



## **SITPRO Plus – Evaluation of the Impact of EU Transport Research Projects in FP5 and FP6**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Project Rapid Report**

The SITPRO Plus Project analyzed the impacts of transport projects funded by the European Commission within the 5th and 6th Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development. Its aim was to use these findings to define new transport research policy objectives and to provide the European Commission with a methodology for impact assessment in the ongoing and future Framework Programmes.

The SITPRO Plus Project started in October 2008 and was completed in September 2010. All reports of the project are publicly available for download from the website [www.sitproplus.eu](http://www.sitproplus.eu). The project was funded by the European Commission through the 7th Framework Programme. Along with four other research projects it formed part of a broader initiative in the Transport Research Programme for developing specific impact assessment methodologies for EC-funded projects.

This is the second rapid report of the project. It presents a summary of the final results of the project.

### **Main project results**

1. There is a gap between the stated and actual use of transport research results by relevant stakeholders or users. Between 30 and 60 percent of research goes unexploited. Exploitation in this context means 'documented use' as through reference or acknowledgement in documents. The degree of lack of exploitation is higher if the actual implementation of research results is considered instead. The fall-out rate of the use of transport research is high not only among policy institutions (such as the EU institutions or national public administrations) but also within the industry—a surprising finding considering that the industry is the main beneficiary of transport research contracts.
2. Transport research continues to produce two main types of outputs: academic outputs such as publications and methods on the one hand; and transport modelling tools and components, on the other. Neither technologies nor policy-relevant outputs are as important, contrary to the rhetoric of some Framework Programme documents on the subject.
3. The policy impact of transport research is often more by name than real. Six out of ten projects consider their results policy-relevant and four out of ten projects think that their research contributes to policy harmonization. However the policy relevance dwindles when specific transport policy objectives such as rail harmonization, road policy or the TEN-T are considered. The gap, which cannot be explained away by the thematic variation of the projects, is the combined result of two factors, namely, the comparatively low specific knowledge of transport policy issues

among some project coordinators in conjunction with the transport modelling paradigm still dominant among those in charge of designing the European transport research programme.

4. All transport projects are, as expected, actively involved in disseminating their results through the standard means of publications, workshops, conferences, websites and project reports. The latter are, however, considered the least efficient means for disseminating project results.
5. Projects which are large in terms of partnership (often also involving users and stakeholders in their consortia) and diffused in terms of contents (i.e. having more than one topic and a broad scope) are more likely to consider themselves as policy-relevant. This is in line with the present logic of policy-design which emphasizes cross-sectoral integration. However, insofar as specific policy output is concerned, projects which are more focused in terms of topic and research design are more likely to produce real policy outputs. This is the case for both small and large projects (in terms of number of partners) but more so the case for large projects.
6. National administrations appear more receptive to transport research results (of all types of research projects) than European institutions. This could also suggest that project coordinators are finding it easier to 'sell' their project results to their national administrations than to representatives of European institutions, not least because they are more familiar with the former than with the latter.
7. Projects which are large and diffused in terms of content, i.e. which tap on different topics and display a broad scope, are perhaps less likely to produce evidence for policy use; but they are more likely to lead to new business opportunities and also to a wider transfer of knowledge.
8. There remain significant science-policy gaps in the transport field that need to be addressed, over and above the specifics of individual projects, but rather at the programme level, if European transport research is to have greater impact in the future.

### Research Policy Objectives

1. Energy efficiency and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions - A large proportion of project coordinators appear to agree that the most important challenges for research are currently related to improving the energy efficiency of the transport system and reducing its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In terms of concrete objectives for research policy two issues were particularly highlighted. The first is the charging for or **pricing** of transport infrastructure. Charging schemes in line with current EU legislation still do not take into account the full environmental costs of transport and are thus not ideally suited to address the issue of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.  
The second suggested shift in research policy priorities relates to propulsion systems of (mostly road) vehicles. In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on supporting research towards battery based **electric vehicles**. From the research community there are serious doubts whether those types of vehicles can and should be promoted as a medium term feasible alternative to various types of combustion engines or fuel cell based electric vehicles. For a variety of reasons it is suggested promote research into a number of different technologies including second generation biofuels, fuel cells, hydrogen storage, efficiency increases of "conventional" combustion engines, hybrid technologies, etc.
2. Safety - Safety improvements in the transport system are still towards the top of the agenda for large parts of the research community. This includes all modes of transport but particular emphasis should be placed on further safety improvements in **road transport** and (maritime) **shipping**. The latter also includes a modernization of the shipping industry towards an increased uptake of electronic management solutions similar to those that have already been introduced in other

modes of transport (e.g. road and air). For this purpose benchmarking activities and transfer of knowledge could be undertaken.

3. Innovative products and technology - Innovative products and technologies are both an aim in itself (to boost the international competitiveness of European industry) and a support for other transport research objectives, such as improving energy efficiency and safety. Among the important targets for supporting research on innovative products are a number of technologies, materials and concepts that contribute to **reducing the weight** of vehicles / vessels.
4. Social cohesion - Increasing social cohesion and supporting capacity building is one of the important impacts of the Framework Programme in general and of the transport programme in particular. Maximizing this impact should remain an objective of certain projects or lines of research in the transport programme.
5. Standardization - An early integration in projects or programme of possibilities for standardization greatly improves the potential impact of transport research. In a number of cases it was found that research itself or the successful exploitation of its output was dependent on the degree to which the stakeholders responsible for standardization were involved in a project from an early stage onwards. In some cases already the conception of a project in the FP Workprogramme would benefit from a stakeholder consultation to investigate the potential for standardization and agreements on technical specifications. This is especially relevant in the railway sector but also in terms of standardizing interfaces and components in the car industry.
6. Harmonization - Harmonization among Member States should be further pursued in those areas in which it has not yet been addressed or achieved (e.g. the training of drivers; railways and road).

## **Recommendations**

The following paragraphs present the ten key recommendations derived from the analysis of the SITPRO Plus project.

- 1. Develop a strategic research agenda for surface transport**  
The surface transport programme would benefit from being based on a strategic research agenda similar to the one currently in place for aeronautics in the framework of ACARE.
- 2. Formulate a clear policy for collaboration with third countries**  
The globalization of research calls for clear and consistent policies for the involvement of partners from third countries beyond time limited programmes for certain regions. This policy needs to provide a secure medium to long term framework in which collaboration with non-EU partner organizations can be built up and maintained.
- 3. Specify European added value for individual tasks**  
In reality the European added value of FP transport projects differs widely and should be specified for individual research tasks or at least by project types. This goes beyond the directly expected impacts of individual projects and refers to the more long term and indirect effects of projects, particularly their long term contribution to overarching EU policy goals such as, for example, social cohesion, economic competitiveness or the freedom of movement of goods and persons.

**4. Reconsider appropriate project sizes**

More differentiation should be introduced for the size of project in individual research tasks. Considering the adequacy of projects' budgets at the evaluation stage remains necessary but in many cases this is too late since the entire project design (including the partnership) has already been built around an envisaged budget which is either too low or too high for the task at hand.

**5. Align timing and user involvement**

Especially in policy relevant research the timing of the availability of results is crucial. For some FP5 and FP6 highly useful results could not be taken into account because projects were only completed at a time where the relevant decisions had already been taken. This also explains why certain support activities are increasingly subject to short term tenders rather than being supplied through projects of the Framework Programme. To maximize the policy relevance of FP projects it would be useful to put a particular emphasis in involving the end users already at an early stage of preparing a work programme to align the timing of research work with their demands.

**6. Increase flexibility**

Flexibility in managing FP projects should be increased to allow a better reaction to changes of external demands during the duration of the project.

**7. Increase continuity consider institutionalizing follow up actions**

In many areas of FP5 and FP6 a lack of continuity was found to lead to inefficiencies and a loss of know-how. Continuity should be increased through institutionalizing follow up actions for those projects which are deemed to be particularly successful.

**8. Improve dissemination beyond the end of the project**

One specific aspect of increasing continuity (see point 7) is to create a system for improving the dissemination of projects' results beyond their official duration. Currently this is sometimes being done on a project by project basis and the Transport Research Knowledge Centre at least provides for the availability of project documentation. However, a more active and comprehensive strategy is needed to maximize the exploitation of know-how generated by FP transport projects.

**9. Improve feedback loop from projects to EC**

The feedback loop from projects to the European Commission should be improved beyond the single link via the individual task officer. This also includes regular feedback to the FP programme committee.

**10. Institutionalize accompanying evaluation**

Continuous evaluation of FP transport projects should be built into the system including requirements for projects in terms of supplying necessary and relevant documentation to evaluators

## Cluster Projects

The SITPRO Plus project was part of a larger FP5/FP6 Evaluation Cluster that was funded by DG RESEARCH in the framework of FP7. In total, this cluster comprised five projects with slightly differing scopes and methodologies. The other four projects were:



AIMS

Freight transport – all modes

<http://www.aims-project.net/>



AGAPE

Air transport



MEFISTO

Air transport

<http://www.mefisto-project.eu/>



METRONOME

All modes except air – passenger and freight

<http://www.vtt.fi/sites/metronome/index.jsp>

### **Information details**

Project full title: Study of the Impacts of the Transport RTD Projects in FP5 and FP6 (SITPRO Plus)

Duration: October 2008 – September 2010

Project coordinator: The Interdisciplinary Centre for Comparative Research in the Social Sciences

Project partners: Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds, UK

TIS.pt, Consultores em Transportes, Inovação e Sistemas, Lisbon, Portugal

Nouveaux espaces de transport en Europe, Paris, France

Contact :

Michael Schmidt

ICCR Vienna, Schottenfeldgasse 69/1, 1070 Vienna, Austria

Phone : +43 1 524 1393 126

E-mail : [m.schmidt@iccr-international.org](mailto:m.schmidt@iccr-international.org)

Web : [www.sitproplus.eu](http://www.sitproplus.eu)