

PRESS RELEASE

EU programs and the role of consultants

Paris, 20 June 2018

On June 5, the Science | Business network hosted the event *Innovative Europe? Time for a new EU innovation strategy*. This conference was the opportunity to learn and debate on the EU's innovation strategy and policy, in light of the ongoing debates on the design of the bloc's next R&I framework program, *Horizon Europe*.

Among an impressive line-up of high-level speakers, the EC's recently-appointed DG for Research & Innovation, Jean-Eric Paquet gave comprehensive views on various aspects of the framework programs, including strategic focus, budgets, applicable rules; and, at some point, a remark on the role of consultants in grant applications:

*"Many of our proposals are prepared in fact by consultants. When the consultant supports the investigator or the innovator, that's not a problem, but when the consultant substitutes, it shows in the interview, and that doesn't help, I can tell you."*¹

ACI, the Association of Innovation Consultancies, welcomes this opinion, which reflects the values and methodologies of our members: to support our clients as a trusted partner, and in no way to substitute the project owner. We consider as positive the DG's statement on the role of consultants in support of grant applicants; and we would like to seize the opportunity to recall a few facts on why there are good reasons to work with consultants where there are competitive calls for proposals.

The consultant brings its in-depth knowledge and understanding of the explicit - and **most important implicit - expectations of the funding agency**. This requires time which investigators and innovators rather spend on their research and their development. Consultants give an external and expert point of view, which helps the project's stakeholders to adjust their project to the funding program framework.

Consultancies also bring more added value: with their **knowledge of innovation processes**, their expertise with **non-technological innovation**, their networks of partners and their **experience feedback from other areas** (projects, sectors, disciplines...), they help the project's stakeholders to improve the conception of their R&I projects. Indeed, we always consider proposals preparation, then collaborative projects, as powerful tools to design and implement companies' and organisations' strategy.

Innovation consultancies are an important actor in the ecosystem, delivering value which is usually not found among other stakeholders. As such, they are significant contributors to **building successful, and more importantly, impactful proposals in funded programs**.

About ACI, the French Association of Innovation Consultancies

The Association of Innovation Consultancies (ACI) is a French professional association, which gathers 71 consulting firms with collectively more than 3,000 employees. These companies offer their expertise across the full range of innovation consulting services and work daily alongside all stakeholders in the innovation ecosystem (research and academia, government and businesses), serving innovation for society, economic competitiveness and territorial attractiveness.

www.asso-conseils-innovation.org

¹ <https://sciencebusiness.net/events/innovative-europe-time-new-eu-innovation-strategy> (3rd video, 1:59)

The interview refers to the oral sessions foreseen in the evaluation process of some funding programs.