

Tánaiste launches new EU funding Research Programme

Irish Researchers to Compete for over €16 Billion EU Funding

Government aims to secure maximum benefit for Irish researchers.

The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (today 12 July 2002) launched the Sixth EU Framework Programme (FP6) in Ireland at an information day in Dublin Castle.

The new programme (FP6), which will run from 2003-2006, will allocate over €16 billion for research activities over a wide range of areas.

The Tánaiste also announced that Enterprise Ireland has set up a dedicated unit to provide a National Information & Support Service to potential participants in FP6. This unit will also participate in the Europe wide network of Contact Points providing a mechanism for identifying partners in other countries with whom Irish organisations can collaborate.

Speaking at the launch, the Tánaiste said: "This Government is committed to the development of a knowledge based economy capable of sustaining economic growth and more and better quality jobs. The success in meeting these challenges will depend on our ability to cooperate and share knowledge for our mutual benefit. This is the very basis on which the EU Framework Programme is built. The challenge for Ireland is to achieve a strong research base with effective links to industry and to centres of expertise both locally and overseas."

The Tánaiste continued: "The EU Framework Programmes have been a crucially important source of funding to support the growth of the Irish research base, particularly in the third-level education sector. Our participation in EU Research Framework Programmes has helped to increase the knowledge base and credibility of the Irish research community. It has also contributed to the creation of a well educated, well qualified and technologically aware workforce capable of acting as a magnet to attract and retain the growing number of high technology companies based in Ireland."

"The Government is determined that Ireland secures the maximum benefits from FP6 over the next four years. The Framework Programme will complement the Government's investment of €2.5 billion in research, technological development and innovation through the National Development Programme. It will enable organisations in Ireland, in partnership with organisations in Europe and beyond, to compete for funding for specific research which the European Community considers important for its industrial competitiveness and quality of life," the Tánaiste said.

Mr. Richard Esquitt, Director, DG Research, EU Commission, addressing the conference, said: "Research and technological development policy is a top political priority for Europe. The Sixth Framework Programme makes a quantum leap beyond simply funding projects and the Programme has an important role in making a reality of the European Research Area (ERA).

I believe that the European Research Area project provides a vision for the future of research and innovation in Europe. The aim is to achieve a genuine European Community of researchers working in close collaboration across frontiers for the benefit of the EU's economy and European citizens."

Mr. Martin Cronin, CEO, Forfas said: "The introduction of new EU research funding under FP6 offers substantial opportunities for Irish researchers to participate with researchers in Europe and further afield in developing cutting edge technology. Today's national launch should ensure that awareness about the new features of the programme and information about funding opportunities is available.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

EU Framework Programmes.

About the EU Framework Programme

The European Union provides funding for collaborative research, technological development and demonstration (RTD) in key technological areas relevant to the competitiveness of European industry, the quality of life of European citizens and European policy development in areas such as agriculture, health and transport. The fund is spread over 4-year planned Framework Programmes. The budget for the next EU Framework Programme i.e. the Sixth Framework Programme, exceeds €16 billion.

An Opportunity for Irish Organisations

The Sixth Framework Programme will provide a unique opportunity for Irish industry, third level institutions and research organisations to win funding that will enable them to participate with other organisations in Europe and elsewhere in cutting edge research and to develop and intensify research and business networks.

The Sixth Framework Programme

A fundamental aim of the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6), which is due to begin in January 2003, is to contribute to the establishment of a European Research Area (ERA). The need for the establishment of a more structured and integrated European Research Area, which could compete effectively with the research effort of the USA and Japan, was set out in the Commission's Communication "Towards a European Research Area" of January 2000. With a total budget of over €16 billion, FP6 will contribute to the realisation of the ERA via a range of measures structured around three main components.

At least 15% of the total budget for FP6 is to be allocated to small and medium size enterprise (SME) participation.

Structure of Sixth Framework Programme

1. Integrating & Focusing European Research – €13,345 million

This component will focus on seven, clearly defined priority thematic areas. These priority areas are as follows:

- 1.1.1 Genomics and Biotechnology for Health
- 1.1.2 Information Society Technologies
- 1.1.3 Nanotechnologies and Nanosciences, Knowledge-Based Multifunctional Materials and New Production Processes and Devices
- 1.1.4 Aeronautics and Space
- 1.1.5 Food Quality and Safety
- 1.1.6 Sustainable Development, Global Change and Ecosystems
- 1.1.7 Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-Based Society
- 1.2.1 Specific activities covering a wider field of research, including horizontal research activities, which will address SMEs, innovation and international co-operation.

2. Structuring the European Research Area –€2,605 million

This component is intended to stimulate innovation, the utilisation and commercialisation of research results, transfer of knowledge and technologies and the setting up of technology businesses in all regions of the community. Half of the budget will be dedicated to improving the mobility of researchers across Europe and enhancing research infrastructure.

3 Strengthening the foundations of the European Research Area–€320 million

The activities carried out under this component are intended to step up the co-ordination, and to support the coherent development, of research and innovation-stimulation policies and activities in Europe.

Following the final agreement of the overall framework on 3 June 2002, negotiations are now proceeding on Specific Programmes and Rules of Participation of FP6. These will outline the actual research programmes to give effect to the Framework Programme and how interested parties can participate.

Link with National Priorities

Ireland will invest €2.5 billion in research, technological development and innovation through the NDP to sustain economic growth and competitiveness. Irish participation in the 6th EU Framework Programme will compliment this effort. The state agencies for industrial development as well as specialised agencies in areas such as marine, health, and energy will assist Irish organisations to participate in the various themes and horizontal activities of the Programme.

National Information and Support Service.

The Government is determined that Ireland secures the maximum benefits from FP6 over the next five years and the state agencies for industrial development as well as specialised agencies in areas such as marine, health, and energy will assist Irish organisations participate in the various themes and horizontal activities.

Enterprise Ireland, as well as providing the assistance of staff experienced in previous Framework Programmes, has set up a dedicated unit to provide a National Information & Support Service to potential participants.

This national service will act as a first point of contact for queries relating to FP6. It will disseminate information and will work in cooperation with the national representatives for the various specific areas of FP6. It will also participate in the Europe wide network of National Contact Points providing a mechanism for identifying partners in other countries with whom Irish organisations can collaborate.

Today's launch

Today's conference, geared specifically at past and potential participants, detailed the substantial opportunities for Irish researchers, industry and SMEs to compete for funding under FP6. The event, which attracted over 430 participants, was organised by Forfas in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland on behalf of the Office of Science and Technology.

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