

Financing Research Infrastructures in Europe: Fact, fiction, hype and hope

by

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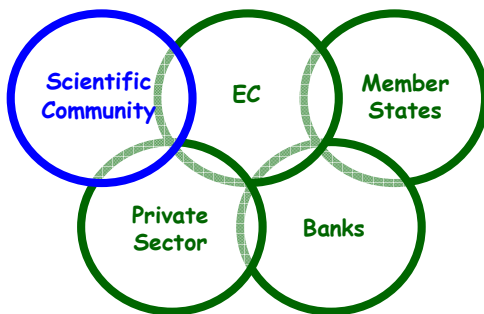
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Research Infrastructures: An excellent benchmark for a truly European venture

- ❖ An interplay among scientific, political, cultural and financial aspects, which reflect the broader challenges towards European Integration
- ❖ In optimising the Financial Instruments for RIs, the above issues and the role of the Stakeholders involved should be considered

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The players



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The current landscape in financing RIs (I)

- ❖ The role of Member States is central in the development and financing of RIs
 - Priorities and criteria may differ significantly
 - ESFRI facilitates coherence in policies and decision making
 - Public investment may be combined with Structural Funds where applicable
- ❖ The role of the Private Sector is to date rather limited
 - Although the significance of RIs for economic growth is recognized, incentives are not truly satisfactory and recognizable

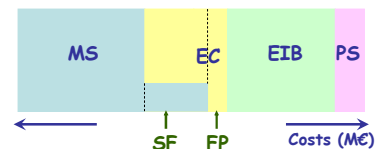
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The current landscape in financing RIs (II)

- ❖ The role of Banks is crucial in complementing financing
 - EIB is willing to finance projects of European RIs leading to economic growth
- ❖ The role of EC is that of a "catalyst"
 - At a political level EC facilitates a coherent and effective approach in setting standards and priorities
 - It provides effective financial instruments through the Framework Programme, the Structural Funds and other initiatives (e.g. the Risk Sharing Facility)
 - In FP6 (2003-2006) an amount of 730 M€ was allocated to the support of RI initiatives

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A possible financial synergy for a new RI in case that SF apply



Code


MS: Member States	SF: Structural Funds
EC: European Commission	FP: Framework Programme
EIB: European Investment Bank	
PS: Private Sector	

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Fact

Research Infrastructures (RIs) have

- ❖ Impact on the scientific community and in society
 - support scientific excellence
 - promote European competitiveness and cohesion
 - reveal European social and cultural resources
 - improve human potential via specialized training opportunities
 - become poles of attraction of young talented scientists and prominent senior researchers
- ❖ European Added Value
 - synergies of pan-European interest
 - optimal use of European resources
- ❖ A key feature: "Uniqueness"

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The issue of "uniqueness"

- ❖ State of the art infrastructures, combining specific issues of unique character (technical specs, magnitude, costs, location, degree of sophistication etc.) together with a high level of local expertise for providing a strong European added value.

One Key issue for success:

Emphasis on scientific excellence both in the RIs and the projects they serve!

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Questions

- ❖ Is the goal of scientific excellence adequate for attracting major national, private and EC funding?
- ❖ What are the short and long term motives in financing RIs?

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An example:

RIs for Optical Technologies
(e.g. Lasers, Synchrotrons, Free Electron Lasers (FEL))

a field of European excellence!

- Unique possibilities for ultra-fine analysis and understanding the structure and dynamics of matter
- There are excellent prospects in the fields of optics, photonics and related technologies
- There is a number of relevant European Companies playing a leading role worldwide
- Important social impact in preserving and promoting cultural heritage

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Fiction

It is a fiction that,

- ❖ "national priorities always coincide with pan-European priorities"
 - There may be RIs which promote plans for national or regional development but they do not provide the best response to the challenges of the future at European level.
 - There may be existing RIs representing a major national investment made at some previous time and having an important socio-economic impact locally but their original scientific scope has passed

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Cohesion and Structural Funds

- ❖ RIs may contribute to the regional development by improving the ability of the regions to compete
- ❖ To what extent should cohesion objectives be considered in supporting European RIs?
- ❖ How can Structural Funds be used more effectively towards this goal?

During 2000-2006 an amount of ~2.5 B€ was allocated through the structural funds to RIs of eligible regions

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Hype

It is a hype that,

- ❖ "the size of a "mega-science" project is proportional to the scientific impact it may have"
 - The danger in the mentality of "records" (Promoting scientific excellence is a more intricate process)
 - Cost benefit analysis: scientific output over costs.
- ❖ "RIs impact on economic growth is always obvious"
 - There are RIs presenting immediate economic interest for private investors (industry) but also there are RIs with less obvious, long term economic impact



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Questions

- ❖ How can industry and more generally the public sector be motivated to enhance their participation in financing public RIs of trans-European character?
 - There is need for a frame of non-bureaucratic rules and attractive measures
 - Short and long term investments may have different requirements
- ❖ What kind of measures would facilitate an enhancement of the role of banks and in particular of EIB?
 - The prospect for economic growth is the major consideration
 - The "risk" level in financing RIs projects could be high



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Hope

European RIs have a major role towards a knowledge based economy

- Optimizing the Financial Instruments is crucial for their realization and success
- The effectiveness of the current financing schemes relies heavily on SYNERGIES among different Financial Instruments



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Final Questions

- What combinations among the various Financial Instruments would lead to the optimal outcome?
- Should the "catalyst", i.e. the leverage provided by the EC be strengthened?
- Considering the current economic situation in Europe, is there need for any new additional measures?



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