

## Nordic non-paper: First input to the next Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe (2025-2027)

With this non-paper, Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden have outlined our initial, overall priorities for the Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe 2025-2027, as a first contribution to the preparatory work - to be supplemented at a later stage with more specific and thematic inputs in the relevant fora.

The Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe 2025-2027 should:

- a. Be developed with **continuity** in terms of format, structure, impact driven intervention logic and Key Strategic Orientations (including the twin green and digital transitions) as a starting point.
- b. Stress that Horizon Europe must remain the **main strategic framework for research and innovation (R&I) funding** and that redirecting funding from to other programmes should only be done under exceptional circumstances, based on a well-coordinated procedure that includes Member States and Associated countries and a thorough impact analysis – and should only be applied for R&I activities.
- c. Emphasize **the principle of excellence** in funding R&I as fundamental to ensure that Horizon Europe helps build a stronger scientific and technological base for Europe and enhances our competitiveness as a robust, competitive knowledge economy and global R&I leader.
- d. Clarify the main **synergies** and co-funding mechanisms between the different parts of Horizon Europe and between Horizon Europe and other programmes, including any still significant, unrealised potential.
- e. Outline how the pursuit of **widening participation** is supported via earmarked Horizon Europe activities, by strengthening synergies with other EU funding, and via support for national reform and capacity building.
- f. Address the need for maintaining the appropriate **balance** between investments in breakthrough, bottom-up and strategic research and innovation, as well as between research & innovation actions (RIA) and innovation actions (IA). Each of the three pillars of Horizon Europe has their very own *raison d'être* that needs to prevail.
- g. Refer to the **recent societal developments** that will be reflected in the Work Programme, including the consequences of the war in Ukraine in terms of security threats, severe energy and food crises, exposed vulnerabilities in supply chains as well as the ever-increasing need for resilience against climate change, particularly in the **Arctic** as one of the most vulnerable environments and a significant proxy for climate change elsewhere. Other disruptive developments such as COVID and its impact on R&I policies and funding need to be analysed and reflected in terms of the need for maintaining adequate flexibility for programming.

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- h. Underline that the rapidly changing international context and security situation does not result in closing off Horizon Europe to **international R&I cooperation** with third countries, which remains a prerequisite for solving global challenges. But spell out how specific restrictive actions to **safeguard EU's strategic autonomy and security**, while respecting national competence in matters of national security, will be implemented on a topic-for-topic basis in accordance with article 22.5 of the Horizon Europe regulation and without jeopardising the possibility of cooperating with entities from Europe's closest and most committed partner countries.
- i. Focus on the need for continuously trimming the overly complex EU innovation landscape by optimizing existing tools rather than creating new ones. Not least by making sure that the **European Innovation Council (EIC)** is fully functioning. Particular attention must be paid to the participation of **Small and Medium sized Enterprises** and unlocking their innovation potential via all of Horizon Europe.
- j. Boost the effective integration of **Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)** in the clusters, partnerships and missions - rather than including SSH as an "add-on". The Strategic Plan should emphasize the societal impact of Horizon Europe more clearly and that *all* disciplines, including SSH, are needed to help solve the fundamental, cross-sectoral challenges.
- k. Openly address and elaborate the still unresolved challenges regarding the realisation of the **R&I missions**, in particular on the specific synergies between Horizon Europe and other relevant funding instruments, critical for the missions to succeed.
- l. Only include any new **R&I partnerships** where they are deemed strategically necessary in terms of EU's global competitiveness or the Green Deal / Agenda 2030, and only when consistent with the available budget. We must remain true to our promise that Horizon Europe would entail a more transparent landscape of fewer partnerships than in Horizon 2020.
- m. Include a new, short section on **evaluation practices** so as to reassure prospective applicants that these practices will always be in line with the guidelines – no more, no less.
- n. Recognize and emphasize **equal opportunities, gender, and diversity** as significant aspects of a successful framework programme for R&I.
- o. Be simple and direct in its **style**, communicating the relevant EU-political priorities in an easy-to-understand narrative. At the same time, the plan has to be applicable for the planning of cluster-specific Work Programmes, which should remain its **key purpose**. The plan should also elaborate on *how* it is to be used to give direction to the development of Work Programmes, in order to facilitate useful input from stakeholders.