

ERRIN paper series

Towards the 10th Framework Programme

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EU Missions

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The future of EU Missions

EU Missions are one of the major successes of Horizon Europe, strongly supporting the objectives of the green transition and providing directionality to research and innovation funding. Support for the EU Missions should continue, be strengthened and extend beyond the research and innovation domain.

EU Missions are implemented at local and regional levels, where transformations take place. To meet the ambitious and time-bound targets of the EU Missions, new models of governance and collaboration are essential, bringing together all relevant stakeholders of the research and innovation ecosystems embedded in cities and regions. This underlines the important role of place-based innovation ecosystems in building a better-connected European innovation ecosystem that enhances European competitiveness and resilience.

EU Missions have already demonstrated their ability to inspire cities and regions across Europe to adopt Mission-like approaches and integrate Mission objectives into their policies and strategies. Furthermore, they have fostered greater collaboration among various stakeholders at local and regional levels while also encouraging further collaboration across governance levels. Additionally, the EU Missions have facilitated closer interaction between policymakers, stakeholders of sectoral policies, and the research community. These positive developments launched by the EU Missions should now be reinforced.

Strengthening governance and multi-level ownership of the EU Missions

ERRIN calls for **enhanced joint ownership of the EU Missions across sectors and at all governance levels**. There is a need for establishing a new governance framework for the EU Missions at the European level, supported by **firm political backing, such as appointing a dedicated Vice-President of the European Commission**. This role would ensure robust coordination, coherence, and ownership of Missions' implementation. It is also crucial to ensure that the European Commission has sufficient resources to carry out this novel mission-oriented approach effectively. This means not only providing adequate funding but also enhancing the administrative and operational capacities of the Commission services. Moreover, achieving the ambitious goals of the Missions necessitates their seamless integration into various EU funding programmes while maintaining strong support from the next Framework Programme (FP10).

ERRIN calls for a stronger **bottom-up approach in both the design and implementation of the EU Missions**. The governance structure of the Missions should be inclusive, engaging all stakeholders throughout the process - from development to implementation. This would ensure that discussions about the challenges and needs on the ground, which the Missions aim to address, are thoroughly considered. Furthermore, there should be additional incentives to encourage the active involvement of cities and regions in the Missions, given that they address challenges that can be solved only through a place-based approach.

Effective **multi-level governance** is crucial for the success of the EU Missions. Multi-level collaboration depends on joint ownership and genuine cooperation. Success is achieved when all levels actively participate, sharing responsibilities and addressing barriers collectively. This requires the national

level to offer concrete support to regions and cities, fostering an environment where challenges are tackled together, ensuring cohesive and comprehensive progress towards the EU Missions' goals.

National support structures are essential for integrating the diverse expertise and resources needed to address the complex challenges targeted by EU Missions. These structures facilitate efficient collaboration between various stakeholders, including academia, industry, civil society and the public sector. By breaking down silos and promoting interdisciplinary cooperation across different levels of governance (local, regional, national and European), these support structures will enable the comprehensive, innovative approaches and transformative solutions necessary for the success of the Missions.

ERRIN emphasises the crucial role of the European Commission in elevating the EU Missions on the national political agendas and in supporting the establishment of **multi-level and cross-sectoral support structures** for the Missions. The Commission should offer clearer frameworks and enhanced incentives for Member States to support cities and regions in the implementation of the Missions, thereby reducing the current disparities in support across the EU. Member States could be supported through various activities, including transnational exchanges and peer learning, technical assistance, and capacity-building initiatives. These efforts aim to enhance capabilities, foster collaboration, and facilitate networking, connecting stakeholders across different levels and sectors.

ERRIN acknowledges the series of Mutual Learning Exercises on EU Missions organised in several Member States with support from the European Commission. **Moving forward, policy instruments such as Mutual Learning Exercises should be used to also encourage multi-level governance** and engage regional and local governments as key partners in the Mission implementation.

Currently, adequate forums that allow and encourage effective multi-level discussions at the European level are lacking. To ensure well-functioning multi-level governance for the EU Missions, it is essential to establish opportunities for exchange among the governance levels also in overarching research and innovation policy frameworks such as the ERA Policy Agenda, the Innovation Agenda, and the Framework Programmes, for example, through comitology.

Enhancing cross-cutting activities

Effective coordination and collaboration among the five EU Missions are vital to capitalising on their collective experiences, identifying any gaps or barriers, and developing solutions to achieve their goals. Taking inspiration from the [TRAMI project](#), which concluded in March 2024, it is crucial to establish a forum for exchange among organisations engaged in mission-oriented policies at EU, national, regional, and local levels, in addition to the European Commission. Such a **Community of Practice** should serve as a hub for knowledge exchange, mutual learning, and stakeholder collaboration.

ERRIN established a close collaboration with the TRAMI project, which aimed to enhance the cooperation and coordination among EU, national, regional and local actions in support of the implementation of EU Missions. Through co-organising several Mutual Learning Events (MLEs) focusing on the role of regional policy, triple helix collaboration, and synergies between Missions and European Partnerships, ERRIN and TRAMI created a platform for sharing best practices, addressing common challenges, and fostering collaboration among industry, academia and the public sector to drive innovation for EU Missions. This collaboration, which began with TRAMI, has proven to be

valuable. It served to bridge the gap between policy objectives and practical implementation, encouraged cross-sectoral cooperation, and promoted knowledge exchange, thereby accelerating progress towards the Mission goals. **ERRIN calls for the establishment and expansion of such a forum of exchange on the five EU Missions.** This would ensure ongoing support, facilitate continuous dialogue, and enhance dialogue across sectors and governance levels. It will be crucial for maintaining the momentum of the EU Missions and ensuring their successful implementation across Europe.

During the MLEs, organised with the TRAMI project, regions expressed concerns about the risk of EU Missions turning into a set of ‘traditional’ Horizon projects rather than supporting solid political ambitions. As the Missions’ implementation progresses, there is a pressing need to define how the support from Horizon projects, Mission implementation platforms, and other potential measures such as national support structures contribute to the Missions’ implementation. It is crucial to establish links between all relevant projects and the Mission implementation platforms, implementing the **portfolio approach** not only at the local level but also across the support mechanisms in place. Achieving this will require enhanced coordination within the European Commission and collaboration across governance levels.

Engaging citizens and the private sector

The success of the EU Missions also depends on a broader **stakeholder mobilisation and involvement**, including citizens and the private sector. Designing and implementing strategies to foster ownership and garner public support is essential for extensive societal mobilisation. Actions may include awareness-raising initiatives, such as networking events and civil society forums, along with co-creation activities like participatory workshops.

The City of Turku, Finland, is a great example of successful private sector engagement in its Mission work. In the city’s Climate City Contract, Turku has secured commitments from 38 companies and organisations, with an open invitation for more to join. This group includes the city’s subsidiary and utility companies, such as those in energy, water, and public transport, as well as the Port of Turku. Additionally, it encompasses major cluster leaders and financial institutions, demonstrating a broad and inclusive approach to tackling climate goals. The city and the region of Southwest Finland are also demonstrating nature-based solutions for water management through the Mission Adaptation project [RESIST](#) in the industrial area of Oriketo. The city has organised meetings to engage local businesses, and these have received very positive responses. Companies in the district are eager to learn how they can contribute to adaptation measures and implement innovative solutions.

Enhancing synergies: Aligning funding and policies

Mission-oriented practices should be embedded at all levels of policymaking, extending beyond the current R&I policies and funding programmes. This long-term integration is essential for EU Missions to achieve their ambitious goals while simultaneously creating lasting links and synergies between R&I and other sectoral policies. The next Framework Programme (FP10) should continue supporting the implementation of the Missions with dedicated financial resources, given their ambitious objectives that demand substantial research and innovation efforts. While a dedicated Missions Work Programme is pivotal, it is crucial to extend support beyond this, drawing from **other components of FP10**, similar to the thematic clusters and European Partnerships in Horizon Europe. Collaboration

among these components, initiated in Horizon Europe, must be reinforced in FP10 to ensure the Missions' continued success.

Co-funded Partnerships play an important role in supporting the objectives of EU Missions by involving contributions from Member States/Associated Countries. This avenue offers an opportunity to more effectively engage Member States in Mission implementation and align funding efforts. While certain partnerships, such as Circular Bio-based Europe, have emphasised collaboration with EU Missions in their call texts, there is a pressing need to strengthen collaboration in practice. **ERRIN urges the Commission to develop a strategy for fostering synergies and collaborations between EU Missions and Partnerships.**

Furthermore, it is essential to mobilise additional funding and financing sources to support the objectives of the Missions. As highlighted in the [Final Report of the EC's expert group to support the monitoring of the EU Missions](#), ERRIN stresses that for effective on-the-ground implementation of the Missions, a substantial portion of the funding must come from **sources beyond FP10**. This includes funding from national and regional levels, as well as through private investments.

At the European level, the proposed New European Bauhaus (NEB) Facility exemplifies an initiative that combines R&I and deployment as it will be supported by various EU funding programmes, ensuring seamless coordination between research and innovation, and implementation. The NEB Facility aims to develop and scale innovative solutions to revitalise European neighbourhoods through sustainability and inclusion. Anchored in the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027, the Facility will be structured around two components: one focussing on R&I and the other on roll-out. The roll-out component will be supported by various EU programmes. It is designed to strengthen competencies and skills, build capacities, bring solutions to market, and upscale innovative tools using public procurement and technical assistance to public authorities.

Dedicated support for developing local and regional investment portfolios should be ensured in close collaboration with the European Investment Bank (EIB). At the same time, achieving further involvement of the **private sector** in the Mission work necessitates a more robust inclusion of these actors in the debates and processes surrounding the EU Missions.

Integrating the EU Missions into national and regional policies and strategies would facilitate the mobilisation of additional funding and financing sources, and ERRIN hopes that the European Commission will encourage Member States to adopt this approach. The Blekinge Region serves as a great example of embedding the Mission approach to its Regional Smart Specialisation Strategy. The region contributed to the formulation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programme for South Sweden, ensuring the incorporation of both EU Missions and innovations for societal challenges into the programme to align it with the Regional Smart Specialisation Strategy. As a result, the region can utilise ERDF funds for regional projects aligned with the Mission objectives. For example, ERDF funds have been utilised to finance the activities of three regional Mission Pilots, which offer a practical approach for the region to work on the Missions by involving multiple stakeholders around clearly defined objectives.

Also, the ERA Action 16 on Access to Excellence (RIMA), which brings together Research Ministries and Managing Authorities, has provided a starting point for discussions to better coordinate R&I and Cohesion Policy. This Action could also help to further embed Missions into regional innovation strategies. RIMA should be used to collect views and challenges and to find practical solutions for

linking R&I policy and Cohesion Policy in the next funding period, creating stronger links between them. However, RIMA would benefit from broader stakeholder participation, particularly from regional governments and other regional entities beyond those currently active in the ERA Forum.

Prioritising a demand-driven approach in EU Missions implementation

ERRIN underscores the importance of maintaining a long-term perspective on EU Missions, supported by continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to effectively track progress and adjust strategies as needed. It is important to acknowledge the progress made by the Missions thus far while also recognising the European Commission and the various implementation platforms need to remain agile, swiftly adapting to emerging needs and changing realities.

As the EU Missions' objectives are realised through a place-based approach, it is essential that the implementation platforms funded by the European Commission tailor their support services to regional and local needs. These platforms must maintain a demand-driven approach, prioritising the needs of cities, regions, and stakeholders in developing their activities and services. ERRIN believes that this can only be achieved through continuous dialogue with local ecosystems and through coherent monitoring and evaluation activities.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen the political support and establish a robust governance framework for the EU Missions at the European level, equipped with sufficient resources within the European Commission.
- Establish a European level framework that allows effective multi-level collaboration and coordination for the EU Missions. A more inclusive governance structure and strategic vision are needed, with cities and regions in the driving seat.
- Foster shared ownership and ensure dedicated support frameworks, which are crucial foundations for the success of EU Missions.
- Promote horizontal and cross-Mission activities to enhance coordination and synergies across the five EU Missions.
- Establish and implement an EU Mission Community of Practice – building on the outcomes of the European Mission Forum (EMiN) and the results of Mission-funded projects - to facilitate knowledge exchange, stakeholder collaboration, mutual learning and collaboration across sectors and governance levels.
- Ensure adequate funding across all levels and foster synergies between different programmes at the EU, national, regional, and local levels are essential to drive meaningful progress towards Mission objectives.
- Work towards aligning the Missions with local and regional priorities and challenges to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. This alignment necessitates bridging the gap between societal challenges and research interests/academic excellence while also defining clearer roles for local and regional authorities in Mission implementation.
- Further support regions and cities in integrating Mission-oriented approaches into their regional strategies and policies. This will be crucial for driving transformative and systemic change in cities and regions to achieve the Missions' objectives, while also mobilising additional funding and financing sources and creating synergies across policies.

- Propose new approaches to strengthen private sector engagement in Mission processes.

Mission specific input

Mission on 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030

Led by its Smart Cities Working Group, ERRIN has been actively involved in developing the [Mission on 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030](#) (Cities Mission) since early 2019, significantly contributing to both its shaping and implementation through numerous input papers and meetings with the European Commission. Additionally, ERRIN is a key partner in the [NetZeroCities project](#), which manages the Mission Platform.

The Cities Mission has **elevated local climate neutrality ambitions** and generated momentum within and among cities, leading to the creation of a European community of ambitious cities collaborating towards climate neutrality. Locally, this momentum has brought new actors to the table, strengthened existing strategies and activities, and initiated new efforts to accelerate progress and achieve greater impact, both in reducing carbon emissions and enhancing societal impact.

Many cities already have structures in place for **collaborating with local partners of the quadruple helix**, and the Cities Mission has elevated these collaborations to a new level and encouraged exploration and experimentation with new models for multi-stakeholder governance. For example, in the City of Groningen, Netherlands, the municipality has teamed up with the University of Groningen and the University of Applied Sciences to co-create innovative governance models and new forms of effective citizen engagement in alignment with the Mission.

The 1.5-Degree City project, funded under the Mission Platform's Pilot City Programme, also exemplifies enhanced collaboration between cities, academia and the private sector. Through this initiative, the City of Turku, in partnership with the University of Turku, aims to increase residents' opportunities to engage in climate action, support low-carbon business practices among companies, and establish a platform for monitoring emissions reductions in the area. To strengthen corporate climate actions, the city is developing a Climate Team network, which now includes nearly 100 climate initiatives implemented by over 120 partners. This effort involves creating carbon-neutral clusters, targeting the largest companies and their subcontractors in the Turku area, and providing knowledge-based support for climate work.

Finally, ERRIN is supporting the [U!REKA SHIFT](#) European University Alliance as an Associated Partner. U!REKA SHIFT aims to forge strong connections with the Cities Mission, focusing on educating professionals to accelerate the transition to climate-neutral and smart cities. ERRIN believes that U!REKA SHIFT's activities will serve as significant examples of the **vital collaboration between cities and academia** in achieving the Cities Mission objectives.

One of the most significant impacts of the Cities Mission is the **change in governance**, both within cities and between cities and other levels of governance (regional and national). Cities can testify to the breakdown of silos among various municipal departments working towards climate neutrality, including transport, environment, waste management and democratic processes. This integration has enabled new departments, municipal agencies and companies to collaborate effectively and find their roles in advancing the Mission. Simultaneously, national support structures have been established, or are currently being developed, across Europe to assist cities on their climate neutrality journey. These

structures serve as crucial platforms for fostering and strengthening relationships among actors within the national ecosystem, providing concrete support to cities in achieving their climate neutrality objectives and creating opportunities for real collaboration between cities.

Although the Cities Mission already achieved impressive results and impacts in cities across Europe, ERRIN proposes several suggestions to further enhance its implementation and accelerate progress towards a net-zero future.

With 33 cities having received the Mission Label to date, and additional cities anticipated to be awarded the label in the second half of 2024, the focus now turns to the **implementation of the Climate City Contracts (CCCs)**. However, several barriers to the effective implementation of the CCCs persist. Successful implementation of the actions outlined in the CCCs necessitates significant investments, underscoring the importance of active engagement from the private sector. The involvement of private companies is crucial not only for financing but also for leveraging their expertise, innovation, and resources in advancing climate-neutral initiatives within cities. Citizen involvement remains another critical barrier, as the transition cannot succeed without their active contribution. Lastly, addressing the lack of support from national and regional levels is essential to overcome challenges such as regulatory and policy barriers, insufficient skills and capacity, and funding constraints.

Many countries still lack **national support structures**, and even existing ones often fall short of adequately accelerating cities' climate efforts. Hence, directing additional resources toward establishing and enhancing the operational efficiency of these structures for the Cities Mission is imperative. These structures should foster real dialogues and cooperation across different government levels, provide support tailored to cities' actual needs, and build genuine political support at the national level. To ensure effectiveness, it is crucial to engage decision-makers in relevant policy areas, such as national ministries, within the support structures.

Regions also hold a crucial position within such support frameworks, as the governance structure in many countries assigns them significant responsibilities and competences vital for cities' transition to climate neutrality. Moreover, regions play an important role in involving more cities in the Mission, aligning with its second objective of ensuring all European cities are climate-neutral by 2050 and extending the Mission's efforts and impacts to additional cities.

The Polish national platform for the Cities Mission is an example of a support framework involving all levels of government, including the regional administrations of the five Polish Mission Cities. Within the Polish governance structure, regions hold several responsibilities important for supporting cities' climate work. Regions play a crucial role in facilitating collaboration between regional stakeholders - extending the impact of Mission Cities' work to neighbouring cities and municipalities, influencing national climate policymaking, developing development strategies and specific sectoral policies, and distributing European funds under Cohesion Policy.

A similar context exists in Spain. Given the strong role of regions in Spain, the City of Valencia considered a Climate City Contract without the involvement of the regional government to be ineffective. Several Mission priorities rely directly on the regional administration, as these issues extend beyond the city's borders. Furthermore, the region has competences in several fields relevant to the city's climate neutrality work, including metropolitan and regional mobility, education, urban

regeneration, urbanism, and energy efficiency of buildings. Additionally, the region plays an important role in effecting regulatory and policy changes essential for accelerating the climate transition.

Supporting Mission Cities in implementing their **investment plans** is pivotal for accessing the funding required for the large-scale mobility, energy efficiency, green infrastructure and renewable energy projects essential to achieve a net-zero future. A significant focus of the work on implementing these plans should be on unlocking private sector investments. ERRIN stresses the importance of ensuring that any financial advisory services delivered to cities are tailored to their specific contexts and are provided by experts who possess a deep understanding of the local, regional, and national circumstances. This includes familiarity with regulatory and policy frameworks, governance systems, and both private and public funding sources.

It is of utmost importance that the **Mission Label** provides clear opportunities for better access to EU funding and financing, while also having an impact on national funding opportunities presented to cities. The European Commission plays an important role in raising awareness among Member States about Mission Cities' investment plans and the Mission Label while also providing them with ideas and incentives for utilising the label to improve access to national funding programmes. National governments are also essential for engaging the private sector in the green transition and supporting cities' efforts. Furthermore, ERRIN members and their local actors count on the support of the European Commission in dialogues with the European Investment Bank, which will be an important source of financing for their work.

In a time when the EU's competitiveness and economic stability are high on the political agenda, it is important to recognise that these goals align closely with cities' efforts to accelerate the transition to climate neutrality. These accelerated climate efforts will increase the importance and demand for Europe's net-zero industry. Therefore, it will be important for the Cities Mission to establish stronger links with policy initiatives that support these efforts, such as the Net-Zero Industry Act, industrial partnerships and the transition pathways currently under development. Achieving this will necessitate closer collaboration across various Directorates-General (DGs) within the European Commission, including DG Research and Innovation, DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, and DG Energy.

Furthermore, achieving climate-neutrality at local level is strictly linked to an effective implementation of circular systemic solutions at local and regional level. Creating links with initiatives such as the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI) could facilitate mobilising further private sector stakeholders on the Mission.

While many cities are already experimenting with new models for **stakeholder engagement**, enhanced efforts to achieve buy-in and active participation from **citizens** are required. Many innovative decarbonisation solutions rely on changes in citizens' behaviour. Therefore, it is crucial for citizens to be involved in developing these solutions and willing to incorporate them into their daily lives. Support for cities should, therefore, extend beyond developing tools and one-stop shops to focus on enabling concrete local citizen engagement activities. These include encouraging the establishment of energy communities, co-creating zero-emission solutions, promoting local green initiatives and implementing participatory budgeting for climate projects.

In line with this vision, ERRIN emphasises the importance of leveraging the outcomes of previous Horizon projects, such as the [MOSAIC project](#). As a partner in MOSAIC, ERRIN collaborated with cities

aiming to become climate-neutral by 2030, helping them in implementing open innovation processes through co-creation. Over the course of three years, MOSAIC's pilot cities, Gothenburg and Milan, engaged with a wide range of local stakeholders, including citizens, to identify and prototype shared solutions aligned with their Climate City Contracts. To support the uptake of these initiatives, ERRIN has produced the [MOSAIC Cookbook](#), a practical tool designed to help other cities replicate these processes. In addition to supporting stakeholder engagement within the EU Missions, the Cookbook could serve as a valuable tool for cities participating in the New European Bauhaus initiative, offering practical approaches to involve stakeholders in co-creation activities.

Enhanced collaboration and **synergies with other EU Missions, EU Partnerships and initiatives** will be needed to implement innovative solutions, scale up existing innovations, and align strategies. This will also be important for simplifying the offer to cities and ensuring that the EU-level funding opportunities and support initiatives are well-coordinated in terms of objectives and scope. Support to this work has started within the Cities Mission but should be further strengthened. Collaboration with initiatives, such as the Covenant of Mayors should be seen as mutually reinforcing.

ERRIN emphasises that the calls funded in the frame of the Cities Mission should be based on local needs. ERRIN also advocates for a balance between calls addressing research and implementation, ensuring ample space for innovation, particularly social innovation, governance innovation and policy innovation. Strengthening links between the on-the-ground challenges and the research community's potential for support is crucial to enable all stakeholders to contribute effectively to the Mission's implementation. The calls funded under the Mission should prioritise horizontal and systemic approaches and solutions, while calls targeting specific technologies and technological solutions should be supported by other components of the Framework Programme. Finally, ERRIN calls for more focus on building local capacities and the up-skilling and re-skilling of stakeholders involved in the green and digital transition.

Recommendations:

- Reinforce national support structures and create synergies between the Cities Mission and existing regulatory requirements supporting the Mission objectives, such as the National Climate and Energy Plans through enhanced energy union governance.
- Provide additional resources to national and regional support structures to ensure coordination across Member States and foster peer learning among countries. Enhanced focus should be directed towards regional support and engagement, as the regional level holds several competencies essential for achieving cities' climate neutrality objectives.
- Incorporate local needs into calls within the Mission-specific Work Programme.
- Maintain a balanced approach in calls, allocating resources for both research and implementation, with a particular emphasis on innovation, particularly social, governance and policy innovation.
- Emphasise capacity-building initiatives for local authorities and up-skilling/re-skilling for stakeholders involved in the green and digital transition.
- Tailor financial advisory services for Mission Cities to suit their specific contexts. Ensure that the services are delivered by experts who thoroughly understand the local, regional and national contexts, ideally through a collaborative effort involving support from diverse actors at the European, national, and potentially regional levels.

- Facilitate direct citizen engagement through activities like co-creating zero-emission solutions, citizen science projects, and energy communities, supported by dedicated funding or technical assistance from co-creation experts, tailored to address city-specific challenges.
- Ensure that the Mission Label offers opportunities for enhanced access to EU funding and financing while also influencing national funding opportunities available to cities.
- Actively involve the private sector in Cities Mission initiatives, recognising their vital role in providing resources, expertise and innovative solutions for achieving climate neutrality by 2030.
- Enhance collaboration with other EU Missions, notably the Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change, recognising that local authorities often address both climate mitigation and adaptation simultaneously. Establishing cohesive frameworks, aligning funding opportunities, and fostering joint initiatives between the two Missions are crucial to effectively support on-the-ground efforts.

Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change

ERRIN has been actively engaged in the development of the [Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change](#) (Mission Adaptation) over the past years, consistently providing input to the European Commission on the Mission and its implementation. After developing recommendations on the Mission and its Charter, ERRIN signed the Mission Charter in 2022 and became a Friend of the Mission.

In response to the large interest among ERRIN members in Mission Adaptation, ERRIN launched a [Climate Adaptation Task Force](#), which now brings together around 60 regions from across Europe. This wide geographical representation highlights the diverse climate change-related challenges and the varying stages of development and implementation of solutions within these regions. Additionally, ERRIN has committed to supporting its members in the practical implementation of the Mission through the [Pathways2Resilience](#) and [RESIST](#) projects.

Mission Adaptation has contributed to placing the issue of climate change adaptation high on the public and political agendas, including at the local and regional levels. With cities and regions constantly confronted by limited resources and high competition among priority topics, the Mission has succeeded in bringing adaptation to the forefront of discussions, creating significant momentum across Europe. Moreover, the Mission has enabled regions and communities to address adaptation in a more long-term and strategic manner, enabling the integration of adaptation aspects into local and regional investment and planning processes.

For example, an analysis conducted by the Pathways2Resilience project reveals that regions such as South Ostrobothnia (FI), Île-de-France, South Netherlands, and Blekinge (SE) have directly integrated climate adaptation into their Smart Specialisation (S3) Strategies and priorities. In other cases, climate resilience is included within an S3 priority that addresses a specific sector or theme related to climate adaptation, such as sustainable food systems, water management, or forestry. This approach can be observed in the Smart Specialisation Strategies of South Savo (FI), Marche (IT), and Uppsala (SE). Finally, some regions incorporate adaptation as a horizontal enabler or a cross-cutting theme rather than a specific S3 priority. This approach is used by Brittany (FR) and Cyprus.

The funding opportunities under Mission Adaptation have enabled regions to involve local and regional stakeholders in planning and implementing climate adaptation actions. Projects funded under the Mission have also **enabled regions to structure their work on climate adaptation and adopt a more strategic approach to enhancing resilience**. One example is the **RESIST project**, which involves ERRIN and several of its member regions in the implementation of large-scale demonstrations to address significant climate challenges. The call (HORIZON-MISS-2021-CLIMA-02-04) that funded the RESIST project encouraged regional and local authorities to join projects together with their local stakeholders to test new technical, social, and governance solutions, promoting cross-sector and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Additionally, the call combined demonstration and widening aspects, encouraging the involvement of regions and ecosystems with different levels of innovation capacity and fostering collaboration and learning between strong and modest innovators.

For example, Normandy's participation in the RESIST project has enabled the region to explore new adaptation practices in other EU regions and collaborate with local authorities and stakeholders on water management, which was not previously a focus area for the region's adaptation work. The pilot site activities have just started, and there are high expectations for increased stakeholder involvement. In Lisieux, the creation of a digital twin and the relocation of houses in flood-prone areas will require consultation and dialogue with citizens. Additionally, Normandy plans to deploy and encourage the use of nature-based solutions (NBS) in land-use planning and urban strategies to address water-related risks associated with climate change, such as flooding, run-off, and erosion. A series of workshops will be held to discuss the benefits and multiple advantages of using NBS in planning and deployment.

While the Mission has already demonstrated positive impacts on the ground, certain elements need to be strengthened in FP10 to fully achieve the Mission's resilience goals by 2030.

ERRIN members have expressed concerns over the lack of a **clear process in Mission Adaptation**. It is imperative to ensure that regions and communities have alternative avenues to implement the Mission and its objectives rather than relying solely on EU R&I funding to advance their resilience efforts. ERRIN hopes that a clear process for concrete engagement and implementation – applicable to both Charter signatories and non-signatories - will be established as the Mission progresses into its second phase. Additionally, ERRIN relies on the European Commission to establish effective links and synergies with other EU funding programmes, as regions and communities often face resource constraints when working on climate adaptation without additional funding sources. ERRIN also calls for engagement with the Member States and their national funding programmes.

Moreover, a strong focus should be placed on **unblocking climate adaptation investments** from private actors and the banking sector by addressing the enabling conditions for climate adaptation financing. Support should also be extended to local and regional authorities to facilitate the development of bankable adaptation projects. Additionally, resources should be allocated to enable them to up-skill and re-skill their staff to effectively manage such projects. The Mission Implementation Platform (MIP4Adapt) is instrumental in enabling regions and communities, both within the Community of Practice and beyond, to capitalise on the efforts of projects addressing innovative financing mechanisms for adaptation to climate change, such as CLIMATEFIT and Pathways2Resilience.

ERRIN calls for the continuation of direct, **hands-on support to regional and local authorities in developing robust adaptation plans and strategies**. This support, thus far provided via the

Pathway2Resilience project and the MIP4Adapt technical assistance to Charter signatories, is crucial. These plans should promote systemic and transformative approaches, aligning with the core principles of the EU Missions. This includes involving cross-sectoral stakeholders, experts from different administrative departments, and representatives of the other levels of government, particularly the national level. ERRIN members have also emphasised the importance of access to data and technical support for implementing adaptation strategies, assessing their effectiveness, and monitoring progress.

Horizontal and vertical governance and collaboration are key to the success of Mission Adaptation. Climate adaptation must be mainstreamed across various policy domains, including biodiversity, agri-food, health, and energy. Furthermore, adaptation strategies and plans at different levels of governance (local, regional, national and EU) should align coherently and reinforce one another. Enhanced multi-level governance will also contribute to ensuring that legal frameworks facilitate innovative adaptation solutions by mitigating conflicting laws, reducing bureaucratic processes, and establishing necessary implementation frameworks.

The **Community of Practice** can play a critical role in facilitating matchmaking, knowledge exchange, and peer learning among participating regions and communities. ERRIN hopes that the European Commission will harness the full potential of this group of ambitious and motivated regions and communities, providing them with the necessary support to advance climate resilience. This support should extend to fostering effective synergies and collaboration between the different components of the new Framework Programme and beyond.

Finally, ERRIN calls for stronger **synergies between EU Missions**, particularly Mission Adaptation and the Cities Mission. At local and regional levels, mitigation and adaptation activities and measures are often developed together. The two Missions could collaboratively address several issues, particularly regarding funding opportunities and technical assistance for climate adaptation and mitigation. This collaboration includes exploring economic models and financial support, joint data collection, and coordination of the processes proposed by the two Missions. With 41 cities committed to participating in both Missions, there is a strong foundation to promote collaborative efforts in combatting climate change and to enhance coordination efforts at the European level. Moreover, both Missions need continued strong support across all political levels to build on current achievements and accelerate local and regional climate ambitions.

Recommendations:

- Establish a clear process for regions to follow in achieving the Mission objectives, particularly after signing the Mission Charter, recognising the resource limitations regions face when addressing climate adaptation.
- Provide targeted support for both Charter signatories and non-signatories.
- Offer hands-on support to regional and local authorities in developing robust and transformative adaptation plans, including financial plans.
- Enhance vertical and horizontal governance and collaboration to streamline adaptation across various policy areas and to align and reinforce efforts and work conducted across different levels of governance.

- Involve the private sector and banking sector to address the enabling conditions for climate adaptation financing. Improve knowledge about and access to information and best practices on innovative financing mechanisms for adaptation to climate change.
- Harness the potential of the Community of Practice to facilitate matchmaking, knowledge exchange, and peer learning among participating regions and communities.
- Foster and extend collaboration and synergies with other components of the next Framework Programme, other EU Missions and initiatives, as well as EU, national, regional and local funding schemes.
- Ensure access to funding opportunities that support regions and communities in the implementation of the Mission objectives, including funding aimed at supporting the replication and scale-up of solutions that have been tested and implemented.

Mission A Soil Deal for Europe

ERRIN has played an active role in shaping [Mission A Soil Deal For Europe](#) (Mission Soil) through its Bioeconomy Working Group. In April 2023, ERRIN collaborated with the European Commission to launch the Mission Soil Manifesto. Additionally, ERRIN is an active partner in the [SOILL-Startup project](#), supporting the deployment of the Living Labs funded under the Mission.

Mission Soil has great potential to structure soil-related activities and work across European regions and cities while also creating links to other EU Missions, notably Mission Adaptation, the Cities Mission, and the Ocean and Waters Mission.

Additionally, ERRIN advocates for the enhanced development of **synergies between the Mission and various soil health policies and actions** at EU, national and regional levels. Creating synergies with other EU Missions, as well as relevant EU Partnerships like the Circular Bio-based Europe Partnership and the Agroecology Partnership, is crucial for scaling up solutions and maximising their impact. Synergies with other European programmes, notably LIFE, would also be useful to get a better overview of the solutions already existing and leverage impact. Additionally, an effective and clear intersection between the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) regulation and Mission Soil will significantly facilitate the adoption of innovative solutions by farmers, who derive their primary income from soil.

ERRIN recognises the importance of Living Labs as vital components of Mission Soil. These labs enable partnerships between multiple actors, such as researchers, farmers, foresters, spatial planners, land managers, and citizens, who come together to co-create innovative soil health solutions on the ground.

Considering this, ERRIN advocates for a more **defined role of regions and cities within the Mission's Soil Health Living Labs**. Their active engagement and integration into regional policies is essential to ensure that initiatives are grounded in local governance structures and priorities, thereby promoting sustainability and effectiveness. Furthermore, regions could facilitate interregional collaboration initiatives among the various Living Labs across Europe, ensuring the sustainability of scaled-up solutions by considering local contexts, stakeholder needs, and long-term impacts.

Additionally, ERRIN highlights the importance of **embedding regional and local governments in future funding opportunities** and calls related to soil health.

Due to the new Soil Health Law, regions and cities will face new constraints and challenges in monitoring and improving soil quality at the local and regional level (e.g. dealing with industrially polluted soil and farmlands with high pesticide use). Capacity-building and peer-learning activities targeting the specific needs of regional and local authorities would be a great addition to the existing set of support provided by the current Horizon Europe calls.

Involving regional and local authorities in funding opportunities ensures that allocations reflect regional priorities, fostering the long-term sustainability of the Living Labs beyond the projects' timelines. The experiments successfully tested in the Living Labs will need to be integrated into local and regional policies and strategies. Therefore, it is important to recognise these government levels as key players in the 'soil health ecosystem'. This integration will not only sustain the developed solutions but also effectively connect stakeholders involved in the Living Labs to local and regional structures.

ERRIN underscores **the crucial role of regions in mobilising local ecosystems** and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders to advance the Mission's objectives. Innovative governance, policies, and incentives tailored to regional contexts are essential for effectively addressing soil health according to local needs.

For instance, the HUMUS project, (HORIZON-MISS-2021-SOIL-01), in which several ERRIN members are involved, is supporting municipalities and regions to engage and is empowering communities to co-create local solutions. Through the financial support of third parties' mechanism, 20 local and regional soil health pilots, including ten located in ERRIN member regions, will develop effective participatory processes on soil health, contributing to the development of soil innovation ecosystems. With regions and municipalities at the forefront of soil management, regulation, innovation, and community engagement, they are central to deploying Mission Soil on the ground.

Recommendations:

- Advocate for a clearer and better-defined role for regions in the Soil Health Living Labs, emphasising their crucial role in mobilising local ecosystems and fostering collaboration among different stakeholders at the local level.
- Ensure the integration of Living Labs – and other soil health experiments – into relevant regional policies and strategies to drive systemic change.
- Facilitate interregional collaboration initiatives among the different Living Labs across Europe, ensuring the sustainability of scaled-up solutions by considering local contexts, stakeholder needs, and long-term impacts.
- Address the need for innovative governance, policies, and incentives tailored to regional contexts to effectively manage soil health, strengthening governance structures at the regional and local levels to implement and enforce initiatives in alignment with local needs.
- Embed regional and local governments into future funding opportunities and calls related to soil health, ensuring that funding allocations reflect regional priorities and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the Living Labs beyond the projects.

- Develop synergies between the Mission and various soil health policies and actions at EU, national, and regional levels, and create synergies with other EU Missions and relevant EU Partnerships to scale up solutions and maximise impact.

Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters

ERRIN has been actively supporting the development and implementation of [Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030](#) (Ocean and Waters Mission). Through its Blue Economy Working Group, ERRIN has engaged in several discussions with the European Commission and provided input to the development and implementation of the Mission. ERRIN has also endorsed the Mission Charter, underlining its support for the Mission objectives. Lastly, ERRIN is a partner in the project managing the [Mission Implementation Platform \(MIP Ocean\)](#), thus reinforcing its ongoing commitment to the Mission implementation.

The Mission Ocean and Waters is highly relevant for local and regional stakeholders as it addresses critical challenges that directly impact their communities. By focusing on the restoration of oceans and waters, the Mission promotes sustainable development, fosters economic growth in coastal and maritime regions and waterfront cities, and supports the deployment of innovative solutions and collaborative approaches on water-related topics.

However, ERRIN members have highlighted the **lack of clarity in the Mission's processes** that can also hamper its implementation. To address this concern, ERRIN advocates for a clearer definition of the roles of regional and local stakeholders within the Mission, along with a clear process outlining how they can collaboratively work towards achieving the Mission objectives beyond EU-funded projects.

ERRIN stresses the importance of providing **targeted support for regional and local actors** moving forward. While welcoming the launch of technical assistance for feasibility studies on the transition agenda for ports, islands and fisheries communities, ERRIN proposes broadening the scope of these studies and services. Regional and local authorities hold significant water-related expertise and can act as connectors among stakeholders on the ground. Therefore, supporting the implementation of water transition initiatives at the territorial level is essential.

Moreover, ERRIN suggests enhancing the Mission Charter pledges by allowing Charter adherents to showcase strategic approaches towards achieving the Mission objectives, providing inspiration and concrete examples for other stakeholders. ERRIN also seeks clarification on the **support services** available to stakeholders who adhere to the Mission Charter. These services could encompass tailored matchmaking events and networking opportunities, assistance in identifying connections with other funding sources, the establishment of a 'sounding board' for launching bottom-up suggestions from the clear stakeholders - including the opportunity to shape future calls, one-to-one sessions between Charter signatories and the implementation platform for tailored technical assistance, collaborative working groups comprising communities of stakeholders to foster cooperation, and access to a comprehensive database of information and available products and solutions.

In light of these proposals, ERRIN welcomes the European Commission's initiative to fund a project supporting the coalition on waterfront cities, regions, and islands. ERRIN views this as an important first step in creating a coalition of cities and regions for knowledge exchange and peer learning, aiming to build capacity and the enabling conditions necessary to achieve the Mission objectives.

ERRIN members have voiced concerns regarding the **prescriptive nature of calls** in the Horizon Europe Missions Work Programme, which may not align with local needs, resulting in limited stakeholder engagement. ERRIN calls for a more flexible approach to effectively integrate regional needs and priorities. Additionally, ERRIN advocates for the broader inclusion of regions as partners, with adequate funding, in consortia of the future calls for proposals. In light of this, ERRIN is pleased to see that the European Commission will fund projects to support community-led actions through sub-grants to a wide range of stakeholders, including regions and cities. This allows for testing and scaling up actions and solutions on the ground.

As the Mission implementation progresses, ERRIN advocates for a less **restrictive thematic basin approach** in the Mission. ERRIN members perceive the division of the Mission into different sea basins, each with specific and narrow priorities, as a barrier to their participation. A more flexible and open approach would be preferable. ERRIN hopes that the second phase of the Mission's implementation will address these concerns, allowing local and regional ecosystems to propose solutions to address the Mission's key objectives. Moreover, ERRIN advocates for the integration of **water-related issues** beyond maritime aspects and urges for **concrete links between the Ocean and Waters Mission and other EU Missions** to foster comprehensive solutions to complex challenges.

ERRIN welcomes the initiative on **associated regions** but believes that restricting eligibility solely to regions located in Member States or Associated Countries not included in the project consortium will limit the potential benefits of this opportunity. It is essential to recognise that regions with similar ecosystems situated in the same countries as the project consortium will miss out on the knowledge exchange and replication of successful solutions. While acknowledging that replication should extend beyond regions within the same sea basin, ERRIN suggests implementing a more flexible approach.

Funding plays a crucial role in enabling regional and local authorities to undertake actions on the ground to achieve the Mission objectives. ERRIN supports the Commission's aim to consolidate national and regional hubs that mobilise national and regional funds, as well as private financing.

Recommendations:

- Acknowledge the expertise of regional and local stakeholders and facilitate their engagement as connectors and facilitators among stakeholders on the ground.
- Provide clear guidance on the roles and responsibilities of regional and local stakeholders within the Ocean and Waters Mission.
- Define transparent support services available to stakeholders adhering to the Mission Charter, including tailored matchmaking events and networking opportunities, assistance in identifying synergies with other funding sources, establishment of a 'sounding board' for launching bottom-up activities, one-to-one sessions between Charter signatories and the implementation platform for technical assistance, collaborative working groups composed of communities of stakeholders to foster cooperation, and access to a database of information and available products and solutions.
- Increase awareness of the benefits and opportunities for involvement of regional and local stakeholders in the Ocean and Waters Mission.
- Expand the scope of technical assistance and feasibility studies to support regional and local authorities in implementing water transition initiatives at the territorial level.

- Broaden eligibility criteria for Associated Regions (cascade funding calls).
- Adopt a more flexible approach to priorities within the Ocean and Waters Mission to effectively address regional needs and priorities.
- Establish concrete links between the Ocean and Waters Mission and other EU Missions, such as Mission Adaptation and the Cities Mission, to comprehensively address water-related issues.
- Foster collaboration with other components of the next Framework Programme (e.g., similar to the thematic clusters in Horizon Europe) and European Partnerships, as well as other EU, national, regional and local funding schemes.

Cancer Mission

ERRIN's Health Working Group has led the work on the [Cancer Mission](#) since the inception of the Missions, collaborating with the Cancer Mission Secretariat at the European Commission.

ERRIN has worked closely with [EUREGHA](#), the European Regional and Local Health Authorities network, to highlight the regional level needs relating to the Mission. In 2020, ERRIN and EUREGHA launched [a joint statement](#) on the Mission, outlining the need to include the regional dimension in the Mission, improving stakeholder engagement and a guide for future activities. In 2024, ERRIN and EUREGHA continued a dialogue with the Cancer Mission Secretariat, culminating in a joint Working Group meeting that explored the current opportunities for regions within the Cancer Mission and showcased regional examples of aspects that could be integrated into the Mission.

Whilst healthcare in the European Union is predominantly a competence of the Member States, regional and local authorities share responsibilities in countries that have a decentralised management system. Recognising this, stakeholder engagement becomes crucial in driving systemic transformation within the Cancer Mission, particularly with regional and local authorities and actors. **Regional and local authorities thus need to be explicitly considered in the further development and implementation of the Cancer Mission.** Moreover, for the implementation of the Mission to be successful, a strong and sustainable commitment from all the governance levels – including regions and Members States – will be essential to achieve the Mission objectives.

Regional and local authorities are key in implementing research results and in deploying and sustaining innovation, so their needs and contributions should be considered early on when identifying future priorities and activities deriving from the Cancer Mission. Additionally, regions are crucial for developing effective cancer prevention strategies and optimising existing screening programmes, as recommended in the Mission outline. Their engagement in screening and treatment is necessary for ensuring equal access to primary care services, particularly in rural areas and villages.

The new Cancer Mission Hubs, supported by the [ECHO S](#) EU-funded project, are a prime example of how the regional dimension should be further defined for those countries where health is organised at a regional level. This will enable the Mission's activities to be integrated and coordinated among relevant stakeholders, as well as to raise awareness of the Mission at the regional and local levels.

Currently, the Cancer Mission is disconnected from the other Missions and initiatives, whilst often being research-focused and technical. For these reasons, regional stakeholders do not see their clear added value in the calls, and therefore, their potential roles should be explicit in future calls. Therefore, ERRIN calls for **stronger synergies with other EU Missions and European Partnerships** (e.g.

Transforming the health care system, Personalised medicine, IHI). This will avoid duplication of efforts and foster a culture of collaboration among different areas and stakeholders. Ultimately, a more efficient and streamlined approach to achieving shared goals can be ensured by connecting the dots and enhancing understanding of ongoing efforts in other Partnerships and Missions. ERRIN calls also for stronger connections with the other EU funding sources, including structural funds and other initiatives related to health improvement and health systems reforms.

Whilst it is felt that the Mission is indeed doing good work, the timely transition from project to impact is not yet clear within the Cancer Mission. To ensure that the mission's aims are met, the results, impacts, and scalability of all past and future projects must be accelerated.

Recommendations:

- Enhance engagement with regional and local authorities in the development and implementation of the Cancer Mission.
- Ensure early integration of their needs and contributions when identifying future priorities and activities.
- Include the regional authorities in the creation of the National Cancer Mission Hubs to further engage regions.
- Bridge the current disconnect between the Cancer Mission and other initiatives at national and regional levels.
- Establish stronger connections between the Cancer Mission and other EU Missions, European partnerships, and health system reform initiatives.
- Promote knowledge exchange between regions and stakeholders to optimise screening programs and enhance access to primary care services, especially in rural areas.



ERRIN (European Regions Research and Innovation Network) is a Brussels-based platform that gathers around 120 regional organisations in more than 20 European countries. ERRIN aims to strengthen the regional and local dimension in EU Research and Innovation policy and programmes. ERRIN supports members to enhance their regional and local research and innovation capacities and further develop their research and innovation ecosystems.

The ERRIN members primarily collaborate through 13 Working Groups (WGs) and two Task Forces (TFs), covering both thematic areas and overarching policy issues. The WGs and TFs are based on members' priorities and current funding opportunities. The WG and TF meetings are at the heart of ERRIN's activities, as this is where our members meet regularly to exchange information, present regional examples, build new partnerships, develop joint projects, network and much more.

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