



PRESS RELEASE

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PIA TOOLS DEDICATED TO THE VALORISATION OF PUBLIC RESEARCH

A strong strategic ambition, but disappointing results

Valorisation of public research refers to the way in which knowledge developed by researchers in public structures is used by companies or the researchers themselves to produce economic and social value.

This may be achieved via partnerships between public laboratories and companies, technology transfers or researchers' moving between the public and private sectors. This valorisation is vital to nurture companies' innovation and stimulate competitiveness and growth in the economy.

New solutions designed to improve valorisation of public research have been created in the framework of the future investment programme (PIA). The Cour des Comptes has prepared an initial assessment of their functioning in order to analyse their effectiveness, following on from its report in 2015 on management and governance of the PIA.

The government's support for this policy can only be assessed over the long term. Nevertheless, the results obtained by some valorisation structures set up by the PIA, which are well below initial forecasts, should lead to the public authorities rapidly tightening the scope and funding of these new tools.

The creation of new valorisation structures – a risky gamble by the PIA

Rather than reforming and simplifying the existing valorisation solution, the public authorities chose, in the framework of the first future investments programme (PIA 1), to set up new structures from scratch, gambling on their effectiveness and viability at the cost of a massive investment of public money. The PIA's ambitions in terms of excellence and disruption ran into a series of difficult obstacles from the outset, however.

The new valorisation structures sometimes found themselves competing with existing entities, particularly those set up by national research bodies and universities. Concerns over territorial coverage led to the generalisation of solutions designed to be selective. The objectives defined often proved inappropriate, leading to the continued existence of some structures when their difficulties could have raised doubts over their viability.

The internal governance of those structures is complex and often involves a large number of disparate participants, sometimes with divergent objectives. Finally, the ANR (National Agency for Research) encountered difficulties fulfilling its role as facilitator of PIA initiatives.

Mixed and, so far, disappointing results

Compared with their broad and ambitious initial objectives, the first results from the new valorisation structures created by the PIA appear very varied, often below initial ambitions and



disappointing overall compared with the significant financial resources allocated.

Creation of the new valorisation structures involved a number of gambles, particularly including their appropriation by public higher education and research institutions. This has been very mixed, however, resulting in insufficient integration of the new structures into the valorisation ecosystem. The existence of duplicates has so far prevented the anticipated economies of scale being achieved.

The simultaneous creation of new structures has also led to a certain amount of confusion in the public research valorisation sector.

Finally, the structures' economic model presents intrinsic fragility, which appears to have been underestimated at the outset and which could, for many of them, imply continued reliance on public funding, even outside the PIA.

Tightening the perimeter of the PIA tools and improving public research valorisation conditions

The results obtained by some structures, which are well below initial forecasts, should lead to the public authorities rapidly tightening the scope and funding of these new tools.

Most of the new valorisation structures created by the PIA are now at a pivotal point, particularly in view of the upcoming three-year reviews, whose results will be decisive for use of the remaining credits from PIA 1 and 2 and potential allocation of PIA 3 credits. Those demonstrating insurmountable intrinsic or system weakness, most notably the SATT Grand Centre, should be immediately closed down. The Cour des Comptes also believes that the CVT (Consortia of Thematic Valorisation) system should be ended.

For those structures justifying an extension of public support beyond the initially planned period, assessment of their value-added should be based on robust socio-economic impact indicators that can be used by both their governance bodies and the supervisory authorities.

In any case, to achieve all their expected outcomes, in addition to a favourable regulatory environment these new PIA tools require a sufficient level of commitment from companies.

Recommendations

The Cour des Comptes has made 11 recommendations, which are designed to:

- tighten the perimeter of the PIA valorisation systems;
- reinforce the integration of these new structures in the innovation ecosystem;
- measure their socio-economic impact;
- reinforce the circulation of competencies between public research and the private sector.

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