

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

Forum Future Europe · Raising Inclusion and Performance of European Research and Innovation

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Mission “Europe as a Global Leader”

By 2050, the EU should be the strongest community worldwide united in prosperity, freedom and peace, and the global leader in education, research, innovation and in quality and ethical standards.

PREFACE

We, the representatives of national academies of sciences and arts, leading universities and research organisations as well as scientists from the EU13 states have gathered in Berlin upon invitation of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina and the Leibniz Association to discuss our contribution to the future of Europe. We call for further dialogue on these matters with our peers from the EU and the states associated to the EU’s Framework Programme. We issue the following recommendations and suggestions united in consensus and aiming at the entire EU.

FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Setting an agenda for the future

Decisions on the future of the EU must be evidence-based. Here, scientists must intensify their efforts for targeted and timely scientific advice as well as better science communication, becoming an intrinsic part of policy-making. The full repertoire of science should be used: creation of knowledge and innovation, formation of future generations, evidence-based advice, science diplomacy etc.

Strengthening Europe as a community

We reject the idea of an EU with two or several speeds and opt firmly for a concerted effort of all Member States at increased speed. Therefore, the Union must be a cohesive community based on rights and obligations of citizens, Member States and the Union. Effective mechanisms on EU level to sanction deviation from these guiding principles need to be put in place. The functional architecture of the EU should be modernised in order to become more solid and efficient.

Defining the EU’s relation to its neighbours

Science builds bridges between the EU and its neighbours in the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership States. Such efforts deserve more acknowledgement and need more support from political decision-makers.

Facing societal challenges

The Union must find effective responses for challenges such fragmentation, gaps between the West and the East, the North and the South, prosperity inequalities, weakening of democracy by disinformation, cyber-crime, populism and nationalism, fallible regulation in digitalisation, artificial intelligence and corporate finance, environmental problems and others.

INCLUSIVENESS AND PERFORMANCE OF EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Emphasise excellence

Excellence must remain the guiding criterion for the evaluation of the education, research and innovation work, because only excellence can lead to a sustainable increase in performance. Excellence requires competitive, transparent, objective and adaptive evaluation procedures. Scientists and not politics must have the last word on decisions in funding competitions.

Generate a European culture

Europe must move beyond individual measures to a paradigm of “European culture of formation, research and innovation”. Such a culture is based in particular on critical thinking from primary to adult education, it respects

science and evidence, encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, strikes a balance between fundamental and applied research, welcomes the brightest minds from all over the world, upholds diversity and academic freedom, emphasises cooperation and working in networks, and nurtures constant self-improvement.

Increase investment in inclusiveness

Europe's strength lies in its diverse and open research landscape in which curiosity-driven, applied, private and publicly funded research interact in synergy and competition with each other. To remain competitive on a global scale, such a system hinges upon the performance of its constituents parts and upon their ability to cooperate with each other. In this context, collaborative projects provide a truly European added value like no other funding instrument. This effect comes to fruition most clearly in small to medium-sized consortia.

Close the research gap with efficient Widening measures in Horizon Europe

The existing Widening instruments are a welcome contribution on closing the research gap between the European East and West, North and South, but they have had only limited impact. That is why new measures beside the existing / planned ones are needed. These should not compromise the criterion of excellence, but help to achieve it faster. Such measures include stimuli for brain gain, brain circulation and Europe-wide networking, and the support of national "excellence initiatives". To ensure their effectiveness and allow for adjustments when necessary, Widening measures should be subject to an independent and periodical assessment of their effectiveness.

Make brain gain and brain circulation in Europe the cornerstones of excellence

The research divide in Europe must be diminished significantly and rapidly, and brain drain towards the West and North must be dealt with. One of the best solutions for this is to implement a system of measures to enable both Europe-wide brain circulation and brain gain through funding of excellence hives (personal and portable grants) in the Widening countries, with collaboration ties to peers in Non-Widening countries. Already very successful funding programmes, such as the European Research Council or the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions require increased efforts. Member States should find legislative-administrative solutions to enable comparable payment of researchers involved in EU-funded projects.

Enhance networked research

The capacity to network is key to increase EU13 participation in European funding. Therefore, funding instruments that support such capacities should be enhanced on both European and national levels. Efforts from researcher teams, universities, research organisations and learned societies in this direction play an important role here. We need bilateral initiatives from (within) Member States, which additionally contribute to close the research gap, for example formats aiming at preparing successful joint funding applications or at enhancing research and academic management capacities.

Amplify the synergy of research, structural and other funds

To achieve / defend global competitiveness and having in mind the large investment required, the unbureaucratic synergy of EU structural, research and other funds should be pursued with much stronger determination. The funding of cost-intensive and risky measures should be shared between European and national levels. Binding National and European Roadmaps of Funding Synergies in Research and Innovation should be adopted by the end of 2020.

Value research infrastructures

State of the art research infrastructures – small, large and distributed – and access to them are a significant competitive advantage for Europe. They function as interdisciplinary researchers' hubs and attract talented researchers from all over Europe and the world. Hence, collaboration between Member States and the EU in this field should be expanded.

POSTFACE

Reforms of national systems need to be undertaken under national responsibility, but aiming for common European standards. Policy-making should at all times involve the science actors, on national and EU level. Reforms must ensure a balance between the missions of the different actors of the higher education, research and innovation system as well as between fundamental and applied research. The opportunities and advancement of European science need better visibility, ensuring an attractive narrative of Europe as "the global science hub". No achievements in European education, research and innovation can withstand, if there is no academic autonomy, research freedom and freedom of ideas.

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