with:

- Setting teams of excellence in competition,
- Mobility.

It could be of good governance not to manage the 2 issues by the same mode de faire (see 19).

30. ECTRI notes that it is necessary that the program aiming at setting the European teams of excellence in competition shall not only be applied to disciplinary but also to the multidisciplinary, the interdisciplinary, the systemic and the complex research.

31. ECTRI notes that the communication project speaks about the networks of excellence (NoE); it would be damaging for the action continuity and the investment required by the NoEs that they do not appear any more in the future.

32. From the presence of centres of excellence and integrated networks of excellence depends the non excessive delocalization of industrial research centres.

Conclusion

33. At this stage, ECTRI is supporting the architecture of the 7th FRDP such as foreseen into the Communication from the European Commission, COM (2004) 353 Final.

34. It is clear that this architecture of the new mode de faire create some problems of coordination⁴ and positioning for all the research stakeholders.

35. The success of this architecture will depend on the level of financing the 7th FRDP and especially of its inducements on national, regional and private financings and ECTRI welcomes the idea of a doubling evoked in the Communication.

⁴ Overtaking the schemes of OCM (Open Coordination Method) and “ERANET demand/program” and asking for “ERANET supply side” and other coordination methods.