

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, 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 at the 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. United in consensus, we issue the following recommendations and suggestions for the EU as a whole.

FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Setting an agenda for the future

Decisions on the future of the EU must be evidence-based. Scientists must intensify their efforts to provide targeted and timely scientific advice and better science communication, so as to become 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 at EU level to sanction deviations from these guiding principles need to be put in place. The functional architecture of the EU should be modernised to make it more robust and efficient.

Defining the EU’s relations with its neighbours

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

Facing societal challenges

The EU must find effective responses to challenges such as fragmentation, gaps between West and East, North and South, prosperity inequality, weakening of democracy through disinformation, cybercrime, populism and nationalism, flawed regulations on 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 improvement in performance. Excellence requires competitive, transparent, objective and adaptive evaluation procedures. Scientists, not politics, must have the last word on evaluation decisions in funding competitions.

Generate a European culture

Europe should move beyond individual measures to a paradigm of a “European culture of education, 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 basic 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 forms of 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 constituent parts and upon their ability to cooperate with each other. Thus, collaborative projects provide a unique instrument of truly European added value. This effect comes to fruition especially in small to medium-sized consortia.

Close the research gap with efficient Widening measures in Horizon Europe

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 a limited impact. Therefore, new measures in addition to the existing / planned measures are needed. These should not compromise the criterion of excellence but help to achieve excellence faster. They include measures for brain gain, brain circulation and Europe-wide networking, and the support of national excellence initiatives. To ensure their effectiveness and allow for adjustments where necessary, Widening instruments should be subject to independent, periodical assessments.

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

The research divide in Europe must be closed effectively and rapidly, and the issues of brain drain towards the West and North must be tackled. One of the best solutions is a system of measures to enable both Europe-wide brain circulation and brain gain by funding excellence hives (personal, portable grants) in the Widening countries, with collaborative ties to peers in non-Widening countries. Established, successful funding programmes, such as the European Research Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions require increased efforts. Member States should find legislative and administrative solutions to enable comparable remuneration of researchers involved in EU-funded projects.

Enhance networked research

The capacity to network is key to increasing EU13 participation in European funding. Therefore, instruments that support such capacities should be enhanced at both European and national levels. Efforts in this direction from researcher teams, universities, research organisations and learned societies / academies play an important role. We also need bilateral initiatives from within Member States that help to close the research gap, e.g. formats for preparing successful joint funding applications and enhancing research and academic management capacities.

Boost synergies between EU-research, structural and other funds

To ensure global competitiveness, much stronger determination and less bureaucracy is needed to boost synergies of EU structural, research and other funds, especially in view of the large investments required. 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 beginning of the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework.

Value research infrastructures

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

POSTFACE

Reforms of national systems need to be undertaken on the responsibility of national governments, but should aim for common European standards. Policy-makers should involve the science stakeholders at all times in reforms on national and EU level. Reforms need to ensure a balance between the missions of the different stakeholders in the higher education, research and innovation system as well as between basic and applied research. Opportunities and advancements of European science need better visibility and an attractive narrative of Europe as "the global science hub". No achievements in European education, research and innovation can withstand, without academic autonomy, research freedom and freedom of ideas.

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