

HORIZON EUROPE – PLACE-BASED INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS

Building an effective European research and innovation policy post-2020 requires input from a range of stakeholders, including citizens. These stakeholders often work together in partnerships at the city or regional level combining proximity with critical mass. In this context, [ERRIN, the European Regions Research and Innovation Network](#), argues that effective research and innovation is increasingly dependent on strong interconnected research and innovation ecosystems embedded in regions and cities. A well-functioning quadruple helix (research, industry, public authorities, and citizens) is essential to increase the impact of research and innovation investment, and thus all its dimensions should be supported under Horizon Europe.

ERRIN's objective is not only to increase university-business collaboration, but to fundamentally change the way local and regional actors work together within a quadruple helix approach focusing on the wider regional development agenda and ecosystem thinking. By including place-based regional innovation ecosystems in the programme, the EU can better coordinate research and innovation priorities and practices at all governance levels - local, regional, national, and European. This will ensure increased impact of the research and innovation policy and programmes.

More added value can be generated by pooling knowledge, expertise, and resources, which is essential to tackle and overcome many of the broad societal challenges Europe's regions face. Europe needs **new partnerships for research and innovation excellence** in the whole of the Union based on enhanced multilevel governance, and a shared and open innovation culture. **Cooperation between innovation ecosystems** provides access to complementary skills, infrastructure, and markets. This helps to reshape EU value chains by promoting investment synergies between the private and public sector within different regional innovation ecosystems, which in turn contributes to the development of the EU economy as a whole.

Horizon Europe should provide support mechanisms to harvest the potential of interconnecting excellent regional innovation ecosystems and open new avenues for European collaborations. The **European Innovation Ecosystems action under Pillar III** provides one opportunity for this. Such **connected ecosystems** would allow for increasing European innovation excellence, as well as for strengthening and widening of the European research and innovation community. This action can:

- Implement synergies and demonstrate how co-funding mechanisms can work in practice (such as Interreg component 5, Digital Europe Programme, etc.)
- Draw on Smart Specialisation strategies as a driver for regional innovation to better coordinate top-down (European) and bottom-up (regional) research and innovation priorities and practices, thus creating a strong link between regional and EU strategies and objectives.

In addition, ERRIN argues that the territorial dimension should be an integral part in Pillar II as well as in the section on Strengthening the European Research Area as a way of accelerating networking capacities of more modest ecosystems. This in no way contradicts the principles of excellence and ERRIN explicitly rejects any earmarking or geographical quotas under Horizon Europe.

Regional innovation ecosystems are about finding novel solutions to the global challenges. ERRIN sees the mission-oriented policy as a positive new feature in Horizon Europe, which would enhance policy coherence and encourage bottom-up solutions to the various clusters within Pillar II. This provides us with an opportunity to avoid calls being too prescriptive. An open and flexible approach to collaborative projects will open doors for different solutions as well as new actors.

Further details: <https://www.errin.eu/content/our-expertise/policy>