

YERUN's input to umbrella organisations consultation on the Orientations towards the first Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe



This document contains YEURN's answers to the last web-based consultation for umbrella organisations on the Orientations towards the first Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe document. The length limit for each answer was 1500 characters, hence the summarised nature of our answers.

Q.1 Which targeted impacts can be best reached (or only reached) through Horizon Europe? On the other hand, what are the targeted impacts, mentioned in the updated orientations, least likely to benefit from Horizon Europe investments?

We acknowledge that there is an improvement in the identification of the targeted impacts, as they refer to social scientific, technological and economic aspects. There is still unclarity with their formulation, as some may be considered objectives and it is unclear how they will be measured. Despite that, all targeted impacts included in the Orientation paper are of crucial importance, but we need to be realistic and accept the fact that they will not be achieved only by Horizon Europe: they need a combined effort at European and at national level, as well as across different European programmes. As we are requested to prioritise, most targeted impacts within clusters 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 could benefit more from European research collaboration and therefore from Horizon Europe investments. From cluster 3, those that would be better achieved through cross-border cooperation (e.g. cybersecurity, counterterrorism) would benefit more than others which are more localized (e.g. better protection of public spaces). This does not mean that other targeted impacts cannot be achieved by Horizon Europe tout court, but their attainment would happen transversally rather than as the ultimate objective of a project (e.g. the fight against political extremism and polarization cannot be the final goal of a Horizon Europe call, but a project funded by this programme can indeed also have that impact/result).

Q.2 Which common challenges between different clusters could reinforce their impacts (e.g. environment and health, green IT...)?

There are potentially endless answers to this question, all of which could be plausible: we could mention digital health, inclusive industry and many more. However, we believe that we should rather focus on the meta-level: what is really important to note is that all targeted impacts can be reinforced by the inclusion of cross-cutting issues such as: diversity and inclusion; digitisation; sustainability; open science; outreach; citizens' engagement, inclusion of SSH elements, etc. In order to achieve real impact, it is crucial that these cross-cutting elements are taken into account. The contribution of SSH elements across clusters/targeted impacts is particularly important, in order to prevent technology to take rule over what makes us human. Furthermore, we cannot disregard the excellence science pillar, as it should be a cornerstone for all clusters. Its ambitious objectives for frontier-driven research across all fields on the basis of scientific excellence build an important instrument to respond to the needs of a knowledge-based society and provide Europe with the capabilities in frontier research necessary to meet global challenges.

Q.3 Beyond research and innovation, which other measures would be needed at the European level to best achieve the targeted impacts (e.g. innovation deals...)?

1. Linking R&I to education (strengthening of ERA & EEA) is essential to build an innovative workforce/society and ensure long-lasting transformations. Nevertheless, the targeted impacts only mention education twice. Strengthened synergies with Erasmus might be good in this regard.
2. The knowledge square should be reinforced and universities in particular should be acknowledged their key role in the achievement of targeted impacts. In order to ensure a constant communication across research, education, innovation and society, Open Science should be further implemented (OS could also serve transversal targets such as democracy and inclusiveness).
3. Acting on the local and regional level by: a) removing legal, administrative, and logistical impediments to the mobility of researchers b) making local and regional authorities (LRAs) aware of the targeted impacts, e.g. by attaching more conditionalities to structural funds (linking them to initiatives complementing HEU, such as studies on agriculture funded by the CAP).
4. In line with the co-design spirit, ensure adequate communication to, and engagement of, citizens throughout the whole implementation of the programme. This will generate synergies by making them aware of the targeted impacts and of the EC's priorities. Citizen science is fundamental to help with.
5. Further to innovation deals, other ways of achieving the impacts could be prizes on research translated to citizens or projects on how citizens and scientists worked together.

Q.4 What are your impressions on the co-design process and how can we improve it?

Co-design is an excellent approach and should continue to be pursued. It increases stakeholder awareness of the policy priorities from an early stage and, by giving the possibility and responsibility to provide input, increases the legitimacy of the resulting policies and programmes. However, some improvements could be made in the future. The EC's expectations when launching consultations (online and R&I Days) have often been unclear – better indications should be given (e.g. during R&I Days, it was unclear how sessions influenced the design of the Strategic Plan, or question 2 in this consultation). Concerning the R&I days, stakeholders' participation was not always transparent. We would suggest for future times, that an open call be launched for speakers and contributions (coming also from the citizens). The impact of the input received by the Commission could be made clearer – beyond producing updated documents, and writing reports of the input received, there should also be an explanation of how that input shaped the policy design (including methodology). Finally, we encourage co-design to continue with stakeholder engagement at all levels (European, national and regional) as the programme is deployed and its impact evaluated. This will ensure a continuous transfer of ideas and experiences from national and regional level to the European one and vice-versa. In this process, all involved must have the same understanding of what needs to be addressed collectively.

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