

Contribution of the Leibniz Association to the consultation

“Horizon Europe co-design 2021-2024”

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With the present opinion paper the Leibniz Association, representing the interests of around 10,000 researchers in Germany, intends to contribute to the EU’s consultation on the orientation of Horizon Europe. We deem it essential to involve decision makers and stakeholders in the designing of the future Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP). However, we call on the European Commission (EC) to **demonstrate how the input gained from the stakeholder consultations will be translated into the drafting of the future Horizon Europe work programmes** and which measures will be put in place to ensure accountability. The open consultation on the Strategic Plan should be a true co-designing process rather than an awareness-raising exercise for science and innovation.

Last April the EC set out a number of policy recommendations for the next EU’s strategic agenda for 2019-2024¹ and has assigned Horizon Europe a substantial role in achieving the EU’s key policy goals as well as the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). This is an important step as, for the first time, a **Framework Programme for Research and Innovation** will be an **instrument for the implementation of a pan-European political agenda**.

It is, therefore, crucial that **research and innovation funded in Pillar II** of Horizon Europe (i.e. the six thematic clusters, the missions and partnerships) are **aligned with the political priorities for Europe’s future**, while the **UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** should provide the overarching **frame of reference for the future FP**. In this regard, the underlying SDGs concerning the biosphere, i.e. climate action, life on land, life below water and clean water and sanitation, should be given particular priority as their achievement will provide the indispensable basis for reaching the societal and economic SDGs.

The overall strategic focus that takes into consideration the political priorities of the EU, the needs of the society at large as well as the expertise of scientists is intended to steer the Union towards future prosperity and sustainable growth. To ensure that the strategic orientation is maintained under Horizon Europe and in line with the newest research findings, the **expert advisory boards should be continued for all funding lines**, and not only for the missions. Also, it requires a more systemic and **integrated approach as regards the coordination of national research agendas and the EU FP**, while a stronger alignment of different EU funding programmes (e.g. COSME, Erasmus+, ESF, LIFE etc.) would help to avoid duplication and strengthen synergies.

¹ https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-2309_en.htm

Horizon Europe should play its strongest role where the European added value is highest. This ambition will be central to the consolidation and further development of the European Research Area (ERA). Fostering transnational research cooperation and creating networks throughout Europe and beyond generates a very strong European added value. Hence, Horizon Europe must provide a framework that allows for the integration of all relevant ERA actors. The **sole criterion for funding decisions** in Horizon Europe must, however, remain the **excellence of the research**. Moreover, it will be essential for Europe's future knowledge base to maintain the **balance between excellent knowledge-oriented research with a longer term perspective and technological innovation-oriented projects**, both in the clusters and the missions.

Pillar I and pillar III, following primarily a bottom-up approach, are not and should not be impacted by the Strategic Plan. These pillars, and in particular the European Research Council, **need to remain mostly independent of policy priorities**. The Excellent Science pillar has become an essential part of the EU FP and a cornerstone for the development of the ERA, but funding for excellent knowledge-oriented research should not be restricted to it.

The Leibniz Association supports the idea of a mission-oriented European research policy which reflects the Leibniz institutes' cooperative approach and strong links to society. We welcome, in principle, the five mission areas to be implemented under Horizon Europe, three of which adopt ideas submitted by the Leibniz Association in the consultation process of 2018. The future **missions** ought to offer a **high added value with relation to the thematic clusters and partnerships** and create links to research and innovation activities across Horizon Europe. As proposed by the EC, the future missions should allow for **different approaches and funding schemes** and should offer **room for knowledge-oriented research as well as for smaller project consortia**. Any decision on the introduction of further missions under Horizon Europe should be carefully weighed against the available financial resources and, thus, the targets they can reach.

Horizon Europe must consider social, economic and technological change at both European and global levels and enhance the impact of research and innovation on society. This requires the adoption of **strategies to address different cross-cutting aspects for Horizon Europe**:

The cooperation with third countries should be a top priority. The challenges European citizens will face in the future are of a global nature and can thus only be tackled through close collaboration with international partners. The **full association of third countries to Horizon Europe** will be beneficial to all and should be pursued.

The Leibniz Association fully supports the EC's **Open Science policy**. It holds the potential to greatly increase the scientific, economic and societal impacts of Horizon Europe. It should **be implemented in a manner appropriate to the needs of the different research fields and disciplines**, which, in turn, needs to be reflected in the evaluation processes for funding decisions.

Research that spans the disciplinary spectrum – from the natural sciences to the humanities – is decisive in producing knowledge and innovation that benefit societies and ecosystems. To maximize impact and unfold the new FP's full potential, the social sciences and humanities (SSH) need to be integrated into R&I activities throughout Horizon Europe, including the missions. A crucial part of the genuine **embedding of SSH is a true co-creation process of calls** which will guarantee that the SSH research is not merely a small side stage of the project objectives. Furthermore, the **impact assessment of projects must take into account the SSH research specific requirements** and not be limited to Technology Readiness Levels.

In order to foster mutual knowledge transfer from research to society it is not enough to involve citizens in the co-design of the FP. Scientific findings from EU-funded projects need to be communicated to society either through direct intervention, political intermediaries or policy-makers. Therefore, **places of knowledge transfer and science education (e.g. museums, libraries, information infrastructures) should be further promoted** as providers of access to scientific results and platforms for dialogue between researchers and the public.

The Leibniz Association

The Leibniz Association connects 95 independent research institutions that range in focus from natural, engineering and environmental sciences to economics, spatial and social sciences and the humanities. Leibniz Institutes address issues of social, economic and ecological relevance.

They conduct basic and applied research, including in the interdisciplinary Leibniz Research Alliances, maintain scientific infrastructure, and provide research-based services. The Leibniz Association identifies focus areas for knowledge transfer, particularly with the Leibniz research museums. It advises and informs policymakers, science, industry and the general public.

Leibniz institutions collaborate intensively with universities – including in the form of Leibniz ScienceCampi – as well as with industry and other partners at home and abroad. They are subject to a transparent, independent evaluation procedure. Because of their importance for the country as a whole, the Leibniz Association Institutes are funded jointly by Germany's central and regional governments. The Leibniz Institutes employ around 20,000 people, including 10,000 researchers. The total budget for all the institutes is approximately 2.1 billion euros.

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Contact Leibniz Europe Office:

Claudia Labisch,
Head of Office
labisch@leibniz-gemeinschaft.de