

TIRIS

Scientific coordinator: TOPLIS, Michael

Leading institution: Toulouse Midi-Pyrénées Federal University

Key strengths of the project

The Toulouse academic landscape is a powerhouse with major strengths in the fields of Aerospace Engineering, Remote Sensing and Water resources, Economics, but also in the fields of Agronomy, Physics, Reproductive biology and Humanities.

Six of the major HEIs in Toulouse with six of the major NROs have finally been able to rally their forces grouped under the heading of the Université Fédérale Toulouse Midi-Pyrénées as the leading institution, to submit jointly this project with the aim after years of disagreement to evolve towards an integrated research university. By defining actions in favor of a clear academic identity with targeted incentives, the goal is to create new interactions between partners in a bottom-up fashion with the creation of six research poles. By putting the focus on three key societal challenges they should be able to start an institutional transformation process in view of creating a world-class Research-Intensive University within a few years.

Choices have been made to orient funding requests to a relatively small number of priority actions that contribute directly to the main objective, but very significant additional funding will be provided by the Region, the direct partners of TIRIS and by socio-economic partners.

Main weaknesses of the project

- The institutional landscape in Toulouse remains very complex and fluid with strong divisions of various kinds. Thus, the degree of real commitment of the various partners remains uncertain and the real academic ambition vague. It is telling that the plan is so far to move only from a COMUE to an Experimental COMUE, not an EPE.
- The plan to apparently create a 'Toulouse Capitole Université' as an EPE with the Toulouse School of Economics within it, is worrisome and one wonders how it will impact the ongoing process.
- How, besides research, TIRIS will impact significantly teaching and innovation, is unclear.
- Why has the Toulouse CHU not joined the consortium while 'Understanding and fostering living in good health and well-being' is one of the main research topics?
- The proposal lacks a timetable, key milestones and some details on its implementation.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching and innovation should receive more attention, besides the TIRIS pedagogical innovation unit.
- Clarify the Toulouse CHU place in the project.
- Consider as a target, moving from an Experimental COMUE to an EPE.
- A timetable with key milestones and details on implementation should be defined.
- More attention should be paid to the monitoring of the change and internal communication.

General assessment

RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING

Considering the huge academic and scientific potential of Toulouse HEIs, this opportunity to kick start at last an institutional rapprochement despite the remaining uncertainties is welcome. The various aspects of the strategy that this project will initiate make sense, but more attention should be paid to teaching and innovation and one would have liked a few more concrete details on its implementation. As important additional matching funds will be provided by the Region, this may be a very significant additional incentive for the various partners to indeed overcome their divisions and to continue moving toward an ever-closer institutional partnership, and to achieve at last a world-class Research-Intensive University in Toulouse.

This summary is the result of the Committee's collective analysis of the project, taking into account the discussions of the Committee during its meetings.