

Foreword

The OECD Review of France’s Innovation Policy is part of a series of OECD country reviews of innovation policy. It was requested by the French authorities, represented by the General Commission for Investment (CGI), with the support of the Ministry for Higher Education and Research (MESR), and was carried out by the OECD Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry (DSTI) under the auspices of the Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy (CSTP).

The purpose of this review is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the key elements, relationships and government policies that drive the French research and innovation system (SFRI). The review provides an independent assessment of the performance of the SFRI. It pays special attention to the benchmark year 2010, because it is intended to serve as an initial assessment of the SFRI conducted in the context of “Investments for the Future Programme” (PIA) of the CGI, but updates have been incorporated as necessary. The review formulates recommendations on how to improve the performance of the SFRI.

The study of France’s innovation policies covers the same areas as the other reviews in this series: human resources for innovation, public sector research, relations between science and industry, industrial innovation, business innovation and overall governance of the system. However, it will highlight the major diagnostic elements of the SFRI in 2010 by focusing on the system’s strengths and weaknesses and analysing how the PIA, as an innovative public policy in terms of scope and methods, seeks to remedy some of them. Thanks to the in-depth diagnostic work, the review will also identify the global context for the PIA, as well as the other public policy elements that could accompany and supplement the actions taken within the PIA, whose purposes are necessarily restricted.

In so doing, the review will identify *ex ante* the changes that a “successful” PIA should reasonably engender, as well as the environment in which it operates and in which other public policies could complement the trend created by the PIA, thereby facilitating assessment work for a future review stemming from this initial exercise.

The first PIA (PIA 1) is a EUR 35 billion (euros) programme launched in 2009 for a period of 10 years, designed to steer France onto a new path of stronger and more sustainable growth based on innovation. This first programme was supplemented by a second tranche of EUR 12 billion, announced in July 2013, which extends and supplements PIA 1 and is also under the aegis of the CGI. In view of this very tight schedule, the review will focus very heavily on PIA 1.

Approximately two-thirds of PIA 1 funding is earmarked for higher education and research. The study commissioned from the OECD will be considered as a “pre-PIA” assessment of the SFRI, reviewing the situation prior to the programme’s launch; a “post-PIA” assessment will be performed at the end of the programme to ascertain the change over the intervening period and evaluate its direct and indirect impact. The OECD has also been asked to propose a set of indicators that will allow tracking changes in France’s performance in the relevant fields over the coming years, so as to assess the effects of the PIA during its implementation.

Of course, a significant number of new policy initiatives have been taken since 2010, beginning with the PIA itself, which acquired a second tranche. The aim of many of the initiatives is to address shortcomings in the SFRI – discussed in this study – and to adjust previous policy decisions after considering the initial effects of their implementation. Although they were taken after the reference year and are therefore not central to this study, the review will refer to the most notable among them and assess their potential impact on the SFRI in the coming years, although not in the same detail as the earlier measures. These measures’ compatibility with the PIA and capacity to increase its effects will be examined in order to identify, where possible, the true effects of the various public policies conducted.

Like the other country surveys carried out by the OECD, the French review draws on interviews with major stakeholders in the national innovation system (see list below), together with a number of recent reports on various aspects of the SFRI – some produced at the request of the Government, others at the instigation of the French Court of Auditors or private sector stakeholders, still others written by academic experts.

A preliminary version of the chapter “Overall assessment and recommendations” was presented to the CSTP in October 2013 and to the OECD Committee on Industry, Innovation and Entrepreneurship in March 2014.

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