

ECIU input to the Horizon Europe Consultation

ECIU participated in the [online consultation](#) to share its views on the revised version of the [Orientations towards the first Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe document](#). The consultation was focused on umbrella organisations, networks with a cross-border dimension and a mission of advocacy relevant to research and innovation such as ECIU. You can find the ECIU contribution to all four questions below. Because of the limited number of characters (1500 per reply), the positions and arguments are very to the point.

Q: Which targeted impacts can be best reached (or only reached) through Horizon Europe? On the other hand, what are the targeted impacts, mentioned in the updated orientations, least likely to benefit from Horizon Europe investments?

A broad definition of 'impact' must be practised for all targeted impacts. Innovation in support of wealth depends just as much on business model innovation as on technology. Application of the award criteria 'impact' must make clear that different types of impact – societal, scientific and economic – should be addressed.

As a consequence of the importance of the UN 2030 Agenda, pre-eminence must be given to impact on the Sustainable Development Goals. SDGs can only be reached through very large, holistic, coordinated and differentiated R&I programmes.

To realise impact in society, Horizon Europe must support universities in their mission to nurture entrepreneurial spirit amongst researchers and provide those from outside the university with opportunities to access relevant knowledge. Opportunities should be given to potential entrepreneurs, as talents and creativity have to be identified and curated to grow to be the champions of tomorrow.

To make optimal use of Europe's innovation potential, innovation must be democratised and the right to be creative must be ensured. Europe's talents must be cherished by students, society and citizens in Horizon Europe's innovation activities. Social innovation infrastructures are key. Regional, national and European funding must be made available to support these activities. Funding must be long term and stable, as innovation takes time. Synergies with Europe's educational programme Erasmus are also crucial.

Q: Which common challenges between different clusters could reinforce their impacts (e.g. environment and health, green IT...)?

Interdisciplinarity is an important way to stimulate innovation and achieve far-reaching impact in society. Therefore, the clusters must support the integration of social sciences and humanities for effective innovation.

All stakeholders must be included in the process of detection and the proposal of solutions in the clusters. This implies democracy, transparency, education, open exchange of ideas and values, shifts in roles and relationships, etc. Co-creation and innovation are ways to use technology efficiently to realise societal progress and to ensure that the right technology is embedded in society.

The 4-helix approach, including academia, industry, policymakers and citizens, is necessary to allow real societal innovation. The living lab is an effective tool to develop new visions and innovative

solutions for societal problems when used in a facility like a fab lab where many stakeholders are involved.

Realising impact of clusters requires addressing several transversal issues: Human capital, citizen-centric approaches, co-creation and innovation. It is also equally important that participants are trained to operate in multidisciplinary teams and across different educational and societal backgrounds and levels.

To be competitive and sustainable in a globalised world, research in environmental policy across subject areas (climate change, biodiversity, health etc.) is needed to prepare for both environmental risks and opportunities.

Q: Beyond research and innovation, which other measures would be needed at the European level to best achieve the targeted impacts (e.g. innovation deals...)?

Synergies are key:

- Innovative ecosystems are crucial for realising societal and digital transformation. Ecosystems must be supported and connected through Horizon Europe and the Open Innovation pillar. Also, the Smart Specialisation Strategies and RIS3 can better enable academy, industry, policy advisers and citizens to collaborate.
- The EIC must push the regional innovation agenda in close collaboration with regional stakeholders, seeking synergy with the existing Smart Specialisation Strategies to ensure regional impact.
- Synergetic co-creation should be reflected in funding mechanisms, i.e. Horizon Europe co-financing activities together with local/regional/national funding bodies and private investors.
- Education, research and innovation links must be strengthened to support knowledge transfer. E.g. education must include the latest research results and there are major opportunities for synergies: Horizon Europe – European Universities Initiative.

Technology transfer from university to society must be better supported, e.g. the role of knowledge transfer professionals. They bring together different actors, support innovation capabilities and increase impact (set-up spin-offs, IPR issues, etc.).

To ensure compliance for making data FAIR, the costs generated by the management of research data must be eligible. Furthermore, to create an innovation culture, universities need academic incentives for innovation. Open Innovation rewards must be part of the Open Science-label.

Q: What are your impressions on the co-design process and how can we improve it?

ECIU welcomes the open Strategic Planning process. Participation in the debate must be open, equal and fair to enable effective policymaking. The R&I Days are a good idea for co-design. We felt heard and hope that the concept is continued. The mix of concrete sessions, discussions and showcasing results, while bringing different stakeholders together, worked well. The Horizon Village was excellent.

The impact of participating in consultations and the R&I Days is not transparent. Because so many contributions were made, the impact of a single contribution is not clear. Feedback from the R&I Days is lacking: What are the main outputs? Will Commission implement our suggestions? Also, the organisation of the Days must improve, there was confusion about registration and participation beforehand.



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CHALLENGING CONVENTIONAL THINKING

It is crucial to include the perspective of innovative universities when preparing an R&I programme because they are the necessary and natural connectors and drivers of international and regional ecosystems. They provide systemic change with their research results and contributions to social transformation and they are key for realising a European entrepreneurship culture. Therefore, universities must be very well represented in the co-design process and in relevant Expert Groups and partnerships. ECIU is pleased that universities are present in the EIC Advisory Board and Mission Boards. We urge that the voice of innovative universities is heard and listened to.