

INPUT ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION COMMUNICATION ON **HORIZON EUROPE MISSIONS**

October 2020

ERRIN, representing over 120 regional and local stakeholders active in research and innovation from across Europe, strongly supports the development and implementation of the missions in Horizon Europe. We particularly welcome the missions' bottom-up nature, flexibility, and the clear engagement of citizens. In view of the upcoming European Commission communication, ERRIN together with its members wishes to highlight the importance of directly involving local and regional actors – and their research and innovation ecosystems – in the governance, implementation, and monitoring of the missions.

Inclusive horizontal governance for better coherence of R&I activities

Achieving the ambitious visions set out by the Mission Boards through the interim reports goes far beyond the scope of what any one organisation or country could do alone. Missions are set to take a holistic approach to address large societal challenges where a multitude of solutions will be needed to achieve transformative change. Therefore, engaging a range of actors – public administrations, private sector, knowledge providers, civil society, and citizens – is essential to ensure shared objectives and a broad ownership of the missions. This calls for extensive cooperation between those who develop solutions, those who test them, those who produce and manage them, and those who use them i.e. moving towards co-created demand-driven research and innovation.

To illustrate, the Mission Board on Climate neutral and smart cities is proposing to establish a “climate-neutral city contract” that should mobilise all relevant actors at the local level to work towards achieving climate neutrality within a city, district, or metropolitan area by 2030. As part of the application process – to become one of the 100 cities participating in the mission – the city should share the commitment and responsibilities with stakeholders and citizens and co-create a plan for achieving climate neutrality by 2030.

A place-based perspective for sustainability and long-lasting impact

Engaging local and regional actors – and their ecosystems – in all stages of development, implementation, and monitoring of the missions is key to deliver long-lasting and sustainable impact. Two of the missions – Adaptation to climate change and Climate neutral and smart cities – are directly targeting the local and regional level, which have been recognised as the most suitable levels to reach the necessary impact seeing the close proximity to the citizen.

All mission areas should consider the local and regional dimension from the outset – when defining the scope, objectives, and desired activities. Taking the mission on cancer as an example, public

healthcare services are often provided at the regional and local level, making regional and local authorities an essential partner in achieving the objective of the mission.

In addition, regional and local actors should be explicitly included early in the development of the priorities and activities in the missions. This should be reflected in the mission texts, work programme design, selection criteria, as well as in the make-up of the governance structures. For example, any advisory boards or similar structures building on the current Mission Boards and Mission Assemblies should clearly include the regional and local perspective.

Role of missions in coordinating R&I policy at different governance levels

Missions have the opportunity – with their holistic approach – to increase the coordination between governance levels. The commitment of national governments and relevant agencies is crucial as they can channel funding to support the missions’ priorities as well as remove regulatory barriers that hinder the implementation. The national level could also provide specific support to facilitate collaboration and take on a key coordinating role with the regions, cities, and communities taking part in the missions from their Member State. This is echoed in the communication “A new ERA for Research and Innovation” where the engagement in missions is put forward as one of the tools available to support the alignment of national strategies as well as industrial and business investments towards common EU objectives.

At the same time, regions lead, promote, and financially support research and innovation agendas, and the regional level can use existing frameworks such as Smart Specialisation Strategies to support mission priorities. Regional and local authorities are also key in implementing research results and in deploying and sustaining innovation – from local climate strategies in the mission on Adaptation to climate change to being the public providers of healthcare services in the mission on Cancer – and as such their needs and contributions should be considered early on when identifying priorities and activities.

As an example, regions can be key in developing effective cancer prevention strategies and optimise existing screening programmes as recommended in the mission on cancer interim report. Their engagement is even more crucial in screening and treatment and in making these services accessible in rural areas. Regional health authorities together with healthcare professionals are ideally placed to identify territorial good practices related to cancer screening. By sharing reports on the implementation of population-based cancer screening programmes and specific obstacles regarding participation, resources can be used more effectively. Hence, regional experiences offer valuable expertise to shape screening programmes at the European level.

A well-supported implementation structure

To successfully implement the strategic portfolio approach, including the promotion of interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration, requires a well-supported implementation structure. The Mission Board interim reports remain open about the modalities of how the missions

will be funded. The type of instruments that will be developed in Horizon Europe to support the missions is a crucial issue. Using the regular Horizon 2020 methodology of publishing, evaluating, and managing calls and projects, will not be suitable to successfully achieve the missions' objectives. Therefore, an updated and more innovative fit-for-purpose model would need to be designed to support and finance the missions. A key characteristic for that model should be flexibility to allow for continuous input from a wide range of engaged actors.

For example, the Horizon 2020 Green Deal Call 1.2. aims to “lift off” the support for the mission on Climate neutral and smart cities to develop a one-stop-shop that would provide the necessary technical, regulatory, financial, and socio-economic expertise as well as assistance to the cities/districts/metropolitan areas, partly through cascade funding. Whilst the project consortium would certainly be an important partner in supporting the implementation of the mission, it should not replace an independent agency-like structure that is transparent and inclusive.

The European Commission should take a leading role and possibly put in place, as suggested by the Mission Board for healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters, an executive agency to coordinate the portfolio and manage the funding. The agency should be sufficiently flexible with an open governance model to provide the necessary support to the mission(s). We would also welcome the appointment of mission managers to ensure the diversity of projects and the coordination of the missions' project portfolios.

Making sure that the missions are achieving the expected impact will as previously mentioned require flexibility, which also needs to be reflected in the governance structure through the inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders from different sectors in the research and innovation ecosystem. This would ensure that a broad and diverse expertise contributes to the mission. Regarding the monitoring and evaluation, the missions should introduce feedback loops between the governance (priority setting) and implementation (project management) structures. Evaluation results should be directly applied to revise the programme structure, thematic priorities, criteria, participation rules etc.

Doing this in practice requires new collaboration processes, and as such innovation in governance will be a key issue that the missions will need to address. This includes visibility and transparency of the governance model, decision-making, and implementing processes, and a clear user perspective to fully capitalise on the missions' potential to make European research and innovation more accessible and known across the EU.

Complementarity and integration with other instruments and initiatives

The missions are embedded in the Horizon Europe programme and should therefore adhere to the principle of excellence. At the same time, missions should be relevant to the European citizen and address key challenges faced by our societies. These challenges are vast and wicked – such as climate change – and therefore their implementation should be supported through several policy areas, funding programmes, and instruments – at EU and other levels. Synergies with the current key EU priorities – the Green Deal and the digital transition – should be created.

We support the notion that the coordination and the support framework for the missions should be funded through Horizon Europe, including the monitoring. Simultaneously, an important effort needs to be made to match and coordinate support from different EU level programmes and instruments, with local, regional, and national funding.

For example, the mission on Adaptation to climate change could benefit from cohesion funding, in particular the ERDF, and InvestEU funding to support activities related to infrastructure, while wider uptake of adaptation solutions could be supported via the LIFE or Digital Europe Programme for digital tools.

From a regional perspective, there is also a need to provide targeted information to the managing authorities on how to use cohesion funding, such as ERDF, in synergy with Horizon Europe funding. A clear link between the two funding programmes would provide a greater incentive for regions to integrate the different missions' priorities in their Smart Specialisation Strategies. This could for example be done by referencing Smart Specialisation in the mission criteria.

For example, substantial funding for research and innovation projects on health and cancer could come from cohesion funds and in particular from the ERDF. In the period 2014-2020, almost all European regions had identified health as one of the priorities in their Smart Specialisation Strategies. Due to the current circumstances, health is likely to remain at the heart of European regions' concerns and strategies. In this regard, it should be highlighted that significant investments have been made at the regional level in the past programming period on one of the key areas to advance cancer-treatment addressed in the mission outline: personalised medicine.

In addition to traditional funding sources, innovative financing mechanisms should be considered. Such mechanisms should, however, be co-designed together with the users and accompanied when necessary with assistance to support the use of such mechanisms. New ways of private sector financing should also be developed – for example supported by the ecosystem approach as exemplified below in relation to the mission on Climate neutral and smart cities.

Financing the transition towards climate neutrality will require significant investments across Europe. Therefore, investing in climate solutions must start making sense for the investors. This means that work needs to be done on the return on investment, de-risking, and the payback time of such investments. This, in turn, means that investors would need to be actively engaged in the co-creation processes of the “climate-neutral city contracts” from the start, with a clear role and responsibility in delivering the objectives and co-creating a new governance model together.

Seeing the importance of the ecosystem approach also in relation to funding, it is clear that links need to be created with other programmes and initiatives at different governance levels – both upstream actions that prepare stakeholders to participate in the framework programme and downstream actions that aims to disseminate and exploit research and innovation results. This should go hand in hand with a clear definition of what activities that should be funded where. As previously proposed, an inclusive multi-level governance structure would support the creation of these links, reflect on how

different policy areas can support the goals of the missions, and ensure complementarities and integration between programmes.

Continuous citizen and stakeholder engagement

Citizen engagement is key in all the five missions and ERRIN is highly supportive of both the way and the extent to which the missions have used new approaches and methodologies to involve citizens and other stakeholders in the design phase. This should continue throughout the lifetime of the missions.

Genuine citizen engagement that goes beyond coordination and consultation requires change in the way the public sector works, whether that is on an EU, national, regional, or local level. The design of participatory processes needs to be carefully considered and there needs to be an awareness of who is invited to participate and when, which is reflected in our proposed governance model. In addition, communication at all stages – from policy to programming – must be clear and widely disseminated to ensure a broad understanding by all relevant stakeholders of what the missions are and how they are going to be implemented. Here we welcome the clear reference in the communication “A new ERA for Research and Innovation” to use the missions to pursue citizen involvement for greater societal impact.

Through a new project (Horizon 2020) entitled [MOSAIC](#) ERRIN will have an opportunity to further analyse how to practically involve stakeholders from all parts of the quadruple helix in open innovation ecosystems and assess the effectiveness of different co-creation instruments – tested within a mission oriented approach. This project could provide valuable inputs and directly feed into the development process of the mission on Climate neutral and smart cities.

To facilitate wide societal engagement, regions and cities are key intermediaries to ensure the link with civil society and citizens. Taking the mission on cancer as an example, regions are often directly involved in financing and organising the healthcare system and research infrastructures in their territories and are therefore in close contact with both health professionals and patient organisations. This in turn make them an excellent partner in developing the oncology-focused living labs as proposed by the Mission Board.

Next steps

The interim reports identify the objectives and approach of the five missions. At this stage, the reports are a concept that should, as a next step, be operationalised. This step is likely to require further support beyond the Mission Boards, Programming Committees, and the European Commission. Therefore, other experts, practitioners, and multipliers, such as the Mission Assembly members, should be further engaged in concretely identifying “how” and “what” should be done. A group of

regional and local actors should be created to support this process, especially for the missions on Climate neutral and smart cities and Adaptation to climate change.

About ERRIN

Established in 2001, [European Regions Research and Innovation Network \(ERRIN\)](#) promotes the regional and local dimension in European research and innovation policies and programmes. The network gathers over 120 members who primarily collaborate through 13 Working Groups, covering both thematic areas and overarching policy issues. ERRIN supports project development and knowledge exchange between members to enhance regional and local research and innovation capacities, with the aim to foster sustainable and inclusive growth in all regions.