



Position Paper on the past, present and future of the European Research & Innovation Framework programmes 2014-2027

IZTECH Working Group on EU Framework Programme Horizon Europe

Polish Chamber of Commerce for High Tech Technology (IZTECH)*

23.02.2023

IZTECH Working Group on EU Framework Programme Horizon Europe was established by the [Polish Chamber of Commerce for High Tech Technology](#) (IZTECH). The Group consists of the representatives of institutional IZTECH members. At the moment it gathers 25 representatives, from 10 [companies](#), [7 universities](#), [7 research institutes](#) and [1 foundation](#). The group is chaired by Ms. Katarzyna Walczyk-Matuszyk representing the Institute for Fundamental Technological Research Polish Academy of Sciences.

The mission of the Group is to represent the voice of Polish R&I and high-tech community in regard to the EU Framework Programmes and in particular the Horizon Europe, at the national and European level. The goals of the group targeting EU level are as follow:

- Participation in ex-post evaluation and position on Horizon 2020;
- Participation in mid-term evaluation and position on Horizon Europe;
- Preparation of position paper on EU Strategic Planning 2025 -2027;
- Preparation of position paper on 10th Framework Programme;
- Preparation and presentation at the EU level aspects which are relevant for the Polish R&I community;
- Cooperation with EU institutions and partners, in particular with the European Commission and the European Parliament.

In the current Position Paper, the Group provides the European Commission with recommendations using the experience and expertise of its members in regard to the Framework Programmes and R&I activities.

Background and context of work on the Strategic Planning 2025 -2027

The discussion over the new Strategic Planning 2025 -2027 is of high importance for setting the priorities for the future of the European research and innovation. Therefore, the deliberate analysis of the previous and current Framework Programmes should focus over all



the elements and consider the perspective and experiences of stakeholders throughout the European Research Area **in line with the New EU Innovation Agenda** accepted by the EC in 2022. The voices of academia and industry, those representing basic and advanced research, are equally important.

Bridging Innovation Divide by using the full potential in all Member States and regions in Horizon Europe

In our opinion it should be a priority for the EU to use the full potential of innovation in all Member States and regions of the Union and to combine the efforts of all actors involved in reducing barriers for innovation in Europe. Therefore, it is important to introduce specific and practical mechanisms to support this process, as well as mechanisms for **the effective inclusion of new institutions, in particular so called “islands of excellence” in underperforming EU regions.**

Missions and Partnerships

The idea of Missions and Partnerships should streamline the efforts to tackle the main challenges the EU is facing in the current financial perspective. By engaging the governments and citizens they are aimed to provide new role for research and innovation. However, some bottlenecks can be observed both as to **the thematic areas selected for support as well as instruments of intervention.**

Participation of member states stakeholders’ representatives in **programming activities** is not sufficiently balanced. Especially Regional Innovation Schemes (RIS) countries seem to be underrepresented. The same applies to European partnerships’ governing bodies and the concept of partnerships in general, which is quite difficult to understand and thus to participate by many stakeholders.

The growing focus on market relevance of projects’ results is a very welcome approach. However, in practice it further favours RTOs from regions where the high-tech industry is located. In parallel efforts should be focused on ways to connect excellent science from all regions of Europe with industry champions and vice versa. Especially **initiatives linking RIS and non-RIS countries should be encouraged.**

Case of EU Mission: Cancer

According to the European Commission and the World Health Organization (WHO), cancer represents the **second most important cause of death and morbidity in Europe** with more than **3.5 million new cases a year**. It means that, on average, **every 9 seconds a person is**



diagnosed with cancer in the EU. Although cancer is an individual diagnosis, it has a significant impact not only on patients, but also severely affects the lives of their families and friends.

To meet future health challenges and to give new opportunities for effective treatment for patients sustainable funding is needed at all stages of healthcare. Therefore, it is also necessary to wisely invest and create a framework for **personalised oncology**: (1) **discovery and development of innovative drugs**, (2) **innovative targeted therapies**, and (3) **unmet medical needs**. Unfortunately, we do not find any of these areas in the Cluster 1 Work Programmes or Mission Cancer. We note with particular concern that the **field of discovery and development of innovative drugs is being overlooked and neglected, and the establishment of the Cancer Mission resulted in the almost complete removal of oncological issues from the Cluster 1 Work Programme**. In addition, in calls for 2021-2022 in the field of unmet medical needs, new therapies, immunotherapy, rare diseases, or personalised medicine, **cancer was excluded**. Ambitious plans related to Horizon Europe were to build multi-programme synergies for the indicated EU priorities, while cancer seems to be isolated right now. We perceive this as a decidedly undesirable course of action. In addition, **Mission Cancer has launched very limited calls, mostly for selected early stages of healthcare** (prevention and diagnostics). Without a full portfolio of activities and real support also for the medical biotechnology sector, it will not be possible to win the fight against cancer, which is one of the priorities of the European Health Union, and a secure, better-prepared, and more resilient EU. **The research, innovation, and technology gap related to unmet medical needs grow every year.**

The upcoming **European Partnerships in the field of Rare Diseases and Personalized Medicine should include on their agendas research and innovation actions in the fight against cancer**. Rare cancers account for about 22 percent of all cancers diagnosed worldwide. Moreover, each year in Europe there are 35,000 new cases of cancer in children and adolescents. That figure rises substantially to 3.7 million when adults are included.

It is time to seriously open up to innovation in **personalized oncology** and real support for research activities directly related to treatment. In the current strategic plan, this aspect was clearly underestimated contrary to the other aspects and areas.

Widening

Framework Programme's instruments targeting countries with low performance in research excellence and innovation proved their significance, however the area still requires targeted Intervention and significant financial resources. In general, **instrument building the capacity of R&I organisations and RTOs, supporting their efficiency in obtaining EU projects or competitive funding as well shaping their own R&I agendas are of a great needed in**



Widening countries. Core instruments such as **Teaming for Excellence**, **ERA Chair** or **Twinning** are successfully impacting the R&I organisations and actively shaping the environment, and therefore **should be continued**. In addition, instruments **reversing the brain-drain** phenomena in the region are as well an important element of the Widening package. **Excellence Hubs** revealed the high demand for actions supporting innovations and therefore the intervention should be kept, yet project duration and budget could be bigger to ensure the higher impact.

The **Hop-on** instrument is promising the possibility for entities from Widening countries to join successful consortia in the areas of the Framework Programme where they are underrepresented. Yet, **its implementation reveals many bottlenecks**. The rules for selecting additional partners are not clear. Similarly, the process of expressing interest by project coordinators to include an additional partner is not well explained to the community. Moreover, one cut-off per year is not satisfactory as it limits the possibility to hop-on and may result in the timely-limited collaboration. As we can observe an innovation divide throughout ERA, it should be considered to extend the Hop-on scheme to Innovation Actions as well. **In addition, the evaluation process of the instrument should be launched.**

Research management and administration is one of the weakest link of research and innovation entities in Widening countries in general. At the same time it is crucial in the capacity building process for R&I entities. Therefore, new **dedicated calls should be launched** to enable the exchange of best practices, shadow mentoring and transfer of know-how. The nature of the calls could be similar to those targeting Gender Equality Plans, yet the scale should be bigger to reach a significant number of R&I institutions.

The impact of Widening intervention on other parts of Horizon Europe should be monitored. There is a need of statistical analysis presenting the participation of Widening countries in each pillar and programmes like e.g.: ERC, MSCA, clusters etc. The impact of Widening actions on their beneficiaries in regard to success rates in HE in total and Pillar II as well as ERC grants should be measured. Similarly, the participation of Widening countries representatives in governing bodies of Partnerships as well as their presence in the evaluators portfolio should be presented regularly.

European Innovation Council (EIC)

As the basic principle of the Framework Programme is excellence, so the **EIC should as well focus on the excellence of innovation presented by a single company**. Yet, the decision of awarding with the grant and capital funding is subjected to the business excellence to large extent. However, the aspect of business excellence can be maximised in the process



of supporting the company in the demonstration and commercialisation phase as it is a standard way how business accelerators or business angels should proceed. Such an approach would enable many breakthrough innovations to be implemented on the market and effectively face the EU current challenges.

The statistics on EIC core instruments such as EIC Accelerator or EIC Pathfinder reveal the **poor share of entities from Widening countries in the funded projects**. Current measures targeting this bottleneck are not satisfactory and do not influence the situation, like e.g.: Hop-on in regard to EIC Pathfinder. Therefore, a new approach is required. Mechanisms ensuring higher participation of innovative companies from underrepresented countries, in projects financed under the Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator calls should be introduced

EIC gives its priorities to companies, in particular SMEs, the role of academia is limited. Yet, RTOs such as research institutes have a very important role in the process of providing input into high-tech technologies and supporting the demonstration process. Therefore, **more emphasize should be given to academia-industry collaboration**.

For EIC Accelerator we suggest an ex-post evaluation in regard to **the projects with SoE** and those awarded but focused on technologies and geographical distribution. It would be very helpful to have a big picture which innovations have been appreciated by the EIC either with direct support or with the SoE, also in regard to the timespan and geographical distribution.

Financial rules

Lump sum funding

In our opinion lump sum funding should be implemented more widely in all parts of Horizon Europe. The programme uses lump sum funding to reduce administration and financial errors. Lump sums make the programme simpler by removing the need to report actual costs. This means easier access to the programme, especially for small organisations and newcomers, who often lack the experience and capacity to cope with the complex rules for actual costs. In particular, the payment of lump sums is not dependent on successful outcomes (which are never certain in research) and follows the standard payment schedule. Lump sum projects enjoy the same degree of flexibility, and their performance is judged by the same standards.

Depreciation of demonstrator installations

Compared to H2020, in HE regulations the possibility of direct payment for demonstrators of technologies was removed. Now it can be only depreciated. In some countries this is problematic, because all components of value above specified threshold are treated as an equipment. This leads to the situation that in the same project partners from one countries



can fully cover the cost of demonstrator, while others doing similar installation can only cover some part of its cost in depreciation. This problem is especially crucial for universities which will not make direct benefits from the pilot installations, but also for the companies which put very high risk in building a new kind of installation.

Evaluation

Blind evaluation

We would like to underline the importance of blind evaluation process and call for keeping this as a rule in regard to two-stage calls (short proposal should always be a subject of blind evaluation) in all the **Pillar II clusters**. This would ensure putting excellence at the heart of the future projects and being free of bias.

Effective implementation of a new additional selection criterion for ex aequo proposals based on geographical diversity

We appreciate the new additional selection criterion of geographical diversity which, without harming the excellence principle, gives the priority to proposals with wider geographical representations of entities. **We believe that this mechanism creates a motivation to have well-balanced project consortia with higher number of excellent participants, also from underrepresented regions.** However, the analysis presenting the impact of this criterion is missing. E.g.: Is the usual size of consortia under HE bigger and more balanced than under H2020? Is the number of newcomers to the programme bigger? Are the numbers of entities from underrepresented regions higher?

Synergies

Pilot implementation of synergies between ESIF and H2020 brought an impact in particular to the Seal of Excellence in the EIC Accelerator or MSCA actions, or complementary funding for Teaming for Excellence. Simplifications presented in the guide on *Synergies between Horizon Europe and ERDF programmes* by the EC in 2022 provided Member States with indications how to effectively implement synergies at the national and regional level. There is a room for using synergies in regard to the European partnerships in particular. Therefore, MS should be encouraged to use the possibility. In this matter, also actions like Pathway to Synergies should be a solid point in HE Work Programmes.

Simplification of participation access

The access to participation in the Framework Programmes is particularly important for newcomers and therefore the efficiency of the tools is of high importance.



Partner search tools are helpful engines in presenting interest in regard to particular calls and facilitate the process of joining project consortia. Yet, there is a room for improvement in regard to upgrading its functions through adding new filters such as e.g.: role preferred in the project, key words, scope of interest.

Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal is a very complex system presenting the vast majority of EU initiatives. However, the tool is quite advanced and in many cases to complicated for newcomers searching for relevant HE calls. Some simplification should be implemented in regard to the system but as well information for single calls.

*The Polish Chamber of Commerce for High Technology (IZTECH) was established in 2008. Its members are companies and research centres representing different high-tech branches. The Chamber's mission is to integrate the community, support high-tech initiatives and promote Polish technological solutions in Europe and the world. The Central European Technology Forum - CETEF is the flag event organised by the IZTECH in co-operation with technical universities and high-tech industries. In CETEF'22 we hosted Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth and Cristian-Silviu Buşoi, Chairman of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy of the European Parliament (<https://cetef.eu/>). The Chamber took an active role in the process of consultations for the European Commission's New European Innovation Agenda. Our position was presented at the session with Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth on June 29, 2022 at the European Parliament in Brussels during the 1st European Innovation Area Summit.